

WOMEN ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE

**A study of women's local integrative organizations
and the pursuit of democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Cynthia Cockburn

with

**Rada Stakic-Domuz
and Meliha Hubic**

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We also owe a debt to researchers who have addressed these issues before us. Among them we would specially like to thank Martha Walsh to whose studies of women's initiatives in postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina and the region of the former Yugoslavia we have often referred. We are grateful to her, and also to Maja Korac for taking time to advise us on our draft.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AFFW	Anti-Fascist Front of Women
B-H	Bosnia-Herzegovina
BWI	Bosnian Women's Initiative
CARE	Co-operative for Aid and Relief Everywhere (international NGO)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
Dayton Agreement	The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, signed in Dayton, Ohio, December 1995.
DfID	Department for International Development (of the UK)
DM	deutschmark
DOM	'Dolina Ostaje Moja' (women's association)
Duga	Zene Pomazu Zrtvama Rata (Women Help Victims of War - women's association)
EU	European Union
FERN	Free Elections Radio Network
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
FZ	Federalna Zena (women's association)
GCG	Gender Co-ordinating Group
HDZ	Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica (Croatian Democratic Community)
Herceg-Bosna	Name given by Croat nationalist leaders to the area of Western Herzegovina and parts of Central Bosnia they aspire to control
HOS	Hrvatske Oruzane Snage (Croatian Armed Forces)
HVO	Hrvatsko Vijece Obrane (Croatian Defence Council)
HZHB	Hrvatska Zajednica Herceg-Bosna (Community of Herceg-Bosna)
IBHI	Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues

ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IEBL	Inter-Entity Border Line
IFOR	Implementation Force (NATO)
IHRLG	International Human Rights Law Group
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOCC	International Orthodox Christian Charities
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPTF	International Police Task Force (of the United Nations)
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISDP	Stranka Nezavisnih Socijaldemokrata (Independent Social Democratic Party)
JNA	Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija (Yugoslav National Army)
Medica	Medica Women's Association
MPDL	Movimiento por la Paz, el Desarme y la Libertad
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
OBN	Open Broadcast Network
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (of the United Nations)
OHR	Office of the High Representative (of the Peace Implementation Council)
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Oxfam	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PIC	Peace Implementation Council
RS	Republika Srpska
SAH	Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk (Swiss NGO)
SDA	Stranka Demokratske Akcije (Party of Democratic Action)
SDP	Socijaldemokratska Partija (Social Democratic Party)

SDS	Srpska Demokratska Stranka (Serb Democratic Party)
SFOR	Stabilization Force (NATO)
SOS Line	An emergency telephone response for women and children suffering violence and other forms of crisis
SRS	Srpska Radikalna Stranka (Serb Radical Party)
SSB	Savjetovaliste za prognane, izbjeglice i povratnike – Sredisnja Bosna (Counselling for Refugees, Displaced and Returnees of Middle Bosnia - women's organization)
The Federation	Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and N.Ireland
UN	United Nations
UMCOR	United Methodist Committee on Relief
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMiBH	United Nations Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina
US, USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UZ	Udruzene Zene (United Women - women's association)
Vidra	Zenska Akcija 'Vidra' (Women's Action 'Vidra' - women's association)
VRS	Vojska Republike Srpske (Army of the Serb Republic)
World Bank	The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ZBiH	Udruzenje "Zena BiH" (Association "Woman of Bosnia-Herzegovina")
ZM	Zena Mostara (Mostar Woman - women's association)

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Women's local integrative NGOs*

In our research we identified the existence of a number of non-governmental organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina that are organized by women and concerned with women's issues, operate at local level, and are inclusive and integrative, in both principle and practice, of all Bosnia's ethno-national groups.

- *Our research subjects*

We selected seven such organizations for case study. We situated the studies in a social and political context by limiting our focus to the cities of Mostar and Banja Luka and the town of Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje.

- *Our research questions*

We explored, using interview and other qualitative research methods, how the organizations function, their objectives and activities, the problems they face, and their strengths and weaknesses. We also learned about the women who are the key actors in the organizations, in particular their backgrounds, motivations and opinions.

- *Valuable work and genuine projects*

We learned that the women and their organizations are inspired by a dual desire: first, to see their towns recover from war as integrated societies where people of all ethno-national identities are fully included; and second, to end the disadvantage of women and the marginalization of women's issues in Bosnian society. We concluded that, though they are not large or strong, they are seriously committed and do valuable work. They are both unusual and courageous in acting collectively and publicly on politically sensitive issues.

- *Weaknesses and needs of the organizations*

Internal weaknesses in the organizations. The organizations have serious weaknesses of decision-making structure and process. There are problems concerning leadership, accountability, responsibility, role and skill sharing, transparency of information and procedure, and lack of contact and co-operation between groups.

Problems deriving from the political and social context. They are impeded by the under-development of public spheres in B-H in which to safely pursue campaigns and question authority. For associations such as these within civil society to make their maximum contribution a parallel development of political society, the economic sphere and the state is required.

Deficiencies of funding. The organizations are critically dependent on international institutions, international NGOs and foreign governments for grants to enable their work. Funds are insufficient, seldom cover core costs and lack continuity. The

criteria and procedures of donors do not always assist the development of the organizations. There is a worrying decline in donors and funds.

- *Towards a women's movement*

There is not yet a developed women's movement in B-H, but these organizations are a hopeful sign that one may eventually emerge. They would benefit from such a movement as a supportive context for their work, and they can help to bring it into being. A Bosnian women's movement is needed not only for the improvement it could make in the position of women, but because patriarchal gender relations are incompatible with democracy.

- *Towards democracy*

If they survive and become more numerous and more effective, women's organizations of this kind tendentially contribute to the building of Bosnian democracy in three specific ways. They can help generate responsive *local democracy* at municipal level; *inclusive democracy*; and *gender democracy*.

Patriarchy, or the dominance of men and masculine cultures, was implicated in the shortfall of democracy in former Yugoslavia, in its collapse into war, in the pursuit of militarism. It also exacerbates many of the social problems in present day B-H. Without a transformation of the gender regime, hopes for a democratic future for the country will be disappointed.

- *We recommend*

the following measures to assist the growth and effectiveness of women's local integrative organizations such as these, and a related women's movement...

That the Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina:

pass appropriate legislation to strengthen the sphere of free association as proposed by the Independent Bureau on Humanitarian Issues;

make financial provision in national and local annual budgets for grants to non-governmental organizations of civil society that can contribute to the equality and inclusiveness of a democratic society;

implement the letter and spirit of the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as recommended by the International Human Rights Law Group.

That international institutions, international NGOs and foreign governments co-operate in instituting a constructive, secure, long-term funding regime to support such organizations, and make widely available training and development to strengthen their capabilities and improve connectedness between them.

That the organizations themselves take steps to strengthen their own performance, to increase the element of advocacy and campaigning in their

activities, to co-operate with each other and with similarly motivated organizations in B-H, and to network with similar women's organizations in the region and further afield.

INTRODUCTION

Our project

This book results from a period of research, carried out in 1999 and 2000, involving a partnership between researchers in Medica Women's Association in Zenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the City University, London. But the subject of 'women's organizing in the aftermath of war' was not just an academic research issue for us. The question had arisen from the experience of war itself. Medica was a place of refuge in the war, offering medical, psychological and social support in dealing with trauma. It was organized by women for women, and both the organizers and the beneficiaries were war 'survivors'.

Who we are

The researchers involved from Medica are Meliha Hubic and Rada Stakic-Domuz. Both work for Medica's Infoteka. Meliha is of Bosnian Muslim background, and her family formerly lived in Visegrad in Eastern Bosnia. The war interrupted her engineering studies in Zenica and she came to Medica, first as a beneficiary and eventually as an information worker.

Rada's main vocation is that of school teacher of German language. She is a woman of Bosnian Serb background, who in the former Yugoslavia had opted for Yugoslav identity. She spent the war in Zenica, in Central Bosnia, where she joined the Medica Women's Therapy Centre (as it was then called) as an information worker, translator and interpreter. She now combines work as a teacher with a continued commitment to Medica.

Cynthia Cockburn is a researcher at City University London. During and since the war she has been one of the co-ordinators of Women in Black, London. Like other groups with this name worldwide, they supported women's opposition to war in the region, demonstrated against the ethnic violence and aggression, and for constructive Western responses. English by ethnicity, Cynthia is a research professor in the Department of Sociology in City University and has forty years experience as a feminist researcher and writer. Shocked by the war in the former Yugoslavia, in 1995 she shifted her research focus to the gender relations of conflict. Her book, *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict*, explored the way some women sustain difficult alliances across national differences in time of war (Cockburn 1998). Medica Women's Association, Zenica, was one of the case studies in that book, along with women's projects in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine.

What we set out to do

So we had all three seen at first hand the importance of women's organizing during war. But how would these new strengths and abilities women had gained in the terrible years of war be put to use in the aftermath? War has contradictory effects on gender relations. Women are simultaneously victimized and empowered. Men are often traumatized, but also brutalized, by fighting. It is very uncertain what kind of gender regime will have evolved five or ten years after the end of a war, and what its implications for women will prove to have been.

We decided to look for funding to enable us to see at close quarters what some women's organizations were doing in Bosnia-Herzegovina five years after the war ended. What were they actually and potentially able to contribute to the building of an ethnically inclusive, woman-friendly and active democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina? We identified three sites for study: the wellknown cities of Mostar and Banja Luka, and the town of Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje. While in Mostar we also met women active in a nearby rural town, Nevesinje. Among our research questions were some concerning these places: how has the war affected them? what changes have occurred since the Dayton peace agreement ended hostilities?

In these urban centres we focused our research on particular women's organizations, and of each of these we wanted to ask: what is it doing? what are its strengths and weaknesses? what difficulties is it encountering? what bearing does the social and political context have on it? what are its prospects and its needs? In each organization we looked to a number of individual women for more information, wondering: what is their personal history? what now motivates them to participate in action? what do they gain and what does it cost them? how are they viewed by others in their town?

We never intended, however, that this would be simply *research* and nothing more. From the start it was a triple project, with two additional aims: *development* and *networking*. We felt it important to make a contribution, however small, to the *development* of the women's organizations that gave us research access. We discussed with them in advance what kind of input from us might be useful. It was agreed that we would use our ability in English language to help them generate project proposals for future activity and seek funding for them from new donors, particularly in the United Kingdom. So we sat down with them to foresee the next stage in their development, identify and elaborate a particular project, draft a convincing proposal and send it off to potential funders. It goes without saying that the project also involved development for ourselves and our own organizations: Medica Infoteka gained more knowledge of qualitative research approaches; City University added to its knowledge about processes of post-war reconstruction in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with which experience in other countries and regions may usefully be compared.

As to *networking*, our research visits to the participating women's organizations deepened links already established by Medica. But we wanted to be able to put some of the resources we raised into enabling the women's organizations to get together, exchange experience and increase co-operation. To this end we organized, a mid-project three-day workshop at Neum (January 2000) and plan a post-publication conference involving a wider group of Bosnian women activists and academics.

All in all, we believe the project we conceived and carried out, a project of research + development + networking, may be seen as participatory action research. And we would like to feel that it goes some way to fill a gap noted by the Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues (1998:45) when they wrote of 'the need for action research on local NGOs to be developed consistently by organizations within B-H', so that lessons may be learned and policies shaped for the future.

Our research method

Given the questions we wanted to answer and the resources at our disposal, we believed the best research approach would be a *qualitative* one. That is to say, we would not look for a large sample of organizations and women, or use a questionnaire to produce quantitative data that could be analysed to produce an ambitious generalization. Rather, we would look for insights of the kind that can be obtained from more intimate knowledge of a smaller slice of reality (Silverman 1985, Strauss and Corbin 1990).

Qualitative research involves attending carefully to what particular people have to say, exploring particular organizations, instances and events, and using all available means to understand people's reasoning, relations and motivations, and the bearing of circumstances on their choices. It is an approach that accepts that things are not the same from one moment to the next, that each person's point of view is shaped by their situation, and that people constantly experience ambiguity and contradiction. None of these things, it goes without saying, can be fitted meaningfully into the questions and answers on a formal questionnaire.

Like quantitative research, however, qualitative research has its limitations. One can never state with confidence 'this is how it is', only 'this is how we make sense of it', 'this is how it seems to us to be'. In other words, as qualitative researchers always must (and quantitative researchers also should) we acknowledge how much of ourselves is in this study. The subject we chose and the conclusions we draw are shaped by our beliefs and perceptions that inevitably arise from them. This subjective factor in research, particularly in qualitative, participatory, action research, calls for a good deal of honest reflexivity - something widely discussed by ourselves and other researchers on women's issues (Roberts 1981, Gatenby and Humphries 2000, Cockburn and Mulholland 2000).

Choosing the cases for study

Our criteria for selecting the *organizations* for study were as follows. First, they should be women-only associations, not by accident but by principle. They should have a primary focus on women's needs, and a gender perspective, both on women's issues and more general matters. Second, they should be local, in the sense of drawing membership and beneficiaries from their town or city, rather than nation-wide. Third, in terms of national name and identity, they should be open and inclusive in their membership and their beneficiaries. They should be consciously and visibly working towards an ethnically integrated town or city. Some organizations state in their founding documents and publicity that they are 'ethnically inclusive' or 'cross-national', but do so mainly to secure support from international donors. We wanted to be sure the inclusivity of our case study organizations was genuine.

We were specially interested in women's self-organizing in relation to its local context. The localities on which we settled for study were the cities of Banja Luka and Mostar and the smaller town of Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje were interesting for having different pre-war and post-war ethnic compositions, and different war histories and post-war trajectories. You will see that chapters 2, 3 and 4 present the research on this town-by-town basis.

The organizations we found to fit our criteria in the three selected cities/towns were:

Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje:

- Federalna Zena
- Savjetovaliste SB (Savjetovaliste za Prognane, Izbjeglice i Povratnike Sredisnja Bosna)

Mostar:

- Udruzenje 'Zena BiH'
- Zene Mostara

Banja Luka:

- Udružene Zene
- Zenska Akcija 'Vidra'

We also include material on the group 'Dolina Ostaje Moja' (DOM) in the small town of Nevesinje, in Eastern Herzegovina. Situated only a short drive from Mostar, it had connections with the two larger organizations and was able to illustrate for us their relation to their rural hinterland - particularly in the matter of refugee return. Unfortunately this does not comprise a full case study because we were not able to interview individual women in DOM.

These seven organizations are not the only women's organizations in B-H that would have matched our criteria and made suitable cases for study. We know there are others doing equally valuable work. However, limitations of time and funding, and the depth of information we wanted to obtain from each case, forced us to restrict the number to these few.

Gathering information

We made two or three research visits of several days each to the three locations. We familiarized ourselves with geography of the city or town, its war experiences and its social, economic and political characteristics. We paid particular attention to the ethnic structure and zoning, as it had been before the war and as it had become. Of all this we kept field notes. We also obtained maps and statistics from the local offices of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

In all we carried out 46 interviews over a period of three months in the autumn of 1999. In each of the seven organizations we conducted initial meetings either with the co-ordinator or with the main activists as a group. This was followed, except in the case of DOM, by interviews with a number of individual members. In the case of Savjetovaliste SB, some of the women preferred to meet us as a group. The women we interviewed are listed in Appendix 1, where they are shown in alphabetical order. Some women preferred to give their first names only. One woman chose to use a pseudonym. We also carried out a number of contextual interviews, and these informants too are listed in Appendix 1.

Interview procedure

The interviews followed a prepared schedule of thematically-ordered questions, appropriately adapted for each place, organization or informant. But we did not follow these in a rigid manner, preferring to leave a good deal of initiative to our informants. In addition to interviews, wherever and whenever possible we observed the organizations' activities, sat in on their meetings or attended events they were

organizing. Cynthia and Rada carried out the fieldwork in Banja Luka; Meliha and Cynthia in Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje, Mostar and Nevesinje.

It was the handling of language that presented the greatest problem in information gathering. Rada and Meliha speak both English and Bosnian. Cynthia speaks English but no Bosnian. Most of our Bosnian informants did not speak English. Cynthia was present for a majority of the interviews, and questions and answers were sequentially interpreted from one language to the other by Meliha or Rada. In the interviews from which Cynthia was absent, the language spoken was Bosnian, Serbian or Croatian. The interviews were tape-recorded for the use of Rada and Meliha; Cynthia worked from handwritten notes in English.

Subsequent handling of the data

On return from fieldwork, Cynthia typed up her notes in English, while Meliha and Rada transcribed their cassettes. They later translated these verbally for Cynthia, so that she could alter and amplify her notes from this more complete record. We were reassured to find considerable consistency between the two versions.

Drawing on all this material, each of us first compiled comprehensive case studies of 'our' towns, either writing them in English or having them translated into English. Cynthia's fuller studies, corrected and amplified by Rada and Meliha, became the basis from which Cynthia wrote the first draft of this book.

Finalizing the manuscript

Amended in the light of a first round of helpful comments from advisers, the manuscript was then translated from Cynthia's English into Bosnian by Rada. Copies of those parts that concerned them or quoted them were sent in Bosnian to all our informants for consideration and comment. We were particularly anxious that individuals should be able to opt for anonymity, or choose a pseudonym, should they wish. We also told them to feel free to change the words we ascribed to them. This was particularly important since, it will be clear from our discussion of language above, the words we put into their mouths could seldom be precise verbatim quotations. They are in fact *reconstructions* of their meaning from one or more sources in one or more languages. Their reliability depends on informants retrospectively acknowledging them or reshaping them. We are very grateful for the care they took in this.

On dates and developments

Our fieldwork was carried out in the autumn of 1999 and the cut-off date for information included in this book is the end of 1999. However, events move fast in B-H and in the period between December 1999 and the date of publication of this book many developments have occurred of which we have been unable to take account. On the whole the developments have been positive. Among them have been an increasing pace of refugee return, a questioning of some of the more negative provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement and an improved performance of democratic political parties in elections.

On names and identities

It was a foundational belief in our research that national and religious names, particularly the identifications

Croat, Bosnian Croat or Catholic

Serb, Bosnian Serb or Orthodox

Bosniak, Bosnian Muslim or Muslim

should never be taken at face value. They are sometimes titles that accurately reflect a sense of self and are proudly used and happily accepted. But very often they are not. They can be labels used lazily or maliciously. Such names disguise many different ways of relating to national, ethnic or religious identity. They are never 'true' in any essential sense, but are always the productions of political and religious movements. In some ways, as used in contemporary Bosnia-Herzegovina, they have to be seen as artefacts of - even as the purpose of - the Bosnian wars of 1992-1995.

But how do you write and print such names without suggesting their 'truth'? We needed a way of using national identifications without implying that they have the same meaning for everyone - and in particular that they mean the same thing to the person who is named and the person who does the naming. At first we tried prefacing them with the word 'nominal'. Thus we would not say 'she is a Bosnian Serb' but 'she is a nominal Bosnian Serb'. But this was cumbersome. We abandoned the idea and tried the device of quotation marks. We wrote, 'She is a "Bosnian Croat"' or 'she is "Bosnian Catholic"'. This proved very tiring on the reader. Finally, like other authors, we have reverted to using the names unmarked. But we would wish the reader to make the effort to imagine her or his own cautionary quotation marks wherever they appear.

There is further the uncertainty surrounding the terms Bosniak and Muslim. We have tried to use the term 'Bosnian Muslim' or 'Muslim' when referring to the community in the period before the war or when referring specifically to religious identity. We try to use the term 'Bosniak' from the time it became widely current, i.e. when referring to the war and the post-war period. We ask the reader to be tolerant of any inconsistencies.

Finally, we want to say that we understand all knowledge to be 'situated knowledge'. Each person we cite in the book sees the world in a perspective determined by her location and her history. Inevitably likewise we three researchers come from different pasts and inhabit different spaces. We do not have the same knowledge of war, death and loss, and have experienced widely different degrees of pain. The struggles we have had over our sense of self and belonging are different too. So the making of this book involved a continual friendly tussle over perceptions and meanings.

Negotiation was needed too over ownership and responsibility for the writing. Most of the material-handling, writing and theorizing was done by Cynthia, simply because this is her lifelong *métier* and it is a hard task for anyone who has not learned the trade. But it was difficult for her as an English woman to imagine what might be relevant and useful to a *Bosnian* readership. In this respect much depended on the perceptions of Rada and Meliha. But it may be inevitable that the book (in its Bosnian form as well as in the English edition) often reads in the voice of an outsider to the culture. We would like to think that for that very reason it will provoke useful discussion, disagreement and fresh ideas.

Cynthia wished Meliha and Rada to be full co-authors of the book, in acknowledgment of her dependence on their insider perceptions, the closer relationship they were able to establish with our informants. But they for their part felt this would overstate their 'ownership' of the material as a whole. It might lead to them being expected to 'speak for' work to which they had contributed but which they had not actually originated. So - the way we three are represented on the title page of this book is simply the least uncomfortable formula for all of us.

CHAPTER 1

Women in the Turning of Bosnia-Herzegovina

The women we met in the course of this research, and the organizations they have created, exist in a world in flux. Bosnia-Herzegovina had hardly a moment in which to feel itself an independent country after its recognition on April 6 1992 before it was plunged into war. It emerged from four years of death and destruction into a series of stressful twists and turns of direction.

The process in which the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina came into being was of course part of a wider process affecting all of East Central Europe and the Soviet Union in the decade 1985 to 1995. An important impetus to change had been Mikhail Gorbachev's initiative for restructuring and openness in the Communist party and system of Soviet Union. This hastened the collapse of communist regimes in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania and ending with the break-up of the USSR itself. The disintegration of Yugoslavia between 1990 and 1995 had its own logic, but was not unaffected by this regional context.

The period and process overall are commonly termed The Transition. But we have doubts about this usage. We are not the only ones to feel that it is too singular, and suggests too similar a past (Gal and Kligman 2000). Yugoslavia diverged in many important ways from other countries governed by Communist parties in the second half of the twentieth century. 'The Transition' also suggests a pre-determined destination. But who knows whether the Western powers' vision for the region will be what comes to be? So instead, when considering the continuities and discontinuities in the pre-war, war-time and post-war moments of Bosnia's experience, we have preferred to translate a term sometimes used in Germany to describe the events surrounding re-unification: *Der Wende*, 'the turning'. We also use alternatives such as change, transit, pathway, trajectory and choice. They leave open more possibilities.

Besides, the women and men of B-H are undergoing a 'turning' in several dimensions simultaneously, each with far reaching effects on the lives both of women and men. First, there was the transit from war to post-war, from armed conflict to a state of uneasy ceasefire and reconstruction. Second there was conversion from a single party political system led by the League of Communists to a multi-party system on the Western model. Third, a socialist economy, of peculiarly Yugoslav design, was undergoing rapid and forced privatization on the neo-liberal model. Fourth, and finally, there was a shift in understandings of civil society involving a rapid expansion of the sphere of free association and a transformation of its nature and purposes.

These were the complicated and rapidly changing circumstances in which the women we studied had taken their initiative. In this introductory chapter, before narrowing down our focus to particular places and particular women's organizations, we will explore what these turnings and changes have meant for women in Bosnia-Herzegovina more generally.

Out of war: a radically altered world

Bosnian women and Bosnian men had in some ways shared the experience of the war, but in other ways had lived rather different wars. Consequently, the subjective sense of being a man or being a woman, 'gender identity', shifted for both, but in different ways.

As war approached, men of an age to fight had few choices. Some found, and took, a chance of escape from the region to avoid conscription into one or another army, either to avoid being killed or in refusal of the ethnic rationale of the war. Other men, the majority, who could not or would not leave the region, were caught up in the fighting. Some were already under arms when the fighting began, serving in the various segments of the Yugoslav National Army. Some were driven to join local units in defence of their own town, village or neighbourhood. Some were enlisted and drafted to fight elsewhere in Bosnia or Herzegovina. Some were imprisoned, sexually abused and tortured. And many men of course, with widely differing motivations, chose to fight. Some indeed started and fomented the fighting. Some relished the killing. Some directed war strategy - strategies of attack and 'ethnic cleansing', and strategies of defence. Some raped. Many men were killed in action.

Some women also served, in different roles, in the several armies engaged in the war, and a few of them carried arms and experienced armed combat. But this was not the characteristic experience women had of the war here. More typical for women, and for children and elderly men, was to be unarmed and to experience a new identity - that of 'war victim'. Or more positively, 'war survivor'. If, that is, they did survive. Many did not. And many lived at such cost in trauma and loss that they would have preferred not to.

Both men and women left or lost or were driven from their homes - a shocking and entirely unanticipated occurrence. How, in their past lives, could they have imagined such a thing happening to them? Many of both sexes had the unprecedented experience of travelling long distances on foot in unfamiliar mountainous countryside and forests. Hundreds of thousands found themselves in foreign countries, bearing the infinitely surprising and degrading label of 'refugee'. Sometimes these were countries they had visited before as workers, or as tourists, on annual events known as 'holidays'. But women more often than men had the experience of helping the very young and the very old to live through this uprooting, and of maintaining their own and others' nutrition and health in very challenging circumstances.

After the war, men and women both experienced the relief of pacification and (if they were lucky) of finding each other again. But again, there were differences. The soldiers had fought to win. But, when this war was over, most men who fought must certainly have wondered what had been gained by risking death and sustaining injuries. It is unlikely that any felt victorious, and many felt bitterly defeated. For men, the transition from being a soldier to being a civilian could be a tough time, especially since few of the prewar employment options, sources of income and self-respect, now existed.

For most non-combatants, including most women, the transition to 'post-war' was perhaps less abrupt, since they continued to face similar challenges to those the war had presented. They were still making decisions about whether to move or stay put, try to go home or forget home. Their strength was still pitted in a daily struggle for shelter, food and health. Establishing the whereabouts of surviving relatives and friends. Coming to terms with the fact that many would never return. Healing

themselves and others from wounding, sexual abuse and loss. Keeping their children safe from unexploded shells and landmines - there were 17,000 minefields in B-H at the war's end (World Bank 1999:20).

It was a shattered world to which both women and men awoke the morning after the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (the 'Dayton Agreement'). It lacked 6% of its former population of 4.4 million: an estimated 258,000 had died or were missing. People had been detached from place: approximately half of the 1991 population had (in the cool euphemism of UNDP report) 'changed its place of residence' (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)1998:18). A great deal of the countryside was deserted. The towns were overcrowded with refugees. In this sense Bosnia-Herzegovina had become a more urbanized country (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1998:8). There had been a change in the sex-ratio (more men had died than women). It was a population that had suddenly aged. An estimated 16,000 children had died. (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)1998:3). The birthrate had dropped. The age group of 20 to 64 years, which had been 68.3% of the population in 1991 had fallen to 58.1% in 1997 (UNDP 1998:56). But there were still a lot of military uniforms to be seen. The several Bosnian militaries were being contained and reduced, but sixty thousand troops of IFOR, the international Implementation Force, were replacing them.

Most women's post-war situation differed from that of most men on account of their traditionally close relationship with children. This relationship had intensified during the war, both because of danger and because of the long absence of men from the family. How could they compensate the young for the war? As a UNICEF report said, 'Children have lost their childhood... daily violence was as familiar to them as playing is for other children'. Adolescents, the report went on, were now manifesting 'apathy and a sense of a lack of control over future events' (UNICEF 1998:8). Many of the young were longing to leave the country. Were mothers, who had kept them safe through the war, now to lose them to the peace?

In addition, that morning after Dayton, Bosnians began to calculate the loss of infrastructure. In the Federation, 50% of the housing stock was damaged and 6% entirely destroyed. The equivalent figures for the Republika Srpska were 24% and 5%. War damage had affected 40% of the social housing stock and 60% of private housing (World Bank 1999:26). And the public service provision, on which women in particular had been used to depend, was out of action. Around 70% of schools were damaged, destroyed or requisitioned (World Bank 1999:25). The health system and social services were wrecked.

Social cohesion destroyed

These things were however only the side effects of the fighting. The purpose of many of political leaders and the armed forces they mobilized was to make ethno-national differences in B-H deeper, clearer and more rigid. (1) They wished to render national identity inescapable, and to sort and separate the three 'incompatible' peoples thus created, so that they no longer lived side by side but in separate territories. The most striking characteristic of the post-war world was thus a loss of ethnic fluidity and mixity.

Of course, at first there were no demographic statistics. But it was possible to see that those who had launched the wars of separation had largely succeeded in their

aims, while those who had stood for co-existence and inclusivity had lost. Many people had been driven out of areas that other people claimed; some had anticipated this and left before it happened; some had fled in fear of reprisals against them for what was being done in their name. Some had just crossed the street to safety, others had travelled longer distances looking for somewhere they would be in a secure majority, and yet others had fled abroad. In this way people had been sorted, or sorted themselves, into much more homogenous communities. In 1996, in the areas under the control of the Croatian Defence Council (HVO) Croats had become 96% of the population compared to 49% before the war. In areas controlled by the Army of the Serb Republic (VRS) Serbs were now 89% of the population as against 48% pre-war. In those parts, mainly Central Bosnia, where the B-H Army kept control, the proportion of Bosniaks had increased from 57% to 74% (Praso 1996). The pre-war republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina had had a higher 'tolerance index' than other republics (UNDP 1998:24) (2), and many, when they awoke to the new demography, felt bereft by the loss of the old companionship. (Others however, depending on circumstances, felt relieved.)

The authors of the Dayton Agreement underscored the divergence of peoples by creating a state of two entities, separated by a civil Inter-Entity Border Line and a military Zone of Separation. Yet at the same time they willed a re-integration, affirming that all refugees and displaced persons had the right to conditions in which they could freely and safely return to their homes of origin. UNHCR was made the lead agency in fostering 'return'. But for some years refugees and displaced people were slow to respond (UNDP 1998:25).

By August 31 1999, the pace of return was increasing. (3) Yet despite an Action Plan devised under the Priority Reconstruction Plan review one year earlier, of the estimated 2 million individuals uprooted in the war only 340,919 refugees and 270,001 internally displaced people had returned (UNHCR 1999). The great majority of these had returned to areas in which they would be part of secure majorities. 'Minority' returns were relatively few. Two effects were at work here: people were fearful of returning to places where they would be greatly outnumbered; but, where numbers were more equal, those now in control of municipalities were discouraging returners for fear of seeing the population balance tip against them (UNHCR 1998:5). Reluctance to return, and reluctance to receive returners, were even greater in the Republika Srpska than in the Federation (UNDP 1998:25).

This first aspect of Bosnia's turning, the journey from peace to war and back to peace, is still unfinished. Its trajectory is most clearly charted in intimate feelings, in hopes, desires and fears. When the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) surveyed the opinion of voters in March 1999 their analysis of women's responses found a high proportion to be pessimistic about the likelihood of reintegration. Asked 'what do you think about reconciliation between Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats in B-H?' almost a third thought it 'would never happen', and another third or more thought it unlikely to happen for ten, twenty or thirty years (OSCE 1999). This may seem to bear out the conclusion of UNDP, reviewing the situation three years after Dayton, that B-H's population 'actually consists, by and large, of frustrated, damaged and angry people who do not know to whose account to charge the personal losses' (UNDP 1998:23). We know, however, from the women to whom we spoke in this research, that this is not the whole truth. Many people do remain too hurt and too afraid to reconcile. But many others want and are working for a restoration of pre-war relationships.

Constitutional change: from a single party to a multi-party political system

It is not only in the countries that formerly comprised Yugoslavia, but also in the other Communist-led countries of East and Central Europe and those formerly part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, that people have experienced a roller-coaster conversion from single party rule to a multi-party system of representative democracy. The turning could have been expected to be relatively painless for the formerly Yugoslav countries, for, though the League of Communists had a dominating role, it was less monolithic, and the political system over which it prevailed was less dictatorial, than in the Soviet-bloc countries. As Peter Gowan has described it,

The Communists exercised a monopoly of political power but, despite the oligarchic character of the [...] state, they enjoyed wide support within the population as the guarantors of all the positive elements in the system and as the people who had led a successful resistance against fascism (Gowan 1999:84).

But an easy transit eluded Yugoslavia. The first multi-party elections, held in 1990,

... rather than being a regular instrument of popular choice and expression of political freedom or the transition to a democratic system, became the critical turning point in the process of political disintegration over a decade of economic crisis and constitutional conflict (Woodward 1995:118).

Nationalist politicians played on the traumas of Bosnian voters before the war and have continued to do so since. Many of those who conducted the war have remained in power. It is not surprising if a majority of voters still believe their claims that the parties they lead are the only ones that can protect the interests of people of a given national identity. It is proving difficult to persuade the public that the small, changeable and competitive parties that oppose them can be trusted to deliver not only the integrated democracy they promise, but with it peace and security. In the elections of September 1996 nationalist parties of the three ethno-national groups took 75% of the vote. In the most recent municipal elections (April 2000), at which 66% of the electorate turned out to vote, the Serb and Croat nationalist parties maintained their grip, while a certain growth in votes for the multi-ethnic opposition parties was at the expense of their Bosniak counterpart, the SDA (Central Europe Online 2000).

The move to electoral democracy has not been made easier by the Constitution handed down by the Dayton Agreement. Those Western leaders who brought the parties to the negotiating table, and the regional leaders who signed up to the peace agreement, believed only such a compromise could end the killing. But, as has been endlessly remarked since, the effect has been to endorse ethnicism. The division of the country into two Entities, each bearing an ethnic label, the specification of the three joint presidents by national name and other such clauses gave authority and permanence to ethno-national differentiation and encouraged nationalist instincts, both in voting and making policy. A UNDP review commented,

In addition to the discriminatory position of national minorities, there is the problem of the 'passive' right to vote granted to citizens from the Bosniac, Croat and Serb peoples who are in the category of 'Others', i.e. those who live in the Entity in which their people are not the dominant group. They can be elected to certain state functions only if they move to the territory of the Entity of their own people. If they choose to live in their own homes which happen to be where they are treated as 'Others', their civil right to be elected will be considerably reduced if not completely eliminated (UNDP 1998:22).

Progressive political forces on all three 'sides', impeded by these provisions, have thus been obliged to organize to seek changes in them.

The Constitution besides deprived the central authority of the State of B-H of any real power of governance. The implementation of the decisions of its parliament depends almost entirely on the will of the dominant politicians of the two Entities. In particular the State lacks the instruments of law and order it needs, for responsibility for most of the judiciary, the army and the police was devolved to the Republika Srpska and the Federation (Bosnian Institute 1996).

Besides, the degree of democracy that can be delivered by the elected legislatures in B-H is severely limited by the overriding role of the international institutions. It is paradoxical that the Office of the High Representative, mandated to foster democracy, has had to proceed in an undemocratic manner to do so. In the first two years after Dayton it intervened only cautiously, and was criticized by democrats for allowing itself to be dependent on the manipulation of the dominant nationalist parties (e.g. Helsinki Citizens Assembly 1997). When, later, the international authorities changed tack and showed themselves more willing to confront nationalist stone-walling, they could only do so by arbitrary and dictatorial means. In a situation where all important policy matters are conditioned by the consent of the international institutions, it is not surprising if many people resent their presence.

The international authorities for their part often complain that Bosnians use their presence as an excuse for passivity (UNDP 1998:19). The OSCE survey of voters already cited, revealed a high level of apathy and detachment from political processes. Over 80% of respondents expressed a kind of nationalist inertia, replying 'I voted for the party that would best protect the interest of my national group' (36%), or 'because other people are voting for their national representatives' (19%) or 'I always voted that way' (27%). When asked 'how much do you feel someone like you can influence decision-making in present circumstances in B-H' 87% answered 'very little' or 'nothing'. And 74% felt those elected at the previous elections to be 'not at all' or 'not enough' responsive to citizen's wishes (OSCE 1999).

Women and politics in B-H today

Where are women in the post-war political system? The answer is, largely absent. Under Yugoslav law, a certain level of representation used to be guaranteed for women by a system of quotas. Even so and even then, women had only half the places they might have been expected to fill. In the elections of 1986, a few years prior to the disintegration of the Yugoslav state, women were returned to 24% of the seats in the assembly of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and 17% of municipal representatives - though they were 50.57% of the population (OSCE 1998).

But worse was to come. The women's quota was abandoned in the first multi-party elections, held in 1990. As a result the percentage of women in the assembly fell to 2.9% and in the municipal assemblies to 5%. In the first post-war elections women's representation remained low: only 2.4% in the B-H House of Representatives, 5% in that of the Federation and 2.4% in the Republika Srpska parliament. At regional level, women's percentage averaged only 6.3% in the Federation's cantons (OSCE 1998). No woman was elected mayor of a municipality (UNDP 1998:91). It was, as Martha Walsh puts it, a 'massive retrenchment of women from public life', and it revealed how little women's participation in the former system, such as it was, had reflected a genuine respect for women in the political arena (Walsh 1999:18).

At the 1998 elections a change was brought about through the activism of the OSCE, the League of Women Voters and some female politicians who organized a campaign, funded by USAID: *There Are More Of Us: Let's Vote*. This message was carried in posters and leaflets, roundtables and discussions to villages and towns throughout the country. The campaign educated women about the electoral system and encouraged them to register and to use their vote in women's interest. It succeeded in getting new rules adopted by the provisional election committee, requiring 30% of the first ten candidates on the lists of political parties to be women (Walsh 1999:18).

As a result, women were returned to 26% of seats in the B-H House of Representatives, 15% in that of the Federation and 22.8% in that of the Republika Srpska (OSCE 1998). But the improvement was more in appearance than reality. Some parties manipulated the rule, putting forward women who could be influenced by senior party members, such as the wives of male members, or young and inexperienced women (International Human Rights Law Group (IHR LG) 1999:182).

Besides, the new electoral rules could not effect the appointment of women to senior executive positions. Even after the 1998 polls had improved women's presence among elected representatives, the B-H Council of Ministers remained entirely male, and women were appointed to only four of the 64 positions controlled by the Council. The Federation Government had not a single woman minister and only one deputy minister. Women were appointed to only 34 of the 200 Federal offices. None of the Federation's cantons had women presidents or principal ministers. In the Republika Srpska none of the 21 ministers were women (IHR LG 1999:183).

Bosnia-Herzegovina's official structures, as endowed by Dayton, are certainly unique in the world, but the political culture that inhabits them has parallels elsewhere - in Northern Ireland, for instance, and Israel/Palestine (Sharoni 1995, Sales 1997, Cockburn 1998). It is characteristic of countries where boundaries are still contested, and national issues unresolved, that the style of politics favours combative, destructive and cliquey ways of behaving in which women feel neither comfortable nor valued. It is also characteristic that their dominant political parties are obsessed with constitutional matters to the exclusion of social policy. The everyday issues of housing, education, health and welfare that matter so much to women are either neglected or treated as footballs in the political game played by nationalist interest groups. Municipal levels of government are often weak, divisive and dominated by national rather than local matters.

Economic transformation: learning the law of the jungle

The third turning being experienced by Bosnians is from a state-led economy to a neo-liberal free market. As we shall see, this too has had different effects on women and men.

Emerging from the Second World War, Yugoslavia was one of those poor societies on the periphery of the capitalist world that needed, as Carl-Ulrik Schierup has argued, 'a forceful centralized authority with economic bargaining power to deal with the predatory great powers, discriminatory international organizations and foreign capital' (Schierup 1999:36). Among the Communist parties of East and Central Europe, Tito's League of Communists took its own way, of course, rejected the Soviet model and broke with Stalin. Yugoslavia developed a unique system involving decentralization, market socialism and self-management. Enterprises were socially owned and were formally run by elected worker councils that selected their own managers.

...the real center of the Titoist system and its concept of self-determination was the idea that individual workers and citizens, in association, would govern their workplaces and local communities (called communes). This system combining local, social and worker self-government was the Yugoslav contribution to socialist experience... (Woodward 1995:41).

Economic and political governance were thus closely related. It was a system that prioritised and rewarded collective social relations.

It replaced private property and markets for capital and labor with the idea of shared, equal property rights for all employed persons and equal participation in managing that property. The power of bureaucracies and managers would be checked by the constitutional obligation to consult with elected representatives of workers and citizens. In practice, it was a system of checks and balances... (Woodward 1995:41).

But the system had its flaws - and its enemies. In the 1980s both became apparent. Modernization had been fetishized and forced. Production was heavily bureaucratized and inefficient. During the 1970s the government had borrowed vast amounts of Western capital, to fund growth through exports. When recession hit the West, debts were called in. Politically, Yugoslavia was losing its strategic importance to the Western powers. While the Cold War pitted the US and its allies against the Soviet bloc, Yugoslavia's middle-of-the road economic choices and politically neutral status had suited them well. But from 1985, as political change in the Soviet Union began to reduce its apparent threat to the West, the US government and the international financial institutions felt free to push for a full restoration of capitalism. The Yugoslav government was now obliged to accept an International Monetary Fund (IMF) plan

that shifted the burden of the crisis onto the Yugoslav working class. Simultaneously, strong social groups emerged within the Yugoslav League of Communists, allied to Western business, banking and state interests and began the push towards neoliberalism.... (Gowan 1999:85).

The US and Western banks insisted on structural adjustments designed to reduce the role of the state and guarantee a regime in the country that would be open for Western multinationals. In the unemployment and social turmoil that resulted from this 'shock therapy', power shifted from the federal government to the republics, whose leaders increasingly manipulated nationalist feeling. Western governments had little interest in assisting the forces trying to hold Yugoslavia together. Its disintegration would assure the vulnerability of the region to international capital. And, as it turned out, the fragmentation of the Yugoslav National Army and the wars that followed would enable the projection of NATO power eastwards (Gowan 1999).

Certainly, the project of economic liberalization was intensified post-war. The Constitution drafted for B-H by the Dayton powers defined democracy in neo-liberal terms. Its preamble speaks of the promotion of 'the general welfare and economic growth through the protection of private property and promotion of a market economy', and Article 1 Section 4 includes the clause 'B-H and the Entities shall not impede full freedom of movement of persons, goods, services and capital throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina'. A conference of international donors in April 1996 committed funding to a Priority Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Programme for the country on condition of massive macro-economic reforms and a framework of laws enabling foreign business participation, and the liberalization of external trade. National and regional Privatization Agencies were set up to oversee the sale by tender or public auction of state-owned property and business assets, including 1748 enterprises. In this way B-H would, in the words of the Government of the Federation of B-H, be 'integrated with the rest of Europe with a modern market economy'. (4) These changes in the economic system have not gone unresisted. Despite the drastically weakened condition of organized labour, protests, strikes and other forms of resistance have occurred.

Before the war, the republic of B-H, although in income it ranked low among the Yugoslav republics, had a highly educated labour force and a sizeable productive capacity. About half of output and employment had been generated by large-scale heavy industry including energy, mining and metallurgy. More than half its exports were sold to Western markets. But by the war's end, this economy was almost at a standstill. GDP had collapsed to 20% of its pre-war level (Commission of the European Union (EU) and World Bank 1999:v). Direct and indirect losses totalled an estimated \$100 billion, and production capacity had been reduced by approximately \$20 billion (UNDP 1998:19). Farm production had fallen to one-third of the population's needs. Unemployment was around 90% (World Bank 1999:22,24).

The result was a population plunged into poverty. In 1998 UNDP reported that 58% of the population of the Federation and 64% of that of the RS were living below the poverty line. Sixty percent of people in B-H thus had 'an average of 0.60 KM daily, hardly enough to buy bread'. They were surviving only by meagre handouts of international humanitarian aid and the support of relatives abroad. As always, pensioners were hardest hit, not least because their small pensions were two months or more in arrears. But the statistics of poverty also included a new kind of poor. Three hundred thousand family members were dependent on the minimal retainers paid to workers on 'waiting time' for non-productive enterprises. And 25% of those classified as poor were actually people in work whose earnings were insufficient to feed themselves and a family. Only those employed in financial institutions and public administration (or on the pay-roll of international

organizations) were able to cover the estimated cost of the 'consumer basket' from their salaries (UNDP 1998: 43-5).

By the time of our study in late 1999, unemployment had fallen to 35%, but earning a living still remained the primary concern of most Bosnians (EU and World Bank 1999:15). Domestic industry was operating at very low capacity, impeded by lack of investment, loss of management skills and collapse of foreign markets. To generate a government budget for social expenditure, taxes had been set very high in both Entities. Payroll taxes and charges on employers amounted to an 80% surcharge on salaries. This had driven most employers to unofficial practices (UNDP 1998:32-34). Characteristically, life in this grey economy meant undeclared jobs for low wages, and of course no possibilities of workplace organization and representation. It also meant the insecurities of undeclared freelance trading, 'wheeling and dealing' to buy and sell whatever commodity or service appeared likely from moment to moment to return a profit. In the shadows was also an extensive black economy, where a powerful *mafia* fought for control of markets. Depressed by these new economic conditions, large numbers - perhaps even a majority - of young people aspired only to emigrate from B-H as soon as possible. This drain of potentially educated and skilled labour will further damage the economy in the long run.

Women's place in a turbulent economy

As in other countries where Marxist ideology has been influential, in Tito's Yugoslavia women's emancipation was sought primarily through their engagement in paid employment. Many women did work, benefited from reasonable maternity benefits and nursery provision, and felt themselves to have less to complain of in their circumstances than women in Western European countries.

Compared with other Communist-led countries, however, Yugoslav women's participation in paid employment was rather low. Many worked at home, in informal economic activity, many on family farms. In 1991, one-sixth of women in B-H had been employed. Women had been 36% of employees, where they had been 25% twenty years before (UNDP 1998:91). Work had also always been somewhat gender-typed, with women and men each in their characteristic activities. Just before the war, women were 73.9% of all health staff, 73.7% of those in banking and finance, 54.1% of administration personnel and 85.3% of those employed in education and culture (UNDP 1998:91). Wages were lower in female sectors and women were significantly under-represented in executive positions and on managing boards (IHRLG 1999:155). Women had been disproportionately affected by the rising unemployment of the 1980s (Morokvasic 1986).

This unequal status pre-war was nothing, however, to the degree of disadvantage to which women descended in the war and post-war period. A survey in 1998 of 2100 women between the ages of 18 and 55 showed at least 62% of women in the RS and 71% of women in the Federation to be unemployed. Of the few employed women, nearly two-thirds were in state or socially-owned enterprises. Women were believed to have been disproportionately affected by privatization. Many were on 'waiting lists' for down-sized or defunct companies awaiting privatization (Prism Research 1998, cited in IHRLG 1999:156). Women, both employed and waiting-for-employment, were now in a labour market where priority could legally be given to ex-soldiers and where there was direct discrimination against minorities and displaced people. Old protective laws were no longer being implemented and new

draft legislation concerning pensions, maternity benefit and other provisions threatened a loss of rights that had been taken for granted in the former Yugoslavia.

Of the unemployed women, many were scrambling for a livelihood as small-scale traders in the undeclared private market economy, vulnerable to government surveillance. In general, the culture of entrepreneurialism was favouring men. Women were having difficulty obtaining credit from banks to enable them to start businesses (IHRLG 1999:159) It was men on the whole who were registering new companies. And certainly men were the principal profiteers of the black market. One compensation in the post-war world, for those educated women with language skills who could take advantage of it, was well-paid employment in the offices of international agencies and humanitarian organizations.

One in five households in B-H today are headed by a female (EU and World Bank 1998:49). Women are having difficulty obtaining child support payments from fathers. And men control marital assets, causing women and children to suffer in divorce (IHRLG 1999:162). But, overall, the war may have increased the economic dependence of those women who have remained living with men. In 1998, 50% of women in the Federation and 30% of women in the RS were not contributing at all to the household income (Prism Research 1998, cited in IHRLG 1999:161).

Before the war almost the entire population had been socially secure through an extensive system of pensions and invalid insurance, child protection, social protection of the most vulnerable groups of the population and the right to free education. Under the system of self-government a large part of the responsibility for this social security had been transferred to companies. With the collapse of state infrastructure and the closure of enterprises, women have been deprived of any social safety net. One in six have no social health insurance at all, and for women over fifty years of age the figure is one in four (IHRLG 1999:190). Even the World Bank recognizes that in the long run this absence of minimum social protection could become a cause not only of deprivation but eventually of social unrest (EU and World Bank 1999:27).

Civil society: new forms of collective action

Bosnian women have so far gained little from the economic and political turning. They may have gained more from another process of change through which they have found themselves living: the reshaping of the sphere of free association. Women, possibly more than men, have seized at the increased potential, post-war and post-Communism, for social and political action by ordinary people within a public space external to the state and the political structures. This is the sphere of what, before the war, were known as civil or citizens' associations. Today people speak of the 'third sector', the sphere of non-governmental, non-profit organizations or 'NGOs'. (5)

A substantial report on the 'local NGO sector' in B-H suggests that 'civil organizations' were first seen in Bosnia more than a hundred years ago. 'They were concerned with developing literacy amongst their members, awakening and spreading national awareness, cultural and other forms of development.' Significant among them, the report suggests, were those concerned with promoting

national identity and exclusiveness through the founding of schools and cultural institutions (Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues (IBHI) 1998:25).

The Yugoslav republican constitutions of the Tito period guaranteed freedom of association in what were called 'social-political organizations'. Such associations were active in many fields of social life, typically concerned with particular groups such as children, youth and people with disabilities, and with particular activities such as sports, culture and leisure. They differed in two respects from the comparable sphere in Western European countries. First, voluntary work is the staple activity of many citizens associations in Western countries. But in Yugoslavia, while voluntary work and voluntary giving was not unknown, it was little emphasized in a state that prided itself on good public provision for all its citizens. Secondly, 'social-political' was something of a misnomer for these civil organizations of the period 1945-1990 because, unlike some campaigning and community groups in Western countries, they did not activate political opinion of any kind that would be incompatible with the ideology of the League of Communists. In particular, until July 1990 Yugoslav law contained a prohibition against association based on national and religious affiliation.

There has however been a qualitative transformation in practices of association in B-H since 1990. In the first place, the war called from ordinary people an unprecedented effort of mutual support. 'The 1992-95 war in Bosnia-Herzegovina initially made everyone a potential volunteer... For instance, the Associations of Taxi Drivers in Sarajevo made a commitment to stopping at every incident of shelling and shooting, driving the injured to the nearest hospital' (IBHI 1999a:4). Groups of volunteers came together for emergency provision of food, clothing and shelter and to respond to trauma with psychological and social care. Some of the more substantial NGOs became implementing partners of UNHCR, the key agency for humanitarian relief (Walsh 1999:24). The majority of beneficiaries and of service providers at this time were women, since the majority of able-bodied men were in the army.

In the aftermath of war, international agencies and NGOs quickly recognized the need to harness the spontaneous local NGO sector for reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country. Some organizations, particularly the ones that had come into existence in response to war circumstances, now underwent rapid development, assisted by international humanitarian organizations wanting to build local capacity for self-help. At the same time, other older types of NGO have declined so that, contrary to the popular view, the overall number of civil associations is probably smaller today than it was in 1990. In the city of Tuzla, for instance, there were 800 organizations registered before the war, against 44 today (IBHI 1998:26).

There is in fact some confusion over the current number of NGOs country-wide. IBHI estimates 1500, excluding many local groups that have registered only at cantonal level (IBHI 1998). The April 1999 edition of the Directory published by the International Council for Voluntary Action (ICVA) lists 136 international, as against 284 Bosnian, NGOs (ICVA 1999a). Forty six percent of the latter are in the Republika Srpska, 54% in the Federation. Of those in the RS, about half give office addresses in Banja Luka or its suburbs. Those in the Federation are more widely distributed, with about a third located in Sarajevo, the remainder in smaller towns.

Bosnian NGOs are seen by the international institutions supervising the civil implementation of the Dayton Agreement as a healthy manifestation of what they term 'civil society'. As in all countries of East Central Europe, they value the NGO sector, along with a multi-party political system and a privatized economy, as sweeping into the dustbin of history the 'controlling mentality' of the Communist state. A report by the IBHI for UNDP stresses that if economic development and good governance are one side of the coin of reconstruction after war, the other is the development of civil society. It speaks of the necessity of social reconstruction

from the grass roots up and the necessity for forming and nurturing non-State structures, non-governmental organizations and community based associations. Not only the leaders but also common men and women must change their thought processes and work habits in order to meet the socio-economic challenges facing them (UNDP 1998:20).

The report complains that Bosnian intellectuals 'do not fully understand' the notion of civil society while the Bosnian state is suspicious of the third sector, perceiving it as anti-government, a kind of unelected opposition. Consequently the 'fundamental pre-requisites necessary for the existence of a sustainable civil society are, by and large, absent in B-H.'

There is no official policy in B-H for building a civil society nor is it accepted by the ruling structures as a national development aim. Civil society, if it is mentioned at all, is identified with democracy and the rule of law. There is little or no debate on civil society in intellectual circles in B-H and research on this issue is only at the initial stages (UNDP 1998:27).

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe is the agency mandated under the Dayton Agreement for implementing the transition to democracy in B-H. Its brief includes promoting democratic values, monitoring and furthering the development of human rights, organizing and supervising elections, and implementing arms control and security building measures (OSCE 1999). As such, OSCE was also designated 'nanny' to the infant civil society. It therefore has a number of programmes for strengthening the sphere of free association. They include support of partner organizations 'to serve as the basis of civil society', confidence and community building in neglected areas, community facilitation training and fieldwork, training for local NGOs in advocacy and media relations, and (as we have already seen) the promotion of women's involvement in politics.

International financial support has assisted not only individual NGOs but also the development of a structure of support for the sector as a whole. The Dutch government, for instance, has supported the Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues (IBHI), whose reports have been cited above. Also receiving international funding have been the Centre for Information and Support for NGOs, in Sarajevo; the Centre for Civil Initiatives, with branches in Banja Luka, Mostar and Tuzla; and the Citizens Initiative in Banja Luka. The Geneva-based International Council of Voluntary Agencies, whose Directory we have cited above, is active in B-H, with the goal of 'establishing a strong, independent and viable "third sector"' (ICVA 1999a:1). It is an independent body aiming to provide a global forum where non-governmental and non-profit organizations may exchange experiences and develop accountability and professionalism. The Council carries out training, and services an NGO Council in Sarajevo, and national NGO Forums in both Entities. In Mostar they service an

inter-agency monthly meeting that brings together national and international NGOs on matters of common concern (ICVA 1999b).

The institutions concerned with developing Bosnia's third sector are critical of the present legal framework governing local NGOs. While Laws on Citizens' Associations were passed in 1990 and 1992 in the Republika Srpska and in 1995 in the Federation, they largely inherited their provisions from the pre-war system, in which associations lacked full independence from the state and the ruling party. 'The Law reflects the legislator's wish to liberalise social and political space while still retaining the old tenets of political and social control' (IBHI 1999b:3). The registering authority has become the courts, in place of the Ministry of Police or Interior, and this is an improvement. But registration is still rigidly required before an association has 'legal' identity, and the registration process continues to be a cumbersome process, requiring thirty citizens to sign up as founding members of the association and give formal details of the statute and intended programme. While structures are thus laid down with some rigidity, less attention is given to process. 'The provisions that should provide associations with openness and transparency towards society are the weakest components of the law' (IBHI 1999b:4).

At the time of our research in 1999 many of those most concerned with NGO development were campaigning for the law to be rewritten. IBHI for instance want to see a framework that would clearly exclude political parties, religious communities, trade unions and lawyer associations. It should be simpler, less rigid and more geared towards the wellbeing and sound operation of the organization. It should for instance encourage internal democracy, addressing issues such as the rights and responsibilities of members and transparency of procedure (IBHI 1998).

NGOs: an opportunity recognized by women

What, then, are Bosnian NGOs doing today? It is almost impossible to categorize them, since many have more than one target group and often an array of activities and concerns. The ICVA Directory (ICVA 1999a) gives a brief description of the mission statement of each of the 284 organizations listed. An analysis reveals the following.

First, a considerable number - perhaps half of the total - are associations that could well have been found in the former Yugoslavia, and some may indeed be survivors from those times. They have target groups such as 'children', 'the family', 'youth/students', 'the elderly' and various groups with disabilities such as the deaf and blind. The activities of these groups are typically humanitarian, educational or cultural. Youth, for instance, are sometimes associated with sport, theatre or arts. Their humanitarian interests are sometimes dressed in a contemporary formulation, 'psycho-social' care. They have often taken on an additional dimension in responding to the distress caused by war. Otherwise they appear little altered. There is another small cluster of associations, perhaps also of recent origin, that seem to reflect new concerns, but apparently without being any more political than those of the pre-war period. They include, for instance, associations concerned with new technologies, consumer interests, HIV/AIDS, animal welfare and the environment.

The second major grouping, again possibly half the total, do appear to be products of the shift from war to post-war. In some this shows up in their beneficiary groups,

that include victims, soldiers and veterans, returners and refugees in addition to the pre-war target groups noted above. It is also evident in their activities, which imply a concern with reconciliation and cross-national dialogue; democratization, citizenship and the expansion of civil society; or legal services directed towards 'rights'. Many organizations concerned with these target groups and these activities are however *also* doing humanitarian, psycho-social and educational work. Another new focus for some of them, reflecting the shift to a private market in post-war conditions, is economic independence through skills training and micro-credit schemes.

A third trend that is visible from ICVA's listing is groups that take advantage of the end of the ruling against associations that promote national or religious sectional interests. At least eight associations do expressly address such interests. Examples are a Serb Intellectual Forum in the town of Zvornik, a Croat-Catholic Humanitarian Association in Gracanica, and the Muslim Academic Club in Sarajevo. But it is certain that many more of the listed associations, though they do not say so explicitly for fear of alienating funders, are in fact single-identity projects. And to the associations representing the three major Bosnian national groups can be added a handful of groups representing minorities - particularly the Roma.

Women have a significant presence in this contemporary NGO world. First, they play leading roles in many of these kinds of association. About half of all those that name their 'head of office' publish a name that appears to be female. 'Women' are besides a beneficiary group of a number of the associations that, organizationally, clearly involve both men and women. More important from the point of view of this study are those organizations that, as well as being led by a woman and as well as including work on women's issues, also title themselves women's organizations. Such women's associations represent 16% of the 284 in the ICVA Directory.

We should not be surprised that the organizations in this 'women's' list reveal all the variety that is manifest among *non*-gender-specific NGOs. That is to say, some, but not all, respond to the post-war situation, as in a concern with trauma, with refugees and returners. Some are purely humanitarian, others are advocacy and campaigning groups. Some are explicitly cross-national and integrative, addressing issues of democratization and dialogue. Others are in practice single identity groups with conservative attitudes towards the patriarchal family. Some of them are 'women's organizations' or deal with 'women's issues' in a way that would have been perfectly acceptable in the former Yugoslavia. Others on the contrary reflect the growth of a feminist politics and a women's movement in the region and worldwide.

Martha Walsh has usefully warned that it is unproductive to try to categorize the gender politics of women's NGOs too precisely. She notes that women's groups are sometimes concerned with 'general' issues, citing for instance Zena Zenama, in Sarajevo, which among other things works with male conscientious objectors and deserters from the armed forces (Walsh 1999:24). In our analysis we take it for granted that women may work, from a feminist or a gender perspective, on *the entire range* of economic, social and political issues, without for that reason being any the less a 'women's organization'. Indeed, the risk-taking work of Zena Zenama with men who refused to participate in nationalist aggression is specially valuable from a woman's point of view for its direct challenge to patriarchal notions of manhood.

Many of these women's organizations have emerged in the 1990s, some of them starting as humanitarian and psycho-social projects in the crisis of war and developing their range of interests in response to post-war needs. Their growth has been heavily dependent on finance and support from outside the country. Important among donors have been intergovernmental agencies, notably UNHCR and the European Union. Funds have also been forthcoming from individual foreign governments, among which the USA, through USAID, has been an important source. And finally many large international NGOs have been active in B-H, including the International Rescue Committee, CARE, Caritas, IOCC, Oxfam, Red Cross and Red Crescent.

These funders have varied greatly in their sensitivity and effectiveness. Donors have been heavily criticized for using Bosnian NGOs for their own purposes. In the frantic search for executing agencies they have burdened to breaking point some rather inexperienced and fragile Bosnian NGOs. They have neglected to support them in building up capacity, and have required them to operate with exceedingly short time horizons. The internationals have proclaimed an interest in building a thriving Bosnian civil society, but when they no longer need them for cheap service delivery, local NGOs have been unceremoniously 'dumped' (Smillie 1996:iv).

Women's organizations however have also had their own gender-specific sources. They were boosted by a US donation of \$5 million in September 1996 to create the Bosnian Women's Initiative. The objective of the Initiative was to promote activities which 'empower Bosnian women', especially returned refugees and displaced women, enabling them to rebuild their lives and contribute to the long-term reconstruction and democratization of the communities and the country. Two important themes were cross-national co-operation and economic independence for women (UNHCR 1997). But BWI too has been criticized. Martha Walsh, in her report for USAID, wrote of the 'chaos' as it tried to establish an operational strategy and selection criteria. It caused, she said, fierce competition between women's organizations and resulted in the funding of weak, ill-conceived projects (Walsh 1999:41). By contrast, some of the smaller woman-focused international NGOs were thoughtful about the real needs of an inexperienced local sector, attempted to defuse competition by networking and to develop capacity through training. The US Delphi International/Star project and the Swedish Kvinna til Kvinna are among those cited appreciatively by Bosnian women's NGOs.

Women quickly learned how to tap into every potential source of funding. The amounts of money channelled towards the support of women's self-organization have been very small in comparison, first, with the huge sums dispensed overall on reconstruction in B-H and, second, with what has been donated to the NGO sector in general. But the many, hard won, discrete grants have had a disproportionate effect. Women have quickly learned how to write project proposals, apply for and obtain support. They have learned how to work together and achieve at least some of their goals. Ian Smillie is a tough critic of NGO practices. He finds the totality of NGOs in B-H 'far from being a community with coherence or any particular sense of solidarity and common purpose'. But it is noteworthy - and encouraging - that he sees fit to make an exception to this harsh judgment in the case of 'those organizations involved with women and human rights' (Smillie 1996:2).

Women's prospects: patriarchy entrenched?

We have already noted that some women, sometimes, emerge from the horror of war having gained unexpected strengths and skills. Other researchers, in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, have noted this paradox too (Mayer 1994, Turshen and Twagiramariya 1998 and Clark and Moser forthcoming). By militarizing men, war confirms and deepens traditional gender differences. But simultaneously the crisis of war breaks the settled pattern of everyday life, and in doing so offers women new chances.

In the wake of war women often ask: what happens next? When society settles down again, will the gender relations forged in war remain, will the old patriarchal power relations return or can we seize the moment to create something better? Will men give up some of their power and privilege when they put away their guns? Will women see themselves in a new light - and will men regard women with greater respect? Will women find a way of building on, rather than giving up on, their proven powers of decision, leadership and organization? Will men support them, if they do, and in turn find a closer and more caring relationship to domesticity and children? Will women be accorded more respect?

To women in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it has to be said, these seem naive hopes. Most features of life in 1999 do not suggest a return to, let alone an improvement on, 'socialist patriarchy'. Everything points to the arrival of a yet more virulent kind of patriarchy than most of them had yet imagined. (6)

Women in the former Yugoslavia had considerable formal rights purporting to assure sex equality. And in certain fields the equality was delivered. For example, women and men in similar jobs were paid the same wages. But, as women in many other countries of both West and Eastern Europe have found, laws against inequality and discrimination do not guarantee equal outcomes. Women were held back by their continued responsibility for the domestic burden, so that they were less frequently found in senior posts. That quotas continued to be necessary to assure women even a third of seats in elected assemblies was evidence of a continuing lack of respect for women as political actors. Women in rural areas were left behind when urban women made gains (Korac 1991). They accounted for the 17% illiteracy of females as late as 1981 - four times the rate for males (Djuric 1995). And most significantly, the socialist revolution, as Mirjana Morokvasic puts it, failed to 'cross the threshold of the family' (Morokvasic 1986:127).

Nonetheless many women now look back nostalgically to those pre-war days when the state and the Party (male dominated though they may have been) stood for modernity in gender relations, as in other matters. The war was a catastrophic rejection of the values of modernity and equality, a twisted travesty of the post-modern pursuit of difference. As ethnicized sex became a weapon in the aggression, women were reduced to symbolic property, marked for appropriation, defilement or destruction. There was not much worse that women could experience in the way of male domination - so the ascent into ceasefire and peace had a certain hopefulness about it.

The formulation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, adopted in Paris on December 14 1995, could have been a moment when the blatantly gendered nature of the war that it brought to an end was recognized and addressed, just as its ethnic nature was recognized and addressed. But this did not happen.

A useful analysis of the gender significance of the Dayton Accords has been made by the Swedish women's NGO, Kvinna till Kvinna (2000). The authors point out that no women from the region were involved in the delegations at Dayton or Paris. On the day of the signing a number of international NGOs addressed a letter to Madeleine Albright, US Ambassador to the UN, to call attention to the lack of sensitivity to women's interests in the Accords, but without result. 'Women lived in the society of concern for the peace negotiations, still they were excluded from the peace process' (Kvinna till Kvinna 2000:20).

The Dayton Agreement confirmed what was already a fact at the founding of the state in 1992: Bosnia-Herzegovina is bound by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, the 'Women's Convention') (7). This commits the Government to a policy, including the passing of appropriate legislation, to eliminate 'any discrimination, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field' (UNICEF 1999:18). The Kvinna til Kvinna report analyses how far Dayton, with its Constitution and its Annexes, honours or fails to honour this commitment. It also asks: how well does it respond to the Platform for Action adopted a couple of months before Dayton at the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The answer is: badly. One of the Platform's strategic objectives, after all, had been specifically increasing the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels, and integrating a gender perspective in the resolution of armed conflicts.

The authors of the report conclude that Dayton performs dismally against these measures. 'The gender dimension of the conflict.. and the differential impact the conflict has on women and men was not a political priority and therefore not a part of the political analysis or of the final peace settlement. These are serious missed opportunities...' (2000:26). Human rights are central to the Accords, but women's rights are not detailed. Gender is mentioned here and there, but it is gender neutrality that prevails, not positive action on inequality, oppression and abuse of women. Because gender was not taken into account in the drafting, it followed that it was absent too in the implementation. 'Mainstreaming a gender perspective could have affected the Dayton Accords in countless places...the shortcomings on property issues, women's participation in decision-making bodies, labour discrimination and treatment of refugees would not have been as alarming as they are today' (2000:25, 26).

When the institutions of the 'international community' flooded into Bosnia to administer the country after Dayton they did nothing to supply the missing gender awareness. For more than four years there was inaction on the gender front, until in April 1999 individual women in senior positions in the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe contrived to establish a Gender Co-ordinating Group. This involved each international institution, including OHR, UNMIB-H, IOM, UNDP, UNHCR and some of the larger international NGOs, appointing a 'gender representative'. The group would meet monthly to co-ordinate strategies for inter-agency cooperation in mainstreaming gender throughout their structures. In its brief was information exchange and liaison with Bosnian women's NGOs. Almost simultaneously a first gender initiative was taken by the Bosnian Government. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of B-H, in partnership with the Foreign Ministry of the

Republic of Finland (2000), launched a governmental pilot project called 'Gender Equity and Equality'.

Meantime, however, in Bosnian society post-war gender relations are proving very adverse for women. Bosnia remains deeply militarized, with over 20,000 international peace-keeping troops, reduced but still significant national army units on the territory of both Republika Srpska and the Federation, numerous armed Bosnian police and an International Police Training Force. Nor is that the end of it. As Cynthia Enloe reminds us, militarization is never simply about numbers of soldiers. 'It is a far more subtle process. And it sprawls over far more of the gendered social landscape than merely those peaks clearly painted a telltale khaki... militarization creeps into ordinary daily routines' (Enloe 2000: 2,3). Militarized societies reflect masculine cultures and values, and women are accorded little respect in them.

Then again, there is a semi-visible and deeply threatening criminality in Bosnian society today and this too involves a misogynist masculine culture. 'Markets of violence' (Elwert 2000), that include gun-running and smuggling, proliferate in war. They also help to generate war, since for those who profit by violence, the more of it the better. After Dayton, war criminals and war profiteers (often the same people) extended their illegal operations into new products and new markets, thriving simultaneously on the scramble to 'privatize', a generalized scarcity and the discrepancy in purchasing power between Entities, and between internationals and locals. Sex was rapidly commodified, and organized prostitution became a source of profit for a new army of pimps. Trafficking in women from other countries, holding them in sexual servitude in bars and brothels, is making some men rich. The most lucrative source of clients is the international community, especially the international military and police, some of whom have joined in the dealing and the profits (Joint Trafficking Project 2000).

Finally, in both halves of B-H nationalist and religious discourses are prevalent. Where Yugoslav official discourse emphasized equality, these new voices emphasize the difference between the sexes, celebrate traditional relationships between women and men, and stress the importance of women's domestic and familial role.

Perhaps the best measure of patriarchalism in a society is the incidence of male violence against women. Physical abuse of women was under-reported, but prevalent, in the former Yugoslavia (Medica Women's Association 1999). Since then, the experience of armed conflict has inured many men to violence and reduced inhibitions against aggression. Interpersonal violence has become more dangerous due to the post-war prevalence of weapons (Boric and Desnica 1996, Mladjenovic and Matijasevic 1996). Besides, the retrogressive discourses of nationalism and religion have undermined respect for women's autonomy and right to control of their own bodies. In stressing women's domestic identity they undermine the legitimacy of women's freedom of movement in public spaces.

As a consequence, male violence against women is endemic in B-H. A survey of a random sample of 540 women revealed that 20% had been threatened with violence, 23% had experienced battering and 24% had been repeatedly battered (Medica Women's Association 1999). Domestic violence not defined or acknowledged in any Bosnian law, regulation or policy statement. Nor has the government adequately acknowledged and addressed the enormity of needs created by the violence of the war (IHRG 1999:170). Violence against women is consequently not

recognized as a public or general health issue. It is not a major concern of International Police Training Force (IPTF), which trains the police. The government centres for social work and for primary health care surveyed by Oxfam varied greatly in their responses, but tended not to see rape and domestic violence as an issue of gender politics. 'Hardly ever was domestic violence acknowledged to be a matter of choice or a matter for which individual men should be held responsible' (Oxfam 1999:26).

Given this context, the existence of self-organizing groups of women such as we have studied here seem unlikely, even surprising. They, and the few others that resemble them, are alone in their critique of patriarchy in Bosnia, and in the practical pursuit of women's economic independence, social and political empowerment and freedom from violence. They start with something of a handicap, in that women of B-H participated little in the pre-war Yugoslav women's movement (see Chapter 6). But in this book we will argue that, despite their frailty and inexperience, these little associations have real importance.

The continued dominance of men and masculinist cultures was one of the flaws in the brave Communist experiment in Yugoslavia. It was deeply implicated in the rise and the rhetoric of nationalist movements, in the pursuit of militarism and in the nature of the violence seen in the war. If women's organizing for a transformation of gender relations such as we write about in this book proves ineffectual, if it cannot draw into being a wider women's movement, and if it cannot begin to reverse the rise of masculinism, the chances for democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina are drastically diminished.

CHAPTER 2

A TOWN WITH TWO NAMES Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje

Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje: war and postwar hostilities

The town that, before the war, was unproblematically called 'Gornji Vakuf' sits in a fertile valley in the canton of Middle Bosnia, where acres upon acres of cabbages are cultivated, providing this region with ample supplies of *sauerkraut*. It is the valley of the Vrbas, which here is only a refuse-littered stream but flows north to become the big river of Banja Luka. The town is long and narrow, following the course of the Vrbas between low hills. Parallel to the stream runs the main road, carrying a fair amount of buses and lorries through from Vitez and Bugojno to the Neretva valley. Gornji Vakuf is an old town, but was modernized after the Second World War. As a result it now has only one historical building, an old watch tower on a hill outside the town. Even the principal mosque is of recent construction. This is not a beauty spot and, although it had one smart modern hotel, there was little in the town to attract tourists.

Pre-war, employment in Gornji Vakuf was provided by two mines and six factories and by public service jobs. There were zones of public housing, in the customary multistorey blocks of flats. This state infrastructure, together with the town's prosperity (due not only to local jobs but also to remittances from family members abroad) and the rather substantial nature of its family houses, gave the place a modern feel. But in Gornji Vakuf the 'Yugoslav' identity did not go as deep as in some other places. Beneath it, and despite the fact that the Second World War's worst atrocities had not occurred in this area, a distinct separateness is said to have existed between the Catholic and Muslim parts of the town's population.

In 1991 the census showed Gornji Vakuf to have a population of 25,130 of which 14,086 registered as Muslims and 10,709 as Croats. There were a few Serbs (106) and an equally small handful of 'others' (109). The relative absence of people choosing to identify as 'Yugoslavs' indicates that the area was rather strongly marked by an ethnic (specifically Muslim/Croat) distinction and there were relatively few people of mixed origin or in mixed marriages. Muslims were the majority not only in the town but also in the surrounding villages. The Muslims were not particularly religious and few of them attended the mosque. But rather more Croats here than elsewhere were practising Catholics. Even in these prewar days there was a degree of territorialization in the town, with some Croat housing clustered around the Catholic church, some Muslim housing round the mosque. The blocks of flats had been built by the federal state with a dual intention - housing the workers of the public-ownership factories but simultaneously desegregating the population.

The former Yugoslavia, unlike some Communist countries, did not ban religious practice. But influence came from eschewing religion and being an active member of the League of Communists. More Muslims than Croats had been party members, and Catholics say that the Muslim-dominated municipal authority 'favoured their own' when it came to giving jobs. For the believing Catholics, therefore, it had

meant each one making a choice. And the element of confessional Catholicism may have cost the community something in political terms, so that they felt themselves, even then, to be a 'minority' in the town of Gornji Vakuf. The feeling was exacerbated by the Ottoman origin of the name itself.

Croat/Catholic women we met said the sense of 'separation between us' began to be felt more after Tito's death. More of the local Catholics than Muslims chose to go abroad to Germany and Austria to get a better living. In the late eighties when political parties were legalized, 'the HDZ and the SDA began promising us a better life', and the 1990 elections showed large numbers of people in Gornji Vakuf voting for these competitive nationalist parties. All the same, the people of Gornji Vakuf had a common lifestyle and the place was small enough that 'everyone knew each other'. That actual war should break out between these two populations, living and working side by side, was, women of both communities told us, 'unthinkable', 'unimaginable'.

In the first phase of the war, when Bosnian Serbs under the political leadership of Radovan Karadzic, employing elements of the Yugoslav Federal Army and Serb nationalist paramilitary units, began 'ethnically cleansing' areas in the north and east of B-H, Croats and Muslims were in *de facto* alliance against them. While the Muslims from Bugojno and Gornji Vakuf were defending the area from Serb attack on the side of Donji Vakuf, the Croat forces were defending the area from the direction of Kupres.

But a unified command of local Croats and Muslims was never achieved and in May 1993 even this pragmatic alliance between local Croats and Muslims broke down, and fighting broke out between them. The Croatian government, under Franjo Tudjman, was igniting Croat nationalism in the region, emigrés of nationalist sympathy were pouring in money and arms. There was increasingly open talk of carving out of Herzegovina and Central Bosnia the Bosnian Croat statelet of 'Herceg-Bosna' desired by the nationalists. Violence erupted in and around Gornji Vakuf – and although units from outside were involved in the fighting and destruction (notably Croatian volunteers from Split), so too were many local men on both sides. At one level the war was between families well known to each other.

Exactly how it began, nobody knows for sure. In 1992, some months before the Croat/Muslim war began in earnest, there had been a three hour 'phoney war' when shooting broke out in the town. 'Children came running home and told us there were armed men on the streets.' At this moment both church and mosque (we were told) called for people 'to come out and talk to each other'. People were weeping and embracing on the street. Rabija, a Muslim, [see note (1)] a school teacher, told us how they collected the school children and organized a 'Walk for Peace' right through the town, carrying roses. The children carried placards against war, one of which stated 'we have used the same shops and bakeries all our lives'. They made a video. A group of ten women, Croats and Muslims living on the 'Muslim' side, got together and wrote an appeal to UNICEF on behalf of the town's children. They got no reply. And the politicians closed the schools in mid-term.

In the spring of 1993 the 'war within a war' broke out for real. Even now, people were unprepared and, in retrospect, naive. They thought, 'it'll be over in a couple of weeks'. There is confusion as to how it began. The minority status of Croats in the town predisposed them to feel they were the victim community. This feeling was reinforced by the belief that the first side to put up barricades to divide the town,

turning Croats back at checkpoints, was apparently the Muslims. But in B-H generally it was the Croats who chose to split from the Muslim-Croat alliance and it was Croat nationalists, not Muslims, that had separatist territorial ambitions.

In a year of conflict, 80% of the housing in Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje and its hinterland was damaged, and much of it completely destroyed. All the factories and significant public buildings were targeted. There were large population movements. Thirty Croat villages and three mainly Muslim villages along the valley were taken by opposing forces and their population driven out. The main road and bus route through the town, named, ironically enough, 'Brotherhood and Unity Road', became the frontline between the two forces. In town, the many Muslims and Croats who lived on the 'wrong' side of the road were expelled, or fled (the distinction between the two things is a fine one) to the other side, taking shelter where they could, with friends and family. Many Serbs had already taken flight from this area in 1992, during the Serb shelling, fearful of reprisals. Now many more people fled the area – particularly Croats, who were able to take refuge across the border in Croatia, only an hour's drive away. Muslims had no such safe haven. By the end of the war, while the Muslim population of the town remained more or less the same as it had been before, there were almost no Serbs left, and the population of Croats had fallen from 10,000 to around 4,500.

The war in Gornji Vakuf cost many lives. Few families did not experience a bereavement. Everyone knew separation and feared for the lives of loved ones. Everyone experienced the horror of knowing it was not only some distant enemy but your own neighbours too that were out to kill you. One woman told us that her mother said 'I survived three wars, the First World War, the Second World War and now this one. And this was the worst, because it was a war against civilians.' Thousands of families, caught living on what was now the 'wrong' side, had to abandon their homes.

Mara and Ivan Brzov, Croats, had lived among Muslim neighbours for fifteen years. Now they fled in the clothes they stood up in. 'I couldn't take so much as a packet of cigarettes with me', she said. During and after the war the privation was severe. Families were reduced to living in basements of their own or neighbours' houses. There was hunger. To go out for provisions was necessary but extremely dangerous – 'thousands of grenades and shells fell in our streets' - and in any case supplies were reduced to the bare minimum. There was no electricity, no water supply, few candles. They used bicycles to generate a current to operate the radio. (The few batteries were mainly on the Croat side, brought in from nearby Croatia.)

Fatima told us how they tried to keep up their sense of humour in the direst of circumstances. One day a group of women decided to defy the danger and get together to make a collective cake, with a single egg someone had donated, worth its weight in gold. Running across the sniper-ridden street, the woman dropped the egg. Another day they used a little precious meat to make a collective *burek*. Put out to cool, it had been eaten by a hungry dog. At such disasters, so huge, yet so tiny compared with the death and destruction around them, they hadn't known whether to laugh or cry.

Although for the last part of the war in B-H, Croat and Muslim again fought side by side against Serb nationalist forces, for a year after the Dayton peace agreement was signed in late 1995, the barricades remained in place between what had been rendered solidly Muslim

(now 'Bosniak') and Croat sides of Gornji Vakuf. There were undoubtedly many weapons in the town. And though Dayton nominally unified the military so that Croat and Bosniak troops now wore the same insignia, they still had separate units and separate cadet training. The gulf between the two communities was deepened when the municipal council split in two. The postwar elections returned only Bosniak and Croat councillors to the municipality and the latter, being in a minority and refusing Bosniak dominance, hived off and formed a separate authority. The Croats now called 'their' town Uskoplje, reviving an antique Croat name associated with the agricultural valley of the Vrbas, which has a long history of Catholic culture.

Under the influence of its rival politicians the town became effectively two towns. Not only were there two municipal offices, but all the town's services also split into two. There were two health facilities, two sets of schools. Even when the barricades and check points were removed, few people crossed the invisible line and those who did were quiet about it. The only place where people regularly came together was the Wednesday market which, surprisingly, picked up as before, unchanged. We were taken to visit this busy scene, where prices are lower and the produce, brought in from the surrounding villages, is fresh. The mingling of Bosniak and Croat in the old accustomed way in this weekly market was pointed out to us as a hardly-explainable anomaly. Those who wanted the town re-united often cited it as a precious glimmer of hope for the future.

A women's initiative

In October 1994 the breach between Bosniak and Croat forces nationally had been mended, but deep hostility remained between the two sides in Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje. A group of women, pre-war friends, decided to cross the line of segregation and meet again. They organized a first get-together in a cafe belonging to one of their number, Milka Tiric. They were supported in this initiative by two foreign women, Carol and Ini, working for international NGOs active in the town. Although the cafe was actually on the Croat side of the road (no territory in this town was completely neutral) it was just about feasible for Bosniak women to go there – especially because Milka and her husband (both Croats) were known and trusted for their tolerant and friendly natures.

Rabija, the school teacher, still remembers that day.

Our 'Berlin wall' was still in place. We saw posters up around the town inviting us to a meeting at Milka's cafe at a given time and date. And women did come, fifty or sixty of us. Some women were covered, even they came. This was the first contact since the fighting, for many of us. There was a lot of suspicion. Some men passing by looked at us suspiciously. I remember, one woman called out to them, 'Yes, this is women who say no to war!'

When they first started meeting, it was just for a chat and a coffee at first. Nermina realized 'to heal the psychological consequences of the war we needed to meet and talk'. Why women though? Well,

One mother knows what it is for another mother to worry about a child or to lose a child. We were able to think: what would I feel? So we didn't accuse

each other. So it was us women who somehow started to talk and share our war experiences. We were testing the situation: is it possible for us to sit and share the same space?

Tahira Kiricic, one of the founding group, told us:

We sat and knitted and talked, rebuilding old friendships and making new ones. It was painful, there were a lot of tears. One day my old prewar friend Dragana came, specially to see me, bringing me a present of coffee. I remember how she stood outside the door for a while, hiding the bag under her coat. It was difficult, on both sides, the hurt was still fresh then. We were accused by our own people. But it changed, little by little.

Encouraged by Carol and Ina, their two 'international' supporters, the group decided to formalize themselves. On Dayton Day, October 21 1995, they registered as a citizens' association. They informed the respective municipal authorities, but due to the irregular political situation in the town it was to the cantonal authority, Vitez, they were obliged to go to register the association. Thirty women were identified, the minimum number of founding members required by law to set up a citizens' association and constitute its assembly. The assembly chose Nermina and Milka to be joint presidents. They elected an Advisory Board and an Executive Committee. Women were asked to write on slips of paper their suggestions for a name for the new association. The alternative ideas were written up on the wall and a vote taken. The choice: *Federalna Zena*, Federal Woman.

Federalna Zena

Early on it was recognized that permanent premises had to be found for the new organization, and, like Milka's cafe, they must be on the front line. The United Nations Development Programme, which had an office in the town, helped them to locate and rent a little house with a shopfront situated near the common produce market, right opposite the bombed out hotel and next door to the wreckage of the post office building. These, once the most imposing edifices of the town, were now perilous multi-story deathtraps of leaning concrete.

In the shadow of these dismal monuments to war, *Federalna Zena* began its work and, given the desperate plight in which the destruction had left them, there was little choice over what must be done first. Economic survival had to be the priority: an income for women, and through them for their families. 'We were responding to need.' They obtained a grant of DM 15,000 from UMCOR with which to buy sewing machines. They got donations of knitting wool and fabric. Soon they had seventy members actively making and marketing sewn and knitted goods.

By January 1996 *Federalna Zena* was able to employ two women to work fulltime as co-ordinators, Nermina Jukic and Pavka Zuljevic. As with the joint presidency, so with the executive and advisory board and now also with the paid staff: there was one Croat for every Bosniak, equal representation for the two 'sides'. This, it should be noted, did not reflect the demographic balance of the town, especially since the shifts in population due to the war had tipped Bosniaks into an even greater majority than before. Instead, what the women chose was a principled parity: fifty-fifty. The only divergence was when particular skills were demanded, for instance a specialized trainer for a short course. It was however always a problem to find enough Croats, because so many had moved away in the war.

The organization's activities have expanded and multiplied. In 1999 we found the house a hive of activity, women (and some men) continually coming in and out. Always the kettle is on for coffee, the meeting room always full of women, wreathed in cigarette smoke, exchanging news, solving problems, debating choices. In the separate room of the sewing project, a dozen women stitch and stuff teddy bears and 'teletubbies'. The knitting project continues, mainly now with women working from home, supervised by Tahira, who before the war had worked in a state bookshop. Computer equipment has been acquired and is in continuous use for training local women in word processing and other basic programmes. Once a fortnight lawyers come from Travnik to hold regular 'legal advice clinics' on the premises, helping people sort out problems concerning marriage, alimony, wills or property.

The management process of Federalna Zena involves day to day executive decision-making by the two co-ordinators; monthly meetings of the Executive Committee, and occasional meetings of the Advisory Board. Ultimately, officers and Executive submit their annual report and accounts, and agree their future plans, at an annual general meeting of the Assembly. At least that is the formal intention. In practice things are more haphazard, dictated by the demands of work and need, and the availability of money, woman-power and opportunity. Much hangs on leadership and inspiration coming from three or four key women. Around them, the 'membership' of Federalna Zena has grown to around 140 women, while as many as 650 have been beneficiaries.

Income, mainly from grants but supplemented by revenue from sale of their products, has averaged DM 55,000 per year for the last three years. Donors have included, in addition to UMCOR, Oxfam, UNOV, the British Department for International Development (DfID), the Spanish Movimiento por la Paz (MPDL), American Refugees Committee, Bosnian Women's Initiative, the Swedish Kvinna til Kvinna and the US-based Delphi Star. But the quest for funding is relentless, consuming much of the co-ordinators' time. Securing the rent for the premises is always a priority, for if the women lose this house, in its priceless situation on the front line, their project will not be viable. Funders however are reluctant to give recurrent costs such as rent. As a result, money destined for salaries often has to be diverted to cover core costs, and the supposedly paid workers are often in fact largely volunteering. The women, besides, now notice a falling off in sources of funding. In the world's memory the Bosnian war is receding, replaced by Kosovo, East Timor - other conflict zones, other people deemed more needy. The donors, themselves under pressure to find an exit strategy, are passing the pressure down to their grantees to be 'self-supporting'. A heavy burden, this, for the teddy bears and teletubbies.

Savjetovaliste SB

And now, since early 1999, a second women's organization in the town is in competition for the same funding sources. Pavka Zuljevic, one of the original founders of Federalna Zena, decided to form a new organization and try to reach women of her own Croat community, with the aim of working more directly on reconciliation between this group and local Bosniak women with whom by now she had good contacts. Nada Oric, its president, was also from Federalna Zena. This break occurred, with a degree of ill-feeling, between our first and second visits to Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje.

Pavka and a handful of women around her called their new project 'Savjetovaliste za Prognane, Izbjeglic i Povratovke Sredisnja Bosna' – or 'Counselling for Refugees, Displaced and Returnees of Middle Bosnia'. They work not only in the town but also in the villages of the region. They obtained start-up funding from the Swedish women's charity Kvinna til Kvinna. Their focus is on advice, information and education. They began with a series of seminars and, when we left them, were seeking funding for a programme of training and workshops. They were also mobilizing material help in the form of tools, building materials and furniture, particularly for returnees to the surrounding villages where they have developed, or revived, many connections. (There have as yet been very few returns to the town itself.) A further intention was to set up an advisory board of local business entrepreneurs from the two sides - partly in the hope that the business community might be a future source of funding. SSB's strategy was not only to work with women at individual level but also to build cooperative relationships with organizations in their environment.

Savjetovaliste SB too is now registered as a citizens' association under Bosnian law and has the characteristic structure we saw in Federalna Zena. But it has carved out a distinctive niche for itself. Where Federalna Zena has a hands-on character, with its sewing machines and computers, its vocational training for production, Savjetovaliste SB focuses on social relations as such: reconciliation. The women among whom it works are more 'middle class'. Starting from a small, potentially influential, core group of teachers, municipal employees and business women, and working outwards, all the activity of Savjetovaliste SB is directed towards bridge building and greater tolerance. They describe themselves as working with more 'difficult' women than Federalna Zena, women who had specially devastating war experiences and who hold opposed views. For instance, two Croat members we met said they believed the only protection for Croats, who would otherwise be politically 'swamped' by Bosniaks, was for the authorities, and the town, to remain divided. While some Bosniak women in the social stratum with which Savjetovaliste SB aims to work might agree that building such a fence would make better neighbours, they tend, like the Bosniak community as a whole, to be more integrationist. It is a bitter division across which Savjetovaliste SB aims to create co-operation.

The difficulties of cross-ethnic working are manifested in Savjetovaliste SB itself. Pavka and the other two part-time paid employees, her daughter Katarina and an old friend, Kata, are all three Croats. This Croat identity of the project is not without value – these are important examples of non-nationalist, un-prejudiced and integrative women from this entrenched community that can use their position of trust within it to build bridges to the 'other side'. But in late 1999 they were still finding it difficult, despite adverts on the local radio and leafletting around the town, to achieve the fully mixed membership they aimed for. While they had succeeded in involving Bosniak women in specific activities it was proving harder to get them involved in the organization itself. When we met them in 1999 Savjetovaliste SB had so far felt able to run activities only for the two sides separately. In this vein, too, they had arranged for us to interview four Croat women individually, and to meet a group of four Bosniak women separately. Attempts to bring the two 'sides' together would be a second stage, to be approached cautiously.

Savjetovaliste SB's future plans include a cross-ethnic project for young women of eighteen to twenty-five years of age, trying to unify and mobilize a generation that

has grown up without the habit of living in a mixed community, having little contact with 'the other side'. They socialize only in their own cafes, clubs and street corners. 'They are gradually forgetting each other,' Nermina had said, and Mara had told us:

Our children's friendships were severed. My son was seventeen when the war started. We used to live in what is now the Bosniak part of town. Now he socializes only on the Croat side where we live at present. He's twenty-five already, and he doesn't have many friends. A lot of families took their children out of town, and his friends now are in Europe or Australia.

Pavka explained the importance she set on engaging more young women, like her own daughter Katarina, in the work of Savjetovaliste SB.

The women of our project are typically over thirty-five, some over fifty. The young ones aren't politically engaged. Life is specially hard for the young. We older ones have our homes, our families. They have nothing but the street and the cafes. They are vulnerable to cigarettes, drugs, alcohol.

Bored and frustrated, too many young people were being killed in drink-drive accidents. Kata said, 'They aren't interested in the kinds of things we do. They are disillusioned with this little town. They want the bright lights of a city.' Meanwhile, Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje does not even have a cinema. When Pavka and Nermina had still been together in Federalna Zena they had organized a fashion show for the projects' knitted and tailored clothes. Girls from both sides had been the mannequins. The glossy photos of those extravagant poses were a lighthearted reminder of what young people can find in common when national identity is not allowed to stand between them.

But as the women of Savjetovaliste SB made clear to us, repairing postwar social relations, here as elsewhere, does not only mean cross-ethnic work. It means healing the rifts that have opened between those who stayed in the town throughout the war, those who came here as displaced persons, and those who took refuge elsewhere; between those who were driven out and are now returning (slowly, painfully, one household at a time) to live among those who expelled them. It means resolving problems over housing – for while many people are desperate to move back to their former housing, many cannot do so and are therefore equally desperate to stay put, resisting the demands of those who want their own property back. There are long and snarled 'chains' involved in rehousing, a source of frustration, bitterness and anger.

The task Federalna Zena and Savjetovaliste SB set themselves, to recreate 'neighbourliness' in this town, is a gigantic challenge and they face it almost alone. In early 1996, soon after the Dayton peace agreement, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had set up an office in Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje, in partnership with the Austria-based UNDESA. Three projects resulted from their programme, a Youth Centre, a Centre for Adults and a Civil Initiatives Resource Centre. But when UNDP withdrew the latter two organizations failed to find alternative sources of funding, and became inactive. The Youth Centre, supported by UMCOR, the Methodist NGO, survives as the one truly common space in the town apart from Federalna Zena and Savjetovaliste SB. Project-based, it works with children and young people from age five to eighteen, contradicting the message of difference, separation and irreconcilability the children experience in school. Though there are ten or eleven other registered NGOs in the town, most of them are

barely active. Two, in addition to Federalna Zena and SSB, are women's organizations. But they are active only on one side or the other. 'Women's Future' on the Bosniak side organizes occasional picnics and outings. And there is a group of 'War Widows' on the Croat side.

Economic stress and political antagonisms

The first challenge faced by the people of this town once the war was over had not in fact been restoring social relations – many, especially the bereaved, were too bitter at first to try. It had been finding a livelihood. Indeed some said 'if the economy could just restart we would reconnect with each other automatically'. But many of the inhabitants had worked in one of the mines or in the factories manufacturing furniture and clothing, light engineering and coal products, that were now wrecked and idle, their machinery rusting. In some enterprises a number of the staff were on what ex-Yugoslavs know as 'waiting time'. There was no production, just a little maintenance perhaps. But they held the promise of their old jobs and meanwhile kept some fringe benefits, pension rights and so on. The trouble was, five years after Dayton there was still no sign of these factories re-opening. The Yugoslav state structure that had owned them no longer existed. Committed to rapid privatization, the state was selling off state enterprises. There was suspicion of this intention, though. 'It sounds like robbery.' 'Privatization means someone buys a firm and throws out the workers.' In any case, who was going to be crazy enough to invest in this rubble that passed for real estate, this obsolescent equipment? So ordinary people in the town had not the first idea what was going to happen to these old workplaces of theirs. 'There's a degree of mystery about it', said Pavka's husband, Nenad.

Many of the women we met in FZ and SSB had been employees of the Yugoslav state before the war, some of them in good professional jobs with health insurance and pensions guaranteed. Today the only such jobs were associated with one of the two municipalities – with which these women were not exactly popular. Besides, the old guarantees of 'equal employment rights' for women (indeed worker protection of any kind) had gone out of the window. Now everyone was obliged to fend for herself and himself. There were mixed views on the merits of unmediated capitalism. Pavka said

We got lazy under communism. We worked for eight hours a day, the salary just came. Tito-ism gave us a nice life, but there were too few productive workers, too many administrators, it had no future.

But Nada, who used to work in a state-owned shop and had now opened her own small general store on the Croat side of town, said 'Today I run about more. I work twice as hard. There's a lot of competition'.

Whatever their views people had no choice but to quickly set about learning how to 'do privatization', and how to juggle the three currencies that were in circulation: the Bosnian 'convertible mark', the German Deutschmark to which it was pinned, and the Croatian *kuna*. Men who came back from their respective armies empty handed felt lucky if they could get someone to pay them to do building work repairing war damaged structures, or could lay hands on some commodity to buy and sell. The women opened cafes and boutiques, set up a stall in the weekly market or a kiosk on the street. The black market flourished and what was not

black was more innocently 'grey'. People simply could not afford to declare their income and incur the cost of tax and insurance.

There were of course a few people in the region, mainly men, who had access to big capital. Some had been powerful in the old regime and been able to sequester state funds. Others had accumulated wealth abroad. Others still had unscrupulously profited by the war. They stepped in, once the fighting stopped, and confidently risked investment in local businesses based on imported goods. These companies generated a few cherished jobs. But the entrepreneurs were operating either in 'Gornji Vakuf' or in 'Usokplje', so that most jobs were out of reach of part of the population.

Dual institutions

Meanwhile, the local politicians misdirected their energies to maintaining this 'inter-entity border line' through the town. The elections supervised by the OSCE had been to a single authority for the town. But the only parties to win votes had been the dominant Bosniak/Muslim party, Izetbegovic's SDA, and their rivals the Croat HDZ. The HDZ had been the ones to force a split, the extremists among them still set on a separate Croatian Herceg-Bosna, the less extreme just feeling (as one woman, a Croat, told us) 'We are the smaller community. We don't want to be swamped by the majority who are Muslims. We want to be assured of our rights.'

In the middle was a silent minority, the supporters of non-nationally based, democratic, opposition parties. A woman we spoke with, a Bosniak, was a local member of the Social Democratic Party, one of the small parties that aspire to break the deadlock between powerful rival nationalist parties. The SDP, she said, had around two hundred activists in the area, and some sympathizers, even on the Croat side. They believed, she said 'we voters can be the basis of change.' But till now most townspeople had continued to vote HDZ and SDA, either through commitment or through fear. And the residents of the surrounding villages were reputed to be yet more conservative and more divisive.

The separation over which the two rival municipal authorities preside is symbolized by the stand-off over the town's name. An arbitration committee recommended a combined name. Both municipal authorities at first accepted this. Then the Usokplje *općina* refused to implement it. Now, neither will step down, for whoever loses the battle for the name will be deemed to have lost the war.

In similar style, the two authorities discourage the return of people across the line to their original homes, and are unwilling to cooperate in the running of the town's services. Take health. Before the war there was a single hospital in the town, serving the population as a whole. Today, health services, and importantly also health insurance, are organized separately. If you are sick, and need specialist advice obtainable only in the other half of town, you will be reluctant to seek it and the specialist will be reluctant to treat you. Bosniaks in need of hospitalization are taken to nearby Bugojno, but Croats trust themselves only to hospitals in Croat centres outside the canton, where the charges, if you come from Middle Bosnia, are higher.

But perhaps the worst rift, and the one with the most damaging long term effects, is that which has occurred in education. Mara was a school teacher before the war, and now divides her time between teaching and Federalna Zena. Rabija, who we

met at Savjetovaliste SB, is also a teacher. Between them they told us the story. Before the war the two women worked in the integrated Yugoslav school system. Now, Mara, a Croat, is teaching (can only teach) in a school run by the Croat authority on the Croat side of town. Rabija is secretary of the new Bosnian state elementary school on the Bosnjak side of the line.

Rabija says 'When the conflict stopped we hoped we could go back to how it had been before. One school for all children.' Before the war both schools had been on what became the Croat side of town. After the war a new school was built on the Bosniak side. Pressed hard by the international institutions, a team of experts with both HDZ and SDA members worked on a plan to reunify the school system. But the HDZ politicians refused to ratify it. The two systems now work quite separately. Though some individual teachers persist in old friendships, it is impossible to speak out publicly against segregation. And the education officials have no contact with each other at all. 'We, the teachers, wanted a common school', said Rabija. 'It was the politicians that prevented it.'

What is worse, perhaps, than the splitting of the school system into two ethno-national parts is the officially sponsored divergence of the content of education, through which a differentiation of cultures is being artificially created and transmitted to the children. Whereas it had been the young in Yugoslavia who were most secular, today many of the young emerge from school already inducted into one system of religious belief or the other. The Croat school is frankly Catholic, with crosses alongside *sahovnica* insignia on the wall. Some of the teachers are nuns. Although the school on the Bosniak side of town is a state school, and not officially Islamic, in the religious studies lesson it is Islam that is taught. Parents who do not want their children to attend must take the step of withdrawing them. School text books differ in the two systems, with different versions of history and culture emphasized. Pavka's husband Nenad was incensed by this. 'It's ridiculous' he said, 'that children are learning the geography and history of Croatia, another state, rather than of Bosnia where they live.'

And the language, once a single language called Serbo-Croat, has also been split. What is taught in the Gornji Vakuf school is called Bosnian, what is taught in the Uskopolje school is called Croatian. Efforts are made to find distinctive words and usages and to stress them. Most of these are not linguistic differences that were current in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but differences imported from the former Yugoslav Republics of Croatia and Serbia. Mara finds all this a disaster. 'Before the war our school had Muslim and Croat directors and teachers. We never noticed who was who,' she says. She can see as each year goes by how divided education is making reunification of the two communities less likely. 'The friendships children make in school are for life. And to arbitrarily make separate languages – that is nothing short of evil.'

Refusing a segregated future

In our interviews we heard a great deal of nostalgia about 'before'. 'Before the war we had no regard to nationality. We scarcely identified who was who,' said a woman who wished to be referred to as 'ST'. 'The town was so nice before the war', said Ljubica, similarly a Croat. 'We lived together and we were happy.' The Second World War had not seen any divisive incidents around here. So as far back as anyone

could remember, it had been, as Fatima told us, 'a town with nice friendships. Everything was provided for a good life. And the nature round here was lovely in a way quite unique to this place.' And Tahira said 'It was a really good life here. We lacked for nothing. We were free to travel wherever we wanted. You could sleep in the road and know you wouldn't be harmed.'

All that was shattered. They have just come through a time when simply crossing the road you were in danger of death, when even children were deliberately shot by snipers. Now you do not know who you can trust. The surrounding woods and fields are made perilous by landmines. There are many traumatized people, men who are still armed, people whose behaviour is warped by alcohol, drugs and just plain rage, bitterness and despair. Poverty, hardship and low morale cause people to look for a scapegoat, someone to blame: the refugees, the returners, the extremists in the villages, 'the ones who took our house', or simply 'them': the Bosniaks, the Croats. As a result, some people could not even bear to see others talking to 'them' as though the war had never happened. Milka described her best friend, a woman who lost her husband in the fighting, who disagrees with what Milka is doing in Federalna Zena. 'I know she is hurt by it. She accuses me, even if she doesn't actually say anything. But I understand her feelings.'

Many townspeople have adapted their public behaviour to conform to 'difference', in just the way the war sought to bring about. Nermina had observed how some people in mixed marriages, people who 'before' had not been religious, were now at pains to attend their own place of worship, one going to the church, the other to the mosque. They would celebrate two sets of religious festivals, now, within the same family, 'to prove something'. The vitally important territorial borders in the town may be less visible today, since the checkpoints have gone. Indeed, when Mara came back from Germany, where she spent some of the war, she got off the bus 'and just didn't know where to walk'. But this very uncertainty, the unwritten nature of the new social rules of categorization and differentiation (like the many landmines buried round the town), makes people careful where they tread.

However, while the majority err on the side of safety, some, braver or perhaps less hurt, are privately reconnecting with people of the 'other' identity. 'People of goodwill, and also those that have a practical need to do so, are interacting,' said Mara. And not just the women. Some men too are renewing contact. Mara's husband Ivan, also a Croat, goes frequently to the Muslim village where they once lived, buys firewood there, socializes with former neighbours. Now and then Mara's former head teacher, now in charge of the 'Muslim' school, calls on Ivan for help with certain things.

Mara and Ivan had themselves recently made a personal choice of integration. They had taken a decision to try and return to their former flat on the 'Muslim' side of town. Such decisions are still relatively uncommon. UNHCR statistics show that in the first eight months of 1999 only 52 Croats returned to the Bosniak side and 21

Bosniaks moved the other way. They would be, they say, 'the only Croats to do it'. Even the fact that they walked over to see the flat and talk to their former neighbours gave rise to comment. When they came back some of their friends on the Croat side reminded them that six Muslims had been killed by Croat shells in that street during the war. 'You were lucky. It could have been dangerous for you going over there,' they said. But Mara and Ivan persisted. 'After all, some of my friends in Bugojno were killed too, but I don't blame all Muslims for that'. They decided to apply for an exchange of flats. 'We don't believe it will be so difficult to live there.' She had not forgotten how, when Ivan had been imprisoned by Bosniak forces, Bosniak friends had got him released, telling his captors 'he's not that kind of Croat'.

Acting collectively, acting in public

Such individual contacts are mostly made in tactful privacy. Given the uncertain future of the town, people hesitate to risk establishing patterns, making life decisions, returning to a flat or house, that could prove a mistake they might later regret. What is different about the women of FZ and SSB is that they have created a *collectivity* in which such contact can be routinized. There was even a collective identity emerging, a label for integrationists. Milka told us about this. She had identified as a Croat in the census even in the former Yugoslavia. So had her father, which 'wasn't popular and cost him something'. Now, she said, people who know that you work in Federalna Zena will sometimes refer to you, 'ironically, sneering a bit, or with a touch of hatred' as a 'Federalka'. It meant a federating, integration-minded woman. Yet she was proud to carry this 'mark' as she called it. And she said, 'Anyway, people who know me know I'm a Christian. They know I'm tolerant. They know it doesn't detract from my beliefs that I talk to Bosniaks.'

Quite a few of the women activists and users of Federalna Zena and Savjetovaliste SB are more than nominal Christians and Muslims. Like Milka they are believers and attend a place of worship. They nonetheless found a way of respecting this difference (which is of course, in one way, a similarity) and did not allow it to impede their co-operation. And, through their activism, they drew in others. Milka for instance, said 'Through us, our children have met each other again. They carry messages for us. Tahira's boy, for instance. I love him like my own son.' But not every woman who has walked in the door of Federalna Zena or Savjetovaliste SB has come in order to talk to women of 'the other side'. Many have been driven there, first and foremost, by hope of assistance. Ljubica, a Croat, said frankly, 'I didn't come to Federalna Zena because I felt good there but because I needed help.'

Nonetheless, once there, if she was to stay, Ljubica, like others, would find herself co-operating with women of the other community. It was made feasible by an important principle in the two projects, something that transcended the question of actual 'ethnic balance' in membership. It was what we came to think of as 'de-categorization'. They refused to lump all people of one ethnic 'name' into one category

and label them. Indeed they held the names themselves lightly, remembering how many people are of mixed origin, in mixed marriages, have lived in the 'wrong' place or fought on the 'wrong' side. In their attempt to de-categorize, the women always tried to work through example, but also through dialogue. They would take issue, for instance, when someone implied 'those others are all the same'. 'We can't accept that,' said Milka, 'You can't blame everyone for what someone of a certain name has done.'

What most importantly differentiates these women activists from others in Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje, then, is not that they are the only ones in the town that meet across the line. It is that they are *collectively* co-operating. A second differentiator is that they are doing so openly, even advertising the fact. They have recreated a *public space* for integrative action. In this space they defy the logic of the politicians, the parties and the structures of local power.

In Milka it is possible to see a woman making this transition from private and individual to public and collective action, gambling her family's very livelihood on a refusal of national difference. The café run by herself and her husband, right on the front line, had been badly damaged. When they looked to hire builders to repair it, Croats would not consider taking the job, here 'in sight of the other side'. But they found Bosniaks willing to do the work. At the time, Croat men threatened to burn Milka's café down because she had employed these 'enemy' labourers. 'But later, when they needed something from my husband, these same ones who made the threats came round. They started to use the place. And they inevitably met Bosniaks here.' It was logical therefore that Milka would open her café to the meetings of women that became Federalna Zena. 'For us it was the only way we could go forward. The women were the ones who positively wanted to meet each other. And for me, such meetings relieved my soul.'

We witnessed an interesting example of the women's intention to make their collective actions effective in a wider public sphere. Federalna Zena had already made an attempt to bring together the Mayor of Gornji Vakuf and the Mayor of Uskoplje. This had failed, due to the reluctance of the latter. Now Nermina made the bold move of setting up a meeting at Federalna Zena between the Catholic priest, Father M, and the town's principal Islamic cleric, Imam P. Each man had been helpful to Federalna Zena on many occasions in the past, and had in turn used the organization to assist some of their own development projects. When colleagues at Mara's school started making provocative jokes about her involvement with Federalna Zena, Father M had told them 'Don't mock. It's a good job she's doing there.' Both clerics were educated men, neither was a bigot. But they had never met each other and, despite a much publicized (if cautious) encounter on TV between the senior Christian and Muslim clerics of Bosnia, they had continued to avoid each other.

The women had two aims for this meeting. The first was simply contact. 'At least they might exchange phone numbers', said Nermina. These are influential men in

their respective communities. Of a relationship were to flower it could lead to greater co-operation in, for instance, the school system. Nermina said:

There are many people in this town that we at Federalna Zena can't reach. For some people who lost sons and husbands it is very very hard to forgive and cross the line. You have to understand their pain, and how it is they put blame for the hurt that was done to them on that whole national group. The priest and the imam could make a gesture of reconciliation and their authority might be accepted by such people.

Second, Nermina hoped the two men might speak more openly of their support for Federalna Zena to women of their congregations. 'Many of these women see only them, the clerics. Could the clerics perhaps help those women to see us?'

With much difficulty a mutually agreeable time was arranged. But the meeting was a stark disappointment. Clearly neither man wanted the visit to be interpreted as official: they came to Federalna Zena dressed not in their religious robes but in 'plain clothes', and approached the building separately. When the imam entered, and the two men were introduced, they avoided shaking hands. They sat uncomfortably side by side, addressing the women rather than each other. Each stated his belief in co-existence - in principle. Each extolled his own religion for its traditional tolerance (the imam rather loud, the priest somewhat shrinking). But both made the point clearly: *it's too soon for this*. The clerics avoided eye contact. As we sat there, a convoy of SFOR tanks rolled by outside the window, shaking the walls. It was a reminder that the war, in a sense, was not yet finished, either outside or inside the room. After fifteen minutes Father M made an excuse to leave.

Father M and Imam P both respect the women activists of Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje. But they are content for these women to do the difficult work of reconnection while they themselves hang back and take no risks. 'Well, it was worth trying', said Nermina, when the door closed behind the imam. 'But it's a pity. Co-operation between them would be a powerful example to others.' Mara thought it had been worth a try. 'Our lives can't really be said to exist unless and until we are united as one community again'.

CHAPTER 3

MOSTAR: City of Passionate Loyalties

Mostar: the war and its aftermath

Mostar was an important merchant town under the Ottoman empire, and within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia it was significant as the administrative centre of the province of Herzegovina. The town has always been much loved by artists (and later by tourists) for its extraordinary physical beauty. The river Neretva, its water a startling cobalt blue, has cut a dramatic gorge here through high mountains. The town was built on both sides of a deep rift spanned by Yugoslavia's most famous bridge, the ancient Stari Most. On the east bank the crowded buildings of the old Turkish quarter climbed up a steep hill but as the town and its population expanded much of the growth occurred on the flatter west bank. Paintings from earlier days show the town against a backdrop of mountains, its many mosques and churches in close proximity, surrounded by picturesque roofs and blossoming orchards.

After the Second World War, in the Tito period, the outskirts of Mostar were heavily industrialized and the town - now a city - became a prosperous centre of employment, with nearly half of its jobs in manufacture and mining. Local factories produced aircraft parts, industrial freezers, cars, aluminium, electronic equipment, wood products, beverages and textiles (we are indebted for these and many of the following facts about Mostar to Bojicic and Kaldor 1999). The fertile valley of the Neretva supports valuable agricultural production. As Yugoslavia developed after the Second World War, the area west of the river became a district of offices, shops and modern housing. The outer part of the east side of the town also modernized, but the Ottoman old town, on the edge of the gorge, was preserved for its antiquity.

Mostar's pre-war population was just short of 76,000. It was ethnically a very mixed city. In the 1991 census those declaring themselves Muslims were the largest group (34%), followed by the Croats (29%), Serbs (19%). A notable 15% of city dwellers refused national name, terming themselves Yugoslavs (15%) and a further 3% fell into 'other' categories - which no doubt included a small number of Jews and Roma. The balance in the outlying areas of the municipality was a little different. There were relatively more Croats (34%), and Serbs were up to 30%. In the first multiparty elections, in 1990, Mostar elected to the municipal council an uneasy coalition of nationalist parties (the SDA, the HDZ and the SDS), which survived only until fighting began in April 1992.

In Mostar, the increasingly close shelling by Serbs from the east lasted from April to July that year, when a counter offensive led by the HVO drove the Serbs back from the Neretva (Bosnian Institute 1996). During this bombardment many Serbs left the city and the neighbouring villages of the Neretva valley. Some fled abroad, the lucky ones to the USA, Canada or Australia. But many moved only a short distance into what were now Serb-held areas of eastern Herzegovina, some to join the Serb nationalist forces.

In November 1991 the Community of Herceg-Bosna (HZHB) was declared with Mate Boban its president. Some months later, in April 1992, a Croat National Defence force, the HVO, was formed, as well as the Croat Defence League (HOS), a militia of the Croatian Party of Rights. The designated capital city of Herceg-Bosna, defined as 'a political, cultural, economic and territorial union' of Bosnia-Herzegovina Croats, was to be Mostar. During the summer of 1992 the HDZ dismissed a number of Bosniak managers in Mostar and replaced them with Croats. On the edge of the city HVO members murdered a HOS commander known for his support of the alliance. In December the HVO dissolved the legal municipal assemblies throughout the territory under its control and dismissed many Bosniak mayors.

But still many people in Mostar were taken by surprised when, on the morning of May 9 1993, the HVO, aided by the army of the state of Croatia, began a general offensive against the east part of Mostar. The former allies were locked in conflict in many parts of southwest and central B-H until March 1994, but nowhere did the 'war within a war' have more ferocious expression than in Mostar. There was an association of the eastern side of Mostar with its Turkish history and of the western side with modernity. A majority of the population on the east were Muslim and on the west Croats. But this was very far from being a tidy division. In 1990 nobody thought of Mostar as anything but a unit, one city. When Croat nationalist forces began bombarding eastern Mostar from the vantage point of the western hills, what became the line between the warring sides was therefore rather arbitrary. It created and sealed a territorial definition of entities that had not existed before, so that many residents were trapped on 'the wrong side'.

The destruction was brutal. Phosphor shells were used to start fires among the houses on the east side. The most ruthless of the men fighting in the Croat forces were said to be from other parts of B-H and from Croatia itself. Although many local Croat Mostaris too were involved in the destruction of their own city, others fled because they did not wish to join the war against their neighbours.

Fire power was also directed the other way by local Mostar people, mainly Muslims, organizing communal defence, with minimal support from the Bosnian *Armija*. They did succeed, at the cost of many lives, in preventing the invasion of the east side of Mostar. But eighty percent of its buildings were damaged, 60% ending the war without a roof and 10% being irreparable. For 22 months the east side had no water or electricity because water and power utilities were situated on the West side of the city under the control of their enemies. Forty per cent of the city's industrial infrastructure, the railway and the airport, many mosques and all nine bridges over the Neretva were destroyed. The destruction of the Stari Most by the HVO was an act that caused grief and disbelief throughout the region and indeed worldwide.

The end of hostilities in Mostar came on February 25 1994, and the following month an agreement was signed in Washington renewing the Croat-Bosniak alliance in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Dayton Agreement ended the fighting between the Federation and the Serb nationalist forces. By the war's end, Mostar's population had declined to around 62,000, of which some 26,000 were displaced persons. Only 36,000 of the originally resident population were still in their pre-war homes and a further 6000 were still in the city but displaced to other, temporary accommodation.

After Dayton

Before the war the terms west and east Mostar had been used simply for geographical orientation. They designated which bank of the Neretva was in question. But the war had now forged what was effectively two Mostars, distinct places with distinct war histories, that now carried 'capital letters' in people's heads: East Mostar and West Mostar. During and for some years after the war, the Croat military maintained checkpoints and strictly limited movement across the line. The front line for the most part followed the river, but a sliver of the west bank a couple of hundred yards deep and perhaps half a mile long had also been defended by Bosniak forces. By the end of the war, all the buildings along this border between East and West Mostar, many of them multistory, were in ruins.

The demographic changes wrought by the war were different in Bosniak East and Croat West Mostar. The fall in numbers was greatest on the east side of the city. Population here had fallen to 19,300 of which 13,000 were displaced persons (UNHCR statistics for 1995, cited in Bojicic and Kaldor 1999). Only 6000 of the original inhabitants were still there. Of the displaced, roughly a quarter came from West Mostar, a third from Serb-occupied territories (especially east Herzegovina), and 17% from Croat-occupied territories in towns and villages of the Mostar region. On the West side, the population fell to 35,700, of which 12,600 were displaced people.

During the war there had been two governments (if one can speak of government) in the part of B-H resisting Serb nationalist forces: the official Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina that had been declared an independent state in 1992, and that of Herceg-Bosna. Each had attempted to collect taxes and duties and raise other revenues for pursuit of the war effort. The Dayton agreement was supposed to affirm the Federation, yoked to the Republika Srpska, within the state of Bosnia-Herzegovina and to bring to an end the project of Herceg-Bosna. The latter however continued to have an autonomous existence in the territories it controlled. And Mostar was its heartland.

The peace agreement mandated the European Union (EU) to pacify and unify Mostar. It was meant to be a model for peace and reconciliation in B-H as a whole (Reichel 1996). But the EU administration possessed few executive powers and its two and a half year mandate ended with little achieved. At the first elections (June 1996), HDZ candidates won control of the three West Mostar municipal authorities, while the SDA won the three East side *opcinas*, with other parties having minimal representation and no authority. Effectively, then, Mostar, like Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje, had two parallel local authorities, and the post of mayor of Mostar alternated between them. The EU (and subsequently the Office of the High Representative) facilitated regular meetings between the two city authorities and attempted, also, to instil co-operation in the small neutral central district that had its own committee. But co-operation had been minimal and, because the situation was sensitive, the internationals had been cautious about making extreme moves.

The EU governed Mostar indirectly, through co-operation with local political and military structures, a policy which rendered it largely impotent. It had little choice but to work separately with each of the two sets of politicians, thus ultimately reinforcing the division of the city into West Mostar and East Mostar. The military commanders and politicians who had waged the war were still in control of West Mostar, where the European Union set up its headquarters, and this lent an

appearance of manipulation by Croat politicians and gangsters. The EU representatives were criticized for conferring legitimacy on war criminals.

As public services were re-established in the city after the war, they were set up as two distinct systems. Dzemal Bijedic University split into two. The schools, hospitals, clinics and social welfare centres of East Mostar were supported by public finance from Sarajevo, those of West Mostar by taxes raised by the self-appointed authorities of Herceg-Bosna and by Tudjman's HDZ-ruled Croatia. Companies newly forming after the war operated on one side or the other, but not both.

By 1999 when we carried out our visits to Mostar, the checkpoints had been removed at last and it was possible to walk or drive from one side to the other unimpeded. The West side appeared to have a reviving economy - though much of it was in black or grey areas of illegality. On the East side, the ancient Turkish district had been prettily rebuilt by foreign aid. But much of the remainder of the East side was still in ruins, and the economy slow to recover.

Hopes for the reintegration of B-H are widely held to depend on 'returns', of both refugees and internally displaced people, to their original homes, particularly in areas where they will now be minorities. By the autumn of 1999, we found from a reading of UNHCR monthly statistics, there had been very few returns as yet to Mostar city. Those few had not been flat-dwellers returning to the former city centre, but people with private homes on the periphery. Returns to West Mostar had been mainly of Croats, with a smaller number of Serbs. Returns to East Mostar had also been few, with Serbs outnumbering Croats. The hesitation of returners was not surprising, for relationships in the city continued to be deeply embittered and untrusting. Sporadic ethnic violence continued, especially on the West side. During one of our visits a mine exploded, near a busload of Bosniaks visiting West Mostar to consider return to their former homes. During another there was a street demonstration in West Mostar against the reunification of a school, demanded by the East side authority with the support of the state and international institutions.

Progress on return both of internally displaced persons and refugees had been a little better in the surrounding areas of the Neretva valley. The returners had so far been Serbs, who started to come back in mid-1998. And in mid-1999 a small number of Bosniaks began to leave the Mostar region to return, in very small numbers, to East Herzegovina.

Women's self-organization: three initiatives

We made case studies of three women's organizations in Mostar and its region. Two of them, Zena BiH (Woman of B-H) and Zene Mostara (Mostar Women), are sited in the city itself and both are known country-wide. The third organization, DOM, is situated in the country town of Nevesinje, 40 minutes by car from Mostar across the Inter-Entity Border Line in the Republika Srpska. It is smaller than the other two organizations, and little known outside its area. Despite the fact that our study focuses on urban activism in the town of Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje and the cities of Mostar and Banja Luka, we include a discussion of DOM here for two reasons. First, as we shall see, the women activists of DOM are actually, in the main, urban women displaced from nearby Mostar by the war. And second, it demonstrates the

interaction between town and countryside, and the work of women's organizations in making it productive.

Zena BiH and Zene Mostara are not the only two women's NGOs in Mostar city. The others, however, tend to be mono-ethnic or religion-based, or to be small and fragile in comparison to these two. But between ZBiH and Zene Mostara too there was a difference in size and character. Although their orientation to women and women's activism was similar, their actual activities were different.

Zena BiH

Zena BiH is unusual among Bosnian women's organizations for having come into being even before the Dayton peace agreement was signed. Once the fighting was ended between Croat and Bosniak forces, but while their joint struggle against Serb nationalist forces still continued, women in East Mostar started to meet. Their organization was registered as a citizens' association as early as October 1994.

It was Azra Hasambegovic who acted first. A Muslim, she had been living and working in the west of Mostar when war broke out. She was an economist, holding a responsible job in a business enterprise. She stayed in her house and her job throughout the Serb shelling. But when the Croat/Bosniak war broke out she was told that, as a Muslim, she was no longer welcome in the firm. 'I felt so terrible,' she told us. 'Deep in myself I felt I would never work there again.' Azra was also expelled from her flat by young Croat soldiers. At first she was given refuge by two friends, both Croat women. Then Zoran Mandelbaum, president of an association of the small community of Jews in Mostar, concealed her in the office of his organization for four months. First, he had helped Serbs endangered by the Serb shelling; now he was sheltering endangered Muslims in West Mostar. He obtained false documents for Azra and enabled her and others to leave the city with a Jewish convoy to Zagreb.

Although she had not at first intended to do so, Azra stayed put in Zagreb for eight months. Despite being a Muslim, she did not feel in any danger there. And she encountered women's projects in which 'all nationalities were working together' in a way that was inspirational and which would prove a formative example for her. But she somehow could not accept her new status. 'I didn't even register as a "refugee",' she says. 'It felt humiliating, I couldn't bear the idea of being a number.' She was all the time longing to return to Mostar. 'I was doing nothing,' she says. 'I had no work. It was killing me.' There had been two deaths in the family and her elderly mother had been expelled from West to East Mostar. So when she heard of a Norwegian aid convoy leaving Zagreb for East Mostar she seized the opportunity to travel under their protection.

B-H was still at war, and in Mostar Azra now had neither job nor flat. But she met up with old friends and together they made enquiries to see what women needed and what could be done. The result was a project they called at first *Women Help Women Through Work Therapy*. They obtained a small grant from a German organization, and with this they rented a room in which to meet. It was in one sense a psychosocial programme, working through small, mutually-supporting groups. Azra understood the need for talk as mutual therapy. She remembered how she had survived when in hiding in West Mostar by writing a daily letter to her sister in Sarajevo - letters that could never be posted but which substituted for the conversation she so badly needed. But the women's project was also occupational

therapy. They obtained knitting wools and eventually sewing machines, a phone and a car with the help of a Jewish woman from the UK working with Mandelbaum's organization.

The group of women that would become Zena BiH slowly grew from three to thirty, until its activities were involving seven hundred or more. Several of their members were women refugees who had been released from Serb-run concentration camps in East Herzegovina. Because of the dire need of many of the population they soon began a project they called *Taking Care*, distributing food packages and other kinds of material aid to old people. Knitted products from the work therapy project were donated. Then they opened a day centre for the elderly, many of whom were now alone.

From the start there was an element of both head and heart in Zena BiH's actions. Azra said

We've always tried to be professional and efficient but our emotions have always been involved - they had to be... Our projects have responded to what we wanted to do and what we saw women around us needed. And because we are in touch with women at the grassroots we have always been a step ahead, so that the international NGOs have followed where we led.

By 1997, when they had been in existence three years, working from premises secured rent-free for seven years from the East side municipality, they had established an SOS crisis telephone line for women and children surviving violence, and a legal advice service.

The *SOS Help Line*, its co-ordinator Nadja Dzabic explained, was at first not just about rape or violence, but responded to anyone in crisis. 'It was for allowing people time to talk about their distress.' The SOS line operates on a voluntary basis. Nadja herself has a daytime job as a social worker in the pensions department, and the phone is staffed by volunteers trained by experienced women psychotherapists from Zagreb. The service was advertised to women living in both East and West Mostar. They were surprised to find a majority of calls were coming from the West. This anonymous and confidential telephone contact proved a valuable resource for women there, in the absence of any local women's centre, and because crossing to the East side was at first not permitted and later remained a source of fear. 'The politics are very rough there,' Azra said, 'There's no democracy. Often it's women from mixed marriages calling us. Children call a lot too. Even men use the line, Serb men particularly.' As with all such SOS lines, listening to women's experience of domestic violence quickly revealed the urgent need for a house of safety in which women could find refuge from violent men. The long hunt for money for a refuge began, and by late 1999 a house had been identified (in a nearly-as-possible neutral place in a nearby village) and funding was on the point of agreement.

The legal service, which by the time of our visits in 1999 had become a *legal agency*, employed two lawyers at base and four women in a mobile team working around the Neretva canton, with access also to an advocate who could represent clients in court. One of the lawyers, Vera Miletic, lives in West Mostar. One reason for this was that Vera (like her brother and her sister) was in a mixed marriage. 'Typical Mostaris!' she said. Her husband was a wellknown Serb doctor. Vera was therefore reduced by the war to a cleaning job in a café run by Croat nationalists of the kind that stigmatized her husband as a *cetnik*. Vera heard about the work of

Zena BiH across the river and offered her services. Azra said, 'She came from the West to work with us at a time when no-one would have believed it possible.'

The lawyers, whether staffing the advice centre in Mostar or travelling in the field, find themselves dealing with a wide range of cases concerning violence against women, pension rights, employment rights, housing rights and family law. Because they lack many of the legal instruments they need, such as injunctions to restrain violent husbands, ZBiH have to campaign for change in the law. And they support national campaigns against trafficking and for women's electoral representation.

But the most difficult and important part of their work has been with 'returners', especially the return of people to areas in which they will now be ethnic minorities. With such a tense combination of resistance and unwillingness impeding returns to the city itself, the best ZBiH could do was to concentrate on the outlying areas. They were working closely with UNHCR, exchanging information on plans for return. With so few Croat returns, most cases so far handled by ZBiH had involved Serbs coming back to Mostar's hinterland and Muslims risking return to Eastern Herzegovina. In both of these transfers Zena BiH worked closely with other local women's groups in small towns in the region, especially with DOM in Nevesinje.

Once these two services, the SOS line and the legal agency, were up and running, ZBiH began other activities, notably a beauty centre and boutique, a medicinal herbs project, a cleaning agency, and what they called a Club of Friendship. By now the number of full or part-time paid employees had reached twenty-four (although frequently the grant money failed and these supposed employees continued to work without pay). The organization's income for the year 1998/99 totalled DM 250,000, the principle donors being UNHCR (the Bosnian Women's Initiative) and CFD, a Swiss NGO. Whereas previous projects, including the legal agency and the SOS line, had been entirely dependent on external funding, the first three of these later projects had been geared towards generating income, both for those employed in them and (responding to funders' increasing pressure on grantees to become self-sufficient) for ZBiH as a whole.

It will be evident that ZBiH, in spite of being a multi-ethnic project, does not have offices or projects in West Mostar. This is because the political climate there would be hostile to cross-ethnic work. The *Centar Ljepote*, the beauty centre, however is in shop-front premises on a busy street in that part of East Mostar that lies west of the river, and is therefore very close to the front line with West Mostar. Being in an area of commerce with offices, shops and cafés, it is not too exposing for West Mostaris to visit. The premises, made available by the East Mostar municipal authority, house a boutique, where the knitting and sewing projects present their designer garments for sale; a beauty salon where hairdressing, manicure and other treatments are offered; and a meeting room and café, with walls that provide space for displaying women's works of art. Zena BiH see the Centre as being about 'the quality of life'. The project has its own director and management committee, and its accounts are separate from those of the parent organization. Its employees are 'official', which is to say that insurance and tax are paid to the state. It is agreed that fifty per cent of any surplus after payment of wages and other costs will be ploughed back into development of the Centre, while the remaining fifty per cent will go to supporting other ZBiH projects.

The *medicinal herbs project* involves women (twenty at first, soon more) in gathering, cleaning, drying, packing and marketing herbs obtainable locally and much in

demand. The *cleaning agency* is similarly an income generating strategy for women with fewer formal qualifications. Concerned not to submit its employees to heavy or hazardous work, ZBiH bought a floor polisher and other modern domestic machinery. Five women are currently employed and the agency is prevented from expanding only by lack of transport, not lack of clients.

ZBiH's latest project is designed to build on the Centre and use its meeting space. It is called the *Klub Prijateljstva*, Club of Friendship, and it directly addresses the matter of cross-ethnic working. From its foundation ZBiH has had a principle of ethnically open membership and integrated life, both for itself and for the city and region. They point to the name of the organization itself. You would not call yourself 'Women of Bosnia-Herzegovina' if you didn't believe in an unified country. The Executive Committee and Advisory Board have always included women of Serb and Croat background as well as Bosniaks, despite the very small numbers of the former groups living in East Mostar since the war. But keeping an ethnic balance has been impossible where greater numbers are involved. They have worked with whoever feels able to become involved, and, given the postwar ethnic structure of the city, that has inevitably included many more Bosniaks than others. Bearing in mind that the figures disguise many people of mixed marriages and mixed origin, the statistics are as follows. The organization's permanent volunteers have been 90% Bosniaks and 10% others, their paid employees 98% Bosniak and 2% Croat. The beneficiaries also include as many as possible of the two minority groups, though the numbers are small: of the 700 women knitting and sewing, 80% are Bosniaks and 20% Croats with just a few Serbs. Those assisted by the legal agency have included 60% Serbs and 40% Bosniaks. The old people assisted include 90% Bosniaks, 6% Serbs and 4% Croats.

Much of the integrative work of Zena BiH has been reaching out to the villages and small towns of the region, such as Gacko, Trebinje, Nevesinje and Celebici, some of them 'no-go' areas. They have contacted women, brought them into Mostar for meetings, shown them what women are doing here and encouraged them to set up their own organizations. But from the start their dearest aim has been to 'reconnect the city', to heal the terrible rift that had opened up, seemingly as deep as the Neretva gorge itself. And now the Club of Friendship sets out to provide a regular public space for renewed contact, especially between women of East and West Mostar. There are three hundred women members at present. The Executive Board includes two Bosniaks, two Serbs and two Croats. The idea is to develop a series of events, attracting well known speakers and displaying the work of local women artists. These they advertise widely but discreetly - especially on the West side, so as not to compromise the women involved.

Zene Mostara

Zene Mostara differs from ZBiH in certain clear-cut ways. First, it is much smaller. Whereas ZBiH has up to 24 paid employees (full or part-time), Zene Mostara has so far only three. Whereas ZBiH claim as many as seven or eight hundred activists, members and beneficiaries around them, Zene Mostara has perhaps a couple of hundred, with a core group of around fifty. The Zene Mostara women are characteristically a little older, typically over forty; ZBiH women a little younger, with some even in their twenties. Because part of Zene Mostara's activity, as we shall see, is cultural, there is a recognisable continuity with the pre-war Mostari

middle class and intellectual community - from which they are nonetheless distinguished by their women's politics. It will be apparent, too, that they differ from Zena BiH in their choice of activities. While a great deal of Zena BiH's work is hands-on and income generating, Zene Mostara's only practical project is a fairly recent *ceramic workshop*. This has been set up under pressure from their international funders in the interests of 'becoming self-sustaining' and it is not really characteristic of their organization - for Zene Mostara is very much more precisely focused than Zena BiH, dedicated to the twin issues of *democratization and reconciliation*.

In the autumn of 1996 three women, friends from before the war, decided to unite in founding a women's organization. One was Jelena Sotric, a Serb who had returned from Belgrade where she had fled during the war. She became the president of Zene Mostara. She is an active politician and a well-known personality, being a councillor in the canton and an MP in the Federation House of Representatives for the Citizens' Democratic Party, of which she is vice president. The second of the founding group was Devleta Balovic, a Bosniak, who is vice president of Zene Mostara. The third was Zelja Grubicic, a Croat from West Mostar.

They set up their organization in 1996, when it was just beginning to be possible in Mostar to renew contact between the 'sides' in the war. Their aim from the start was to be cross-ethnic, not only in the sense of their own personal inter-ethnic alliance but in their outreach and their activity. They aimed to re-unite the city across its internal 'front line', and to work intensively across the Inter-Entity Border Line, refusing to endorse the separation of the Federation from the Republika Srpska established by the Dayton agreement.

Zene Mostara has been funded almost entirely by UNHCR and a Swiss organization, Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk. They are accommodated in a small office in Swiss House, the well-appointed SAH headquarters on the main street of East Mostar. The handsome coffee bar of SAH serves as their meeting room. They do not as yet have an office in West Mostar, although they long for times to change sufficiently for them to open one there.

Zene Mostara registered, with the help of OSCE, in 1997, and are structured in the way normal for Bosnian citizens' associations. The obligatory thirty founding signatories have involved a couple of hundred more women in activities as the organization has developed. Membership does not entail a subscription, because few could afford one. Sixty or seventy women will normally turn up to an Annual General Meeting, at which the Executive Board of seven, along with the working team, reports on its work and discusses future plans.

Zene Mostara has had an annual budget oscillating between 25,000 and 50,000 DM. Much of this goes on the salaries of their three fulltime employees. The project manager at the time of our research was Alma Elezovic. Alma is a Bosniak, local to East Mostar, who had been employed for a while in OSCE's Mostar office (to which she later returned). Nada Bojcic, a Bosniak, was activities co-ordinator at Zene Mostara. She is technically an IDP, having been living in West Mostar when war broke out and surviving a terrifying escape to the East under shellfire. Antonela was the organization's administrator. She is a Croat, still living in West Mostar and crossing here to work each day. Although not technically displaced, having stayed in her flat all through the war, she was nonetheless in a worse job situation than Nada due to being in a mixed marriage. By profession Antonela is an economist,

and after the war she hunted for a job to match her qualification. But the prejudice against employing her was total. In desperation, she and her husband started a small business. But it was quickly bombed, a warning that they were watched, and they did not dare to continue. After years of surviving on remittances from their parents, the couple were on the point of emigrating to Australia when Antonela learned from a former schoolfriend of a potential job in this multiethnic project. She was welcomed in Zene Mostara with open arms, and her income is able to support her husband and baby daughter. Today, despite everything that has happened to her Antonela still believes in the possibility of a united Mostar. She says 'I love our city. We grew up here and I want to stay', and of Zene Mostara she now feels, 'It's the only place that gave me a chance to work, to be useful, where I can speak'.

The women who take part in the activities organized at Swiss House tend to be from the more educated stratum of Mostar life. But a large number of less educated women, women who in another context might be called working class, gather in a weekly social club called *Vrelo*, which is recorded in the registration document of Zene Mostara as a partner organization. *Vrelo* attracts between thirty and fifty women to its activities and plays a valuable part in providing a friendly and unproblematic space in which ordinary women can meet, including a few from West Mostar.

Whereas *Vrelo* is more or less entirely social, Zene Mostara by contrast conceive of their work as addressing directly the development of civil society, democracy and tolerance. They approach this through two kinds of activities, cultural and political. Their practice has been to hold three public events a month, two of them cultural and one political. Their *cultural activities* are typically lectures and readings from poets and other writers, or the presentation of their work by local artists. 'Our first aim is to give women a nice time, a drink and a chat. To enable them to get away from everyday problems.' Normal attendance is 10 to 20, but participation sometimes reaches 50 women. We met a characteristic Zene Mostara member and activist on the cultural side, Marela Jerkic. A Croat from West Mostar, Marela is a many-sided artist: she acts, paints on silk and writes both prose and poetry. Her personal aim is to use every aspect of her art 'to unify the divided sides of this city through cultural means'. Working with the support of writers in Italy and Germany, and artists from other Western European countries, she has organized many events in Mostar, some of them through her involvement with Zene Mostara.

Zene Mostara's *political activity* directly confronts local women with the challenge of democratizing the political system in the city and the country. 'We have to change the political situation.' Alma explained. 'We work on three levels: to understand politics, to get involved in politics and to change politics.' They worked closely with the League of Women Voters to get women registered as voters and educate them in how to use their voting power to bring about change. They believe it is necessary, both for women and for the country, to get more women into the representative assemblies at national, entity, cantonal and local levels. 'We want more women in politics and that means both in quality and in quantity,' Jelena told us. And Alma added, 'We need more women candidates. But women say they won't stand because they feel they can change nothing. So we encourage them to listen, to see a way to act.' If 60% of the population is now female, they argue, a quota even of 30% under-represents women by half. Besides, they want to see women in proportional numbers in executive positions in the various levels of government.

So Zene Mostara organize tribunals and round tables with different guest speakers, often academics who are politically active. 'We want to help people decide for themselves.' We attended a workshop addressed by a Bosniak woman speaker, a returner to a neighbouring town, now with a Croat majority, who inspired her listeners by telling them that she had recently got her pre-war job and home returned to her. Her talk posed the need to challenge women MPs from different parties to put their party loyalties on hold sometimes, and unite in action around women's issues. 'Shouldn't we be bringing women MPs together and asking them why they can't co-operate? Shouldn't we require them to be accountable to us?' she asked. We should let the women we elect know we're watching and analyzing their performance, and voting according to what we see they've done for us.'

So far Zene Mostara's activity has been education rather than advocacy. But they are beginning to feel, says Alma, 'let's ask these politicians some challenging questions'. They don't do it yet, for fear of reprisals. But Fadila, one of the participants at the workshop, stressed the importance of grassroots action such as theirs, not to compete with government, but to improve it.

Given the nature of its work, it is perhaps even more important to Zene Mostara than it is to Zena BiH to achieve a multi-ethnic composition among its activists, members and beneficiaries, and it meets similar problems in doing so. Their publicity leaflet describes their membership as 'women of all nations... women who stayed in Mostar throughout the war; women who went to third countries; women of Mostar in the Republika Srpska; women of all ages, nationalities and professions; women without their homes - displaced people in their own city.' In its three founding members, as we saw, there is perfect symmetry: one Serb, one Bosniak and one Croat. But it has not been possible to replicate this in the organization as a whole. The Executive Board is comprised of four Bosniaks, one Serb (Jelena) and two Croats (one of whom is Zelja). The employees are two Bosniaks and one Croat.

The imbalance of course is due to the demographic effects of the war, and the severe deterrent the tense atmosphere represents to Croat participation from West Mostar. But another important factor is the loss of potential Serb participants from the other side of the Inter-Entity Border Line. They had worked particularly hard to draw into ZM activities women from the Republika Srpska, particularly in the nearby towns of Nevesinje and Trebinje. But they had worked equally hard to help them open up their own centres and in so far as this had come about it had inevitably had a negative effect on the ethnic mix of those actually active in Zene Mostara and attending its events.

DOM of Nevesinje

The women's group Dolina Ostaje Moja (DOM) of Nevesinje was one of these outlying women's groups on the periphery of Mostar. Early in its life it had been a partner of Zene Mostara. More recently it had developed a closer working relationship with Zena BiH.

Nevesinje is about 40 kilometres from Mostar, up in the hills of Eastern Herzegovina, across the Line in what is now the Republika Srpska. It is a small market town with a single high street. On the edges, where it tails off into the countryside, there are chickens in the gardens and cattle dung on the streets. The air here smells quite different from Mostar, green and breezy. There are a few small factories and workshops on the outskirts, oriented towards the industrial area

surrounding Mostar. Now, post-war, almost all the men are definitively unemployed, and the women making do with whatever small income they can generate. Only the local municipal authority and a handful of NGOs provide jobs.

DOM, which rents a small office and adjacent meeting room just off the main street, was founded by Marija Belovic, a Serb who before the war worked as a controller in a bank in Mostar. In May 1992, when Serb forces were shelling Mostar, nationalists cleared Serbs from the flats in which she was living on the west side. One of her sons were captured and imprisoned. Marija fled into the Serb-held territory of Eastern Herzegovina, where she found temporary accommodation as a displaced person.

Before the war the population of Nevesinje was around 14,000, of whom around 10,000 were Serbs and the remainder Muslims. Only 1% were Croat. Today there are an additional 8000 Serbs, incoming refugees from the Neretva valley - part of an estimated population of 31,000 displaced Serbs now living in Eastern Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. The entire population of 4000 Bosniaks was 'ethnically cleansed' by Serb extremists. 'All the Muslims living in the town and in nearby villages were killed or driven out,' Marija told us. 'It was no secret. In this street alone 152 Muslims used to live.' Many local Serbs served at the front in Gorazde, Trebinje and other places. Some of them were enthusiastic for the Serb nationalist project, but others were forced to fight in a war they deplored. Five hundred children in the town lost a father in the war. Feelings of fear, anger, hatred, guilt and defiance run deep in the present day population.

When the Serb population displaced, like Marija, from the Neretva valley and Mostar arrived here in Nevesinje the men were immediately forcibly recruited into the Serb nationalist forces and sent to fight. The families of men who refused or escaped the draft were thrown on the street and starved of humanitarian aid. The newly-arrived women stayed as much as possible indoors. They knew no locals, and socialized, if at all, only with other displaced Mostaris. The atmosphere in the town was terrorizing. Violent paramilitaries from Montenegro and Serbia were everywhere on the streets. Muslims were being killed or expelled, and Serbs like Marija who opposed the Serb nationalist project were considered traitors, 'not-good-enough Serbs'. Being among other Serbs did not mean they could feel secure.

For some months even after the Dayton peace agreement the atmosphere made it impossible for Marija to be active. She and other women around her, many of whom had been in responsible employment before the war and had no prospect of returning to it, were frustrated and depressed. 'We couldn't bear to be limited to this small community. Even pre-war the place was underdeveloped.' Then in 1996 a group of them took an opportunity to travel to Mostar under the protection of IFOR. 'Nobody had ever done such a thing at that time,' Marija says. They made contact with Jelena Sotric and the other women just then forming Zene Mostara. As we've seen, they became founding partners of Zene Mostara, who in turn supported them in forming their own organization.

We had no space then, no money. We were active but not yet official. But we were already connected with other women's NGOs. We had contact with Udružene Zene in Banja Luka, with the women in Bijeljina and at Zena Zenama in Sarajevo. They helped us, we got organizational training from them.

They registered their organization on February 17 1997 in the *opstina* offices in Trebinje. The majority of the women listed as the committee were Serb, but there were also two Croats named. DOM boldly stated in their registration document that the group intended 'co-operation with the Federation', indeed with 'women of all regions of the former Yugoslavia', and that they intended to press the issue of 'the right of return'. Even the title of the organization carried a kind of coded message: Dolina Ostaje Moja means 'the valley remains mine'. To take such a stand at this time, in the heartlands of Republika Srpska, took a good deal of courage. Yet the Trebinje authorities let it pass. And though local security officials investigated them, they took no action.

DOM's earliest activities were psychosocial support and legal advice to women. Marija said

The women have a hard life here, they are both oppressed and depressed. Very often, women are the main support of their families now. Everything falls on them. There a lot of educated women here who have no jobs. There is one woman with a masters' degree selling cigarettes on the market place. The *opstina* is no help to people. If you aren't a member of the SDS or the SRS you don't stand a chance of official work. We didn't want to accept things as they are. We wanted to bring change.

DOM also organized English language courses, sewing and cake-making. They acquired two tiny rooms opening onto the high street and set up a café, where the home-made cakes and *bureks* were sold. The café had, even when we visited in 1999, no running water. The space allowed of four small tables and a tiny bar. But there was electricity for the essentials: coffee and tea, and music from a cassette player. Four young women were making their living running the café. And the small surplus it generated, after women were paid for the cooking ingredients, helped DOM get a phone line and office furniture.

NGOs in the Republika Srpska tend to be deprived of grant funding. They are, ironically, punished by donors for living under a regime deplored by the international community for its nationalist separatism - from which of course the dissenting NGOs themselves suffer most. Nonetheless, grants from Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk, the Bosnian Women's Initiative of UNHCR, and the Swiss organization DECA, enabled them to obtain computers, not just for office use but for women's vocational training. Eventually DOM have been able to employ up to eleven women, though often part-time and often with only token pay. All their job opportunities have been advertised on the radio as open to all nationalities. 'That's one reason the local authority doesn't like us much.' says Marija. Soon after we visited DOM their office was broken into and all the computers, telephone and fax machine stolen. They were devastated. But also angry, because, with the computers, sensitive data were taken, and this made the women wonder whether the burglary had not been inspired by their political enemies.

For on the computer were DOM's immaculately maintained and detailed records of their work on 'returns'. And this is the aspect of DOM's work that is the most challenging, difficult and, perhaps, dangerous. We have seen how few, by late 1999, had been minority returns, in this region as elsewhere. Serbs sheltering in and around Nevesinje were afraid of reprisals should they go back to their villages in the Neretva valley, while Bosniaks ethnically cleansed from around Nevesinje knew they were still unwanted here.

The work DOM had set itself to do was different in the case of the two categories. In the case of the incoming Bosniaks, they waited to be informed by UNHCR of returning groups, then arranged to meet and support them on arrival. In the case of returning Serbs, moving out of the local area, they were able to be more pro-active. They would make contact with individuals and groups wishing to risk a return and go on their behalf to the UNHCR (to get humanitarian support in the form of housing repairs and material aid) and to SFOR and the IPTF (to arrange security). They would also inform the local authorities in Neretva canton of the intention. DOM would discuss honestly with potential returners the situation in their village. 'We are always quite honest about the difficulties they will face, their destroyed houses, how long they may have to wait for help with reconstruction.' Then they would locate a habitable house in the village of return that might serve as a collective centre. They would fix a date for return, and inform local people on the radio. Zena BiH legal team would be alerted. And then DOM would accompany the returners to their homes.

In the period of our visit to Nevesinje DOM's computer records showed that 700 Serb families, with DOM's help, had returned home, with 83 more poised to go. And 52 Bosniak families had returned or were returning to eight nearby villages. It was this carefully maintained information that had now been stolen along with the organization's computers - the precious names and addresses of people brave enough to refuse to accept the divisions wreaked over a period of four years by extremists using intimidation, torture and death.

Sopilja - the reality of return

A small group of Bosniaks, under the protection of an SFOR escort, had moved back to the village of Sopilja, eight kilometres from Nevesinje, on August 10, 1999. UNHCR had supported the return. But DOM had been the ones to do the human work, encourage the returners, make sure they had basic provisions to start this new life in an old place. In particular, they had provided each 'household' with a milk cow. Marija took us to see the village, the returners and their humanitarian cows.

Before the war Sopilja had 102 houses and 460 inhabitants. Now the houses were in ruins, open to the sky. Trees were growing in what had been living rooms and bedrooms. The once-cultivated fields had reverted to scrub. Every piece of furniture and equipment had been stripped from the houses. There was nothing to indicate that they had been inhabited as recently as six or seven years ago.

We met Hatidza and Salko Pobric. They were elderly, perhaps around seventy years of age, though it was difficult to be sure. Both were rather short in stature. Salko was wizened and weatherbeaten, but expressive, with deep smile creases. Hatidza was wearing an old grey skirt and a handknitted cardigan. Their own home was beyond repair so the couple were living in a patched-up room in a cousin's slightly less ruined house. From the outside you would have said it was still uninhabitable, but we went in a low door into a roofed space where the firewood had been neatly chopped and stacked, and then through another door into a tiny room about 8 ft square and 7 ft high. It was warm in here, because in the corner was a large old woodburning cooking stove. Around this and the stack of firewood all Hatidza and Salko's life revolves. Along two sides of their tiny room were two long wooden boxes with knitted covers that served to sit on and sleep on. In the angle there was a

small table made of sawn planks roughly nailed together. The only other piece of furniture was a tall thin cupboard made of scrap wood.

Sopilja is where Hatidza and Salko were born and where they want to be. While he was a refugee in Mostar he was staying in someone else's house in temporary accommodation. Now there is nothing for him there, he says. But here? Winter was coming. Hatidza and Salko's pensions of 100 marks a month are six months in arrears because the state is bankrupt. They had spun out a food donation, but now had only five days' supply left. They had no winter clothes. They had had two candles, they said, but had given one to a neighbour. The remaining one was on a saucer on the makeshift cupboard.

In pre-war Sopilja, among the Muslims there had been one household of Serbs and one of Croats. The Croats had fled and showed no interest in returning. The Serbs' house had not of course destroyed, and this family remained and were now Hatidza and Salko's neighbours. They had not received them badly and after a week had even started to say hello. 'It is not these people, it's the politicians who are the trouble,' said Salko. There are 60 more Bosnjak families who would come back if their houses could be repaired. Including Salko and Hatidza's two sons. That is their great hope.

At the time of our visit, some months after their return to Sopilja, the villagers had no transport of any kind. No equipment or tools. Their urgent need was a tractor, and a powered saw for wood. There was no electricity in the village, for lack of the necessary 500 metres of cable to connect the supply. DOM was helping, not only by providing the cow, but by intervening with authorities, lending money, making sure that, whatever the privations, the returners did not actually starve or die of cold. Salko said 'Marija is the one who takes care of us.' And on the rare occasion they might walk the eight kilometres to Nevesinje, there would be the DOM café where they would feel safe and welcomed.

We asked Hatidza and Salko, 'Are you afraid?' And Salko at first said 'No'. But then he added, 'Yes, every night'. And Hatidza said: 'the nights are very long'. You have to imagine that it is dark at five or six in the afternoon now. They had no light, except the wood fire. Hatidza had no wool to knit. They had nothing, absolutely nothing, to do until day-light at seven in the morning. Thirteen hours to think, and remember.

The Serb extremists set out to prove to the peoples of Bosnia that they could no longer live together. The condition to which they reduced this village is the best proof they could muster. It is like a hand of aces laid insultingly on the table. How could Muslims ever dream of living here again? *Ever*. And yet this old couple were walking back against the headwind of history.

The complex social relations left by war

The effect on social relations of the wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina can perhaps best be understood through individual stories. Each person experienced the war differently. In part the differences are due to variation in social positioning: whether one was identified by others (or saw oneself) as 'Muslim', 'Croat', 'Serb', 'Yugoslav' or something else; and where, on the new map drawn by the war, one was living or working. But partly too they are due to accident -- where precisely the shells fell,

what became of loved ones, how well or unwell, resilient or defeated, you happened to be, what opportunities and choices seemed to remain. And then, after the war, there were new factors of social positioning shaping each experience: whether one had become a 'refugee', or a 'displaced person'; whether one was a 'returner', and furthermore a 'majority' or a 'minority' returner. Even a person who had gone nowhere at all was now designated something particular in post-war jargon: a 'domiciled' person. Few families and few pre-war friendships remained exactly what they were. No social relations could be taken for granted. Each one had to be renegotiated, and most involved a degree of mistrust, a potential for resentment or anger. It was these complex relations that the activists were attempting to handle and to heal.

The following three instances show something of this complexity and difference in the lives of three women we met in the course of our research in Mostar. These are not the principal activists in the women's organizations, but women more peripherally involved with them. Each different from the other, they are similar in one way which sets them apart from certain other women in their environment: they still, despite what was done to them in the name of ethnicity, harbour an integrationist vision. They want a unified and mixed Mostar.

[Box the following text]

Mira's story

Mira Hacam was 74 years old when we met her 1999. In her working life she had been a dentist, in a clinic in West Mostar. But when the war broke out she had already long been retired. Her husband, Avdo, had had an honourable career as an officer in the Yugoslav National Army. Both came from Muslim backgrounds, but they had been communists and atheists. Both their families had been in the Partisans in the second world war. Mira had lost two brothers and a sister, and had herself been imprisoned.

When Yugoslavia began to disintegrate in 1991 they were living in a flat on the third floor of a block only a few metres from the road that was to become the frontline in the Croat/Muslim war. Despite being in the zone of heaviest shelling and sniper fire, she and Avdo did not leave their home and join the ranks of refugees and displaced people. In the months while the flats were bombarded they camped in the basement, 'which we shared with the rats' as Mira says. They went hungry, they saw the death of many neighbours, but they refused to be intimidated out of their home.

When we met Mira five years after the end of the war, back upstairs, we could hardly believe that anybody could possibly be inhabiting this building. We approached it by way of Devastation Boulevard, that infamous avenue through the centre of Mostar on which every building was destroyed. And Mira's block looked little different from the rest, with its gaping windows, crumbling masonry and charred walls. But looking closer it was possible to see that one or two flats now had glass in the windows. And the comfortable rooms of Mira's flat, rehabilitated with the help of the British Army (a goodwill gesture to a couple who were locally celebrated 'survivors') belied the forbidding exterior.

Mira's husband Avdo did not survive the war. Deeply depressed by the betrayal of the Yugoslav ideal by the JNA to which he had devoted his professional life, overwhelmed by the horror of Srebrenica, he took his own life. Even this loss Mira has survived, and despite arthritis and a bad chest, she is full of fun. She is an enthusiastic member of Vrelo, and goes to their meeting room three or four times week. 'Everybody talks at once. We talk about flats, money, children, the winter coming on. We're just ordinary women in Vrelo,' she says, adding mischievously, 'we're not intellectuals like the women in Swiss House!' She loves the afternoons of tombola and handicrafts, the possibility (that nobody now can take for granted in Mostar) of socialising with women of both 'sides' of the city, women of all national names and those who want none. She feels no difficulty in renewing friendships with Croat Mostaris because she believes that the killing had not been their choice. It was fomented, she believed, and for the most part carried out, by identifiable extremists from West Herzegovina.

Mira lets her spare room as bed-and-breakfast accommodation to supplement her very low pension. While we were staying there a friend popped in to borrow a couple of cigarettes, and she told a story that is yet another example of how social relations are today in Mostar. A man, she said, had just knocked at her door. 'Come in,' she'd said. But he'd hesitated, doubtful of his welcome. 'I'm a Croat from West side.' But she'd insisted, 'Come in anyway.' Then he explained why he was there. 'I used to know your husband. I need help, and he's the only one over here I can approach. My brother desperately needs a blood transfusion and the hospital tell us there's nobody of his blood group on the West side. But they gave us some possible names from the pre-war register of people in that blood group with addresses in East Mostar. Would your husband be willing to contact them for us?'

Mira looks back now on the life she and Avdo used to have. A country called 'Yugoslavia'. Times when they would get in their car and take off anywhere the fancy took them, to the hills, to the coast, for a summer holiday or a weekend break. A city just called 'Mostar', where children swam together in the Neretva. A place you could be proud to belong to. And even if that united Yugoslavia now had to be forgotten, she was determined the united city was something they could have again.

[Box the following text]

Ivanka's story

Mira then is a 'domiciled' Muslim woman, native to Mostar. *Ivanka* is also 'domiciled', and a Mostari, but is a Croat and lives in West Mostar. A woman in her early forties, she has a son of eighteen and a daughter of fifteen. Her husband is a Bosniak, a Muslim. Ivanka used to work in the aluminium factory. Today, through a friend, she feels lucky to have found a job on the East side. 'You don't choose, you take whatever you can get.' Working in the same building as Zene Mostara means she is a *de facto* member and participates in a lot of their activities.

Despite the vulnerability they incurred in being a mixed marriage, by a lucky chance Ivanka and her husband managed to stay in their house in what became West Mostar. When the Croat soldiers came to check on them only

Ivanka had been at home. They asked her name. She said simply 'Ivanka' without mentioning her surname. Identifying her as Croat, they simply passed by without further comment. But the war, despite the relatively light shelling of the Western part of the town, was a time of great fear. Her husband had to stay hidden. He passed the months of the war in the house, avoiding imprisonment but also cut off from the Bosniak defence forces of East Mostar. But the whole family survived, and in this Ivanka was luckier than most.

Since the war however she is finding that being in a mixed marriage has a very different meaning from the meaning it had in the former Yugoslavia. She says, 'I think someone like me is a personification of all the things that happened in the war.' She feels uncomfortable by virtue of her own name on the East side of town and by virtue of her husband's name on the West side, even though she is clear in her mind that she is guiltless whichever street she walks on. But it is her children's lives and choices that concern her more. They go to the disputed gymnasium in the central district of Mostar that excludes Muslim children from the East side. Ivanka says, 'I still live the way I was raised, not to care what national group a person belongs to. And in my own family we've tried not to influence the children too much.' But the war forced an identity choice, and her son and daughter made different ones. The boy, older when the war began, was able to see what was happening and take a political stand. He identifies as a Bosniak like his father. Given the way, living in West Mostar, this continues to disadvantage him in the post-war situation, it has to be read as a position of revolt.

Ivanka's daughter, though, was only in the first class of elementary school when the war ended, and was made to feel 'worth less' for having a Bosniak father. She would come home with many questions. She heard other children talk of their fathers as '*bojovnik*' (a Croatian word for soldier). And she was told that a person's nationality derived from that of his or her father. That made her a Bosniak. One day Ivanka felt she had to speak to her openly. 'Are you ashamed of your father?' she asked the girl. 'Those other children's fathers may have killed in the war. Do you want such a father? Your father didn't kill or hurt anybody.' She tried to show her she had something to be proud of. But when they asked her for her nationality in school she said she was a Croat - like her mother. 'It cost me a lot of time and nerves to try to instil normal thinking in her, that you should judge people by whether they are good or bad, not by their national group,' Ivanka said. 'And I'm not sure I've succeeded. I think this is a terrible time that kids have to think about such things and to decide which nation is better and which parent they are going to identify with.'

[Box the following text]

Rasima's story

Whereas Mira and Ivanka are both 'domiciled' women, with experiences defined partly by which side of Mostar they happened to live, Rasima (a pseudonym), another Muslim, is a 'displaced person' who has taken refuge in Mostar and now wants to stay. We met her when visiting Zena BiH. Sewing had been her work pre-war, and today she tailors quality garments for the boutique.

As a young woman, as yet unmarried, Rasima had lived before the war with all her family in Nevesinje. During the Serb extremists' 'ethnic cleansing' of East Herzegovina, Rasima and her sister were imprisoned in a concentration camp with many others. She, her sister and one other woman were the only survivors of this camp. She was witness to the killing of a total of 76 people, including little children. 'They killed them in a terrible way', she says. Rasima lost seven out of eight family members in these events, including her father and mother. She arrived for work therapy in Zena BiH in early 1995, part of a group of 250 survivors of concentration camps, now expelled from East Herzegovina.

Rasima, with some others among the newly arrived women, got involved with Zena BiH. Azra remembers, 'When she first time she couldn't speak to us, she couldn't even cry.' But the sewing work was a kind of therapy, and gradually she was able to use the space to talk. 'Women were tortured in this war in different kinds of ways,' she says. 'They were used as living shields. They were in concentration camps. Some were raped. It is very difficult to talk about it. But it is also difficult not to talk about it.' Rasima and her sister both stayed in Mostar. Both married. Rasima had a miscarriage. But now she has a daughter, and Zena BiH call this baby 'our youngest member'.

The day before we met, Rasima had been taken back to Nevesinje in order to identify the exhumed body of one of her brothers - another trauma. Freshly returned from that terrible revisiting of her home town, she said, 'How could I ever think of going back to live there, taking my daughter? Those war criminals are still walking about free. I don't believe most of them will ever be punished for what they did. I don't have the strength to go back, to go through all that again, to have people provoke my child.' She was crying as she spoke. 'I'd rather be a beggar on the street than go back there.'

It is remarkable, though, what faith Rasima has in the potential of Mostar to renew itself as a mixed city, and how much she wants that to happen. For her, Zena BiH prefigures this future. 'Women of all nationalities participate in Zena BiH from both sides of the city. And personally I can say that in all this time we've never had any conflict between us. It will be a long time, but one day the city will be re-unified.'

The refusal of enforced identities and divisive categories

The fact that in our research we focus on Zena BiH, Zene Mostara and DOM, all three ethnically mixed and anti-nationalist projects, may give the impression that such positive developments are commonplace in Mostar and its region. But this is not so. As in Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje, there are many individuals who personally wish to see their society re-integrated, but there are very few who act on this collectively and in the public sphere. In fact the only other project of this kind in Mostar (we are told) is the Pavarotti Centre for children and youth, and this was not, as the three women's organizations were, a local, Bosnian initiative.

It has not been easy, even for these women as individuals, to resist feelings of ethnic hatred. Memories of war are still acute. Azra said, 'I don't know whether it's hate I feel for those people who hurt me and my mother. I don't want to feel hate. I think perhaps I just want to vomit on them.' Antipathy is daily reinforced by the

distinctive environments of East and West Mostar. Semsra for instance, said 'I go back to the West side to visit friends sometimes. But somehow it gets to me *here* [she pointed to her chest]. I'll be sitting in a café there and all I can think about is how quickly I can get back to the East side.'

But the way the urge to national hatred is dealt with by the women is continually to differentiate between 'good and bad', 'normal and abnormal', 'killers and others' among any one national group. So when Semsra avoids the West side it is not because she is surrounded by 'Croats' there, but because 'war criminals still walk those streets'. West Mostar is the centre of power of those extremists who, as she puts it, 'wrecked my life'. And Azra takes care to show that when she speaks of 'those people who hurt us' she does not mean 'Croats', but 'extremists'. She says of West Mostar, 'The hardliners in the HDZ are still there. And until they go it is impossible truly to talk of a common life.'

So those who want to heal national divisions in Mostar and its region take what steps towards this that they find possible, personally and organizationally. At the simplest individual level people 'cross the line'. Mira told us of one Bosniak woman who simply goes every day into West Mostar to tend her garden there. She may not be able to live there now, but she is prepared to risk hard words and cold shouldering on a daily basis simply to assert that the land is hers to care for. In a similar spirit the women of the three organizations too 'crossed the line' as soon as they could do so with moderate safety. Zena BiH for instance soon after the Dayton agreement was signed, started running car trips four times a week to Nevesinje in the Republika Srpska. Twice a week they took women from Mostar to Nevesinje, and twice they brought women from DOM into Mostar. They did something similar between Mostar and Capljina, a town with a Croat majority now.

They achieved the re-establishment of 'normal' relationships, first and foremost, on the basis of a thought-through position, a belief. Thus Nadja, social worker and Zena BiH activist, said 'I'm not threatened by nationalists and nationalism. I feel myself to be an intellectual, and I believe I can build positive relations.' And Azra, the founder of Zena BiH, said

It's my belief that women never really lost the links of friendship from before the war. Even when we cannot act on them for fear of harming each other. Take those Croat women who took me in. I still can't speak their names. But I can be sure their friendship for me hasn't changed. (Azra)

But a principled position is not enough of itself. The women knew, or quickly learned, that you need to develop an intelligent and sensitive relational practice if mistrust is not to destroy the chance of reconnection. They learned first of all what level of candour is possible, or becomes possible, within the organization. Thus the women of Zena BiH learned how to build the level of trust among themselves that could enable Rasima, arriving with her appalling experience of 'ethnic cleansing', to speak. So that, by the time we met her, Rasima would be able to say, 'We can talk about everything here, we can be open with each other. Every woman here, whatever national name she carries, each has her own pain.'

And likewise the organization took those skills outwards to their meetings with the women in Nevesinje and other towns.

We would avoid painful or sensitive topics in these encounters. We used to organize preparation, a kind of training, for the women who were going from our side. We would avoid heavy war experiences, talk about children, houses, prices, markets, food, relations between men and women, things like that.
(Nadja)

In addition to national identity, there are, as we have seen, many other divisive differences in a place like Mostar. The war has resulted in distinctive categorizations among its survivors, with one category pitted against another. As in Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje, fingers are pointed and blame ascribed. Those who took up arms and those who did not hate each other; those who lost loved ones resent those who did not; those who stayed resent those who went by choice; those who were expelled resent those who escaped; the domiciled resent the displaced and *vice versa*; those who cannot get their accommodation back resent those who live in their own homes. The work the women of the three organizations have undertaken is a highly complex work of healing that often stretches heart and mind to the point of exhaustion.

CHAPTER 4

BANJA LUKA: A city of uncertain status

Banja Luka in war and after war

The city of Banja Luka is the geographical, political, and cultural centre of the region known as the Bosnian Krajina. It is situated in the northern part of B-H, in the wide valley of the river Vrbas, surrounded by forested hills. It is an elegant city with many tree-lined avenues of lindens and chestnuts, and handsome monumental buildings. Its fortress, the Kastel, is built on Roman foundations.

Banja Luka was an important centre both under the Ottoman Empire and Austro-Hungarian rule. The Turks conquered the territory in 1463 and in the next three and half centuries many fine buildings were constructed: mosques, inns, fountains and gardens characterised the city of this period. Many local people converted to Islam during these centuries. In 1878 Ottoman domination ended and Bosnia-Herzegovina came under the administration of the Habsburg monarchy. Those who then came south to colonise the area were Catholics, and many so-called 'Croats' in Banja Luka today are their descendants and carry Austrian or Hungarian family names. The late nineteenth century brought hospitals and the railway, the printing press and manufacture to Banja Luka.

In the period between the two world wars, Banja Luka was the principal city of a province in the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, but when German forces invaded Yugoslavia in 1941 it became the headquarters of the *ustase* regime of the Nazi puppet state of Croatia. The Serb population in particular was victimized by the brutal *ustase*. Serb men who survived imprisonment, torture and murder went underground, joining either the monarchist Serb *četniks* or the ethnically-mixed communist Partisans. These two conflictual traditions still live on in the local Serb population and its contemporary politics.

In post-war Yugoslavia, Banja Luka was important for its university and for its many industries - including engineering, electrical goods, chemicals, timber products and food manufacture. While the town modernised and new high-rise flats were built, distinctive districts of Muslim, Croat and Serb housing persisted. Although religion was not favoured under Tito and the League of Communists, the important Islamic mosques and Orthodox and Catholic churches of Banja Luka survived as valued expressions of a complex cultural heritage.

But all this was about to change. In the late 1980s when the grip of the League of Communists began to fail and new political parties sprang up, it was nationalist politicians that seized the support of local people and won the elections of 1990. Serbs were more than half the population of the city. In the census of 1992 they numbered 106,858, against 29,033 Croats, 28,550 Muslims, 23,403 people declaring themselves Yugoslavs and 7,408 'others'. Banja Luka, under the political control of the SDS, became the heartland of Serb nationalism as the country slid to war.

In the fighting of 1992 to 1995, Banja Luka fared better than Sarajevo or Mostar. There was no direct engagement of militaries in the city or neighbouring area,

although an onslaught by Croatian forces from the east in 1995 was only averted by international action. The infrastructure therefore was not damaged by shelling. But Serb extremists destroyed almost every trace of Muslim culture in an attempt to efface memories of the Ottoman period. All sixteen mosques were dynamited. Many Catholic churches too were destroyed.

The Muslim population of the town was not 'ethnically cleansed' in the manner of those living in the smaller towns and villages to the east. Serbs were so clearly in control here that they did not feel the need for such measures. Muslims were simply intimidated and victimized, so that many fled. To get on a convoy out of the city they had to pay, and also to sign away their rights to their property. The few who remained kept a low profile. Most were removed from their jobs and driven from their flats and houses, sometimes at gunpoint. They spent the war living in garages, sheds and basements. Many felt, and indeed continue to feel, abandoned by the Bosniak leaders in Sarajevo (*Svijet*, 18.4.199). Many Croats also left the town during the war, taking shelter in nearby Croatia. Those who remained suffered particular harassment in 1995 in response to the Croat offensive (Operations Storm and Flash) against Serbs in the Krajina.

Many Banja Luka Serbs disagreed with what was being done in their name by the nationalist regime and its armed men. Some older Muslims remembered how, in World War II, a group of eminent Muslims had appealed to the *ustase* to cease victimization of Serbs. Some now expected rightminded Serbs to reciprocate. Many did help friends and neighbours of the minority groups in private, but few were willing to risk a public stand for fear of reprisals for disloyalty.

Since Dayton

In the new map drawn at the end of the war by the Dayton peace agreement, Banja Luka fell within the Republika Srpska. Radovan Karadzic and the other war leaders of the SDS maintained their headquarters in the town of Pale. But Banja Luka became the principal city of the new Entity, its municipality under SDS control.

The war had affected huge changes in the human character of the city. The streets were full of soldiers in uniform. The many thousands of Muslims and Croats who had gone had been replaced by an influx of thousands of Serb refugees, some from Croatia and some from areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina under Muslim or Croat control. A lot of the refugees were country people, not used to city living. There was resentment on both sides. Banja Luka had always had a proud, perhaps even snobbish, class of 'old Banja Luka' residents who were inclined to look down on these rough newcomers with mud on their boots. For their part, some of the incoming refugees resented the cosmopolitanism of the 'old Banja Luka' elite who, they suspected, might 'rather see Muslims and Croats than us living in Banja Luka!'

The remaining Muslims and Croats however were given no reason to feel this was in fact the case. In the post-war period the elimination of all traces of Muslim culture in the city continued. Muslim-sounding street names were changed to names reflecting Serb (and not even Bosnian Serb) history. The Serb authorities for some years resolutely refused to consider the rebuilding of the famous Ferhadia mosque. On the other hand, they set about reconstructing the Orthodox cathedral that the *ustase* had demolished in World War II.

To Serb nationalist feeling in the Republika Srpska, Catholic culture was now alien. Nevertheless, Croat ethno-political aspirations were seen as relatively unchallenging. Croats after all now had 'their own homeland' to look to. It was Muslims, with nowhere else to belong, known to aspire to a re-unified, Muslim-dominated Bosnia-Herzegovina, who were seen as a threat. They were the ones whose birthrate was feared. They were the ones whose traces had to be rubbed from the face of Banja Luka and whose return must be made unthinkable.

In the period immediately following the first post-war elections, which confirmed the grip of Serb nationalism on the Republika Srpska, the entity was punished by the international community for its intransigence, particularly the way it dragged its feet over the return to their former homes of Muslim and Croat refugees and displaced people. It received less aid than the Federation, and on all indicators of economic recovery it lagged well behind the rest of B-H. Investment and output was lower, unemployment very much higher. The privatization process here was particularly brutal, with a mafiosi of corrupt politicians selling off state property to their own profit.

The political atmosphere in Banja Luka has fluctuated. The power of the war-faction in the administration of the Entity was modified somewhat when, in early 1997, Radovan Karadzic was replaced by Biljana Plavsic as President of Republika Srpska and the new party leadership moved the headquarters from Pale into Banja Luka. The atmosphere was further improved by the accession to the Entity's premiership of the moderate, Milorad Dodik. Plavsic however was displaced in the presidential elections of 1998 by Nicola Poplasen, leader of the extreme nationalist Serbian Radical Party. The international community soon after unceremoniously removed him from power. But this high-handed gesture of the internationals angered many SDS supporters and polarized opinion. Serb national feeling was also aggravated by the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in the Kosovo crisis of 1999, and attacks were made by angry youth on buildings identified with the USA.

Although the Dayton Agreement has been widely criticized for seeming to reward Bosnian Serb militarists for their actions, the predominant attitude of Bosnian Serbs themselves, post-Dayton, has been one of bitterness and resentment. Some had shared the aspiration to a Greater Serbia. But many ordinary Bosnian Serbs had fought between 1992 and 1995 because they felt, or had been persuaded, that the declaration of independence of a Bosnian state threatened to make Serbs 'yet again' victims, doomed to be minoritized and dominated by 'Turks'. They did not, even in retrospect, see Serbs as aggressors but as parties to an 'unavoidable' civil war.

Feelings towards the FRY however were not unambiguous. Individual and family cross-border ties were being maintained and Serb national issues continued to dominate political discourse. On the other hand some were increasingly disillusioned with Milosevic as a leader. Not only had he betrayed the Bosnian Serbs at the end of the war, but he had now 'lost' Kosovo and in general damaged Serb interests in world opinion. And with Serbia enduring sanctions and political turmoil, it was even possible to feel lucky to be a *Bosnian* Serb, with, at least, the Republika Srpska to call your own.

By the time of our case study in 1999, the administration was paying lip-service to the international institutions' injunctions on return. The actual movement of people

however was very slow, particularly to the city itself. Minorities were being discouraged from even considering such a move by acts of terrorism carried out by the extremists on the Serb rightwing against both minorities and Serb personalities considered traitors, such as the assassination of progressive newspaper editor Zelko Kopanja. Between December 1 1995 and September 30 1999, only 609 Bosniak refugees and displaced people returned to Banja Luka. At the latter date, the Muslim population of the town was still little more than 4,000 (and Muslims were no more than 1-2% of the Republika Srpska as a whole). The number of Croats who had returned to the city was 326. In the same period 2091 Serbs returned, more than twice as many as the minorities combined (UNHCR statistics). Meanwhile birth and death rates were also threatening the continuity of a Muslim presence in Banja Luka. In 1999 only three live births were registered in the city, as against 200 deaths.

So while café culture and street life were reviving to give Banja Luka something of its former urbane character, this was now a monocultural city. The cries of the *muezzin* from the mosque were a thing of the past. Cyrillic script had become dominant. Only a foolhardy Muslim woman would walk 'covered' down the fashionable Gospodska promenade. Banja Luka's community of artists, dramatists, writers and other intellectuals, which had been cosmopolitan in its culture, had lost two thirds of its personalities, its inspiration and creativeness.

Women's activism in Banja Luka

Banja Luka, and the Republika Srpska more generally, have their share of humanitarian NGOs, both international and local. There are said to be sixty in BL alone. The great majority are humanitarian organizations. Among the big international NGOs, for instance, Caritas has been very active and also Merhamet. The former have been specially important for the remnant Catholic/Croat population, while Merhamet was the only high-profile NGO supporting the remaining Muslim/Bosniak population of Banja Luka during and after the war.

Quite a few of the local humanitarian NGOs that have sprung up in the post-war period are women's organizations. Examples are Put Nade, (Way of Hope) an organization of women supporting children, Zlatna Jesen, (Golden Autumn) working with the elderly, and Duga, a predominantly Serb group of women working with refugees. Although run by women, however, such groups are not critical of gender relations. And they are characterized by being mainly, in practice if not in principle, mono-ethnic. The two projects of which we made studies in Banja Luka are quite different. They challenge both ethnic exclusivism and women's position in society. Such activist civil associations, as opposed to service providers, began to become a possibility in Banja Luka as the extreme nationalists started to lose their political grip. But the two organizations we researched also differ from each other.

Zenska Akcija 'Vidra'

Zenska Akcija 'Vidra' was set up in 1997 and was thus two years old when we came to Banja Luka to learn more about it. In numbers and budget it is a small NGO, and can seldom pay more than one salary. Its members and beneficiaries are mainly drawn from Banja Luka's ethnic minorities: Bosniaks, Croats and people of mixed origin and in mixed marriages. The project was set up to address one particular problem: the *economic disadvantage* experienced by such women. Project

activity was be designed to give support to what Vidra have variously termed the most 'socially jeopardized' or 'socially endangered' women. What precisely these terms mean in the context of Banja Luka, we learned from our interviews with four of Vidra's more active members.

All four had been put out of work during the war and, by the time they got involved with Vidra, had all but despaired of ever working again. SK (aged 49) and SJ (aged 53) had both been reduced to inactivity in 1992 by being removed from their jobs in Incel, the big Yugoslav paper manufacturers. The reason given was 'war circumstances'. But both of them knew full well that the real reason was their names. SK was born of a Serb father and Croat mother. SJ was a Muslim. But both were married to Muslim men. 'It was a hard moment,' SJ said of her ejection from employment. 'But those of us who were laid off together, we visited each other, we talked to each other. And sometimes, I have to say, at times we were almost glad not to be working in those perishingly cold rooms for that miserable salary!' They compensated for their enforced idleness by walking in the countryside (there was no fighting in the immediate environs of Banja Luka), collecting mushrooms and herbs, finding respite in nature.

Jasmina, a Muslim married to a Muslim, had also been dismissed in 1992 from her job as an administrator in a medical institution. 'It was just an ordinary working day,' she said. 'And just one hour before it was time to go home they told me "don't bother to come in tomorrow". A month later they sent me my papers.' This had been a very hard time for Jasmina. Her husband had been arrested and held in a prison camp. Several family members had lost their livelihood. Latterly, eleven of them had depended on her salary alone. Now that too was gone. Fortunately they had saved a small supply of provisions against such an eventuality.

Jasmina at this time had felt her children were unsafe in school. The teachers were always baiting her daughter by asking 'where is your father?'. But she was in a cleft stick. If she kept them out of school the family would be seen as boycotting 'Serb' education. She thought of trying to leave Banja Luka, with the children, on a convoy. But to do this she would have had to sign away her house and other property to the Republika Srpska authorities. And, besides, her husband, whose freedom from imprisonment they had eventually bought for DM 4000, remained under house arrest. Eventually they bribed their way onto a bus to Tuzla and spent the rest of the war there.

The story of M was different again. An unmarried Muslim woman, she had lost two jobs in succession not because she was of minority identity but because her employers were. The first, a Muslim, escaped from Banja Luka in 1993, and her second, a Croat, fled the following year. At the outbreak of war she had been, as well as a working woman, also housekeeper for her mother and three brothers. Her mother died and her brothers escaped from the region. Now M was left living alone, jobless, doing her best to keep busy with humanitarian work - until joining Vidra.

In comparison with other women's organizations covered in this research, Vidra are thus very specific in their membership. The core group is a cluster of friends. Some had known each other long before the war, and some had helped each other during the hard times. They are also specific in their range of work and action. Their stated objectives are broad - supporting and promoting women's human and civil rights, and developing and expanding tolerance, confidence and non-violent communication in the community. But their practical focus is economic: women's

earning power. They are, effectively, a small school for professional education for women, and, as they put it, 'the promotion of women in society'. In the early days they obtained training for themselves on how to run an NGO and how to do 'policy advocacy'.

Early on, they were supported by Caritas, the Catholic international NGO, and by a Danish NGO. They acquired an office, computer equipment and basic training in computer skills with a grant from CARE, a Canadian organization. Then they opened their doors for courses to women disadvantaged in the labour market. First, with Bosnian Women's Initiative money, they ran a three-month course for twelve women in small business enterprise for women. Then they ran a course in the Word Excel programme for book-keepers. In cooperation with the 'Medical Corps', they ran a two-month course in computer training for medical workers in emergency services. They have since run courses in computing for handicapped people, and facilitated sixteen workshops for NGOs in the Republika Srpska and the Federation. They also have a women's micro-credit project with 112 beneficiaries.

Vidra is based precisely on the principle of ethnic mixity: these minority women have organized to seek equal rights in a fully mixed society. And in this respect it contrasts strikingly with the prevailing Serb exclusiveness in Banja Luka. Jasmina for instance said 'Vidra is the first organization I visited where nobody asked me what my nationality is. That's so important. For nine years I'd been asked: what's your name? your nationality? your religion? even when it had absolutely nothing to do with the matter in hand.'

So although the project's mixity is partial, it is both practical and principled. 'Most of us couldn't survive without contact with women in other towns. We got together a critical mass of women who wanted to co-operate and weren't nationalistic. We have mixity in all our courses. But we don't insist on it as a principle, it is something that just happens.' They do not specify in their records the national identity of those who attend Vidra activities. But they can tell from their names that many women involved with Vidra are in mixed marriages.

Udruzene Zene

Our second case study in Banja Luka was of Udruzene Zene. It is a considerably bigger organization than Vidra, with a broader range of activities. It has four paid workers, a substantial number of activists and reaches many beneficiaries. It has a more consistent and critical gender analysis than Vidra. In contrast to Vidra, the women involved are mainly Serb, though, as we shall see, their politics are positively integrative.

Nada Golubovic is the acknowledged founder of Udruzene Zene. She was born of a Serb father and a Croat mother, but identifies as a Serb due to the latter having been, as Nada explained, 'a very patriarchal woman', who believed that the children should take their father's national identity. Like Vidra, Udruzene Zene is based on a friendship group. Around Nada was a group of women, including Lana Jajcevic and Natasha Petric, predominantly of Serb identity, all of them deeply opposed to Serb nationalism and angry at the separation brought about by the war and then imprinted on the map of B-H by the Dayton Agreement.

As soon as Nada and her colleagues saw a possibility of defying prevailing political opinion by crossing the Inter-Entity Border Line they did so. The first opportunity

that arose was a women's conference in Zenica, organized by the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly. This was in 1996, a time when it took some courage to participate in events in the Federation. On their return they were attacked in the local newspaper for having 'taken coffee with Alija Izetbegovic'. But nothing worse than insults befell them. So they persisted, next visiting Bihac for a workshop on leadership organized by the women's NGO Delphi Star. Nada says

The part played by women in maintaining dialogue in B-H has been very important. And not even B-H alone, but in the whole area of the former Yugoslavia... For me personally, it seemed as if German-style Nazism had come to the region. I couldn't agree with the idea that one national group could exist alone without the others.

This contact with other women and women's organizations so soon after the fighting ended taught Nada what an 'NGO' is, and she began to feel that action for change might be possible even in the Republika Srpska. She saw Medica, for instance, helping refugees. She thought: yes, we suffered in a particular way as women, and women in the Republika Srpska were particularly isolated. Having such a political leadership was terrible in itself, but on top of that the international institutions and NGOs were punishing the entity for its leadership by limiting aid and contact.

Nada and her colleagues first set their sights on making contact with women in the eastern part of the Entity, where they knew the situation was even worse than in Banja Luka. They tried to awaken interest in women there to get active and organize. They helped them get humanitarian aid, to set up an organization, and raise funding from BWI. At the same time, in Banja Luka, they founded their own organization, Udružene Žene, registering it under the law of citizens' associations on August 16 1996. Some of them attended a course about how to organize projects, offered by the OSCE. Some of them individually attended empowerment courses, 'to strengthen ourselves and then to be able to strengthen others.' At first everyone worked on a voluntary basis, only later raising grants from international donors.

Since then Udružene Žene have started and completed many different activities. One of the earliest, which continues to have an important place in their programme, is *Women and Law*, a joint project with the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, funded by Kvinna til Kvinna. It employs lawyers to give free legal advice and help on employment, housing and domestic issues. It represents women in court cases. The legal project is specially useful in having secured a building in which other UZ activities too can be housed.

Other UZ projects have included *Woman Today*, a series of public seminars on sex equality for women in Banja Luka and other towns. There was *Women's Reproductive Health*, a joint project with Stope Nada (Marie Stopes International), co-ordinated by a doctor. And there was an *Animals Fund*, supported by BWI, providing cows and hens for women returners - both Serbs and Muslims returning to a rural area spanning the Entity line.

A good deal of the activity of Udružene Žene has involved co-operation with other women's organizations in Sarajevo and elsewhere in B-H. They worked actively with the League of Women Voters in the campaign *There are More of Us*. UZ organized the local branch of the League and were active in outreach designed to get women in the Republika Srpska registered to vote. They have tried to develop a working relationship with women representatives in the more moderate political parties,

having most success with the Party of Independent Social Democrats. They co-operated with the International Human Rights Law Group, contributing to research on *Women in Public Life* for a report on women's rights in B-H. And they participated with Medica, Zene Zenama and Oxfam in research on *Women and Violence*.

A project that has been particularly formative of UZ's gender politics is the *SOS Crisis Phone Line*. It is a resource for women experiencing violence and other forms of crisis, who not only obtain immediate support on the line, but may also subsequently come to the office for advice and counselling. The recruitment of young women as phone-line volunteers has reduced the average age in UZ. The volunteers receive some training on gender-based violence and hear many first-hand accounts from the survivors they work with. As we saw was also the case with Zene B-H in Mostar, the SOS line has revealed an urgent need for a refuge for battered women and their children. UZ are now seeking funding for such a development.

This work on domestic violence, and the relative connectedness of Udruzene Zene with feminists from other countries, has tended to radicalize their stance on gender politics. As we discuss further in Chapter 5, these women have a more consistent analysis of women's oppression than we found elsewhere and they are unusual in readily using the term 'feminist' of themselves and their work.

In their use of the media, too, Udruzene Zene are more experienced, so far as we can tell, than other women's organizations in B-H. They regularly use independent radio and television to inform women of the existence of the SOS Crisis line and to 'make violence against women visible'. And in their most ambitious project, *How to Live Together*, they have tackled head-on some of the most sensitive issues in post-war Banja Luka. This was a series of programmes, designed by UZ, that ran monthly for twelve months. The pattern was for a sequence of three weekly radio programmes to be followed by once monthly television slot. Each radio programme featured an individual woman, while in the television programme the three were brought together for a discussion chaired by a moderator. Each time Udruzene Zene chose one domiciled woman of Banja Luka, one refugee, and a woman of the Muslim or Croat minority who had fled, or been driven out, and was now a returner. When it happened, as it often did, that the returner felt insufficiently safe or confident to appear on television with the other two, a vacant chair would symbolize her presence.

The media project depends greatly on the experience of Mirjana Lukac, a Udruzene Zene activist and paid worker, whose pre-war occupation was television journalist. She says

We deal with topics like prejudice and tolerance, adaptation and communication. We choose women who we know are eloquent, careful and confident. Before each cycle we carry out a questionnaire study in the town, to gather popular opinion which we then insert into the programme. The broadcasts are live, and there's a phone-in, which usually provokes a lot of calls.

The national identity of the great majority of women of Udruzene Zene is Serb. But this does not mean that they seek to be a Serb organization. On the contrary, they are open to women of all national identities as a matter of stated principle. Lana

explained that the women had gathered around a vision, an attractive idea. 'Names' had been irrelevant.

At the start we were basically a friendship group, five or six of us. And in the war, friendship was a matter of life and death. Even before we formed UZ we had been supporting refugee women, and our friends in minorities here who had problems. For instance, I was lucky to be able to stay in my own flat. But many non-Serbs were forced to leave. My nearest neighbours had to leave, so I opened my doors and they lived with me. Many of these women now in Udruzene Zene were doing the same for others.

Lana also pointed out to us that the very fact of Udruzene Zene's publicly anti-nationalist politics made it difficult for many Bosniak and Croat women, extremely vulnerable minorities in Banja Luka today, to join and have the high profile being an activist in UZ involves. On the other hand it attracted a degree of ethnic mixity among beneficiaries. Up to half of the clients of the both the legal service and the SOS Crisis phone line were women of the minority groups. It would not necessarily be a bad thing in the current context, she felt, to be an organization mainly of Serbs. It could be valuable to have Serb women, explicit about their politics, taking the lead in challenging the nationalist political regime and arguing for the rights of the other, minority, national groups. 'We are not part of "the Serbs" who decided to have ethnic cleansing. If we can say we're Serb women and we're against Serb nationalism it can be even more effective.'

Changes in the social fabric: women's re-integrative practice

The war drastically changed the social structure of Banja Luka. At the level of the family unit, it split people apart, separating men from women, old from young. Sometimes the separations were made permanent by emigration and many were sealed by death. Few families have recovered the shape they had before the war.

At the level of Banja Luka city, this urban society lost its stable mixity and became a site of flux. Croats, Muslims and people of mixed, uncertain or 'other' identities, left in large numbers. Some (especially Muslims) were received as refugees by distant countries, some (especially Croats) just crossed the border to nearby Croatia. Also prone to leave, if they could, were democrats who found themselves at odds with the resurgent nationalism and the hyping of national identity. Many middle class and intellectual people who could draw on contacts abroad, and many men who wished to evade recruitment to the army, escaped if they could. Also departing the town for the countryside, of course, leaving their womenfolk and children behind them, were those men who were recruited into the armed forces. Thus, national identity was not the only shifting variable - the age and sex structure of the city changed too. Meanwhile, flooding into the city were thousands of displaced people, mainly Serbs driven eastwards across the Krajina in the Croatian offensive. Of these, some stayed in Banja Luka but many were passing through on the way to Serbia. To these changes in the urban society must be added a more general decline in wellbeing. An abnormally high proportion of the population ended the war in a state of ill health, either physically, due to poor nutrition and untreated illnesses, or mentally, due to trauma.

When the fighting stopped some, but rather few, of the incomers left again. Some (but even fewer) of the leavers returned. As we saw to be the case in Mostar, there

were new and complex tensions between the various groups in and out of the city. There were resentments, as for instance between those old hands who felt distaste for the displaced incomers 'with mud on their boots' and those incomers who felt put down by the snobbery of the 'old BL-ites'. Some people who had settled abroad now despised those who had remained, viewing them as contaminated by the nationalism and provincialism of post-war Republika Srpska. The stayers resented the new emigrés for their foreign currency and Western lifestyle. Remaining Croat and Muslim minorities felt betrayed by 'their' national groups in their respective power centres in B-H who had abandoned the Republika Srpska as 'unwinnable', leaving them hostage among Serb nationalists. Bosniaks living in the Federation suspected those remaining in the RS of 'having sold out to the Serbs', and conversely Serbs in the RS suspected Serbs remaining in the Federation of a similar betrayal.

[Box the following section]

Sanja

Sanja was fifteen when war came to Bosnia-Herzegovina. She was living with her Serb parents in Bugojno, a town where the Serb population was in a minority in relation to both Croats and Muslims. Three of her uncles were arrested and one was killed. Sanja and her mother took heed of this warning and escaped from the town during the night. They went first to Donji Vakuf, then to Sanski Most. Eventually they joined the flood of displaced people in Banja Luka, where they were able to rent temporary shelter in the outhouse of a Muslim's home. Sanja came to Udruzene Zene one day looking for help, and stayed to become a volunteer on the SOS phone line.

Twenty-two now, Sanja has been traumatized by violence at several levels. All her childhood she witnessed her father's brutality to her mother. More recently she had been terrorized by the shelling and grenades, so that now the sound of an alarm or a car backfiring could evoke panic. Mother and daughter would like to return to Bugojno, trusting that their former Muslim neighbours would bear them no ill will. But now her parents are separated and the father will not relinquish the flat. So Sanja says, 'I live nowhere. I belong nowhere. Any moment we could be put on the street by our landlord. I just live from day to day.' She would like to study law. She sees the only viable future lying abroad, anywhere far from here. But no country yet has conceded a visa.

But if Sanja cannot escape from Banja Luka, she has found among the women of Udruzene Zene a philosophy that affords her an escape from hatred. She says 'The world belongs to the younger generation, the future belongs to the future. We will make efforts to rebuild this place, to make it better. People will be divided into two groups. They won't be Serb, Croat and Muslim, just good and bad.' This young woman of Orthodox Christian background says she would like to see the mosques of Bosnia rebuilt. 'The destruction of historical monuments is the next worst crime after murder. It's barbarism.' Remembering the town of Donji Vakuf where she had seen the results of the war, she said, 'I would like to express my apologies to the people whose mosques were destroyed there, and my thanks to Muslims who didn't destroy our churches.'

In the postwar period, information about what was happening, who was who, and about attitudes and feelings, was often lacking, erroneous, or concealed. The national media gave one spin to events, the internationally sponsored radio and TV stations another. People sometimes felt obliged to conceal their national identity, or even to misrepresent it. If you had a Muslim personal name and a Serb family name you might use the first in one context, the second in another. Some returners would deny they ever left the city for fear of losing rights to their property. National feeling was more openly expressed by Serbs than by Croats and Muslims - because minorities' safety depended on keeping quiet. Mostly, democrats who deplored nationalism hid their opinions while among the dominant nationalists. But conversely, as the international institutions increasingly exacted compliance with standards of 'democracy' in the Republika Srpska, some nationalists too began to feel gagged.

There had been drastic losses in culture. There had been a flowering of religious belief and affiliation in the late eighties as communism waned. Now Islam had been repressed, the mosques torn down. Catholicism was muted - despite the brave stand taken by the leading cleric, Bishop Komarica. The Orthodox Church had allowed itself to be manipulated by nationalist politicians. The 'modernity', 'civility' and 'urbanity' of pre-war Banja Luka, once a deep well of commonality for its peoples, was in ruins. Thus Mirjana told of her husband, an actor who had won many prizes, was no longer entertaining children with his wellknown puppet theatre but reduced to driving a car for an international institution. Mirjana said, 'We have lost some of the people who made the city what it was.'

The women activists had experienced as individuals these losses and deformations in their customary way of life, and each had responded in her own way. SK said, 'So many friends left. None of them have come back. I want it to be the same as it was. It's like a watch that stopped and won't start again. I have dreams about the friends that left. I imagine I hear someone's voice, and I cry.' Nada had spent many years in Zagreb. She had been a relative newcomer to Banja Luka. She said

I didn't realize how much I liked Banja Luka and how many people I was connected with here until the moment the war started. Then my women friends started to leave, some went to Croatia, some abroad. It was such a beautiful autumn, that autumn of 1992. I started to see the city with the eyes of an 'old Banja Luka-ite' and to understand how those who had to leave their city would suffer. I felt the pain of the ones who left, but also the pain of the ones who came. It hurt me to see the young people, refugees, wandering aimlessly around the town.

Totally alienated by the separatism, the furious reinvention of national identity all around them, they did what they could as individuals to contradict the trend. Nada said

At that time most of our people [i.e.Serbs] were afraid to say anything. But you could help people of the minorities in practical ways. Small things, but you could offer them what you had. For instance you could protect your neighbours, or colleagues at work. And people did. I did.

They tried not to be prejudiced towards the newcomers. They tried to make the difficult transition from 'it's nice here in spite of them' to 'it's nice here with them' and even 'it's nice here because of them'. Nada went on

It's really become a different town. It's still nice. I even like the new people who came, and the people who came back. We must work on them more, so as to live together. In this city first, then in B-H as a whole.

It was this war-time refusal of the logic of chauvinism, the one-to-one support of friends and neighbours, that laid the foundation for post-war collective action by Nada and the other women. When they did take the positive step of setting up their women's NGO, they began to work more consciously and collectively at acquiring new abilities and sensibilities to serve them in the turbulent city. They themselves, as Aleksandra said, may not 'take nationality seriously'. They might prefer to 'have no nationality because nationalism had brought us such terrible things.' But they realized that the ability to take nationality lightly depended on individual circumstances. It was easier for some than others. They worked, as Mirjana put it, at 'seeing each other's problems'. For instance, they very much wanted to see everyone return to their old homes. But it was important to respect choice. 'I think people ought to return,' said Nada, 'But at the same time I respect someone if they don't want to, whatever their nationality.'

They gained a certain valuable knowledge from the hard experience of being 'Serbs' (the people the whole world had learned to hate). Listening to others lump you in with *četniks*, show prejudice against you, call you 'the aggressor', had made them more aware of the 'Inter-Entity Border Line inside our own heads'. 'We bring something with us from our homes and our upbringings. We are taught stories of the past in different ways... I started to think about these differences. I think we all have to overcome these obstacles we have inside us.' Their understanding of the pressures that shape identity enabled them sometimes to stand, figuratively, in the shoes of nationalists as well as their victims.

So in Udruzene Zene they taught each other the first rule of re-integrative politics: being alert to the other person's sense of self, respecting it and responding to it. We noticed Nada used the term *Bosniak* to refer to people of Muslim background. She explained she had become aware that since the war individual Muslims varied in the way they wished to be known. She had worked in the hospital with two *Bosniak* women. They had said they felt themselves to be Muslim and did not wish to be known by the new name 'Bosniak'. But elsewhere she had been taken to task by a woman had been angered to be termed a Muslim, and wished to be named *Bosniak* - a status earned through suffering. So now Nada accepted that the choice should be theirs and she should listen to them and be sensitive to their wishes.

The women of Udruzene Zene were finding that, as time went by, they were no longer so out of step in being integrative. More and more they were feeling that people in the Republika Srpska wanted change. 'People become more aware as time goes by that the war was just a kind of craziness.' 'They are fed up with this singular politics.' This sometimes encouraged the activists of both Vidra and Udruzene Zene to express a cautiously optimistic vision for the future.

The women of the two projects approached a similar future from different directions. The women of Vidra, the minority, would 'hold on in there'. SJ, of Vidra, said

My wish, my *želja*, is that I want people to return to where they want to be. I want to see former citizens, friends, here again with me. For myself, I want

economic independence. I don't want to have to rely on my children. And I want good health, to walk and walk and walk... I want to be back in my own flat again, and my parents back in their own house, all of us able to sleep without fear. I'd like to build a beautiful retirement home for people of all, any nationality - something for me too, if I'm ill or old.

Some of them, like Vidra's Jasmina were 'returners'. She said 'We are going to stay and fight. Maybe fight isn't the right word. Simply show we have a right to live in this place. We dreamed for five years about coming back and don't want it to fail.' And even more positively, she had devised a plan for a women's centre in Banja Luka. Women feel a big need for this, she felt. It was going to be 'a space for women of all nationalities. None of us have any space for ourselves. There's no money to go to cafes. It would be a place where you don't have to talk about difficult issues, politics. They're fed up with all that. To do things that bring them pleasure. Deal with things like health, households, children. Something social, not political - even just exchanging cooking recipes. And relaxing.'

The vision of the women of Udruzene Zene was coloured by their membership, in the main, of the ethnic majority. Mirjana said, 'I'd like it if we were one country. You can't have a miracle of course, you can't have amnesia, and it is only ten years since 1990.' And she realized that things could only move a step at a time. Each person had their own pace, because they had to deal first with their own memories. She said, 'I travel freely between the entities, and I am meeting people mainly like me. But I recognize it's different, for instance, for those who lost loved ones at Srebrenica.' In essence, the vision of the women of Udruzene Zene was precisely a city and a country that would give Banja Luka's minorities, such as the women of Vidra, what they most dearly wished for.

CHAPTER 5

Women's Organization: Developmental Problems

Women and their local integrative organizations

What can we say in general about these organizations? And the women who are active in them - do they add up to a 'kind' of person? What exactly have they chosen to do and why? It is not easy to generalize, but certain things are clear.

Who are the women?

We saw that it is characteristic of these organizations that they were inspired by one particular woman who gathered round herself a group based, usually, on pre-war friendships. In some the originator continues to be of over-riding significance in the organization, while in others the principal roles have been disseminated somewhat more, to a small core group of active women, of which she remains a part. The active women tend to be in the middle years of life - in their forties and fifties. There may be one or two older than that, but young women are scarce in the leadership groups. They are thus typically women who had experience of life and work in the 1970s and 1980s, in a Yugoslavia led by the League of Communists before the onset of the dramatic social, political and economic turnings of the nineteen-nineties, considered in Chapter 1. They were adults well before Tito died. Most of the core group of women are married, or have been married. Few have little children. Their offspring are now likely to be teenagers or young adults.

On the whole these are educated women, some with university degrees. Most of them had responsible employment before the war. Many were administrators, teachers, economists, in public sector employment or socially owned industries. If one can talk of a class structure in Yugoslavia, this positions them in a 'middleclass' bracket. That is to say, they were not among the Yugoslav élite of Belgrade, Sarajevo, Zagreb or Ljubljana, pulling the strings of power, but they had a comfortable, secure and satisfying lifestyle. This may be one source of their strength and confidence today. They are also characteristically urban people. They may have been born to families who lived in villages, but on the whole as adults they worked in towns and cities, where a non-nationalist mindset was common.

In terms of political affiliation, none of them of course owe allegiance to the nationalist parties that claim to represent ethnic groups. They are more likely to vote for one of the newer opposition parties mobilizing around democratic and integrative values. Only a minority however are active members in these parties. In terms of religion, we have seen that they come from all of the three main traditions but relate to Islam and the Christian churches in a range of different ways. Some described themselves as atheists, some as simply detached from religion, some as having a personal religious belief. But none of them are of the opinion that organized religion should have a role in politics.

Around the core group in each organization, as we have seen, there is a wider group of frequent or occasional participants and users. Many do not differ greatly from the core group. But in the extended membership there seemed to be more older women, younger women, less educated and more rural women, than in the core group. As to

the wider circle still, of those who might be termed 'beneficiaries' of the organizations, certain components of the programme of work (as for instance running a crisis line for women affected by violence, or supporting returners and refugees) involved much poorer and more needy women and their families.

What is their activism about?

The organizations began either during the war, or not long after it ended, and responded at first to the twin crises of destitution and trauma. Individual women were helping others in informal ways, and gradually collectivized this help so that it became recognizably 'humanitarian assistance'. They were urgently getting food and clothing out to the most needy in their locality. They were also helping each other, and later a wider group, to deal with trauma through simple sociability, a chance to talk. Knitting projects for instance served both these needs at once. Today, although some of this kind of thing continues (in helping returners for instance), humanitarian work and psycho-social support are not the main activities of any of the organizations. (Nor, incidentally, is reproductive health care, although we know of other women's organizations that do focus on this.) Instead these organizations have developed a characteristic range of projects. The six most prominent are the following.

The first two respond to the disadvantage, indeed the crisis, of women in relation to employment and the economy, discussed in Chapter 1. One is *income generation*, and this operates in two modes. We saw how some organizations have established manual production of goods for sale, as where women have set up workshops to make knitted and sewn garments and toys, and have organized ways of selling them. We found projects for hairdressing, for ceramics and for the gathering, processing and sale of medicinal and culinary herbs. And some organizations administer micro-credit schemes, through which they are helping women, singly or in groups, to exploit business opportunities.

The other employment-related activity is *skills training programmes*. These are often associated with the income generating projects and serve the same aim of helping women to achieve economic independence. For instance, women working in production projects learn skills, such as machine sewing, on the job. But several organizations have acquired computers on which to run short courses in word processing and accounting for women, including particularly disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities.

A third field of activity is *legal advice and legal advocacy*. Some organizations employ their own lawyers or make space available for lawyers to come in and run 'clinics' on a regular basis. They offer legal advice to people of the locality, and will even in some cases represent them in the courts. The problems clients bring to them include housing rights, job discrimination, state benefits, divorce and alimony. On some issues the legal teams may contribute to campaigns concerning 'rights' and pressure for changes in the law - 'advocacy' in its second sense.

Another kind of project we came across is action against *violence against women*. An organization may run a telephone help-line for victims of domestic abuse or rape, and for women (and children) experiencing other forms of crisis. They may offer an opportunity to women to follow up the phone call with a visit to the office for counselling. They may be trying to raise funding for a flat or house to serve as a refuge for women needing to escape violence in the home. And in addition to this

local work they may contribute to, or be in touch with, a wider campaign concerning, for instance, child prostitution or international trafficking in women.

A fifth focus of activity is increasing *women's engagement with the political system*. This responds to the marginal and alienated position of women in political society, described in Chapter 1. The organizations may educate and inform women about the political system. They may seek to establish productive working contacts with local women activists or representatives of political parties, and encourage such women to speak for women and mobilize in their parties around women's issues. And they aim to give women the knowledge and confidence to act politically. We have seen how some organizations have been active partners of the League of Women Voters in campaigning for women to register as electors and use their votes to further women's interests.

Sixth, and finally, the organizations all work in one way or another on *conflict reduction*. Tensions in these cities and towns, post-war, are many and complex. There is of course deep mistrust between people of the ethno-national names that were politicized and mobilized in the fighting. But there is also tension between those who fought and those who did not; those who espouse nationalism and those who reject it; those who have always lived here and those who have arrived as refugees; those who now live in a given flat or house and those who want it back; those who stayed here in the war and those who fled and are now returning. Few of the organizations work on 'conflict resolution' as such in focused group sessions. They do it, first, through their own conscious commitment to inclusivity. Just working together within the organizations as Bosnian Serb, Bosnian Croat and Bosniak women, and women of mixed origin and in mixed marriages, fosters post-war reconciliation. Secondly, the choice of projects fosters reintegration - assisting returners for instance, and outreach from town to village. Third, reconciliation is furthered by their integrative way of running projects - as when, in Mostar and Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje for instance, they positively seek participation in their various activities of women from both 'sides' of the town.

It is a characteristic of these organizations, then, that they are mid-way between the low-profile option of humanitarian work and the high-profile option of campaigning. They do just a little of these things at either end of the spectrum, and the trend seems to be away from the former and towards the latter. But campaigning and advocacy is still rather undeveloped, partly for lack of strategic thinking and partly because, in the current uneasy political climate, women already under suspicion for 'talking to the enemy' are afraid to be seen as too 'challenging'. In the main therefore they are focused on practical, local, collective, public projects for furthering women's independence, effectiveness and power, while simultaneously attempting to rebuild an integrated social world to live in.

Personal motivations

What has motivated the leaders/founders and core group to be active in an integrative NGO? They seemed to us to be three. First, they are active in order to *quell their own fear*. This is curious, since many of the things they choose to do incur risk and danger. They are 'crossing the line' towards reconciliation and reintegration at a time when incidents of violence against returners and reconcilers are in the news headlines every week. But the women experienced being afraid, during the war, as terrible. Now they are simply refusing to go on feeling fear.

Secondly, they have become active in order to *escape confinement*. Before the war they had mostly been women working in the public sphere, going out to a workplace everyday. During the war it had been a shock to find themselves pinned in a basement under shellfire. Afterwards, they were deeply frustrated to have become 'housewives', forever preoccupied with home and family. And they felt constrained and limited by not being able to move freely about their town or city. Hate-filled towns are riddled with borders that you can observe or defy: one of them is the threshold of your own front door. They had taken a step across it, and then a step further to cross political and military borders.

A third motivation is *regaining agency* after the victimhood of war. While women were occupied to the point of exhaustion during the war in ensuring their own survival and that of families and friends, there had been few choices involved and they had not felt in control. In the transition from war to peace slightly more choice opened up about how to earn a living. One possibility was to become an entrepreneur. And we met women who had opened a kiosk, or re-opened a café. But the current circumstances of grassroots capitalism in B-H are tough and the culture in the main is masculine. More men than women have chosen the business route. The sphere of NGOs, on the other hand, is less male-dominated, and running a non-governmental organization is something women seem to be good at. It has offered a salary, albeit erratic, to some of the core group. But more importantly it has attracted them by offering a chance to move forward, learn skills, be of use, effect something.

Responding to these motivations, the women have brought into existence a new kind of phenomenon in Bosnia-Herzegovina. But their organizations are fragile and may not survive long. It is uncertain just what they add up to and what future they have. In our research we explored not only the achievements of the organizations but also their weaknesses, and the impediments they experience. We found the two most significant weaknesses were *inadequacy of organizational process* within the groups; and *lack of co-operation and connectedness* between them. A major impediment to their progress was *insecurity of funding*.

We go on now to discuss these three things, drawing on two sources - one internal to the organizations, the second external. The first is the record of the workshop, mentioned in the Introduction, that we held in Neum in January 2000 so that the women themselves could discuss these things. We feel this internal self-criticism has particular value and legitimacy. The second source is tape-recorded interviews we conducted in Sarajevo with concerned observers outside the organizations, both Bosnian and other women, in international institutions, international NGOs and organizations of Bosnia-wide scope (see Appendix 1). This is more detached opinion and comes from several different standpoints.

Criticism, even self-criticism, is of course always sensitive. In the interests of enabling a full and free presentation of the problems as women raised them, we have decided in the discussion that follows to afford all the speakers anonymity.

Problems of internal process

Small NGOs like these can succeed or fail, survive or fold, due to their circumstances (over which they do not have control) and their practices (over which they do). The main internal weaknesses of the organizations we studied, discussed

both at Neum and by the external commentators in interview, concerned their *structure and regulation*; questions of *leadership, accountability and responsibility*; the development and sharing of *skills and roles*; and *transparency of information and process*. These are inevitably interrelated and not easy to disentangle one from the other.

Decision-making structures and regulations

We saw in Chapter 1 that, at the time of our research, NGOs such as these were governed by out-dated laws, currently under review. The 1995 Law on Association of Citizens operating in the Federation, and that adopted by the Assembly of the Republika Srpska in 1992, afforded no encouragement or guidance to NGOs in setting up democratic decision-making structures, effective management systems and responsible, reflexive processes.

We have seen how all these organizations had been obliged under these laws to assemble a group of thirty founding signatories in order to formally register the association at the outset. Clearly, these people ought, in theory, to have some meaningful role in the life of the organization. But inevitably the thirty nominal founders were often just 'names', rather far removed from the day to day exigencies of the organization. Even were it possible to assemble them, as some of the organizations attempted to do, at a kind of 'annual general meeting', they would be insufficiently in touch to be a coherent or responsible governing body. In the absence of such a body to which to be accountable, most of our organizations had set up a small executive committee that would meet every few weeks and take practical decisions in the name of the organization as a whole. Sometimes but not invariably its members were elected.

There was seldom a constituency that could be called 'the membership' of the organization. Few women would have the spare resources to pay a regular membership subscription. Besides, the fluidity and the ambiguity of status of individuals in relation to the organization (the difficulty of defining any one woman as activist, advisor, supporter, user, or beneficiary) made the concept of membership elusive. Consequently it was difficult to conceive of a way in which members might be formally represented in decision-making. In the absence of a collective voice of members, some organizations had enlisted individuals randomly onto some kind of an advisory committee or group, to be a sounding board for the executive.

As to procedure, the organizations appeared not on the whole to have amplified the formal statute required by law in order to meet their own need for agreed procedure. There was therefore a lack of conscious reasoning and choice concerning the proper procedure of decision-making bodies and the relation to them of working staff (paid and unpaid). It was mostly unclear how they would be elected or chosen, how often they would meet, whether majority voting would prevail, what their responsibilities were to be etc. etc. Individual participants were therefore unlikely to know how to play a full and active part in governance.

As to goals, although most organizations had some kind of statement of aims, even if only to satisfy funders, few had an elaborated statement of mission or a process for evaluating achievements in relation to targets. In any case, as we shall see, direction tended to veer this way and that in response to available funding.

Leadership, accountability and responsibility

Women's organizations formed in the 'new wave' of feminism in Western European countries during the 1970s and 1980s, and also those that had been beginning to emerge in the former Yugoslavia before its demise, often rejected the idea of individual leadership in favour of collective responsibility. They often found difficulty, however, in activating this principle. Either the organization failed because responsible leadership was undeveloped; or leaders arose who, because they were unacknowledged, were unaccountable. Latterly, by contrast, feminists from the different culture of the USA had been stressing 'leadership' at the expense of collective responsibility. Some Bosnian women had received training in this mode.

In each of the organizations we studied there was a woman who was clearly a leader. Women indeed often spoke of 'our leader'. She might be called the founder or president or co-ordinator - but whatever her title, she was the one who most often represented the organization in public and to whom other women looked for leadership. Even in cases where the leadership was formally shared between two or three women, one appeared to have more authority. This practice entailed both benefits and costs.

In our visits to the organizations we did not hear leadership problematized. It was however energetically pursued as an issue at the Neum workshop, where some of the participants were in leadership roles and others not. It did not happen on the first day. In fact in the early sessions women said such affirmative things as 'we're always all there together in the office', 'we have been friends a long while', 'we never have arguments', 'there are no interpersonal problems', 'we're all included in decision-making' and so on.

Eventually, however, as women gained the confidence to probe more deeply, some painful issues involved in leadership were brought to light. Some women were critical of what went on in their organizations. One felt that that leaders tended to be egoistic. 'They never lose a chance to tell people they are the founders.' They tended promote their own interests and to 'realize their own will rather than ours'. Another felt her leaders had taken the initiative to form an organization and gone public in enlisting donors, only afterwards seeking to inform and involve the followers whose participation they needed to give them legitimacy. 'We were just curtains for them,' she said. 'I think it's the perfect example of undemocracy.'

Often the core group was a friendship group clustered round a leader. That history of friendship had a plus side, laying a strong foundation of trust between the friends and making it possible to cohere across national differences. But, as one woman put it, 'we can't base our organizations only on friendship.' To do so could make for inequality in membership, with the friends of leaders having more influence than the rest. It led to informal power, whereby some friends of the leader who are 'not even members' may come in and exert influence. (In Chapter 7 we return to a discussion of friendship as a political resource.)

Some women in non-leadership roles defended their leaders. Several pointed to the very real difficulty of recruiting and holding members and getting them to share the work and responsibility undertaken by the leader. One woman said 'I'm glad our project has a leader. She pleads with others to be more active. But they don't want to be.'

Then some of the leaders present at the workshop began to express their own feelings of frustration. One, speaking of herself and another principal figure in the organization, said bitterly 'Our members expect us to help them, not them to help us. We've had to carry everything. Quite literally! We even carried the equipment and furniture when we moved office. Sometimes I get crazy and think, I don't *need* this organization.' Her co-leader added, 'Women often ask why we two are so prominent. But we are the ones who make sacrifices. We go in at weekends and we clear and wash the dishes. Other women only do the bare minimum.' A woman in a leading role in a second organization agreed with this. 'Sometimes you take a decision alone, and later everybody's eyes look at you for it,' she said. 'But women can be hypocritical. They aren't willing to educate themselves, and they won't work at weekends. Who will go to meetings? Who will represent the group? Some women don't feel confident. They just wait for me to do it.' But was the behaviour of leaders contributing to the passiveness of followers?

This same speaker complained of the problem of retaining new members. 'We try to include new members by various means. We organize round tables with neutral facilitators, we try to be open to each other. We organize a trip for everyone to the sea. They stay for a bit, but then they drop out.' Sometimes this could be the effect of a clique, where a leader and small group appear to refer only to each other in making decisions. The test (said one observer from a Sarajevo organization) was 'Are we all participating equally in this? Are we, all of us together, *living* our mission? Do we all feel that this is our space?'

In the hard circumstances in which they operate, these organizations could not have come into existence, and could not do what they do, without the existence of strong, motivated leaders with drive and vision. But over-dependence on leaders puts the organization at risk. The problem with leadership these organizations were facing was of course related to the deficiencies noted in the preceding section: lack of clear structure, definable membership and regulation of procedure. How, in such small, inexperienced, overworked organizations, could a hierarchy be created that was flat enough to suit women's preference for informality, yet clear enough to endow leaders with the responsibility they sought, and yet again ensure their accountability to the will of 'members'?

Sharing of roles and skills

One effect of having a dominant leader is that the skills of others may remain undeveloped, and roles and responsibilities be distributed unevenly through the organization. One outside observer was outspoken about this. 'There is a tendency to control information and opportunity within the organization. It stays at the top of the pyramid. It's exactly the male way of doing management, doing organization. It's disgusting. And we are talking about women's solidarity!' Later, speaking of her own organization in Sarajevo, she said 'I'm the director but I would never say that I can give you all the information. Whatever the subject in question I'll have a colleague working on that, and I would need to know what she thinks. That's something you'll find in very few NGOs. Whenever you organize something and invite them, they send the same person. The one person deals with everything. It's very seldom that they have people specialised for something. They don't train or develop particular skills in particular people.'

Another commentator who often has dealings with women's organizations had found a similar problem. Sometimes a named individual in an organization may be invited to participate in an external event. Other women sometimes react to this with jealousy. 'Why does she get to be invited, not me?', they will say. It is not unknown for a leader to rip up an invitation that comes addressed to someone other than herself, to keep the opportunity from them. Alternatively, some organizations do have a policy of sharing up 'fairly' the chances to attend training and go to conferences. ('I went to the last one, you should go to this one.') But should 'fairness' be the only criterion? It is important for the effectiveness of the organization to develop specialist kinds of expertise in its individual members, and by this criterion there may be a logical person to nominate for a particular activity.

At the Neum workshop the women listed among the changes they would like to bring about in their organizations: greater equality between members; a fairer sharing of advantages; and agreement on who should represent the organization and how. At the same time they agreed there should be a conscious effort to develop skills in each individual. There should be a conscious planning of the allocation of roles and responsibilities. It should be made clear to everyone who is responsible for what and how they are to be held accountable. They believed there should be regular review meetings, mechanisms for monitoring and control, and penalties for failing to carry out tasks.

Transparency of information and process

These organizations, like so many others in B-H and elsewhere, are seriously compromised when it comes to 'transparency'. It is often unclear just how decisions come about, except to those who made them. Information is held in too few hands. The person who sits at the computer and reads the e-mails does not share her contacts with others in the organization. At the Neum workshop feeling ran particularly high about secrecy concerning money, donors and plans. It was felt that women earning salaries for their work in the organization should make known the amount they earn. Details of annual budgets and the amounts of grant-funding applied for and received should be available to everyone involved. Project proposals for future work should be discussed with everyone, not decided between leaders and funders behind closed doors. 'When there is silence about these things,' one woman said, 'it's an abuse of power.'

One external commentator, in fact, was of the view that budgets and grants should be known not only in the organization but outside. They should be published in the local press. Our organizations after all were not our private property - they were a resource of the locality. Donor organizations should also publish their budgets and state the amount of grants awarded to organizations, listed by name. Another noted that government processes in B-H were no model when it came to transparency. New laws were made covertly by legislators, with too little consultation.

One form that non-transparency takes is an unwillingness to identify wrongs and to bring them to light. This may be motivated by fear of hurting feelings or inexperience in handling conflict. One concerned critic of women's organizations said to us in interview, 'Our life is in the NGOs and I support them and I love them. Sometimes I could weep because of their weaknesses. But I'm an optimist. I believe we have to be critical in order to save them. When I criticize them it's with the best intention, to make them sustainable, to make them more productive.' Another, speaking with experience of other women's organizations, said 'Too often we forget

the importance of relationships inside the group. We're all focused on results, whereas we should spend more time thinking about process. If we're satisfied with the relationships and the process, it will lead us to good results. Both are important.'

The Neum workshop enabled an unusual degree of mutual criticism and self-criticism, and in this way was itself a refreshing exercise in transparency. Several participants commented on how unusual it had been to feel sufficiently safe to air problems candidly. One participant said in her final evaluation of the workshop 'I valued being able to speak openly. We could look each other in the eye and be honest about ourselves and others'.

Lack of contact and co-operation between groups

The potential power of integrative women's organizations resides precisely in their breadth and inclusivity. The potential weakness of nationalist and separatist NGOs resides in their narrowness. Yet the organizations we studied were not working as co-operatively as they might have done. They were not benefiting from their collective strength.

Lack of co-operation is one outcome of other problems discussed here. The attitude of some leaders, discussed above, contributes to rivalry and poor co-operation between the organizations they lead. And funding, discussed below, has a bearing too. Lack of money limits the extra travel and contact needed for real co-operation. One effect of the territorial fragmentation of Bosnian society due to war is a parochial outlook, in which the furthest horizon is the edge of town and a vision of belonging to a state is lacking. But even within the town or city, competition for scarce funding exacerbates competition between groups.

The several informed outsiders we spoke to in Sarajevo had much to say on the subject of non-co-operation between local women's organizations.

One city can have five different women's organizations. They are paying five rents, five telephone lines. Why not have just one shared office to run all the different activities?

It's very difficult to create working coalitions. You'd have to bribe them to work together. And the difficulties between groups has nothing at all to do with ethnic tensions - that's not the problem. Quite literally, at the end of the day it's a question of who gets the cash.

The experience the International Human Rights Law Group in organizing the preparation of their report on women's human rights (IHLRG 1999) had been a tough one. We were told

We worked with eighteen groups from both entities to produce the report. It was six months of very difficult work. And not only for lack of statistical information and difficulties with access to information. It was difficult because we had to deal with a sort of animosity that existed among these groups.

IHRLG's intention had been to create, in the shape of the report, a tool for groups to use in advocacy. The hope had been that a coalition of NGOs might come together to work on specific issues identified in the report. But personal power struggles and jealousies ('Who's getting what? Who's name will be first?') had impeded this work.

At the Neum workshop the women's organizations acknowledged the problem. Here are some of the things they said.

We all recognize a lack of connection.

Quite often there is less co-operation between women's groups within our town than there is between us and groups in other towns. It's a shame.

We scarcely even know the women in other organizations.

There is no mutual interest and concern between us.

Each group thinks their own project is the most important.

We are insincere with each other.

We hide information.

We don't act in solidarity.

Bigger and better funded groups don't help the smaller ones.

Sometimes an organization will even speak badly of other women's groups to donors, to increase their own chances.

Everyone recognized what was being lost by lack of co-operation. Networking, in the town, in the region and nationally were genuinely felt to be important, and women made many suggestions for change. The fundamental theme was that organizations should first and foremost decide to be more open to and respectful of each other. 'It's a question of solidarity. We should praise each others' organizations for their work. After all, nobody else will praise us!' Certain practical forms of co-operation were suggested.

We could acknowledge and develop specialisms within organizations and exchange skills between them

We could share in carrying out statistical surveys and other local research

We could lend practical support to each others campaigns.

We could exploit the potential for shared, more effective, campaigns. For example, against the segregation of schools in our town.

We could form a branch of the local NGO Forum specifically for women's NGOs of all kinds (or set up our own meetings).

But more precisely we should look for those organisations with whom we share values, and seek closer co-operation with them.

The women at Neum saw three ways that co-operation between them could increase their effectiveness. First, it would enable them to increase their visibility with donors. In some cases they might encounter fewer difficulties in accessing substantial funding if they were to apply as a network of organizations rather than as separate organizations. Second, government bodies, national and local, might accord them more respect. One practical suggestion for capitalizing on this was for women's groups in a given municipal area to ask for 'observer status' at meetings of the municipal council, and come together to elect a representative for this purpose. Third, through co-operation they could improve relations with people of their locality. They could avoid duplication of effort in offering services. They could give better and more focused services. And in general they could raise public awareness about women's needs and women's collective action.

We ourselves concluded that the lack of co-operation between Bosnian NGOs remains something of a puzzle, the possible causes never quite adding up to a full explanation. More research would be useful.

Funding is fundamental

If failure of organizational process and failure of co-operation are the main internal flaws of the integrative women's organizations we have been working with, the main external impediment they encounter is the funding regime. In a situation where individuals and families are often desperate in their search for an income to cover basic needs, it is quite unrealistic to suppose that NGOs can operate without funding or finance themselves through private donations. Local people cannot afford to pay for the services they provide. Nor are there Bosnian institutions with sufficient resources to fund them. They are crucially dependent on international NGOs and the international institutions, both governmental and inter-governmental. No wonder competition prevails over co-operation.

A good deal of the two days we spent together at the Neum workshop was spent discussing problems of funding. The women are acutely aware how much they owe to funders: the space they inhabit, however rudimentary this may be; their computer and other equipment; their office costs; some salaries. In other words, the organization as we know it. They are aware of the many opportunities that only funding can open up to them: experience in running an organization, practice in writing proposals and reports, a chance to experiment with democracy.

But complaints about funders and funding make a longer list. The women find the majority of donors very often bureaucratic, inflexible, unreasonable and lacking vision. Procedures for applying for funding are often complicated and demand specialized skills in preparing budgets and writing persuasive English, which in their early days organizations simply do not have. There are long anxious delays while donors make decisions on applications. They often lay down inflexible conditions. They are unwilling to give recurrent basic costs of rent, electricity and phone, demanding instead ever new projects that stretch the capacity of organizations to the limit. Funding is on a 'stop-start' basis, and nearly always short-term - so that organizations are perennially insecure and have to devote time to fundraising instead of getting on with their chosen work. Donors appear little

interested in the actual realization of projects and do not provide follow-through, with supplementary funding where it is needed. Some donors favour particular local NGOs and, regardless of their performance, support them at the expense of other organizations that might spend the money more productively. And, just as there is poor co-operation between women's organizations so, the women say, there seems to be poor co-operation between funders. There is jealousy and envy among them too, and they do not share information. Sometimes it seems the donors and the recipients mirror each other's failings.

The most frequently voiced funding problem however, after scarcity, is that donors set their own priorities rather than responding to those of grantees. 'They shift us from our own goals and mission by the conditions of their funding. Are they offering money for moving chairs? We'll design a project for moving chairs.' Certain topics become fashionable with donors year by year. 'Trafficking in women' is a theme that has recently received attention at high level in the international institutions, that in turn have invited local NGOs to make it an issue. Trafficking is certainly a shocking abuse of women's human rights. But it is understandable if not every women's organization wishes to prioritize it, because the dealing occurs more in some areas than others. Donors are continually switching themes and expect grantees to do so too, starting new projects at the cost of abandoning others that have only just got going. This pressure leads organizations into too much diversification and into undertaking activities for which they are not qualified. Sometimes donors encourage the formation of a new organization that duplicates one already existing in a locality, or a new project of a kind already up and running. 'And sometimes,' the women say, 'they steal our idea and fund a rival organization to carry it out.'

The relationship they describe is thus one of fundamental inequality. The donors have the power, the NGOs depend on them. Very often the donor organizations, especially the biggest international institutions and those NGOs that operate worldwide, seem distant and obscure. 'You see the hand, not the motivator. You see an umbrella, not the person who counts.' Their representatives can seem arrogant at times, 'especially the local ones who act as gatekeepers'. 'You have to be careful not to get on the wrong side of the person who counts.' The inequality is rubbed in by the contrast between their well-appointed offices and well-paid staff and the poverty of the organizations who must go to them, cap in hand, for money. 'Seventy per cent of their money is spent on themselves.' The women's organizations gradually get into the mentality of relative powerlessness. 'We become their pawns. We're afraid if we protest and fight they'll take away even the little they give us.'

Shortcomings in the current funding regime have been widely noted, and not only by beneficiary NGOs. Ian Smillie in his report on Bosnian NGOs criticizes the international donors for using local NGOs for cheap service delivery and neglecting, despite their professed concern, to use their resources to build a strong, pluralist civil society (Smillie 1996). Martha Walsh in her report to USAID on women's organizations in B-H acknowledges that little could have been achieved without an input of international funding but criticizes donors faulty assumptions about women and women's organizations, their failure to respect women's own priorities, and a certain instrumentalism and lack of a longterm commitment (Walsh 1999).

Nonetheless, the women we spoke with had had good experiences with some donors. Everyone spoke warmly, in particular, of those feminist organizations whose mission is specifically supporting women's self-organization. Delphi International's Star Project (now sadly defunct) originating in the USA was often

cited warmly. So was the Swedish NGO, Kvinna till Kvinna. From these experiences, the women had a clear idea of what would be good practice in donor organizations. A good donor would have a simple application and reporting process, clearly explained - with training in these things for inexperienced organizations that need it. They would have a speedy and efficient approval process. Rather than deciding for themselves what to fund, the ideal donor would listen to the needs women are uncovering in their locality and respond supportively to projects they devise to meet them.

What happened during the war in B-H, and even more immediately after Dayton, was that a veritable army of international institutions and INGOs arrived in Sarajevo and started dispensing money. The NGO sector responded with rapid growth. It became a source of livelihood for many people - and that was legitimate, because people deserve a salary for doing productive and necessary work. The money invested in NGOs also set in train a great deal of needed activity. Now the memory of the war is receding and new wars in other continents have taken Bosnia's place on the world's TV screens. Many funders have been pulling out of B-H or scaling down their operations. Money is getting scarcer. Many Bosnian NGOs will cease to exist (Walsh 2000).

So, donors are warning their grantees: look for alternative sources. The truth is there are no alternative sources. Extensive volunteering is scarcely a possibility, given women's desperate need to earn a living. Income generating projects, after they have paid those who work in them, produce a profit too tiny to sustain an organization. It is said that municipal authorities have funds for 'humanitarian activity'. If they do, the women say, 'it's not being distributed to us'. And given the nationalist character of the parties in control of the municipal authorities, and anti-nationalist orientation of these integrative women's organizations, they are unlikely to see any of it.

The only means the women saw of strengthening their hand, *vis à vis* the donor organizations, was solidarity. 'If we could co-operate better among ourselves we might be able to co-ordinate an approach to donors.' They might strengthen the identity and profile of organizations such as themselves, working on the twin themes of women's rights and re-integration of Bosnian society, and demand a matching co-operation among donors and a clear commitment to a long-term funding strategy. But this means both grant givers and grantees understanding the important potential of women's self-organizing for the renewal of society in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the following chapters we discuss two aspects of this potential - a women's movement, and its contribution to democracy.

CHAPTER 6 Towards a Women's Movement

While we were visiting and talking with women in Banja Luka, Mostar and Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje the discussion sometimes turned to 'the women's movement' and 'feminism'. It became clear that these words are used in many different ways and evoke different kinds of reaction. We wanted to learn whether these seven organizations can rightly be thought of as part of a Bosnian women's movement. If they can, in what sense of that term? At what stage of development is the movement?

We approach these questions here from two different directions. We look at what women are thinking and doing in B-H. At the same time we look at what women are thinking, writing and doing in the name of women's movements in other countries. We discuss the various concerns on which movements elsewhere and at other times have focused, and their similarity to the problems addressed by the Bosnian women's organizations. The chapter ends with a consideration of the various uses of the word 'feminism' among women in our study and elsewhere, and how we can best define our practice.

Why organize as women?

One of the first questions we asked women was: why have you chosen to organize *as women*? After all, the majority of women who are active in this post-war 'sphere of free association' in B-H are in organizations led by men, or in which there are also men. One woman laughed and said 'The men sometimes ask us that. No men round here? Are you a bunch of frustrated women?' The Mostar women gave us the following reasons for organizing as women-only. They were very similar to those of women in the other towns.

'Because I love it, and I support all women.'

At one level it was an emotional response, a supportive engagement with certain perceived qualities in women. Azra, of Zena BiH, said

In West Mostar where I live, during the war all Bosnian men were imprisoned or fled the country. Women stayed alone. Some were reduced to prostitution to survive. They had to do jobs they would never have dreamed of having to do before, because they were responsible for their own and their children's survival. When I saw that, I longed to find some other solution to survive, and for other women to survive. I wanted to share my strength with women. I wanted for women *not* to do what others tell us to do, not to be passive. I discovered my own strength at that time, in managing to escape from all those violent men around me. I discovered something deep in me that I never suspected was there. Everything I do here in Zena BiH comes deeply from my heart. Once you start you can't stop. All of us here feel this same enthusiasm that I feel.

Azra's compassion and solidarity were recognizable in other women too. Some of the valued qualities they described as good reasons for organizing with women and as women are that 'women feel more deeply' (Ivanka); 'women are born democrats'

(Nadja); and 'women are stronger than men in many ways, and they carry a lot of responsibilities' (Semsa).

Some of these reasons appear to skirt dangerously close to essentialist thinking: as though women are 'naturally' this or that. It is not surprising if women were sometimes tempted to think this gender difference 'must be in the genes'. After all, the war had sometimes produced extremely sex-stereotyped behaviours in both sexes: aggression on the one hand, caring on the other. But on reflection they usually recalled instances that contradicted the stereotypes. They remembered some violent women, and men who refused to kill. Then instead of referring to 'nature' as the source of gender differences they talked about the way *cultures* shape us, during childhood and adult life.

All of those with whom we spoke valued the supportive environment women could make for each other. 'We wanted to give women a space.' Some women, like Semsa who had worked in a sewing factory, took female company for granted. Others had not thought of working just with women before, and it took a bit of getting used to. But Nada said, 'For seven years I'd been accepting and adapting to change, time and time again. I just took everything as it came. Being a women's group was just one more change.' Antonela said, 'I didn't really think about it. But it felt good. Lots of women from both sides of the city say this is the most beautiful thing that happened to them in years, getting involved with Zena Mostara.'

Equality: 'There's the theory, and there's the reality.'

A refusal of 'inequality' was a second important reason for aligning with women. On the whole the women were conscious of a double reality concerning pre-war and post-war gender relations. On the one hand, as discussed in Chapter 1, the state in Yugoslavia had guaranteed women formal equality (in employment for instance) and a certain recognition of their special needs (like maternity benefits and nurseries). On the other hand, the equality had remained incomplete. Family relations had been particularly resistant to change, continuing to be patriarchal, especially in rural society. We remembered what Mirjana Morokvasic had written in 1986.

Women, in Yugoslavia can be economically independent, socially active, recognized and respected at work and yet remain mere servants at home, where the man retains authority... In the private sphere, legislation was unable to resist the old values and replace them with something new (Morokvasic 1986:122).

Then came the political upheaval and disintegration. Post-war and post-communism, the old inequalities were more exposed to view and new ones piled on top. Fadila is a woman who lives in a house full of men, so she has pretty clear ideas about the politics of the household.

The war hasn't changed much in family relations. Men's mentality in B-H is just 'give me a job and a social life, or 'I want a car, I want a house, I want money'. And they don't understand women's wish to work in women's organizations. But we organized a survey and found out that 80% of families are only surviving thanks to the women's income. So women have to have power and organize together.

To form a women's organization, then, could seem a good way of confronting inequality. But present circumstances for women are adverse, and not just in the countries of the former Yugoslavia but throughout East/Central Europe and the former USSR. Peggy Watson writes that the new post-Communist world 'offers men the opportunity of putting a greatly increased social distance between themselves and women. It is the rise of masculinism which is the primary characteristic of gender relations in Eastern Europe today'. Everywhere, with the ascendancy of neo-liberal economics, the primacy of competition and the loss of socialism's welfare safety-nets, we are seeing 'the enactment of masculinity on a grand scale' (Watson 1996:216).

A particular threat to women's equality in the formerly Communist countries has been the renewal of currents of nationalism and religious fundamentalism - with the Yugoslav region as the prime example. Deniz Kandiyoti writes about nationalisms in other countries in terms that would be recognized by many women in B-H. She says

on the one hand, nationalist movements invite women to participate more fully in collective life by interpellating them as 'national' actors: mothers, educators, workers and even fighters. On the other hand, they reaffirm the boundaries of culturally acceptable feminine conduct and exert pressure on women to articulate their gender interests within the terms of reference set by nationalist discourse (Kandiyoti 1993:432).

Gender and the family have indeed been fearsomely manipulated by nationalism in recent Yugoslav history. Silva Meznaric has analyzed the way a fabricated scare over the rape of Serb women by Albanian men in Kosovo in the late 1980s was a key moment in the resurgence of nationalism. Both Kosovan Albanian and Serb leaders at the time of this incident 'spent enormous amounts of money, energy and ideas on defining tradition and continuity', using women's bodies and men's family honour as markers of ethnic difference (Meznaric 1994:82). Women in B-H have responded in polarized ways to these pressures. More than before have a confessional belonging, Christian women attending church, Muslim women going covered. But others feel more alienated, resenting the way religion is intruding into politics, and politics into everyday life.

Women say they have never had the respect and trust accorded to men in this region. One woman told us, 'There's a basic lack of confidence in women.' She illustrated this with the story of a woman dentist in her town, a competent professional woman. 'People don't trust themselves to her. They say, "She's a woman. She's so small. She can't be strong enough for the job." This town, it's a disaster for women.' Now, with conservative patriarchal ideologues attempting to control women's dress, behaviour and role, women were even less likely to be treated as equals.

Nor is it just women as individuals who are divided by the new currents. Deniz Kandiyoti writes that women's organizations too are inevitably touched by these changes. They must either conform to the prevailing nationalist discourse or oppose it (Kandiyoti 1993:380). We can see how this issue has tested and sorted women's organizations in B-H. Women's groups like the fifty-four adhering to the Unija Zar alliance, for instance, would be likely to put Bosniak national loyalties before women. By contrast, the organizations in our study would put women's equality, and what women can contribute to a more equal world, a long way before national

belonging. We can see that Maxine Molyneux is right when she writes that nationalism and other tendencies in formerly Communist countries 'have altered, perhaps irreversibly, the terms of critical debate about the way forward for women... posed new questions of feminist politics and practice' (Molyneux 1996:234).

'Getting things done'

Some things the women activists said indicated that, for them, organizing as women was a pragmatic choice: through it you could achieve certain goals. First, if it's a women's organization, ordinary women are more likely to feel comfortable stepping in the door. And through them you have a good chance of reaching men and children too. Thus Jelena of Zena Mostara says, 'Women can give a lead to their families'. Vidra had seen a particular use in 'being women'. As a group of minority women they had been afraid of awakening the suspicion of the authorities. One activist said she had felt that a women's organization might appear less challenging and reduce the likelihood of trouble.

Second, women offered a particular possibility for reintegration in these towns. Thus Jelena said about the founding of Zena Mostara, 'What we wanted to do was to unify the city, and the whole country, *through women*. Because women forgive first.' Other Mostari women said something similar. 'Women have more trust in women. We are more open' (Nada). 'Sometimes I'm surprised by the energy and tolerance of women in this region. I couldn't possibly do what I want to without such women around me' (Nadja). In Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje women really felt it was women or nothing. 'Between men here, there is this wall,' Milka said. Pavka said, 'It was the men who carried guns in the war, they were the ones directly involved in the fighting.' Men were beginning now to meet their 'others' casually in the street, or for purposes of work or trading. Such contacts, even if informal, were valuable. But for men to organize publicly together still, in 1999, seemed out of the question.

Being an organization only of women was also a way of avoiding the ascendancy of men. 'SJ' and Jasmina of Vidra had both had experience, as well-qualified and even professional employees in large enterprises in the former Yugoslavia, of nonetheless remaining, as they put it, 'in the shadow of men'. 'Men were the directors, the bosses' said Jasmina. 'It was difficult to realize any idea of our own, however good it might be.'

'Doing things our way'

A fourth reason for being a women's organization was the control it offered women to do things differently from the way men might do them. The women's organizations were surrounded by bureaucracies - party political, state institutional, international. We were told that even NGOs are not, as you might imagine, necessarily less authoritarian. In fact, men in NGOs can be 'very powerful, possessive and individualistic'.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the women's organizations have not yet made the most of the potential for democratic process. Udruzene Zene had gone furthest. They had been the most self-conscious in building their organization and they were beginning to recognize the gains. They were proud of being a 'horizontal organization', without hierarchy and with shared responsibilities.

The organization's quite democratic. There's not one strong leader, like a director, a boss or authority. There's equality in the team. Women's solidarity is a principle with us. There are differences, including differences of political opinion, but we don't see that as meaning you are an enemy. People have a right to differ, to individuality.

Mirjana at Udruzene Zene was a social worker.

I do the same job for women clients in our organization as they do in the Centres for Social Work. But they have limits, as an institution. The people working there qualified years ago and they work the same way they always did.

She had previously had a job in television, where women colleagues had often been unhelpful. Now she put this down to the fact that they had had to adopt male behaviour in order to compete with the men who dominate the TV industry. In Udruzene Zene, where women were in control, she found 'these women around me support me. It's a nice working atmosphere'.

Is this a women's movement?

We were interested to know whether the women felt their organization was part of a women's movement. We have seen that there are many women's organizations in B-H, some of them quite small, scattered in country towns and even villages. We learned in Mostar that the Bosnian Women's Initiative was funding numerous projects in the canton, and convening regular meetings between them. But numbers are not everything. Women's organizations vary widely in their politics. Some are integrative, some nationalist. Some aim to administer charity to women, some to empower them. And, as we have seen, there is rivalry and resentment even between organizations with a shared political outlook. Representatives of OSCE in Mostar and Sarajevo with whom we spoke both deplored a lack of co-operation between women's organizations in B-H. And we have seen how women themselves, at the Neum workshop, identified this as a problem.

So - do a lot of organizations add up to a *movement*? Sevima Sali-Terzic, legal advisor of the International Human Rights Law Group in Sarajevo said, 'We have lots of groups, but I wouldn't say we have a women's movement.' 'What are the necessary conditions for a movement?' we asked her. 'We need networks,' she answered. 'But also you must have a very simple open idea that you can communicate. And a global sense of the world you are living in, which I don't think they yet have.'

Perhaps we need to know, then, what a 'social movement' means elsewhere in the world, and to test what we see in Bosnia against these meanings. One early definition by John Wilson is widely used (it is discussed in Cohen and Rai, 2000). He sees a social movement as '*a conscious, collective, organised attempt to bring about or resist large-scale change in the social order by non-institutionalised means*'. He goes on to say

Animated by the injustices, sufferings, and anxieties they see around them, men and women in social movements reach beyond the customary resources of the social order to launch their own crusade against the evils of society. In

so doing they reach beyond themselves and become new men and women (Wilson 1973:5).

Wilson identifies several kinds of social movement, and using his categories we might say that our women's organizations are partly *reformatory* (trying to improve the existing system), partly *alternative* (doing things our own way) and partly *transformative* (trying to rid society of patriarchal power relationships between men and women). It is interesting that he identifies the *non-institutional* nature of movements. We have seen how women's NGOs have indeed flowered in the unstructured and voluntarist space of civil society.

When a disadvantaged identity group, like women, begins to organize collective action around its hopes and dreams, it can only turn into a social movement by *mobilizing* resources of commitment, energy and money (Melucci 1996). This we have seen our women's organizations achieving - although very sporadically, with moments of success and moments of failure. Manuel Castells sees social movements as processes in which collective *identities* are formed and expressed.

...social actors, on the basis of whichever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, by so doing, seek the transformation of overall social structure (Castells 1997:8).

Wilson too stresses this link between movements and identity: *we reshape ourselves* in the process of organizing action. And many women in Bosnia told us how they had changed through being active on women's issues. 'We're not the same people we were at the start', as Mirjana of Udruzene Zene put it.

We would conclude then that there are the stirrings of a women's movement in B-H, within and around women's organizations of the kind we are studying. But before we can say confidently that a movement exists, three important questions remain to be answered. First, do these organizations emerge from and reflect a *current of opinion* in B-H society? Are other women, other initiatives, awakening around them? Second, are our organizations *networking* within B-H and are they connected beyond its borders, to a wider movement? Third, are they sufficiently *challenging* to be an effective movement? To be a transformative, or even a reformatory, movement calls for its activists to enter public space, criticize and challenge the system. It means campaigning and advocacy. Do we see this happening?

What else is moving?

There are signs that some women in B-H are conscious of women's disadvantage and oppression. This consciousness exists particularly among women in mid-life, let's say in their forties and fifties, who can compare today's circumstances with what life had been like for women in Yugoslavia in the nineteen-eighties and nineties. But there is as yet very little 'acting out' of this consciousness. Women are preoccupied with day to day survival. Many men gave their health, or life itself, in the recent fighting, and women wish to honour men for this. It is not easy at such a time to allow oneself to challenge men or criticize masculinity, whatever the justification. Although the incidence of rape in the war alerted women to the issue of sexual violence, many, perhaps the majority, prefer to see its authors not as men shaped by masculine cultures, but as members of an ethnic group, shaped by nationalistic cultures.

Cities are normally fertile ground for non-conformism, including women's movements. But the war damaged urban society, and even cosmopolitan Sarajevo is not what it was. Young women are often in the vanguard of women's movements in other countries, but many of Bosnia's young women think more about escaping abroad than about putting their energies into changing B-H. Others have become conservative, even religious, since the war. There are as yet no women activist groups in the professions, and few comedians, singers or artists popularizing a cultural critique of patriarchy. Some political parties have set up women's sections. There are a handful of teachers and students at the university developing critical women's studies, reading texts from other countries. But there is not yet the flowering of academic analysis that has nurtured women's movements elsewhere. Few critiques of patriarchy have been published in the Bosnian language. *Zena 21*, the only journal that might be seen as serving a women's movement, carries informative interviews. But editorially it is rather unchallenging of state or authorities, and women are often represented in its pages in conventional ways, with an emphasis on fashion and beauty.

How connected?

The seven organizations vary in the degree to which they are connected to other groups. Most felt convinced they were indeed part of something you could call a movement. But we saw in the previous chapter that in practice co-operation between organizations is not good. Personal and group rivalries are most strongly felt at local level. Connectedness seems slightly better at the level of B-H. One woman remarked 'We've got better links with women in the other Entity than within this town'.

The women of Federalna Zena and Savjetovaliste SB were the least 'networked'. Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje is less of a regional centre than Mostar or Banja Luka. They had less experience of foreign travel than the other organizations. But they were attempting co-operation within their local area. They had located women's organizations in the nearby towns of Bugojno, Prozor, Travnik and Vitez. Some of these did not share their own refusal of national divisions. 'Even so, we try to work with them', said Pavka. And Nermina thought 'We are definitely part of a women's movement, and a strong one.'

The Mostari women were more networked, partly because that town has been a focus for foreign spending. They clearly saw themselves as participating in a movement. They had been playing a key role in the B-H Forum of NGOs. They had co-operated with Vidra and fourteen other women's organizations in the 'women's human rights' project, already cited, led by the International Human Rights Law Group in Sarajevo (IHRLG 1999). They had flown to women's conferences in Budapest, Rome, Florence, Brussels. They had also been on a peace mission to the United States.

Up in Banja Luka, Udruzene Zene too are relatively well connected with women's organizations elsewhere in B-H and further afield.

We have had many contacts in B-H, good common actions. We are just beginning, but we've moved something somehow. The connection is strongest and most important to us at the level of B-H... If I need something in a town or city, I'll phone a women's organization I know, and they'll help me.

Recently I needed information, and just turned to Zene Zenama in Sarajevo and they gave me the answer. (Group discussion)

Nada, the president of Udružene Zene, felt it was important to consolidate a movement. Otherwise, when the funders disappeared, women's self-organization might disappear too. She had a conscious strategy of alliance-building.

The more women we get in organizations the larger the number of women will become aware that we have to share in men's power. It's a big gain. We can work autonomously, each group for itself, knowing best what are the issues in our local district. But we can also make coalitions on the issues we think are in our common interest... *Ad hoc* coalitions are important as a model. There are common problems at the level of the Entity, or even of the state. I think we should have this direction: first to strengthen women in the local community, then at the level of the entity, then of the state.

For UZ the potential for women's alliances demonstrably stretched beyond the state to the former Yugoslav region. For instance they are part of an SOS Hotlines network for B-H ('that's been a wonderful experience') but also for the former Yugoslavia, with a further link to SOS lines across the whole of Eastern Europe. That in turn potentially furnishes links to a wider world.

Even for the most 'networked' of these seven organizations however, connection into a national, regional and worldwide women's movement is still a potential more than a reality. The factors that work against it are lack of funding for travel, insufficient access to the Internet and perhaps also a lack of vision or sense of urgency.

On the other hand, there are several factors pressing women towards connectedness. The first is the energy being put into contact by women *outside* the country. Women's organizations in Croatia and Serbia have been continuously supportive and interactive, during and since the war, fostering contacts, facilitating meetings. Groups of women from some of our organizations, for instance, have been made welcome at SEKA House, the seaside resource centre on the island of Brac, run by Croatian and German women. Contacts by women and women's organizations in other countries, including invitations to conferences and meetings, contributions to post-war reconstruction, offers of funding and enquiries about research, have been drawing Bosnian women's organizations more and more into worldwide networks. And Bosnian women have joined those of other nations at the United Nations 'Beijing plus-5' activities on women.

How challenging?

In some parts of the world, 'women's NGOs' are contrasted unfavourably with 'a women's movement'. People talk disparagingly of 'the NGO-ization of our movement'. Organizing a non-governmental organization is seen as rather safe and acceptable, organizing a women's movement as altogether more challenging and risk-taking. By such a criterion, the Bosnian women's activities we are studying here can hardly count as a movement, or even as part of one. But is the criterion valid?

Women of the former Yugoslavia are not, after all, strangers to activism. Neda Bozinovic writes of a generation of women way back in the 1930s

In all parts of Yugoslavia they found young women who managed to, independently, unite the feminist movement with the anti-fascist movement and the movement for the independence and democratization of the country. They found a way to bring together women from different classes, trade unions, youth and other organizations and to encourage them to emphasize their own, specifically threatened women's right (Bozinovic 1994: 14).

In 1942 two million women politicized and organized themselves in the Anti-Fascist Front of Women, and through this mass movement women were equal partners with men in the struggle for freedom and democracy in Yugoslavia. When the fighting ended, 'the AFFW started working to eliminate the terrible consequences of war' and a 'battle against the centuries old patriarchal attitude' that still lived on. Their achievements were recognized in the Yugoslav Constitution.

But there followed a lull in Yugoslav women's struggle for their own rights, which persisted until the 1980s. It was too readily assumed that the League of Communists' socialist programme, including the decentralization of government, and self-management at work and in social services, would bring women *de facto* equality. As the AFFW, in 1953, melted into the Union of Women's Associations, then became, eight years later, the Conference for the Social Activity of Women, the focus on women's specific struggle against patriarchy was lost within the broader class struggle orientation of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People under the tutelage of the League of Communists (Mladjenovic and Litricin 1993, Bozinovic 1994).

Partly the inactivity of women organizing around women's issues was due to their very achievements. By the 1970s Yugoslav women had rights that were the envy of women in Western countries. They had an equal right of access to any job - and at the same pay as men. They had the right to a year's maternity leave on full pay, and the right to decide freely whether or not to bear a child. Abortion had been legal since 1952. Divorce was obtainable by mutual consent (Morokvasic 1986). This equality, Bozinovic reminds us, 'was not something that Yugoslav women received as a present, it was something that they fought for' (Bozinovic 1994: 15).

Women's struggle was not taken up again until the 1980s, but in that decade women's activism flowered in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana. Women often date the beginning of the movement to a conference in the Students' Cultural Centre in Belgrade in the autumn of 1978, attended by women from all over Yugoslavia and from countries of West and East/Central Europe. What was fresh about this phase of women's activism was that it roundly criticized the socialist leadership of the country for its failure to eradicate patriarchalism. The conference was titled *The Woman Question: A New Approach*, and it challenged the assumption that women's struggle was synonymous with class struggle (Papic 1994). The response of the official women's organization was to stigmatize the organizers as 'feminists' and trivialize the issues they raised. Women were accused of 'female intellectual aggressiveness' (Jancaar 1985:210).

This Yugoslav women's movement of the eighties touched only a small circle of students and intellectual women in the larger cities, and had no time to cohere in a connected and militant movement before the country disintegrated into war. Few of the women we met in this study

had been part of it. The question remains, therefore, as to whether these women's NGOs of today can carry forward something of the spirit of the eighties?

To answer this, perhaps we should look behind the rather passive label of 'NGO' to the nature of their work and the constraints of their context. Today, the seven women's organizations we studied certainly have that clear focus on women's needs that is characteristic of women's movements. They are material needs, making themselves felt in a context of post-war reconstruction: economic independence; protection from violence; women's legal rights; political representation of women and women's issues; and the reconciliation of national differences. We have seen how the organizations were (variously) taking practical measures in their own localities to fill these needs. But were they simultaneously exposing to public view the causes of women's disadvantage and who gains from it? Were they controversializing it and lodging demands? The answer, with some exceptions, has to be no.

The reasons we were given for an absence of campaigning were three. The first reason was lack of funding. We have seen that the funding regime is 'stop-start' and 'short-term', so that projects cannot feel secure or develop a forward plan. Were an organization's recurrent costs, like rent, electricity and phone, to be covered by donations, that might furnish the overheads for campaigning. But most donors prefer to fund on a project-by-project basis. And among projects they favour service provision that can be justified in humanitarian terms. For this reason, organizations often dress 'campaigning' in the more acceptable term 'advocacy' - or even avoid it altogether as 'too political'.

The question therefore arises as to whether campaigning should and could be done *without* donor funding. Some of the supportive observers we interviewed in Sarajevo were critical, though in a sisterly way, of Bosnian women's organizations for being 'too fixated on money'. They were disappointed in 'the lack of anger' they saw in women. 'There can't be change if there's no passion', one said. Whether these observers were local to the region or had come from other parts of the world to work in Bosnia, they shared an ideal model of a women's movement - women taking risks, women with a street presence, politicized and politicizing. They deplored the fact that today 'women won't do anything unless they get paid for it'. Simultaneously, however, they recognized that in this post-war context women could hardly be expected to survive or keep their families fed without a salary.

But, in any case, the women cited two other reasons for a cautiousness over campaigning. First, women did not feel secure enough, in an environment still imbued with wartime animosities, to step into the limelight and draw attention to themselves. This was more understandable in some cases than others. Zenska Akcija 'Vidra', for instance, had strong feelings about employment discrimination against women, particularly minority women in the Republika Srpska. They would have liked to see a campaign raise this issue nationally. They were hoping the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Sarajevo might turn its attention to employment rights. But they felt too vulnerable, as an organization representing post-war minorities in the Republika Srpska, to risk leading such a campaign.

The final explanation women gave was the daunting array of problems in post-war B-H they deemed more urgent as a focus of campaigning and mobilization. However much they might rage at their subordination and marginalization, other issues had

to come first. Many Bosnian women are still desperate to know the fate of their lost family members. (The Women of Srebrenica can hardly be accused of lack of militancy.) Pensioners are starving for non-payment of their rightful benefits, and their protests are widely supported. Families are destitute through joblessness, and those with jobs are driven to strike over low pay. A women's movement on women's issues therefore has been 'put on the back burner' and has to wait for its time. Meanwhile, though, an analysis of women's condition is being developed and valuable organizational skills learned.

Inertia in the institutions

What is the institutional world of Sarajevo doing to support an active women's movement at local level? The nationalist political parties are doing nothing, of course, and the non-nationalist parties' Women's Sections are more devices for recruiting and holding women in the party than for fanning the flames of feminism. As the millenium approached, the Government of the Federation, prompted by the Government of Finland, announced an experimental initiative to 'mainstream' a gender perspective into the administration (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000). It might gradually produce improvements in state employment practices and in policy evaluation, but it is a top-down initiative, not nourishment for the grassroots.

The international institutions have not, overall, led by example. A concern to see an active, campaigning women's movement develop in B-H exists only among a handful of isolated individual women within the international institutions and international NGOs in Sarajevo. The institutions they work in, so influential in B-H, are on the whole male-dominated, both at headquarters and in their Sarajevo operations. Some of them have adopted the currently fashionable pose of gender-sensitivity, but this does not translate into authentic policies. The International Human Rights Law Group is unique in having appointed women to all roles in the organization and making women's human rights an important focus of work. Elsewhere, the few motivated women have an uphill struggle getting 'women' and 'gender' taken seriously in their agencies and charities.

Martha Walsh writes that, from the start, the international institutions in B-H made damaging assumptions about women's potential role in post-war reconstruction. A gender-stereotyped perception of women was current, in which they were cast in the role of 'natural peacemakers'. She suggests the failure of agencies such as UNHCR, USAID and OHR to make gender issues a central matter in their key programmes has been damaging for both the country and women (Walsh 1998).

An internal paper of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recalls that the Dayton Peace Agreement did not specifically mention the need to integrate a gender perspective into the system it installed in B-H. It goes on to say

the international community has singularly failed to give this due consideration in its programs and policies. A great deal of work of the OHCHR in 1999 has been spent getting the international community to take gender into account at all levels, by drawing attention to the international obligations around gender and in particular the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (UN OHCHR 1999).

On the decision of British lawyer Madeleine Rees, while she was Acting Representative of the High Commissioner in Sarajevo, the OHCHR took up the leadership on gender that had been missing till now. In March 1999 they initiated a Gender Co-ordinating Group, to bring together in a monthly meeting members of the international community. This meant both the inter-governmental institutions and the larger international NGOs. The Group would co-ordinate strategies for inter-agency co-operation in mainstreaming gender throughout the international structures. It is refreshing to find in the brief of the GCG 'information exchange and liaison with local NGOs'.

The existence of the GCG does not of course guarantee support from the powerful international structures for a campaigning women's movement. But it may increase the likelihood of it. There have been precedents for the internationals supporting women's activism. An example is the women's voter education project prior to the 1998 elections. But at other times they have been obstructive. Udruzene Zene had planned to host a roundtable discussion in Brcko in connection with an international initiative to resolve the dispute there. The arbitrator's office attached to OHR told them that it was 'not the right time' for such a discussion - despite the fact that political leaders had been talking about it openly on television. The women went ahead anyway (Martha Walsh - personal communication). In July 1999, at the Stability Pact Summit in Sarajevo, women from Bosnia and other South East European countries were refused time to make a presentation to the world leaders who attended the meeting. It was only with the help of OSCE that they managed to present a common appeal in a private meeting with the Special Co-ordinator.

This lack of support for a campaigning movement of women addressing political issues in B-H and the region assures a quiet life for the international institutions. But it is shortsighted in failing to see the central role a forceful women's movement could play in achieving their principal aim - a democratic Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The issue of 'feminism'

In conclusion, then, the women's organizations we have studied are potential elements of a progressive women's movement. They have many characteristics that fit the criteria. But, at the time of writing, an autonomous Bosnian women's movement is still a thing of the future. Partly through lack of coherence and vision among its potential actors, partly through adverse circumstances, it cannot yet be said to exist. The important thing, however, is that the women involved in this present day activism do aspire to be part of a Bosnian women's movement, and there is a worldwide movement beyond its borders that seeks links with such a movement.

One factor impeding the growth of a Bosnian women's movement is lack of a confident and agreed self-definition. This can be illustrated by reference to one word: *feminism*. Attitudes in Bosnian society make it hard for a woman to identify herself as a feminist. One of our informants, who preferred not to be named, put it this way.

To say 'I'm a feminist' is very dangerous here. Only to say it. To *be* it is more dangerous. You have very many male, conservative and retrograde tendencies expressed in all the regions in transition, especially in B-H, especially in those parts where nationalists are in power. This ideology is

very unfriendly to any feminist way of thinking. Nationalism, sexism and xenophobia intersect. They support each other. I think it is a kind of totalitarian way of thinking. It is very hard to be a feminist in these cultural circumstances.

Unsurprisingly, then, while a few many women in B-H positively embrace the word feminism, many shrink from it. We found an interesting difference in the use of the term between the majority of the women in the seven organizations and the cluster of Sarajevo-based women we interviewed. The former did not feel comfortable to identify as feminists without careful qualification, while the latter readily called themselves feminist and did not feel they had to justify it in any way. Women who felt uncomfortable with 'feminism' however were not necessarily less aware of women's disadvantage than women who called themselves feminists.

For brevity, let us illustrate the range of positions within our seven women's organizations by citing Federalna Zena and Udruzene Zene. A characteristic rejection of the term 'feminism' is that of Milka, of Federalna Zena. We were sitting in Milka's cafe in Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje one day when Milka's daughter, overhearing her mother telling us about her involvement with local women, laughed and interjected (perhaps setting a certain distance between herself and her mother) 'She's a feminist!'. Milka thought carefully and said

I'm *not* a feminist. But everyday something happens that gets under my skin. In this cafe for instance, customers are always coming in and asking me 'Where's your husband? I want to eat!'. As if I'm not here, I don't count. It's a little thing, but it's typical of relations between men and women here.

By contrast, while we were sitting in the office of Udruzene Zene, Aleksandra said

Feminism's very important to me. I use it. I declare myself a feminist... And I've made an effort to give it effect in my private life. It's made me stronger in myself, my reactions are different in some situations than they would have been. For instance, in conversation, I'm not so polite and gentle any more.

The question is, what are the differences between the two micro-cultures - that of Federalna Zena and that of Udruzene Zene - that would explain this contrast in usage? We believe it is less a product of materially different politics among women than of their different positioning on three scales of experience. The first is the different degree to which individual experiences like Milka's have been collectivized and politicized within the organizations, so as to be seen as general problems for women. Thus in Udruzene Zene, Sanja, a young woman working as a volunteer on the SOS Crisis phone line, had experienced familial violence in her own life. But it was hearing scores of women recount their experience, in a context where women had an 'analysis' of male violence and a practice of resisting it, that had given her what she termed a 'feminist consciousness'.

The second experiential difference was in degrees of connectedness, and the resulting degrees of exposure to women, ideas and language coming to B-H from elsewhere. Mirjana, at Udruzene Zene revealed both these factors when she said

We've progressed, it's about sensitization... During my studies I wasn't sensitized. Here I became more and more able to see women's problems. I was meeting foreign women, Swiss, English, and my picture of women's lives

filled out, like bits of a mosaic. I always felt myself feminist, but it wasn't developed until I came here.

A third factor (and in this Bosnia is no different from anywhere else in the world) is whether or not women feel their circumstances permit them to stand up against and contradict prevailing negative meanings of feminism. Mirjana thought feminism had an undeservedly bad reputation in B-H. She continually had to fight this interpretation. She said

When I say I'm a feminist, women who don't know me think I must be someone without a family, free, without any responsibilities. When I say I have a husband and child they're surprised. One of my husband's colleagues says about him, 'poor thing, married to some bitch'.

Differences of interpretation: what does 'feminism' mean?

What Mirjana says here indicates a good deal of inconsistency in the meaning ascribed to 'feminism' in Bosnia. What people 'think it must be' often differs from what women who call themselves feminists actually show themselves to mean by it (Medica Women's Association 1998). For instance, the projects of Bosnian women's organizations described in this book (whose activists for the most part do not call themselves feminist) are very similar to the projects of movements of other times and other countries whose participants do call themselves feminist.

Underlying today's feminism is a historical longing for justice and freedom. The movement might be said to begin in those violent moments in the 18th century when this longing broke out in revolution - the American Revolution of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789. The revolutionaries aspired to equality, liberty and fraternity for ordinary people, challenging the old feudal, imperial and monarchical order. But the outcome of these revolutions disappointed women. The new 'Rights of Man', it seemed, were not intended for them. Relations between men of different classes were transformed, but the unequal relation between the sexes continued much as it was before. Throughout the 19th and into the 20th century women continually appealed to the state to deliver the promised citizenship (in marriage and divorce laws, property rights, the right to vote), and they made piecemeal gains (Rowbotham 1973).

The two World Wars and the recession of the 1930s set back the feminist movement. But in the 1960s the struggle for women's rights at work, in the workplace and the trade unions, revived. Simultaneously a new Left movement was emerging, rethinking in a new form the Marxist critique of capitalism. Like Yugoslav communism, it roundly opposed Stalinism. In 1968 a wave of radicalism swept through the universities. Women were active in the new Left, the student rebellion and in opposition to US aggression in Vietnam. They incurred risks alongside their male comrades and were shocked when they found out these comrades did not respect them or treat them as equals.

It was largely disappointment with the male Left that prompted what is now known as 'new wave' or 'second wave' feminism. Its first

publications began to appear in the late 1960s, but the activism really only got going in the early 1970s with large meetings and marches in the USA and many Western European countries. In Yugoslavia, as we have seen, it began in the late 1970s and flowered in the '80s.

The women of the new Left and the student movement in the USA and Western European countries were attuned to class inequalities and the importance of workplace struggle in capitalism. So the familiar demands for economic equality for women, bracketed with reproductive rights, were central to new wave feminism. In Britain, the banners carried in the first women's marches of 1971 showed four basic demands: equal pay, equal opportunities, free contraception and abortion, and free childcare (Rowbotham 1989). As women in Third World countries generated their own women's movements, it was evident that their experience of poverty, exploitation and traditionalism made these same issues of primary importance to them too. Yugoslav women would not have disagreed. But likewise they would not have seen great need to organize around such demands, since the socialist state had already afforded them many of the rights Western women were demanding.

It is often said, now, that the feminists of new wave feminism were uniquely well educated women, unmarried, and from privileged backgrounds and without responsibilities. It is true that the feminist theories developed in the academic world tended to issue from a privileged point of view. But in the grassroots movement itself were always many ordinary women - factory workers who went on strike for equal pay, women in trade unions calling on male members to support their case, ethnic minority women. Married women too. While students were active in the movement, most feminists, far from being women without responsibilities, had husbands and children. Often it was precisely the problem of combining care of young children and a job, with husbands who did no housework and without satisfactory childcare, that made women angry enough to organize feminist action.

It was indeed mainly married women that introduced to the women's movement one of its most urgent themes: the issue of violence. Women married to or living with men began to reveal the extent of domestic violence, and the fact that rapists were by no means always strangers - and were often family members. Women began to call for an end to the physical intimidation that kept women confined. This became a theme in the women's movement in Yugoslavia as research began to show that there was, and always had been, a great deal of violence by men against women in Yugoslavia. Male dominance in family, society and state had just made it invisible and unspeakable till now (Morokvasic 1986:130).

These insights led to a more far-reaching critique of men's power in new wave feminism than in earlier phases of the movement, when the focus had been mainly on women's rights. It was (to use the language of social movements) a more 'transformative' project, and the scale of what had to be transformed was daunting. The very mode of production, whether it was capitalism or socialism, was seen to be systematically linked to an age-old regime of male dominance, that women were calling 'patriarchy'. (See note 5, Chapter 1.)

Women began to think more probingly about their own personal experience and to build a politics around it. The term used to describe this process was

'consciousness-raising'. An important and fresh idea emerged at this time: 'the personal is political'. Anna Coote and Beatrix Campbell attempted a popular history of new wave feminism while it was still rather fresh and new. In their book *Sweet Freedom: The Struggle for Women's Liberation* published in 1982 they described how women came to think this new thought.

Small groups of women began to get together. They began to talk to each other in a way they had not done before. They discussed their day-to-day experiences, and their feelings about themselves, their jobs, their husbands, their lovers, their children and their parents. Of course, women had been doing this since language was invented - but what was new was that they were now drawing political conclusions from their personal experiences. They began to see that it was both necessary and possible to change their lives, and they realized that this would require a fundamental shift in the social order... (Coote and Campbell 1982:14).

'The personal is political' was not altogether a welcome thought for women of the Soviet Union and East/Central European communist-led societies. They had always cherished the family and personal life as precious private space to be guarded against an intrusive Party and state. But it proved a productive idea. Once alert to the notion that 'the personal is political', women developed some startling new insights that applied equally in communist and capitalist societies. Housework has a value and should be recognized in national accounting systems. Democracy should exist in the family as much as in the state. Domestic violence is an abuse of power, with society-wide implications.

We believe that most women in the women's organizations with which this book is concerned, given their public commitment to women's economic independence, legal rights, political representation and freedom from violence, would have supported the philosophy and demands of the feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s as described above. To this point, therefore, the problem with the word 'feminism' is merely a semantic one - it has to do with different ways women understand and use the word.

Points of divergence in feminism

However, both in B-H and elsewhere, there are real disagreements *among feminists* and *within feminist movements* that arise not from any mere difference of interpretation of the word 'feminism' but from genuinely different analyses and different strategies. We detected three of these divergencies among women activists in B-H. They concern attitudes towards *men*; towards *autonomy*; and towards *sexuality*.

Differences within feminism about men. Slavenka Drakulic has written that a major obstacle to women's organizing in the region of the former Yugoslavia is that 'the very concept of feminism as it was and still is presented in the mass media, is reduced to the stereotype of "women who hate men"' (Drakulic 1993). We did hear some Bosnian women express this view that 'feminists are man-haters'. But we also heard women state quite the contrary.

There is a deep division within feminism worldwide between a small minority of women who identify men, men as such and only men, as the problem for women, and the majority of feminists who see women's disadvantage as deriving from a

much wider range of conditions. The latter would say, yes, our problem derives from 'patriarchy', but it also springs from the way the economy is organized, the way power is structured and the way cultures shape us in masculine and feminine identities. Among those who see 'men as the problem' there is again a division. A small minority of separatists have decided women can only flourish if they live quite apart from men. The majority believe on the contrary that, if men are the problem, men can and must also be part of the solution. We should work with men for change in the system in which both sexes live.

This does not mean of course that we do not need women's spaces. The women in our seven women's organizations clearly felt they did - they had made their organizations such spaces. Some feminists, Bosnian and others, feel that when feminism is portrayed as 'man-hating' we should be wary. Often it is a deliberate slander, associated with a male backlash against the steps towards equality women have already taken (Faludi 1992).

Differences concerning women's autonomy. A second disagreement between feminists in Bosnia, and within feminist movements in other countries, has to do with women's autonomy. We heard some women in B-H say 'I don't like feminism if it means women for themselves'. It is important to recognize that this suspicion rests on quite realistic grounds: feminism *does* encourage women to look after their own interests, not only those of other people. But there are different ways of understanding this.

An important insight in new wave feminism was that something much valued in women, our almost universal commitment to caring for others, has a down-side. Women's immersion in the lives of others is often an impediment to women seeing themselves, and being seen by others, in their full person-hood. The rights of those others for whom a woman cares tend to obscure the fact that women also have rights.

Among the several hundred Bosnian NGOs listed in the ICVA Directory, many list their beneficiaries as 'women and children' or 'women and the family' (ICVA 1999). Our seven organizations tend to use other words to describe their mission. Zena Mostara for instance gives its aim as 'strengthening the position of *women*', Vidra as 'improving the economic position of *women*'. One of our informants stressed the importance of this. To continually link women with the family, she said, 'is to reduce women to their traditional role, in which she only had validity if she was caring about somebody else, being of service to someone.' A feminist movement, she believed, could never be built in B-H unless and until women disentangle themselves from their family identity and begin to act politically in their own interests. To do so is not a denial of love and care for others. Ultimately it is an assertion of it. A strong and autonomous woman does not love less. She loves more and better.

When new wave feminism began worldwide it was almost unthinkable to criticize wife-hood and motherhood. But the sexual division of labour in the family generated half-people: men skilled at earning but not at caring; women skilled at caring but lacking economic independence. If women wanted to be whole people, sharing men's freedom, they had to require men to shoulder some of the burden of care borne by women. They argued that men and children, as well as women, would gain from this. But it has never been easy for us as women to argue our own case

and look after our own interests. We feel guilty if we do. We find ourselves struggling not only against the burden, but also against the guilt.

Disagreements concerning sexuality. A third source of disagreement within feminist movements everywhere has been sexuality. A feeling began to surface among women in the 1970s that sexual relationships with men were nowhere near as satisfying to women as popular opinion would have it. Research into men's and women's sexual behaviour backed this up. Men found more satisfaction in sex than women did. Why was this? Before, women had perhaps felt that it was the very real fear of getting pregnant that inhibited their enjoyment of sex. But then the contraceptive pill came into use - and women *still* felt the sexual act as practised in most marriages to be disappointing to them. Then women began to ask questions. Some women set out to learn more about their own sexuality and find what does give women pleasure. For some women this meant speaking more openly about their needs with each other, and with their male partners.

With sexuality being more openly discussed, women who had sexual relationships with women felt safer to be more open about this practise. Lesbians were able to come out of hiding and argue for a right to *their* take on sexuality. Some women living conventional lives lost their fear of acknowledging unhappiness in heterosexual relationships, and felt more able to act on a homosexual desire they had until then suppressed.

A small number of lesbians in the former Yugoslavia were active in the women's movement before the disintegration. Lilit, the first lesbian group, was formed in Ljubljana in 1979 (Papic 1994). Today a number of lesbians, who have decided to be open about their sexual orientation and make it part of their politics, are valued activists in the women's organizations of the former Yugoslav region. But, as in many other societies, in Bosnia-Herzegovina homosexuality is still seen negatively. So the issue of sexual orientation divides Bosnian women, even those who are active in progressive women's organizations. As a result, few women have felt confident enough to 'come out' as lesbians, and 'come in' to contribute their energies to women's projects.

These three questions are among the most difficult and divisive issues of substance in the debate over feminism in Bosnia today. But they are equally live issues in other countries too, wherever feminism exists. Women will probably always harbour some difference of opinion on them. But there is a large space in which feelings can be rationally explored and differences tolerated.

Feminisms are plural

It will be sad if 'feminist', a name taken so courageously by many women in Bosnia and worldwide, becomes unsayable in our movement, turned into a dirty word by those who resent women's progress. What we are seeing here is that new wave feminism is not a unitary phenomenon - it is plural. But we can try to agree on broad definitions. A useful one is suggested by the well-known Black North American writer and teacher, bell hooks.

Feminism is the struggle to end sexist oppression. Its aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or class of women. It

does not privilege women over men. It has the power to transform in a meaningful way all our lives (hooks 1984:30).

It is useful to talk of *feminisms* in the plural rather than *feminism* in the singular. Some women for instance have argued the case for equality within the existing system, while others have made the case for remodelling of the entire system and its power relations. Some women have emphasized 'body politics', while others have pointed to the way gender oppression works through, and is shaped by, economic mechanisms. Some women have stressed women's similarity to each other, others the differences and inequalities between women - particularly those deriving from class and ethnicity. Some women have preferred to examine women's material disadvantages while others showed how damagingly women are represented in language, literature, art and cinema.

These differences of emphasis are hardly surprising. After all, feminists come from very different starting points. Western European and US women, especially students and academics, were important in the original upsurging of the late 1960s and early 1970s - though their contribution is probably over-stated. The vanguard of the movement today is certainly women in Third World countries - women in Africa and Latin America struggling with under-development and exploitation, and women in the 'patriarchal belt' of the Middle East and Asia, struggling with traditionalism, fundamentalism and communalism. The end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet system has brought many women of Eastern and Central Europe into feminist movements. Inevitably women in different circumstances have prioritized different needs and chosen their strategies for change accordingly.

Bosnian women's own experiences are certain to be bringing into being a women's movement in B-H that will be shaped by women's past in Yugoslavia and also reflect the unique ethnic and class structure of the new country. And just as women's movements in the rich northern hemisphere and in the poor South have learned from each other, so both will learn from women's movements in B-H, the Yugoslav successor-states and the formerly communist world.

The possibilities for mutual learning are all the time increasing. There is massively more connection between us - the women's movement today is a genuinely global movement, its significance widely recognized (Castells 1997, Stienstra 2000). Bosnian women are present in international forums - for example, attending the activities flowing from the United Nations World Conferences on Women. In all regions of the world we are finding ourselves dealing with similar threats. Militarism and war affect us all, in one way or another. So do failures of democracy, resurgent fundamentalisms, and an exploitative and aggressive capitalism propelled by theories of neo-liberalism. And everywhere we have to defend ourselves against the backlash against feminism.

As a result of our greater connectedness, listen to each other more and more, it may be that there is less '*either/or*' thinking among women. Feminism today does not present us with the limited choice of two thoughts: men and masculinity are women's only problem, or they are not a problem at all. Clearly the truth lies between the two. Likewise, there are few feminists who think we must argue about whether women need changes to the economy and political system *or* changes in the bedroom, the kitchen and the street. Most think both are needed. Most women who are alert to women's disadvantage at all see it as a problem of inequality between the sexes (things that could be put right today) *but also* believe that, in the

future, women and gender roles, men and society, must all be transformed, that everyone would benefit from this, and that men, as well as women, can help to bring it about.

bell hooks worries about the difficulties we have in agreeing what exactly we mean by 'being feminists'. She suggests we might do well to stop trying to fit ourselves into feminism as a personal identity. We could stop challenging each other to say *I am a feminist* or *I am not a feminist*. We might all feel more comfortable seeing feminism as an analysis and a political programme for action. We could then say simply *I advocate feminism* (hooks 1984:31).

If a women's movement does not quite yet exist in Bosnia-Herzegovina today, it is important that it comes into being and grows strong. The existing women's organizations need a social movement around them if they are to keep any kind of feminist vision and practise alive. At the same time, they can help bring it about.

CHAPTER 7

Towards Democracy?

We saw in Chapter 1 that these seven women's organizations are part of a growing sphere of non-governmental, non-profit organization in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Numbering by now several thousand associations, large and small, and dealing with a wide range of issues, from pet animals to poverty, this voluntary sector is becoming a significant component of Bosnia's post-war society. While some associations perpetuate interests that were typical of pre-war Yugoslavia, others are quite new, not only in topic but also in style - being more ready to address controversial issues and to challenge the authorities. Bosnia's NGOs are the seeds of what might become the flourishing civil society, in the space between the state and the family, that has been the vision of ideologues of 'the turning' in the formerly Communist countries.

But the NGOs have their critics. One of the most cogent is David Chandler. In his book *Bosnia: Faking Democracy After Dayton* he complains that the international community have shifted the goal posts with regard to democracy. Initially, he says, they set requirements for constitutional rule, the creation of representative assemblies and electoral processes, to be brought into being under the tutelage of the OSCE. These have been fulfilled. But because the internationals were dismayed by the nationalist colour of the parties chosen by voters in the elections of '96 and '98, they continued to deem democracy in deficit and substituted as their fundamental requirement a flourishing *civil society*, particularly the growth of an associational sphere of interest groups. 'Democracy' says Chandler, 'has become a moral as opposed to a political category, and democratization now concerns societal values and attitudes rather than political processes' (Chandler 1999:28). International money is being pumped into local NGOs, deemed by Chandler and other critics to be unrepresentative, undemocratic, inefficient and middle class, dangerously fragmenting the political opposition and undermining the political process.

Criticism of NGOs is not limited to academic debate. We found quite soon that when you are researching this sector in Bosnia you have to be ready to defend yourself against cynicism. Often we came across people who would say of Bosnian women's NGOs, 'Surely you don't set any store by *them*, they're just in it for a grant and a salary'. Or they would say, 'They're unrepresentative. They're just friendship cliques.'

Such challenges made us think carefully about our reactions to our research experience. We concluded that while the dangers are not illusory, the findings of our research point in a different direction. In this final chapter we will argue, first, that an effective state structure, responsible political society and creative civil society are *not alternatives to each other*. Each one is, in B-H as elsewhere, a necessary condition for democracy. Second, civil society inevitably contains both integrative and divisive forces - a struggle for a progressive politics has to be waged in the sphere of free association as well as in the political arena. It is both possible and necessary to distinguish one NGO from another, and evaluate the political promise (or threat) of each. Third, we will propose that local, integrative women's organizations of the kind we have discussed in this book, especially if embedded in a wider women's movement, are a creative phenomenon with a potential for shaping

Bosnia's future democracy in three particular ways. They can help to bring it into being as *localized democracy*, as *inclusive democracy* and as *gender democracy*. Finally, we shall look at some of the impediments faced by self-organizing women in achieving this effect.

Civil society in relation to democracy

Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan made a careful study of the problems of what they called 'democratic transition and consolidation' in certain selected countries of Southern Europe, South America and post-Communist Europe. The former Yugoslavia was not among their case studies, but much of their discussion is relevant to Bosnia-Herzegovina. These authors state clearly that while free and fair elections to representative assemblies are a necessary condition of democracy, they are not a *sufficient* condition. The belief that elections are all we need, Linz and Stepan call 'the electoral fallacy' (Linz and Stepan 1996:4).

The other necessary conditions for democracy, they suggest, are the following. First, the society should be securely constituted *as a state*. Then, within the framework of the state, five more interconnected conditions are needed. There must be a respected *political society* - a system of competing political parties, responsibly observing the rules of the democratic game and seeking to satisfy the voter with their respective policies and programmes. There must be a proper *rule of law* to guarantee citizens' rights, especially their right to associate freely. There must be a *state bureaucracy*, a corps of government departments staffed by officials willing and competent to carry out the wishes of the elected government. There must also be an *institutionalized economic society*. A modern consolidated democracy is incompatible with a command economy, but is likewise incompatible with a pure market economy. A democracy, Linz and Stepan argue, calls for genuine freedom and diversity in property ownership and business. But there must also be a significant degree of state ownership and intervention to assure regulation of markets and standards of trading, to protect public and private property and to guard against gross extremes of wealth and poverty.

Finally - and from our point of view most important - a necessary condition of democracy is a flourishing *civil society*, 'that arena of the polity where self-organizing groups, movements and individuals, relatively autonomous from the state, attempt to articulate values, create associations and solidarities and advance their interests' (Linz and Stepan 1996:7).

Of course civil society, including the sphere of NGOs, is still in the process of development in B-H. But so too are all the other conditions of democracy. As discussed in Chapter 1, even that primary essential, effective state-hood, has not yet been achieved. The country remains a kind of international protectorate. 'We live under a glass dome constructed by the internationals', as one woman told us. The Constitution proclaimed democracy in principle, but in practice it reified the ethnic logic of the war, so that the integrated operation of the two entities as a unified country is proving very difficult to achieve. Indeed, Bosnia has been called 'a case of failed transition' (Burg 1997). Linz and Stepan's other necessary conditions are also still lacking. Nationalist parties that seek separatist, ethnicized and therefore essentially undemocratic solutions for B-H are dominant, while parties offering genuinely democratic alternatives are fragmented and weak. Corruption and lack of transparency inhibit confidence in the legislative process, the state

bureaucracies and the courts. Finally, instead of institutionalized economic society, Bosnia is characterized by a black market, a grey economy and a hole where state ownership used to be and private investment has yet to arrive.

We would argue, then, that it is not the growth of NGOs that weakens Bosnian democracy. The problem is the lack of a context that can enable them to be effective. Civil society cannot produce democracy in the absence of a secure state and a responsible political society. But likewise those things can generate consolidated democracy only so long as the spirit and practice of democracy is alive at the grassroots of society. This is what David Held means by 'double democratization'. Always needed, he says, is an interdependent transformation of *both* state and civil society, so that they become 'the condition for each other's democratic development' (Held 1987:286).

We should not however be unrealistic or uncritical in our pursuit of civil society. It is never possible to rely on free association *as such*, as a force for democracy. Civil society contains a paradox: it guarantees freedom to movements that can undermine it. Its very permissiveness permits anti-democratic forces to arise. John Keane, in his book *Civil Society: Old Images, New Visions* recalls Hegel: modern civil society is a 'restless battlefield where interest meets interest'. Nationalism, for instance, roams hungrily through civil society just as it does through the state and the political parties. So we have to be selective, alert to the political quality of our associational life. We have to evaluate and often contest NGOs, just as we do political parties and their programmes, and the state and its powers (Keane 1998:50).

In our research we were selective in just this way. As described in the Introduction, first, we chose to look at women's organizations. Second, because being a women's organization is no guarantee of any other quality, we applied additional political criteria in our choice. We singled out organizations whose aims and interests suggested an aspiration to inclusiveness and democracy. And we looked for organizations whose focus suggested a concern with the condition, status and needs of women as a sex, rather than addressing women as mothers and wives, or as a vehicle to reach the family.

It is our opinion that NGOs that match these criteria, as these seven women's organizations do, *tendentially* play a valuable part in the constitution or reconstitution of democracy in Bosnia. We say *tendentially* because they are barely able to play this role at present. They need to be stronger, more numerous, part of a widespread women's movement. And they need to be better supported - in ways we shall return to at the end of this chapter.

The local dimension: democratic towns and cities

We were struck during our visits to Banja Luka, Mostar and Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje by how little contact was occurring between the women's organizations and the local political authorities and bureaucracies. In many Western European countries there is continual interaction between NGOs and town councils. The former complain and make demands of the bureaucrats. They lobby and put pressure on political representatives. The 'town hall' in turn usually seeks contact and co-operation with local organizations, firstly because they can be a source of valuable information to those who govern, and secondly to ensure votes at election time. By

contrast, in B-H the local authorities ignore NGOs, and the latter do not see anything to be gained by addressing them.

In theoretical debate about the quality of democracy, hope is often specially pinned on the local level of government. National government can be too remote from the concerns of ordinary people and the issues dealt with at that level are too big for ordinary people to make much input. Locally, however, the man-or-woman-in-the-street does have a hope of getting a foot in the town hall door. In Western European countries, local councils have been seen as the right level for a meaningful input by the individual and by small associations and interest groups. In Yugoslavia, 'local self-rule' was an important corollary of 'self-management' at the level of the enterprise. But in neither context has this hope been well fulfilled. There was a good deal of inauthenticity in the process, due to the hegemonic role of the League of Communists. In Western Europe local political interests have sometimes co-opted and used local associations. There is a fine line between 'community action' that challenges the council and to which the council must respond, and versions of 'community development' where the political party dominating the municipal council spreads its tentacles deep into the community and its associations in order to maintain political and managerial control and increase its own apparent legitimacy (Cockburn 1977).

Why is 'public participation' important? In the period following the second world war, the dominant theory of democracy employed a somewhat formalistic model that saw democracy as a rule-bound process of representation by means of election of candidates to legislatures from competing political parties. During the 1960s and 1970s ideals of participatory democracy were revived from a much earlier period. The new mood favoured making democracy less indirect, by giving ordinary people a more active role. Carole Pateman's book *Participation and Democratic Theory*, published in 1970, was symptomatic of that revival. She evokes the classical democracy that inspired the New Left in the Western European countries and helped shape the post-war Yugoslav model.

Like classical theorists Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Stuart Mill, the new democrats believed the participation of people in making decisions about things that concern them was the best way of protecting individual rights and making government responsive and responsible. It was also the best way to educate citizens for the conduct of government. With G.D.H.Cole, they saw society as a complex of many small associations, held together by the wills of their members. The individual member should be able to share in the association's decision-making, while the association in turn should be able to interact productively with a responsive elected local authority (Pateman 1970).

In very much this vein, a recent United Nations report sees Bosnia's local authorities as potentially 'the backbone of a civil society and a viable democracy'. It urges international institutions and national government departments to give them a central role, acting 'as a bridge to local capacity-building and to strengthening of local and national institutions'. But Bosnia's municipal councils, post-war, are in no condition to live up to the grand hopes that are pinned on them. 'What is common between both Entities is that their municipalities as units of local self-rule have little power, large territory and modest resources.... Financially, they are completely dependent on allocations from the State or the international community. Politically, they are used as party headquarters to which local municipal leadership is usually subordinate and loyal' (UNDP 1998:26-29). Similarly, a World Bank

report on reconstruction in B-H argues that effective de-centralized authorities are vitally important to re-establishing basic services in every town and village, but 'local governments and their utility companies are institutionally and financially weak...' (World Bank 1999:6). (There is some irony in this, since the international institutions withheld funding from local authorities, distrusting their nationalist politics.)

Not only are Bosnian local authorities weak, they are ill-disposed to NGOs. Many reports have noted that local politicians seem to consider any kind of challenge from the grassroots as illegitimate and subversive, while local officials are perennially suspicious and jealous. Local government consequently provides no bridges to allow for an input from local citizens' associations to policy making or service delivery (Smillie 1996). The Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues, a strong advocate of Bosnian NGOs, states baldly, 'those in authority must shift their approach to NGOs from competitive non-integration to co-operation and integration' (IBHI 1998:37). The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe has organized training for municipal officials to promote openness and transparency in budgeting and project planning. At the same time it seeks to encourage NGOs to overcome their reluctance 'to challenge officials, hold them accountable or advocate public interests to them' (OSCE 1999).

The unfruitful relationship between our seven women's organizations and their local municipal councils is explained in large part by these general conditions. But another factor is the deep mistrust many women feel for politicians, political institutions and political processes. With few exceptions, the women we interviewed were dismissive of politicians as a class, holding them responsible first for the war and now for the post-war stand-off. They blame those at national level for keeping the Federation and Republika Srpska divided, and those at local level for keeping their towns divided. In Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje, Tahira was of the opinion 'We should prohibit nationalist parties'. And Nermina added, 'All over the world nationalism brings trouble, evil. You can see it in Germany, in Indonesia.'

That did not mean however that they altogether shunned local politicians. In fact, some of the organizations had set out to win their interest. Federalna Zena for instance, on more than one occasion, had fixed a date for a meeting with local politicians, only to have the latter cancel before it could take place. Pavka was sure 'they perceive cross-ethnic NGOs like us as oppositional.' She had heard an official at some event they had attended in the municipal offices of Uskoplje remark, in a barely hidden aside, 'these people are meddling in our business'.

We have seen that Mostar is particularly notorious for its nationalist politics. The HDZ leaders of West Mostar are key figures of the Bosnian Croat national project. Unsurprisingly Zena Mostara and Zena BiH, openly working for reintegration in the region and the city, have a chilly relationship with them. The local SDA party controlling this part of the municipality is in favour of re-integration in principle, but in practise is suspected of being more and more Islamist, pursuing a reactive Bosniak national interest. It is however unusual in supporting the work of Zena BiH with rent-free accommodation.

It is widely believed that municipal councils have access to funds budgeted by national government for local humanitarian work, but little if any of this appears to get passed on to NGOs. The women are sometimes bitter about this. Some argued that the annual funding of local government by central government should contain

an element specifically allocated for support of local NGOs. But the women also reflect on the dangers that would be inherent in accepting funding from a nationalist-led local authority. As Azra says, 'You'd have to be careful not to make yourself obligated to them. It's women we're morally responsible to, and we don't ask permission from anybody for what we do.'

In the Republika Srpska, DOM, because they assist return of refugees, have had a substantial struggle with the SDS-controlled Nevesinje council. Given the pressure from the international institutions, the municipality cannot afford to take an open stand against returns. But they have exploited negative incidents, knowing that publicity for harassment can discourage others from returning. DOM have persisted however. From the very start their mission statement, seen by the council when they applied for registration, boldly stressed human rights: the right to return, the right to reclaim property, the right to free exchange of information. They continue to act on behalf of returners in all their dealings with the *opstina* and to accompany Bosniaks to meetings with officials. They never leave them to face the hostile authorities unsupported, because, they say, 'We want to spare people the provocation'.

DOM believe the municipality penalizes them for their politics. The charges imposed for phone, electricity, water and garbage collection are punitively high. 'It isn't a question of open threats, just quiet harassment.' The official strategy seems to be to exclude and ignore the women activists and diminish the importance of their organizations. The political authorities in Nevesinje would not dream, for instance, of including DOM in the invitation list when VIPs visit the town. 'It's as though we don't exist', says Marija.

In Banja Luka, Udruzene Zene reported that the municipal council neither hinders nor helps them, but is simply neglectful. If their outspokenly integrative stance had not yet provoked an adverse response from the council, it was, they felt, because they were seen as 'only' a women's organization. Women and women's issues are just not considered subversive. On the positive side, co-operation with individual politicians and bureaucrats had sometimes been achievable on practical matters. Over time, they had been able to win the co-operation of the Centres for Social Work in connection with helping their women beneficiaries. Recently, the Centres had even referred clients to UZ. Similarly with the police. At the outset the police were disrespectful of the activist women and called them insulting names. But recently their attitude had much improved. At the request of the International Police Training Force, Udruzene Zene had run training courses for the police on domestic violence. UZ was now negotiating with the service to enrol women police officers and set up a special unit to deal with rape and domestic violence.

Vidra's attitude to local government has inevitably been cautious. Strongly characterized by their minority identification, they feel themselves an unwelcome presence in Banja Luka to the Serb nationalists whose opinion prevails there. There had been, at a practical level, a certain limited co-operation with the municipality. But, feeling vulnerable and exposed, Vidra preferred to keep a low profile. They would very much have liked to be able to campaign vigorously about job discrimination, but they believe the politicians would see any criticism as an attack on them personally or on the party programme. 'So, no, it's just not possible. There would be consequences.' So long as they restrict themselves to providing practical assistance to women they will not be harassed, however, for the municipality

'knows that money flows through us into the economy. After all we do solve some social problems for them.'

There was no tradition in Yugoslavia of local groups engaging in creative 'community struggle' with local authorities, and it is not surprising that the authorities in B-H today are suspicious of local activism, and that the NGOs for their part are cautious in their demands. But democracy in B-H would be the richer for such engagement. If local integrative women's organizations can survive and grow stronger, not just in the services they provide but in the *challenge* they offer to local authorities, they could well draw from the political system a greater transparency and responsiveness. As Nermina, of Federalna Zena put it, 'We have to give a good example to our politicians'. Udružene Zene had already found that 'the political authorities respect us more as we become more effective'. It cannot happen of course, until the grip of the nationalist parties is loosened. But, when and where that happens, women's organizations, working at grassroots level, could find opportunities to insist on, and win, a genuine local dimension to democracy.

Beyond 'community': inclusive democracy

The women we interviewed had a clear and consistent vision for the future of their town or city. Its defining quality was *inclusivity*. They want it to be: a place where old friendships can be affirmed and renewed despite intervening experiences; where people are judged by what they do and say, not by the name they carry; where collective guilt is not ascribed to the individual; where political divergences are dealt with non-violently and democratically; where religion is a question of private belief not of politics; where economic competition is lively but humanized; and where there are no extremes of wealth and poverty. They believe in an integration of the three ethnicities honed in war, but also want the town or city to be inclusive of refugees and returners.

In Mostar for instance the women of Zena BiH and Zena Mostara said

I imagine the city as it was before the war. We all want to go back to our own flats, to our friendships. If the politics were less hard here everything could fall into place again. (Azra)

East Mostar, West Mostar, to me these are ugly concepts. They stick in my throat. It sounds like East and West Berlin. (Semsa)

The first expression of their commitment to bringing about that future had been their choice to stay and live in Mostar, and take responsibility for its quality of life. 'I love our city. It's where we grew up, and it's where I want to stay', Antonela said. And Marela said, 'I was born in Mostar and all Mostaris are my Mostaris'. We found something similar in Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje. Partly on political principle and partly from a very personal sense of outrage, the women were determined to stay in this depressed and depressing town when so many people around them were looking to emigrate. They were angry that something belonging to them, beloved by them, had been so arbitrarily shattered. 'I love my town and I want to stay here and feel security for our children, and for our old age.' It was Pavka who said it, but many other women said something like it.

Of course sometimes the problems look insuperable - 'the younger generation have left the city', 'there are too many traumatized people' - but the women are kept going by their belief that they can and will re-unify the city. They take encouragement from every little sign of improvement in social relations.

Communication is improving. And I don't just mean technically, like phone connections. People are communicating better with each other. Look at all the traffic on the bridge now. With new people, younger people, new politics, we can manage to make something new here. (Marela)

The same applies to the women we met in Banja Luka and Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje. Whatever the divergences and tensions between the women of the integrative organizations, they were closer to each other than to those who were saying 'trust between us will not be possible, and separation is better.'

It is interesting that the women did not often use the word 'community' in our interviews with them. This may be because there are two discourses in Yugoslavia's past through which a sense of 'community' has been mobilized by politicians, and both have given the word a meaning that makes it feel inappropriate today for expressing their own aims and ideals. We will suggest that this is not a problem for them alone: 'community' is altogether a problematic concept and there are good theoretical, as well as practical, justifications for the women's lack of enthusiasm for the notion.

One of the two discourses, that of nationalism, had given 'community' a closed, competitive and exclusionary meaning. Since the rise of ethno-national movements in the 19th century, as Xavier Bougarel has pointed out, 'the principle which has given structure to the Bosnian political order has not been citizenship, but rather *communitarian identity*' (Bougarel 1996:87, my italics). Those communitarian identities were fiercely energized in the Second World War and again in the late 1980s and 1990s. By definition, our integrative women's organizations oppose that nationalist concept of community.

The second 'community' discourse that women may have had in mind was the official ideology of federal Yugoslavia between 1945 and 1990. Benedict Anderson, theorist of nation and nationalism, has suggested that unity is always built by state-makers around an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983). And Tito was no exception. The Yugoslav state was imagined in the official discourse of the League of Communists as a national community that transcended ethnic difference in 'brotherhood-and-unity'. But the sense of belonging to a unified, secular, people's state ultimately faltered and failed. The wars of 1991-5 were precisely designed to destroy the credibility of that Communist 'community'.

The women find that tragic, but it would be wrong to see them as restorationists. They may be a little bit 'Yugo-nostalgic' (as the saying goes), especially concerning the loss of the values of service and public responsibility. But they are not looking for a return to Yugoslavia just as it was. In a way, the war has woken them from any complacency about either version of 'community'. Their lives have been wrecked by the nationalist version. They also see with hindsight what differences Yugoslav 'community' suppressed and neglected: its unsuccessful handling of national identities, its silencing of the specific gender interests of women. So the women do not speak much of community, now. What they do talk about, with enthusiasm, however, is their *town or city*. Disillusioned with 'community' and its false promises,

they are reaching over and beyond it for a more fully social, permeable and connected world.

All the same, for most of us the word 'community' is difficult to criticize, because it has a pleasing ring to it. In everyday speech, we often invoke community casually, and warmly. It *is*, after all, important to recognize that the individual is not a lonely atom, but becomes who she or he is within a context of related human beings. It can seem unduly negative and destructive to suggest the notion of 'community' is full of political hazard. The trouble is, it is too often invoked by people who wish to persuade us we are a unity when we are not, to force us to be identical by suppressing our variation, and to tell us we are different from those of other 'communities'.

Elizabeth Frazer explains why 'community' should ring alarm bells for us. The experience of community, she says, is almost always euphoric, but fleeting. The euphoric excitement comes from a feeling of 'engagement of the whole person in the relationship of community' (Frazer 1999:83). But the fleetingness comes from the unreality, the idealistic nature of supposed community. The reality that underlies the notion of community is more divisive, riven with differences and inequalities. Community is also by definition exclusive: one belongs to the community, or one is an outsider to it.

Nira Yuval-Davis, too, like other feminist writers on democracy and citizenship, warns that these inequalities tucked away inside 'community' can be particularly oppressive to women (Yuval-Davis 1994). Community and family are often yoked together, jointly seen as the foundation of social being. Women are enlisted as the keepers of the community tradition.

When community and family are represented as if they are organic and natural, and as something one is born into, belongs wholly to, the dominance of men and the subordination of women are also taken as natural, so that they cannot be contested.

The boundaries we set round 'community' and 'family' are arbitrary. In real life, the individual continually crosses them. We call community 'natural' and see it as a 'whole'. But this is an optical illusion. The same occurs when we attempt to draw a 'family tree'. It shows one lineage - perhaps the forebears of the father and his father. It excludes all the forebears of marriage partners and maternal ancestors. It shows a line of links that can be drawn on a sheet of paper, instead of the voluminous sphere of connections that inheritance really is.

Nationalist ideologues are adept at painting neat pictures of community - the community of national name to which we are supposed to belong by blood, attached to a given piece of land. This is the community invoked by the local political authorities of 'East Mostar' and 'West Mostar', the imam of 'Gornji Vakuf', the priest of 'Uskoplje'. But each of us usually inhabits more than one family, and more than one community. An ascribed national name never tells everything about us, and sometimes it so badly conflicts with our sense of self as to seem to tell a false story about us. To be restricted to the confines of one family or community or nation alone, one to which by birth we are thought to be fated, would be stifling. As Paul Hirst puts it, 'all associations should be communities of choice and not of fate'. We must have a guarantee, an unquestioned right, of exit (Hirst 1994:51).

It is better, then, as these women do, to look beyond community to a more complex and connected social world. It is, besides, more realistic. When the euphoria about community subsides, what people are left with is the stuff of social life, writes Elizabeth Frazer, 'networks of concrete social relations of exchange, trust or its absence, obligations and duties, friendship, uncertainty. That is, we are left... with neighbourhoods and local people, interest groups and parties, activists and voters, people who share religious or cultural institutions and so on' (Frazer 1999:84). But that rich and complex social stuff, if democratically handled, can be worked into a genuinely sustaining and sustainable web, and one that is less constraining and exclusive than 'community'. Frazer argues for imagining the places we inhabit simply as that: places.

We are better off, theoretically speaking, with locality than with community - for there is in this concept no suggestion that a single or any particular set of values, norms, preferred social identities, patterns of relations or tastes is privileged. Within the framework of social justice, the needs of existing users (residents, workers, visitors) in a place would all have to be considered if the value of democracy were to be realized... (Frazer 1999:171).

And we can *imagine* them into being.

It is precisely the overlapping and indeterminate nature of localities, the importance of routes and communication between them - their contingency - that is a crucial ingredient of a normative theory of local democracy and civil life, and more particularly a theory of the political and social processes by which we might construct localities that will support civic values (Frazer 1998:171).

In open and free 'communities of choice', the people with whom we choose to associate are very often not members of our family, community or nation but people with whom we share interests, concerns and values. Sometimes they are people with whom we have found common ground because we share an oppression - as women sometimes seek out other women. They are often people we call *friends*. We saw earlier how the active women in women's NGOs were sometimes criticized as 'mere friendship cliques', as if their friendship for each other in some way invalidated their organizations. But friendship is a political resource. As Marilyn Friedman has said

friendship has socially disruptive possibilities, for out of the unconventional living which it helps to sustain there often arise influential forces for social change. Friendship among women has been the cement not only of the various historical waves of the feminist movement, but as well of numerous communities of women throughout history who defied the local conventions... (Friedman 1992:114).

And this does sound somewhat like the women of Udruzene Zene and Zena BiH and the other groups we have studied here. Many women told us 'friendship in war saved lives'. They had refused to observe the nationalists' notion of community, they had crossed ethnic boundaries and at the same time, as women, stepped out of line by stepping into public space and prioritizing something political, that is neither job nor family. If it had not been for *friendships*, formed before the war in Yugoslav days or during the war, looking after neighbours in moments of danger, these women of Bosniak, Bosnian Croat, Bosnian Serb and other war-riven identities would

scarcely have been able to come together in cross-ethnic projects and integrative work after the war.

There is of course a down-side to associations based on friendship groups. As Jane Mansbridge perceptively noted, as early as 1976, it is not long before women's organizations come up against 'the limits of friendship' (Mansbridge 1976). Friends too often take each others' agreement for granted and forget proper democratic processes of debate and decision-making. They can become exclusive, so that others feel always on the margins, cut out of information flows, deprived of full membership and discouraged from taking responsibility. That is a serious challenge not yet adequately dealt with by most of these women's organizations today. But having said that, friendship is not an incidental but a meaningful and valuable element in the organizations.

Interestingly, a link can be made between friendship and the life of towns and cities. Both forms of sociality are based on choice rather than on 'natural' community. We think of 'cities' as places in which difference is readily acknowledged. An urban centre is home to people with many distinct interests, needs and values. Research has shown that urban dwellers tend to form their social networks of people who are brought together for reasons other than geographical proximity. Urban life allows for movement, and unexpected, distant and political connections. And the women do show that they want their town or city to be a place with a great deal of outward connectedness. The regional and international women's movement is already beginning to furnish this for them. Our research connections with them are a part of it, in fact.

Marilyn Friedman suggests that both friendship and urbanity, due to their voluntary and fluid basis, may be seen as 'modern' phenomena (Friedman 1992). I think something of this can be seen in the women activists liking for each other, their attachment to their urban places, and their visions for their future. Such an impulse is valuable in Bosnia-Herzegovina today, and, if they survive, organizations like these can contribute a quality of inclusiveness to democracy as it grows. Sevima Sali-Terzic summed this up for us when we interviewed her in Sarajevo. 'It's a question of taking ourselves seriously. Our inter-ethnic stance is an aspect of our oppositional power. We are modelling something the state cannot yet do.'

Gender democracy: feminizing politics

We saw in the descriptive chapters on the women's organizations how all of them, without being aligned to any particular party, had a distinctive take on politics. The women we spoke with were uniformly critical, from their positioning within civil society, of that sphere the theorists term 'political society'. They held politicians, as a class, responsible for the disintegration of Yugoslavia in armed conflict. They felt that politicians, with honourable exceptions, were the group most responsible for the divided condition of B-H today.

Many women remarked critically on three features of political society. First, men dominated it, having almost all the leading roles in political parties of all tendencies and senior political and executive positions at state, entity, cantonal and local levels. In Chapter 1 we showed the statistics of representation that support this observation. Second, a related feature, the political process was deeply masculine in style. It was a system in which men looked after the interests of other men, male

bonding was a factor in political dealings, and aggressive and combative behaviour was privileged. Third, neither men nor (unfortunately) women in positions of power dealt responsibly with the policy matters most important to women. It was for these reasons that Udruzene Zene and Zena Mostara had made 'women and politics' a significant focus in their projects.

None of the women active around politics assumed that just 'being women' was enough to assure either a non-nationalist or a feminist approach to politics. There is plentiful evidence that some women prioritized national interests both during and since the war. For instance, when, during the war of 1992-5, the parliament of the Republika Srpska appeared disposed to accept the Owen-Stoltenberg plan for partitioning the country on ethnic lines, the war widows of Kupres protested in inflammatory nationalistic language against the surrender of 'territories ethnically Serb for centuries, strategically important and with an exceptional economic potential, and strewn with communal graves containing more than 10,000 Serbs whose throats were slit by Ustasha hands' (Bougarel 1996:107).

When we were looking to identify women's organizations to include in this study we had to discard many that were not genuinely cross-national. But we could not assume that even those we singled out as clearly working for ethnic re-integration were necessarily critical of the patriarchalism of politics. Some of them were quite sexist, saying (in effect) 'women's part is to forgive and reconcile, men's part is to do politics'. So our women differ from others on this dimension too. While they criticize 'male-stream' politics, they do not universally abstain from activity in political parties. However, if they join a party they will choose the oppositional, non-nationalist parties and they will join as an individual, rather than linking their organizations with it.

Udruzene Zene and Zena Mostara, the two most politically active of the seven organizations, work in very contrasted political environments. We have seen how Mostar's politics are dominated by the split between an HDZ-controlled West Mostar and an SDA-controlled East Mostar. Jelena Sotric, one of Zena Mostara's three founders and a Bosnian Serb by background, is Vice President of the Citizens' Democratic Party. This dual role gives her a high public profile, very unusual for a woman in this masculine culture. The twin goals of Zena Mostara are re-integration the city - indeed the country - and feminizing Bosnian political society. Their gender work involves, first, increasing ordinary women's understanding of politics and raising their expectations of women already in the political system. This, as we saw, they approach through educational work, in workshops and seminars. 'Our aim is to open people eyes to what nationalism and democracy mean, what they are,' said Alma, the project co-ordinator.

Second, Zena Mostara work with women who are already in political parties, particularly elected representatives. They encourage them to think about women's issues and women's needs, think how they can represent women as a social group in policy making. They urge them to work co-operatively as women across party lines, in order to change the agenda of politics. While there are some women in the system who are prepared to work with women's NGOs, they are few and usually restrict their contact to organizations close to their own party. They do not contradict the party line for fear of being branded disloyal. As one commentator in Sarajevo told us, 'When people in power, in parliament, see some kind of solidarity between women across party lines, they don't like it at all. They instinctively see it

as dangerous.' So women on the whole are 'good little soldiers, doing what their generals say'.

Zena Mostara have seen too many women turned into surrogate men as soon as they get involved in party politics. There is pressure to adopt men's combative techniques, join in the scheming and power-brokering, simply in order to survive in the political jungle. As Marela put it, 'There's a kind of natural selection in which the strongest stay in and the weakest fall out.' So Zena Mostara's third aim is making sure that women who enter the system do not accept it as it is, but challenge the political process and change the way power is used. Jelena felt the task was not impossible. She herself had learned how to ask questions and raise issues that others dared not, and she had found some politicians respected her for it.

We can't accept male politics. That's what I'm fighting against. Margaret Thatcher did it men's way. In our organization we want to promote a women's way. I think as woman in politics we can be softer, cleverer about reaching our goals. When men speak they have a certain body language. They are so sure, they seem to say 'this is how it is'. When I speak I show that I'm not so sure. I try to work towards an agreement.

Udruzene Zene operate in the very different political environment of the Republika Srpska. When they began their work, the Entity was controlled by the extreme Serb nationalists of Pale, led by Radovan Karadzic. In those days they ran a risk even in crossing the Inter-Entity Border Line. The political atmosphere in Banja Luka has gradually improved however. Pressure from the international institutions has achieved more political pluralism and liberalism. The voters may continue to choose the SDS and the SRS - Serb nationalist parties. Dodik's Independent Social Democratic Party (ISDP) may be the puppet of the international community. But the international protectorate has undoubtedly changed what is considered legitimate political discourse.

While Udruzene Zene and the Serb nationalist parties have no truck with each other, relations with the ISDP are warmer. Some women are members and women candidates in the party are cooperative. Even so Udruzene Zene's media work had met with criticism. Their series of radio and TV programmes, 'Living Together', began just at the time of the NATO bombings, when feelings were running high. 'They're a bunch of *ustase!*', critics squealed. 'How *can* you expect us to "live together" when Serbs are attacked on all sides!' The donor that funded them recommended postponement, but the women pressed ahead, determined not to be intimidated.

We were interested that the women of Udruzene Zene used the terms 'left' and 'right', which we did not hear in the other organizations. The women described their politics not only as 'feminist' but as 'moderate left'. Aleksandra said, 'We're a bit left. Not hard, but gentle left'. Their 'leftism' appeared to reside in two orientations - firstly towards integration and secondly away from unmitigated capitalism.

Lana and Nada were both explicit about constitutional issues. They said they would like to see full constituent status established for each ethnic group in both entities. 'How can the state function,' asked Nada, 'if a Bosniak living in BL can't be a candidate for the municipality here, and a Serb living in Zenica can't be one there? It's altogether wrong.' She also added that Roma, Jews and others who do not fall

in the neat three-fold ethnic categorization of post-war B-H are disenfranchised by the Dayton constitution, a denial of human rights. If the ethnic principle were to prevail, Lana said, at the very least the Praesidium should be increased to four members, with the fourth representing such 'other others'.

The women of Udruzene Zene are also sharply aware of the abrupt economic revolution they are living through. Lana's view was that privatization had probably been inevitable in the long run, and was perhaps ultimately beneficial. 'I do think we should go this way. It could solve the chaos in the economy. What I want is *human* privatization. But I expect problems. The men who become big capitalists will be the war profiteers, with their ill-gotten wealth and corruption. I've seen it in other countries, so what else can we hope for in our own small, war-damaged country?'

Mirjana agreed with her. 'This is liberal capitalism, uncontrolled, just like in the 19th century. It's a value system in which money is king. There'll be no justice in this privatization. Children will think, 'Why bother to learn. It's crime that pays best.' She also foresaw social conflict and protests ahead, because a lot of people preferred socialism and saw totally privatized markets as a step backwards. Women in particular were likely to lose out in the new system. 'Women are not close to the centres of power where business is done,' said Lana. 'Women don't have access to the information they need, the right information for the moment and the place.'

Such views had led Udruzene Zene to engage rather actively with the political system. Their entry point had been gender politics. They had cooperated with the League of Women Voters in their campaign to register women and encourage them to use their votes. Like Zena Mostara, they see women and women's issues as marginalized in the 'dirty' power game. 'Politics is still men's issues,' said Lana. They actively supported the initiative of the OSCE's initiative for a 30% quota for women candidates. They also told us they want to see an improvement in the quality, not just quantity, of women representatives.

Throughout the formerly Communist world, following 1989, multi-party elections drastically marginalized women. Anastasya Posadskaya is a Russian feminist. Dismayed and angered by this political exclusion, she said, on many public platforms, with wonderful simplicity: *democracy without women is not democracy*. She and other Russian feminists argued that women should claim a place in politics and a right to 'our own voice in the making of the new world order' (Posadskaya 1994:5). Their opinion has been echoed by women in many countries of East/Central and South-Eastern Europe.

But also in Western Europe's more practised multiparty systems, women have been and still are systematically under-represented in the political process. Anne Phillips, opens her book *Engendering Democracy* with the observation

With the odd exception, the entire debate on democracy has proceeded for centuries as if women were not there... The relentless privileging, not just of real living men, but of the very category of the male itself, has formed and deformed political theory and practice... Politics has to be reconceptualized without the blindspots of gender, and democracy rethought with both sexes written in. Old concepts must be fashioned anew (Phillips 1991:2-3).

It is embittering to find that, even now, authoritative discussions of democratization since the end of the Cold War pursue their theme without any reference at all to the invalidity of a democracy that fails to represent women, the sex that is more than 50% of the population (see for instance Linz and Stepan 1996, Gallagher 2000, Diamandouros and Larrabee 2000). The gendering of democracy involves three things: changing the personnel; changing the issues and the outcomes; and changing the processes of power. These changes never happen of their own accord. They call for 'positive action'. I have argued elsewhere that we need *strategies* to ensure that democracy is gender democracy (Cockburn 1995). Udruzene Zene, Zena Mostara and (incipiently) the other women's organizations are beginning to devise such strategies for Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Their gender perspective also holds the promise of *deepening* democracy, so that it penetrates not just the state and political sphere but permeates the whole of society. Anne Phillips points out that most of the systems called democratic today do not even begin to tackle some of the power structures that most dictate women's lives. They scarcely touch our workplaces, our associations or our families (Phillips 1991:39). And that is the solid ground of everyday life on which feminist action works directly. Sevima Sali-Terzic, Director of the International Human Rights Law Group, remarked to us 'They call our issues small and unimportant. But our projects deal with *life*'.

A conversation we had with the women of the feminist women's NGO Zena Zenama in Sarajevo reminded us that it is not unreasonable to expect women's organizations to take internal democracy seriously. As one of them said, 'In feminism and democracy there exists a common source, in that they share a principle of equality.' Anne Phillips was making a similar point when she wrote 'feminist and participatory traditions have been intimately connected. The contemporary women's movement has been almost an experiment in participatory democracy, with a politics of grass-roots activism, a radical critique of authority and a commitment to collective decisions ... Most feminists have come to regard discussion, talk and active participation as vital' (Phillips 1991:41).

And women who get active in pursuit of democracy in and through their organizations are unlikely to stop before they democratize their own families and households. The first thing that women's activism does is erase the boundary between the public and private, and women who put energy into gaining respect and equality in the public sphere do not for long tolerate second class status in marriage.

The impediments faced by integrative women's organizations

Three problems are liable to prevent women's organizations from playing this part in the democratizing of Bosnia. The first is internal - their own lack of capacity; the second is contextual - the limitations of public space in B-H; and the third is a deficiency of funding.

The challenge of organizational capability

First, if women's local integrative organizations such as these are to survive and gain an impact, new skills and practices have to be developed within them. In Chapter 5 we noted some of the organizational weaknesses about which women had

been candidly self-critical. In this chapter we have been discussing the part that organizations like these could play, through demands and campaigns directed towards responsible authorities, in developing participatory democracy in the political sphere in Bosnia-Herzegovina, particularly at the local level of municipal government. But they are unlikely to be able to achieve this if their own practice fails to prefigure the wider social change they want to bring about. One woman we interviewed in Sarajevo, who has extensive experience of women's NGOs, remarked that 'it is specially shocking when women who declare themselves to be promoting inclusive democracy in the country perpetuate an unequal distribution of power within their own organizations and between themselves and the local women they have dealings with'. She added, 'we have to be prepared to speak critically about the practices of our NGOs, in order to strengthen them and save them, so that they can be the focal points we need'.

In similar vein, another concerned critic told us, 'The more democracy we have in our organizations, the more democracy we'll have in our society. Nobody can do it for us. It's not about our leaders, it's about us.' And she added 'The foreigners can't do it. We have to do it for ourselves.' She was referring to the fact that there are international institutions and NGOs operating in B-H today that support democratic process. As we have seen, a key actor in setting up and monitoring the representative system, and a strong advocate for local, inclusive and gender democracy, has been the OSCE. The advocacy of the ICVA and the IBHI press in the same direction. Some, though insufficient, training in 'process' has been made available to local NGOs by international donors. But in an important sense the actions of the international regime run counter to democracy, contradicting the intentions of the OSCE. In the role given it by the Dayton Peace Agreement, the Office of the High Representative is obliged to act arbitrarily and dictatorially, often overriding elected authorities.

However, the international community's protectorate, and the democracy deficit it entails, is a temporary phenomenon. A more deep-lying problem in B-H may be that the practices needed to bring into existence responsible government authorities and NGOs today may be the very ones with which Bosnians became disillusioned under 'the Yugoslav self-management system'. When, in the 1960s and 1970s, the new Left and new wave feminism in Western countries were re-igniting enthusiasm for participatory democracy, looking to renegotiate and reshape the relations of power, Yugoslavia stood for many as a model of state socialism that differed excitingly from the Soviet version. But the reality of self-management as experienced by Yugoslav workers fell far short of the ideal handed down from above by the bureaucracy's ideologues. Many alienated Yugoslavs came to dread the time-consuming and unfulfilling tasks required of them in the name of 'participation' and 'democracy'. Now, when Westerners, often on the basis of far less experience, evoke these terms, Bosnians are liable to feel, 'But these we already tried. They failed'.

'Women's emancipation' similarly lost its credibility, contaminated by association with Party rhetoric. But while the women of the women's organizations are managing to reappropriate the idea of women's emancipation and reformulate it as women's movement, they have not as yet managed in a similar way to shake 'participatory democracy' free of Yugoslavist rhetoric. Yet Bosnian women have a great deal of experience: they learned the contradictions of 'democratic' socialism; they saw the implosion of democracy in war; now they perceive the hollow promise of the Western 'democratic system'. Who is better positioned than they to devise a form of democracy that is not a travesty of the ideal?

Lack of developed spaces in which to act

Second, the women's organizations in B-H lack opportunities for realistic engagement with political power. John Keane suggests an important condition for civil society is 'the cultivation of public spheres of controversy in which the violent exercise of power over others can be monitored and resisted non-violently' (Keane 1998:156). The public spheres available to Bosnian women in which to controversialize power by their own non-violent means are as yet seriously under-developed. The result is that women are muttering to themselves, rather than shaking the pillars.

For example, features still relatively undeveloped in the political sphere in B-H today are such practices as street politics, political lobbying, making demands of public services, exemplary use of the courts and media campaigning. We might compare the processes that women's organizations might use in a more developed political system to campaign on an issue such as achieving supportive legislation for single parents, or changing the laws governing divorce, abortion or prostitution.

They would, first, mobilize interested groups of women to seek a high public profile for their case. But, as one woman pointed out to us, 'there aren't more than five women in B-H who would come out on the streets for a demonstration on women's issues'. Circumstances in the former Yugoslavia did not develop the reflex that brings people out into public space on political issues. Mobilization has, besides, acquired a bad name in recent years because it has been mainly nationalisms that have evoked mass followings. This reluctance to protest in public may be changing, however, for since 1995 pensioners have been demonstrating noisily around the state's delay in paying pensions, and trade unions in several industrial sectors have organized strikes.

Secondly, elsewhere such activists would use a political lobbying process. They would encourage women to approach the city councillor for their own local ward, or the member of parliament representing their own electoral constituency, and urge them to speak for their case in the party, and in council or parliament. They would try to identify councillors or MPs from several different parties who might be disposed to form a cross-party alliance around the single issue with which they are concerned. They would engage politicians to turn out in support of the public events generated by their campaigns. In B-H today the politicians remain obsessed with constitutional conflict and are unmotivated by the development of social policy. The normal procedures of contact between public and politician, such as public meetings, and regular local 'surgeries' at which ordinary people can talk with their MP, are taking time to develop. Meanwhile, however, as we have seen, some women's organizations are learning to by-pass the politicians and put pressure directly on the administration's public officers, particularly in social welfare, hospitals and police, for the services they need. They are learning how to use the *ombudsman*, an unfamiliar addition to public life.

Thirdly, women's organizations in a Western European country, campaigning around a critical issue, might use the law courts to establish useful precedents that can shape future legality. They would take test cases to the European Court of Justice in order to force changes of law in their own state. As yet the court system in B-H is inundated with cases arising from war - particularly property cases - and

it may be many years yet before the law can become an adequate resource for social movements such as the women's movement.

Finally, organizations of civil society wishing to 'controversialize power' would depend on access to a variety of media. During and immediately after the war in B-H, newspapers and television stations were entirely partisan, in the hands of one of one warring national faction or the other, and some still purvey nationalist opinion. But the OSCE's mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina included 'development of an independent, pluralistic and professional media... as a means to support the overall transition to a free and democratic society' (OSCE 1999b). They set up a Media Department, whose task, among other things, was to promote the rights, and the professional standards, of journalists and to prompt the development of laws that would guarantee the freedom and responsibility of the media. In 1996 the international institutions set up their own broadcasting outlets, Radio FERN (it stood for Free Elections Radio Network) and the Open Broadcast Network (OBN). They have been joined by many more independent newspapers, radio and TV channels, some likewise with external funding. This proliferation of media is generally welcomed by non-nationalist Bosnians, although many feel that their journalists are too servile to the interests of the international community.

The women's organizations we interviewed however were disappointed in their experience of trying to get coverage for their activities, even by the international and independent media. As in other countries, women's issues are not considered newsworthy. Vidra had found they could get media coverage 'only if we pay for it - you get what you pay for'. But there are also skills that NGOs can learn - for instance, how to use 'phone-in' programmes to get a point of view across. DOM and Zena BiH had eventually succeeded in getting media attention for issues both of refugee return and domestic violence. And, as we saw in Chapter 4, Udruzene Zene, one of whose activists had formerly been a TV professional, had run its own series of radio and TV broadcasts. But these positive examples were exceptional. On the whole, women were dissatisfied with the dominance of male voices and views in the media, and felt women's issues were deprived of a public hearing by the under-developed condition of the media in B-H today.

Need for a consistent funding regime

Third, and definitively, we have seen how women's organizations lack security of funding. NGOs must scratch a living as hunter-gatherers in a primitive world. There is an urgent need for a thought-through, co-ordinated, long-term funding policy for progressive NGOs on the part of Bosnian and foreign governments, inter-governmental institutions and international donor NGOs, and democratic means of accessing such support. What women show they need is donor organizations that have a genuine, heartfelt interest in the grantee organization and its work. They need donors willing to take a risk with new and untried organizations and experimental projects. Such donors would keep close to the projects, show respect for women working on the ground, show real concern over success and failure and develop an in-depth understanding of local conditions. They would reward well-run and productive projects with extended funding and help them access other sources. They would make a policy of local capacity-building and set up training and development opportunities for their partner organizations. They would encourage co-operation between women's organizations, not competition. They would work with other donors in a long-term plan for the overall development of Bosnian

women's integrative NGOs. They would model transparency by publishing in the press details of their annual budgets and their expenditure on grants.

A valuable transformative vision

We have argued here at length the case for helping local integrative women's organizations to develop and thrive. Some would argue that they are a negligible phenomenon, scarcely worth this advocacy. Why should their survival matter?

We believe it matters because such organizations are potentially a social space (and a rare one) in which a genuinely transformative, progressive revisioning of the social might happen after catastrophic societal failure. With whom, otherwise, does the dynamism lie in Bosnia today? First, it lies with the international institutions - and they are extraneous. They cannot speak with a Bosnian voice about Bosnian hopes and fears. Second, it lies with the visionaries of private wealth through the market economy - and they are not geared for social responsibility. They seek to increase, not diminish, inequalities. They produce atomized individuals, not social being. Third, the initiative resides with nationalist politicians and ideologues, and their stifling and murderous conception of community. Integrative NGOs are important for daring to refuse both individualism *and* a narrow notion of community - while still acting collectively. And ultimately, who other than these *women's* NGOs conceives of women as a responsible collective social actor - in a world still governed by men in the male interest?

To wish for an influential women's movement in B-H is not special pleading for a sectional interest called 'women'. On the contrary, the gender aspect of democracy is inextricably bound up with all the other aspects of democracy. Our descriptions of Yugoslavia before the war, and of Bosnia in war and post-war, have shown how patriarchal relations of power, which include both the practical dominance of men and masculine cultures and a conservative ideology of gender roles inside and outside the family, have been deeply implicated in every phase of the disaster that befell Yugoslavia. Socialist patriarchy contributed to the shortfall of democracy that left Yugoslavia vulnerable to disintegration. Nationalist patriarchy galvanized the rise of nationalist movements and the pursuit of militarism. Now capitalist patriarchy is sweeping through the ex-Communist world along with Western commodities, corporate business interventions and development bank loans. Unless women succeed in challenging, over-turning and reshaping gender values and power relations in the post-war moment, Bosnia has no hope of achieving real democracy in future.

APPENDIX 1
List of Women Interviewed for the Research

Federalna Zena

- Mara Brzov
- Milka Tiric
- Nermina Jukic
- Tahira Kirlic

Savjetovaliste SB

- Fatima
- Kata Crnov
- Katarina Zuljevic
- Ismeta
- Ljubica
- Nada
- Pavka Zuljevic
- Rabija
- Sijada
- 'ST'

Udruzenje 'Zena BiH'

- Azra Hasambegovic
- Nadja Dzabic
- Semska Catic
- Vera Miletic
- Ivanka
- Rasima (pseudonym)
- One other anonymous

Zene Mostara

- Alma Elezovic
- Antonela
- Fadila Hadzic
- Ivanka Balic
- Jelena Sotric
- Marela Jerkic

Udruzene Zene

- Aleksandra
- Lana Jajcevic
- Mirjana Lukac
- Nada Golubovic
- Sanja

Zenska Akcija 'Vidra'

- Jasmina
- 'M'
- 'SJ'
- 'SK'

- One other anonymous

'Dolina Ostaje Moja' (DOM)

- Marija Belovic

Contextual interviews:

- Aleksandra Petric, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, Banja Luka
- Anja Simic, Malteser Hilfdienst, Mostar
- Camila Hodzic, returnee, Banja Luka
- Jadranka Milicevic, Memnuna Zvizdic and Selma Hadzihalilovic, Zena Zenama, Sarajevo
- Jasminka Drino Kirlic, Youth Centre, Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje
- Madeleine Rees, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Sarajevo
- Maryann Rukavina, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Sarajevo
- Mira Hacam, Vrelo, Mostar
- Nada Ler Sofronic, Open Society Institute, Sarajevo
- Sevima Sali-Terzic, International Human Rights Law Group, Sarajevo

NOTES

1. The term *ethno-national* is used to suggest that identities in Bosnia are a product both of cultures that have gained specificity over historical time (ethnicity) and their conscious deployment in nationalist political movements (nationalism). We follow Pieterse (1997) in use of the terms *ethnicity* and *nation/nationality*. Ethnicity, as a collective identity deriving from a historical process of linguistic and cultural differentiation, may be relatively unemphasized, optional or dormant. It may become competitive, politicized and militant. In such times ethnic groups may imagine their community as a nation, mobilize politically around the concept and seek nation-statehood. Central to the political project of nationhood is the generation of a *collective identity*, defined in exclusion of and opposition to a certain 'other' or 'others'. Nationalist discourse invites those it designates as belonging to 'identify' with the collective name. Each of us however retains a measure of agency in the constitution of our *sense of self* - we may take, reject or ascribe new meaning to offered identities (Hall 1996).

2. The 'national tolerance index' results from research carried out by the Consortium of Yugoslav Sociological Institutes on a sample of 13,500 cases from all republics and provinces of the former Yugoslavia. See Footnote 1, page 24, of UNDP 1998.

3. Please see our comment in the Introduction in the section subtitled 'On dates and developments' where we comment on our handling of events occurring subsequent to this research.

4. We draw here on two undated government documents *The Constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina*, and *Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina: Facts*.

5. The term 'civil society' has been used in many ways, at different periods and with different political intentions. See discussions in Fine and Rai (1997), and Keane (1998). We choose here to exclude from its scope the family, business organizations and political parties. The latter, following Linz and Stepan (1996) we term 'political society'.

6. The usage of the term 'patriarchy' has been keenly debated in the context of the feminist movement since the late 1960s (Eisenstein 1979, Sargent 1981). A particularly useful formulation has been that of Pateman (1988), stressing its historical variations. Here, as elsewhere, we use it to mean a long-lived, but adaptive, form of sex/gender system (Rubin 1975) characterized by a hierarchy among men, and of men over women, that structures and is structured by other hierarchical systems, notably those of class and ethnicity (see Cockburn 1983, 1985 and 1991). R.W.Connell has usefully introduced the term 'gender regime' to mean the power relations between men and women that characterize a given society at any one moment (Connell 1987).

7. There are differences however between the two Entities. The Federation Constitution (in its Annex) directly incorporates the Convention. 'Though the Constitution of the Republika Srpska makes no direct reference to the Women's Convention, it does contain several key provisions impacting the rights of women' (IHRIG 1999:137).

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