

A Battle over Innocence: Gender and Competing Narratives of a War
Event in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina

By

Gorica Stevanović

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Arts in Gender Studies

Supervisor: Professor Elissa Helms

Budapest, Hungary

2011

Abstract

This thesis analyzes the development of competing narratives of one war event that took place in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina on May 15, 1992. The thesis looks at the development of the narratives on the level of two political entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as locally, in two towns where different commemorations are held. The purpose of the thesis is to examine how the status of innocence as well as the notion of innocence is constructed and how both “sides” employ similar patterns and similar essentializations in order to achieve the status of the innocent and just side in the war.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	II
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	III
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. THE JNA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR IN YUGOSLAVIA AND MAY 15 IN TUZLA.....	3
1.2. THE RESEARCH PROJECT	6
2. THE FEDERATION NARRATIVES	9
2.1. FROM “SERIOUS INCIDENT” TO “FAMOUS BATTLE” - THE WAR AND THE IMMEDIATE POST-WAR PERIOD	10
2.2. “AS IF THE JNA HAD NEVER ATTEMPTED TO LEVEL THIS TOWN FROM SOUTH AND NORTH AND AS IF A CHETNIK BALL HAD NEVER BEEN SCHEDULED” - THE NARRATIVE OF DNEVNI AVAZ	18
2.3. “THAT IS OUR INTERSECTION, AND OUR TOWN” - TWO COMMEMORATIONS	25
2.4. CONCLUDING NOTES	30
3. THE NARRATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA.....	32
3.1. MOTHER AND SON.....	32
3.2. MOURNING AND CELEBRATION	37
3.3. CONCLUDING NOTES	51
4. CONCLUSION	53
5. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	58

1. Introduction

One common element of the post-war period in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the existence of competing narratives of events that happened in the 1992-1995 war. Every side in the war and every ethnic community has its own narrative of events and ways of justifying them. Narratives are not monolithic and there are also competing narratives of events within and across ethnic communities. This thesis will be concerned with different narratives of one event in Tuzla (a town in the northeastern part of BiH) that happened on May 15, 1992 and resulted in a number of killed JNA soldiers (the JNA - the Yugoslav People's Army, the army of the six republics of the former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia) that were exiting that town. Since Bosnia and Herzegovina is composed of two political entities, the Federation of BiH (in which the majority of the population are Muslims and Croats) and the Republic of Srpska (in which the majority of the population are Serbs), the analysis will examine the ways different narratives of May 15 are constructed in two newspapers with the widest circulation in one entity and two newspapers with the widest circulation in the other, with the addition of one representative local newspaper in Tuzla and one in Bijeljina (a nearby town in the RS) since those are the two towns where different commemorations of May 15 are held.

Homi Bhabha states about nation and narration, that through textuality we can expose “the wide dissemination through which we construct the field of meanings and symbols associated with national life.”¹ The most important theme of the thesis is the status of innocence and the construction of narratives for the purpose of achieving the status of the just and innocent side in the war as well as the implications that the term innocence has in relation to gender. The thesis will also address the notion of masculinity and show, as R. W. Connell

¹ Homi Bhabha, “Introduction,” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 3.

states, that it has to be contextualized, as contextualization is necessary for understanding the narratives of May 15. Different constructions of masculinity, such as the father masculinity as recognized by Rhoda Kannaneh in the context of Palestine and by Stef Jansen in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, support Connell's point and indicate that the construction of masculinity and war is not restricted to the combat context only. The thesis will use the concept of gendered innocence, as developed by Charli Carpenter and Adam Jones who elaborate on the gendered aspect of the civilian status and the implications that has for the status of innocence. The transition from a legitimate target, as Carpenter and Jones explain, to a "credible dead body,"² as Čolović calls it, is highly gendered. The presence of bereaved mothers is important for the narrative, since they are used as symbols, as elaborated by Cynthia Enloe, Sarah Ruddick, Jamie Munn in the context of Kosovo and Elissa Helms in the context of Bosniac women. We will observe some similar patterns employed by the two sides, such as othering, as analyzed by Robert M. Hayden, Bette Denich and Mirjana Prošić-Dvornić in the context of the former Yugoslavia.

The narratives in this thesis are embedded in bigger narratives of Serb and Bosniac victimhood. The siege of Sarajevo and the massacre in Srebrenica in 1995 committed against Bosniacs (Bosnian Muslims) by Bosnian Serbs are some of the most frequently evoked events in the war used to construct the notion of Bosniac victimhood, whereas the crimes against Serb civilians in the period prior to 1995 in the region of Srebrenica, for example, are used to construct the notion of Serb victimhood. Ger Duijzings illustrates that by noting separate commemorative practices that have been developed in the region of Srebrenica, the accounts

² Ivan Čolović, "Warrior," in *The Politics of Symbol in Serbia: Essays in Political Anthropology* (London: Hurst, 2002), 54.

of the war by both sides being very similar in style and rhetoric, but each side documenting only the victims of its ethnic community and discounting the victims on the other side.³

The first chapter will give an overview of the development of the Federation/Tuzla narrative in three newspapers from 1992 to 2010 and look at the construction of motherhood and the construction of men as fathers and moral killers with the emphasis on Tuzla's civilian position and multiethnic politics. The second chapter will give an overview of the development of the RS/Bijeljina narrative and the representation of soldiers as children and the representation of mothers as bereaved. The conclusion will attempt to show points of contact between the two and the similarity of the patterns they employ, showing that the practice of othering, the construction of certain notions of masculinity and the essentialized notion of a woman as a mother serves to construct the position of the innocent, indicating how relative that position is and how opposing sides in the war are working according to very similar premises.

1.1. The JNA at the beginning of the war in Yugoslavia and May 15 in Tuzla

It is very difficult to determine what happened on May 15 in Tuzla. However, there are some things that we know for certain. We know that a convoy of JNA military trucks was on its way to exit Tuzla on May 15, 1992 at 7 pm. We know that there was shooting, explosions and exchange of fire at the street intersection Brčanska malta. We also know that a certain number of people were killed, a smaller number from the Tuzla side and a bigger number of JNA soldiers. The number of the JNA soldiers is not constant in any narrative and the number is heavily contested, the Federation/Tuzla side offering a smaller number (approximately 30 –

³ Ger Duijzings, "Commemorating Srebrenica: Histories of Violence and the Politics of Memory in Eastern Bosnia," in *The New Bosnian Mosaic : Identities, Memories, and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society*, ed. Xavier Bougarel, Elissa Helms and Ger Duijzings (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 145-160.

90, different numbers given at different points in the narrative) and the RS side offering a bigger number (“more than 200” or “more than 300”). We also know that there is a disagreement on who fired first, whether the JNA soldiers or the members of Tuzla’s Territorial Defense (TO) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (the police, hereafter referred to as MUP). Each side states that the other side started firing first and each side states that it was under attack.

The following part offers a short, narrow and simple overview of the position of JNA and the way in which it was seen in Bosnia, especially at the onset of the war in BiH (1992-1995). Separation along ethnic lines occurred in 1990 in BiH. As happened elsewhere in Yugoslavia at the time, political parties on the basis of nationality were formed, and in 1990 three national parties supporting the interests of three ethnic communities in BiH came to power after the elections in 1990. One of the main issues in the subsequent period was whether to remain part of the Federation (of Yugoslavia, i.e. what remained of it after two republics, Slovenia and Croatia, had opted for independence) with the Bosnian Serb side wanting not to be separated from it on the basis that it would mean living as a minority in BiH. BiH was becoming increasingly polarized. BiH, without an agreement from the Serb side, became independent in March 1992 and was recognized in April, which was when the attacks on Muslims in the eastern part of BiH started and were committed by the JNA reservists from Serbia. BiH became immersed in war by mid-April.⁴

Marko Attila Hoare states that after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Tito, the President of Yugoslavia formed a system of “territorially based units [that] were removed from the command structure of the JNA and placed under the supervision of civilian

⁴ Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The War in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), 92 – 120.

authorities with staffs at the local, municipal and okrug level.”⁵ These territorially based units were structured on a model of the Partisan manner of fighting. This resulted in a combination of the regular army on the level of the Federation (JNA) and the local system of TOs at the level of the six Republics that were subordinate to the JNA. The TOs in the parts of BiH with the Muslim majority became the basis for the Army of BiH⁶ and the Tuzla military-related actions were organized between municipal council, TO and MUP.⁷

It is also important to understand the position that the JNA had in early 1992. The Army of the Serb Republic (VRS) was formed by the JNA that began the process of arming the militia of the Serb Democratic Party (SDS - the Serb national party in BiH, one of three national parties at the beginning of the war) in the spring 1991. The basis of the new Bosnian Serb army was formed by the JNA and the TOs in the regions with a Serb majority. BiH became independent in March 1992 and by that time, the Serb regions (one-third of the territory) were under SDS control. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was established as a federation of Serbia and Montenegro on April 27, 1992 and since BiH was not part of that country, Serbia separated the JNA into “formally separate SRJ and Bosnian Serb armies.” The citizens of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia who were in the JNA withdrew from BiH (they composed a small number of the JNA in BiH) and the remaining 90,000 JNA soldiers transformed into the Serb army in BiH. The Serb Republic of BiH (or as it is nowadays referred to in English, the Republic of Srpska, hereafter frequently referred to as the RS) was established on May 12, 1992, and was officially recognized by the peace agreement in 1995.⁸ This might help to understand why the JNA, the joint army of the former country, was seen as a Serb army at the beginning of the war.

⁵ Marko Attila Hoare, *How Bosnia Armed* (London: Saqi Books in association with the Bosnian Institute, 2004), 19.

⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁷ Ibid., 48.

⁸ Ibid., 32 – 39.

1.2. *The research project*

The notion of a narrative used in this thesis is of a narrative as a process and as a sequence of events. “[Narrative] does not simply mirror what happens; it explores and devises what can happen. It does not merely represent changes of state; it constitutes and interprets them as signifying parts of signifying wholes.”⁹

The ‘same’ story can be represented differently in different narratives adopting different discourses, and conversely, different stories can be represented in terms of the same discourse (with the same chronological arrangement of events).¹⁰

In this thesis, I use the method of discourse analysis as concerned with the interpretative context, “the social setting in which a particular discourse is located” and the rhetorical organization of the discourse¹¹ in order to look at the newspapers and their representations of commemorations of May 15 and their construction of a narrative of that event and the construction of the position as well as the notion of the innocent.

I decided to look at four newspapers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Oslobođenje* and *Dnevni avaz* from the Federation and *Nezavisne novine* and *Glas srpske* from the RS. The newspapers from the Federation are usually circulated among the Bosniac population and the newspapers from the RS among the Serb population, even though this is not exclusively so and ethnic communities are not monolithic. However, these newspapers do employ different perspectives on the news in the country. *Nezavisne novine* and *Glas srpske* are the only daily newspapers from the RS, and *Oslobođenje* and *Dnevni avaz* are two out of four daily newspapers (*San* and *Dnevni list* are the other two) in the Federation. *Dnevni avaz* is the most widely circulated daily newspaper in BiH and is seen as primarily addressing the interests of

⁹ Gerald Prince, *Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 60.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹¹ Fran Tonkiss, “Analyzing Discourse,” in *Researching Society and Culture*, ed. Clive Seale (London: Sage, 1998), 249 – 250.

Bosniacs. It was also seen as a mouthpiece of the SDA party, but it has dissociated itself from it more recently. The newspaper *Oslobođenje* is one of the oldest in the country (circulating from 1943) and is usually perceived as being of better quality than *Dnevni avaz*, being independent, multiethnic, but still sharing the perspective of secular Bosniacs and pro-Bosnia people. *Nezavisne novine*, circulating from 1995 and not seen as supporting any political party, is an independent newspaper and often in opposition to the government of the RS. *Glas srpske* is owned by the government of the RS and is seen as supporting their interests.¹² The two local newspapers used in this thesis are representative of the rhetoric that the political parties in power employ in those municipalities (Tuzla and Bijeljina). In Bijeljina, the party in power is the SDS party, and that is the party that has been in power in Bijeljina throughout the period relevant for this thesis (1992 – 2010). In Tuzla, the party in power is the SDP party (The Social Democratic Party, a non-national party).

In my research, I primarily concentrated on the representations of the event of May 15 itself, as well as the marking of May 15 in Tuzla and the commemoration in Bijeljina. The chosen time period is from May 10 to May 20 in each year from 1992 to 2010. I initially looked at the entire month of May in order to find any articles about May 15, but after noticing that most writings on this event occur most frequently on May 14, 15, 16 and 17, I restricted my research to the period of May 10 to May 20. The two local newspapers are exceptions, since they do not have a daily edition. Therefore, I looked at the entire month of May. The local Tuzla newspaper *Front slobode* was issued two times a week in 1992 and once a week later on. The local Bijeljina newspaper *Semblerske novine* were issued once a month, two times a month later in the 1990 and once a week in a more recent period.

¹² “Bosnia-Herzegovina's Media Landscape – print media,” *Vienna's weekly European journal*, January 15, 2009, Accessed May 30, 2011, <http://www.wieninternational.at/en/node/12040>.

The main purpose of the research was to look at the development of the narratives of May 15, both locally and on the level of the two political/national entities and to see how the position of and the notion of innocence is constructed and how the narratives compete with each other. I, being from Tuzla and growing up with one narrative of May 15, have only as a young adult become familiarized with different interpretations of this event. My attempt in this thesis is to approach both/all of them critically and analyze the manner in which they are constructed. The narratives of certain events in the war that the “sides” in the war have are very powerful. Each side has its own mainstream narrative that is well-established. While doing the research in Tuzla, I was often reminded that after analyzing these narratives I must not forget to establish “who was who” in the war, in terms of who the victim was and who was the aggressor. Because of the criticism I received for choosing this topic in the first place, I would like to state at the very beginning that this thesis has a particular purpose which is not to determine which side is responsible for the outcome of this event or for initiating it. I do not look at narratives to see which one is more probable or to determine which side is lying. This thesis attempts to see similar patterns in the construction of innocence that are employed by both sides, rather than to side with one of them.

2. The Federation Narratives

This chapter will give an overview of the development of the narrative of May 15, 1992, as constructed in the newspaper *Oslobođenje* in the period from the 10th to the 20th of May from 1992 to 2010. It will observe how the narrative changes, from the early description of the event as “a serious incident” to the war celebratory discourse from 1992 to 1996. This is followed by a period of silence, a shifting of the anniversary marking from May 15 to May 16 and the arrival of a commemoration from the Republic of Srpska to Tuzla in 2010, where we can see how the discourses and narratives from one political entity interact and are constructed in contrast and in relation to the other. This chapter will also include the narrative as it is constructed in the newspaper *Dnevni avaz* in the period from the 10th to the 20th of May from 1996 to 2010, since the first edition was issued on October 2, 1995. The local Tuzla newspaper *Front slobode*, as an example of the local narrative, is included from the period of 1992 to 2005. The newspaper was no longer printed after 2005 and it will mainly be included for its representation of the period in the 1990s.

The construction of men as fathers and women as mothers will be relevant in this part of the thesis. Women, who are otherwise absent from the narrative, find their place in it only as mothers mourning the loss of their sons’ lives. These women, appearing in this narrative with the arrival of the commemoration from Bijeljina as mothers of the killed JNA soldiers, are not seen as political actors and are not seen as representing a threat, unlike male politicians from the RS who are. We observe several patterns of the construction of masculinities in the Federation/Tuzla narrative – the construction of men as fathers and as moral killers who did not fire first but fired back and the representation of the JNA soldiers as militarized and violent, the emphasis being on their status as a current or a potential threat. The chapter will show how the emphasis on the civilian and non-militarized position of ‘us’

and the highly militarized position of ‘them’ helps to construct the position of the innocent and morally superior and just side in the war.

2.1. From “serious incident” to “famous battle” - The war and the immediate post-war period

We find the very first account of the Tuzla Convoy, as May 15 is nowadays frequently referred to, in the *Oslobođenje* newspaper from May 16, 1992. It starts with the following statement: “A more banal and more serious incident between the former JNA and the Territorial Defense and MUP in Tuzla could not have happened.” The article states that Selim Bešliagić, the town’s mayor, affirmed on the local television channel that was also relaying the exiting of the JNA, as well as “the incident” itself as it happened, that the JNA soldiers “who were rejoicing to be leaving town” started firing first, which triggered a response from the TO and the police. The article also states that, prior to this main incident, another one happened also at Brčanska malta when one JNA truck was stopped for attempting to take the weapons that belonged to the TO and had to return to the barracks “all seen by the people of Tuzla who watched all of this on their [TV] screens.” This establishes the character of the JNA at the very beginning of the narrative as an army that can no longer be trusted, but also as an army that is at this point doing whatever it wants. The article then goes on to state that three hours later the members of the TO and MUP stopped the convoy of trucks and that shooting followed, concluding that it is not known whether the incident will escalate and adding that Tuzla is calling for peaceful settlement.¹³ The first article about May 15 establishes the status of May 15 as an incident, as something that should not have happened and that might make the situation in Tuzla complicated and have consequences. An article from the following day,

¹³ M. Bikić, “Planula i Tuzla,” *Oslobođenje*, May 16, 1992. This footnote refers to all quotes that are situated from the time I mention the article to the footnote marker. This is done in order not to have a footnote for every quote which would result in a very big number of footnotes.

however, entitled “After ‘the Fireworks’-Peace?,” states that the military barracks was won by taking a “lightning-quick action” and that members of the TO and MUP “completely surprised” the JNA. That account, one of the first on the event, states that, “according to a free assessment,“ approximately 30 members of the JNA were killed and that according to the TO Tuzla, four members of their [TO] units were killed, which gives us one of the first assessments of the number of the killed persons, a number that varies over the entire war and post-war period in all narratives. The article also states that the “the guilty party” of this “serious incident” were members of the JNA because one truck, instead of following the itinerary that was agreed upon, went the other way towards another part of town, adding that the JNA soldiers started shooting from the last truck at the surrounding buildings and passers-by and that one member of the MUP was killed, which was when the members of the TO and MUP fired back. This triggered a ten-minute exchange of fire, then explosions and fire which spread to other trucks [made possible by the fact that trucks were carrying explosive devices].¹⁴ It is interesting and indicative that the word used to describe the incident in the title is “fireworks,” usually seen in relation to celebration.

There are several articles in the Tuzla local newspaper related to May 15 in the edition from May 22, 1992. The newspaper did not have a daily edition, making this our first encounter with the narrative that was starting to be built around May 15 in Tuzla. On the cover of the newspaper, we find an article entitled “Hell at Malta.” There is a picture of the explosion at the intersection with an explanation “the moment that looked like the end of the world - the explosion of munition at Brčanska Malta.” The article starts by describing May 15 as “the start of this, fratricidal war, the most nonsensical war of all wars.”¹⁵ In the continuation of that article in the news section entitled “Hell under windows,” May 15 is

¹⁴ M.B.-V.J., “Nakon »vatrometa«-mir?,” *Oslobođenje*, May 17, 1992.

¹⁵ Z. D. “Pakao na Malti,” *Front slobode*, May 22, 1992, 1.

taken as the start of the war in Tuzla. The narrative is established - someone from the JNA started firing first while the line of trucks was exiting town. The incident earlier that day is also mentioned, when JNA reservists “about whom it is known that they were celebrating the previous evening and morning” tried to take weapons from the military barracks.¹⁶

This initial newspaper overview establishes the character of the JNA soldiers as drunken armed men who were celebrating to be exiting Tuzla and who were firing at the surrounding residential buildings and civilians, killing one police officer in the process. In her article on Palestinian soldiers in the Israeli military, Rhoda Kanaaneh writes about “weak masculinities”¹⁷ in reference to the way many Palestinians think in relation to Palestinian men who joined the Israeli military. Such form of masculinity is immature and needs weapons to exert power. In this initial representation, the elements of which will be observed throughout the Federation/Tuzla narrative, the JNA soldiers are depicted as thinking they can do whatever they want and putting it into practice. Their representation as Chetnik killers will be evident further on in the narrative. As will be argued in the following chapter where a similar pattern can be observed in the construction of the Tuzla party as Muslim extremists, the othering of the enemy serves to establish one’s position of the innocent and just, the two sides (‘us’ and ‘them’) being established and contrasted. As part of that process, the masculinity of the Tuzla men involved in the event of May 15 is constructed differently and they are seen as fathers fighting for their families and their country and moreover, as men who did not want to fight, but had to fight back. Stef Jansen, writing about the postwar period in BiH, recognizes the “father” type of masculinity. His notion of a father is connected to the post-war period as a modality of masculinity that allowed men to engage in post-war conversations over ethnic lines, the masculinity which men used to evoke mutual recognition. The father in his terms is

¹⁶ Z. D., “Pakao pod prozorima,” *Front slobode*, May 22, 1992, 3.

¹⁷ Rhoda Kanaaneh, “Boys or men? Duped or “made”? Palestinian Soldiers in the Israeli Military,” *American Ethnologist* 32, no. 2 (2005): 263-265.

a breadwinner for the family “constituted through patriarchal kinship”¹⁸ and this type of masculinity will have an important part in the Federation/Tuzla narrative, as we will see later on, used to evoke the common notion of a father in order to establish a position outside of the military context.

An article from May 16, 1993 entitled “The people were ready to fight” starts by explaining that May 15 was planned and that the planning started from April 4, 1992, culminating on May 15. The article states that two moments marked May 15 - one when it became known that the JNA was taking weapons from the military barracks and when the trucks were stopped, and the other when the decision was made to fight “fire with fire [na vatru vatrom].”¹⁹ There is a change in relation to accounts from the month of May 1992 when we get the impression that the event was incidental. However, this is only the impression we might get since we are not sure whether the article is referring to the attack on May 15 as planned or to April 4 as the start of the overall planning for the war, which made May 15 possible. That aside, this is the instance when the importance of May 15 is maximized. One official from Tuzla is quoted that “if Tuzla had been enslaved, I am sure there would have been no free inch of Bosnia, and I would say that there would be no united BiH either.”²⁰ The article also gives as an insight into how May 15 is beginning to be marked in Tuzla - by performances of the orchestra, meetings, and other similar events. In 1993, in Tuzla local newspaper from May 18, an article on the marking of May 15 emphasizes the unequal relations of power between Tuzla police and the JNA,²¹ which is also acknowledged in a press release by the Forum of Tuzla Citizens that states that men of Tuzla “almost barehanded” stood up to the Chetnik attack, adding that Tuzla fights not taking into consideration politics,

¹⁸ Stef Jansen, “Of wolves and men: Postwar reconciliation and the gender of inter-national encounters,” *Focaal-Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 57 (2010): 40.

¹⁹ “Narod je bio spreman za borbu,” *Oslobođenje*, May 16, 1993, 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

²¹ H. Muharemagić, “Policajci odbranili slobodu,” *Front slobode*, May 18, 1993, 1

religion or nation.²² In another article from the same issue, May 15 is seen as the event when the “mighty fascist army” was overpowered for the first time and as the event of very big importance for the town.²³ The accounts from 1993 represent a contrast to the accounts of May 15 from 1992 when there is uncertainty whether the event might escalate into a bigger conflict and when there are fewer celebratory accounts. Later on in the war, a celebratory discourse was formed, reaching its peak in 1994, 1995 and 1996. The position of Tuzla as a multiethnic town is established in the Tuzla narrative as well as the non-militarized position of Tuzla men that were involved, since they were “almost barehanded” and since the JNA was much more powerful and better equipped than them. There is a similar pattern in the narrative of the RS since the JNA soldiers are also represented as barehanded and unarmed so we can observe how both side try to represent themselves outside of the combat context.

In 1994, the newspapers write about the 15 of May in Tuzla as a “jubilee of victory.”²⁴

On that May 15, 1992, in only approximately ten minutes of the fight, organized by the MUP and TO Tuzla, a big military transport of the aggressor was demolished, approximately 200 of their soldiers were liquidated, and 150 were taken prisoner.²⁵

The usage of the word “liquidated” is rather rare for this narrative, but it exemplifies the part of the narrative when Tuzla men are represented as the ones who reacted quickly and eliminated a threat. The construction of the JNA soldiers as a threat is of importance for this narrative. The bigger the threat, the more justified the actions. The number of the killed soldiers in this article is bigger than in the preliminary accounts in 1992 or in later accounts. At this point, there is an attempt to maximize the importance of the event by maximizing the numbers of the killed soldiers, the emphasis on May 15 being a course of events and a planned attack rather than a war incident and accidental shooting that set trucks on fire and

²² “Saopštenje za javnost,” *Front slobode*, May 18, 1993, 4.

²³ F. Šljivić, “Tuzla neosvojiva tvrđava,” *Front slobode*, May 18, 1993, 2.

²⁴ “Jubilej pobjede,” *Oslobođenje*, May 15, 1994, 9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

spread unintentionally, as it was represented at the very beginning in the Federation/Tuzla narrative. The emphasis is also on its representation as one of the most important events in the war. The article goes on to state that the victory was won and that the “insurmountable wall” was built for those who wanted to exterminate Bosnia and Bosniacs which was done “owing to primarily Bosniacs, but also the members of other peoples that think of Bosnia as their homeland.” This is very much different from the emphasis on the multiethnic politics that Tuzla had earlier in the narrative. The article adds that the Tuzla town mayor stated that *šehidi* (Muslim religious martyrs) cannot be forgotten.²⁶ The exclusion of soldiers of other nationalities with the usage of the term *šehid* as well as erasing other nationalities and not naming them in the former statement, diminishes their contribution and posits them as inferior. This article is the only one in the narrative that gave credit for the positive outcome of the event to “primarily Bosniacs,” but can still be seen as an indication of the inclination of this newspaper toward a more nationalistic depiction of the participators in the event. However, this is 1994, the war is still very much going on and the war rhetoric is at its highest.

An article from May 15, 1995 describes the event as a “lesson” for the members of the JNA. The article states that men from the military convoy fired first but that the reaction was “lightning-quick and fierce.” May 15 is also described as “the first open battle with the JNA,” “the first victory,” “a battle for history” and “David against Goliath.” “The people [narod] against the fourth or the fifth army in Europe.” “Everything was on the side of the powerful, everything but the heart.”²⁷ At this point we can see that stating that the masculinity is represented here solely as a militarized, warrior one would be an oversimplification. In addition to May 15 being depicted as a big battle, the emphasis is on how the men fought with

²⁶ “Jubilej pobjede,” *Oslobođenje*, May 15, 1994, 9.

²⁷ Ibrahim Prohić, “Lekcija na Brčanskoj malti,” *Oslobođenje*, May 15, 1995, 4.

their hearts and for what is right. The notion of power used here is interesting since those who are truly powerful are those who are moral and just, not those with the physical strength and weapons. We find a similar framing in the Tuzla local newspaper in an article on the marking of May 15 that states that May 15 could be rightfully called “an uprising of Tuzla, people/men of Tuzla [Tuzlaka], and residents of this region against the fascist srbo-chetnik occupier.” The article states that many activities as part of “Tuzla’s Days of Antifascism” that encompass the period from May 9 to May 15 were organized by the Tuzla Municipal Council and “numerous institutions and organizations” and that the activities included laying the flowers at the Partisan memorial, as well as exhibitions, the session of the Municipal Council and round tables.²⁸ As we can see, May 15 is included in the overall struggle against fascism, as well as emphasized separately since the article states that gatherings were held and ceremonies organized in local communities in the Tuzla Municipality specifically to mark May 15. It is also important to note that May 15 in Tuzla is framed as not only the battle by the military formations of Tuzla, but as the “uprising” of “the people,” making it look less like a military action and more as a collective civilian undertaking against oppression. As we will see further on, the Partisan memorial will also be included as one of the places where flowers are laid on May 15, which suggests that May 15 is marked in a wider context of wars, especially since the narrative of May 15 in Tuzla has remnants of the narrative of the Partisan struggle, the struggle against fascism, people’s uprising and the battle for freedom. Tuzla is represented as a town with an anti-fascist tradition. On a website of the Council of National Minorities of BiH, for example, Tuzla is described as “the biggest liberated town in Europe” in 1943, during WW2.²⁹

²⁸ F. Šljivić, “Tri godine od poraza četničke Jugo-armade u Tuzli,” *Front slobode*, May 15, 1995.

²⁹ “Tuzla: Različitosti nas čine bogatijim!,” *Vijeće nacionalnih manjina BiH*, Accessed June 3, 2011, http://www.nacionalnemanjinebih.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=75:tuzla-razliitosti-nas-ine-bogatijim&catid=3: vijesti1&Itemid=75.

In the following year of 1996, the biggest number of articles yet was written about the event. However, this time May 15 is written about in a somewhat different context, since this period is an aftermath of the mass murder in Srebrenica in July, 1995 as well as the massacre committed on May 25, 1995 in Tuzla, by far the most emotionally evoking war event for the people of Tuzla. The massacre was committed by the Serb military by targeting a missile from the Ozren mountain on a gathering place of young people on May 25, the former Day of Youth and Tito's birthday, killing 71 mostly young people. In 1996, one part of the newspaper issued on May 15 is given to a "special addition" about Tuzla. Each article in that part of the newspaper is about something related to Tuzla, with a circle on the upper part of the page stating "15. MAY 1992 - TUZLA-15. MAY 1996." In addition to that, one part of the newspaper is set apart for congratulations from various companies from Tuzla to Tuzla fighters and people of Tuzla. In an article entitled "Fire with fire," the event is described as "the first organized resistance to the aggressor."³⁰ An article in the local Tuzla newspaper from May 24, 1996 is about the series of activities and ceremonies held to mark May 15, including speeches, concerts, the session of the Municipal Council and the reception for the families of the killed soldiers from the region of Tuzla municipality. The article refers to May 15 as "the armed resistance" and states that at 7 pm, a siren could be heard at Brčanska malta that "in a symbolic manner" marked the moment of the resistance.³¹ It can be observed that the reception that was held was organized for the families of the killed soldiers for the entire Tuzla region, rather than those four men from Tuzla killed on May 15. This may indicate that May 15 is being put into a wider context of the war.

One year later, an article from May 15, 1997 refers to the event at Brčanska malta as a "famous battle" ["čuvena bitka"]. We can notice the change by now from the first

³⁰ "Na vatru vatrom," *Oslobođenje*, May 15, 1996, 4.

³¹ F. Šljivić, "Tuzlaci porazili četnike," *Front slobode*, May 24, 1996, 2.

characterization of the event as a “serious incident.” This article also states that the JNA was “evicted” from Tuzla as well as that the “courageous sons of Tuzla” managed to “overpower” the JNA.³² In an article from the next day, the event is referred to as exemplary and being “written in gold letters for the people of Tuzla.” The article also states that the event was unique since the town police together with the patriotic citizens “took upon themselves the attack of the mighty Yugoarmy.”³³ As we can see, the emphasis is on the power of JNA and the Tuzla men being even more superior for managing to “overpower” it, with “nothing but the heart,”³⁴ to use the words in the 1995 article discussed above. In an article in the local Tuzla newspaper from May 23, 1997, we find information about the ceremonies for the marking of the anniversary of May 15, seen as the most important event in the war period for Tuzla that is in turn seen as a free town without interethnic problems during the war. The article also recognizes the possibility of a different narrative, but, as it states, it is something the military analysts will address and determine.³⁵

2.2. “As if the JNA had never attempted to level this town from south and north and as if a chetnik ball had never been scheduled” - The narrative of *Dnevni avaz*

The publication of *Dnevni avaz* started on October 1995 and May 15 has a number of important articles written about it starting from 1998. In her column in *Dnevni avaz* on May 16, 1998, Almasa Hadžić criticizes the absence of the marking of May 15 which she describes here as “the day of the attack on Tuzla.”³⁶ This is rather different from representing May 15 as “a battle” or even an attack on JNA, as it can sometimes be inferred from the narrative, and positions Tuzla rather differently, as shown by the following quotation by Hadžić:

³² A.D.S., “Prva pobjeda branilaca, *Oslobođenje*, May 15, 1997, 12.

³³ A.D.S., “Pokazali kako se brani BiH,” *Oslobođenje*, May 16, 1997.

³⁴ Ibrahim Prohić, “Lekcija na Brčanskoj maliti,” *Oslobođenje*, May 15, 1995.

³⁵ B. S. T., “Praznik antifašizma,” *Front slobode*, May 23, 1997.

³⁶ Almasa Hadžić, “Krvavi datum prošao šutke,” *Dnevni avaz*, May 16, 1998, 5.

What happened on Friday in Tuzla on the occasion of the marking of May 15, the day that, in addition to the tragic May 25, is certainly the bloodiest date in the more recent history of this town, shocked all people of Tuzla. That date passed almost in silence, just as if Tuzla had never been attacked. As if the JNA had never attempted to level this town from south and north and as if a chetnik ball had never been scheduled for May 17, 1992 to celebrate the slaughter of the people of Tuzla.³⁷

Hadžić implies that May 15 is ignored on purpose and that this is an example of an attempt to “stop any kind of memory of killing, slaughter, rape.” Rape, especially in the context of the war in Bosnia and the mass rape of Bosniac women, is very emotionally evocative and symbolic of Bosniac victimhood. Hadžić mentions that the manifestation that was organized in the form of a popular entertainment program on May 14 was not enough and that it was upsetting to see. She criticizes Ekrem Šehović, a participant of May 15, the commander of the First Tuzla Unit and a vice-mayor of Tuzla Municipality, who stated that they [the Municipality] decided not to mark May 15 in the usual way, in order to make possible the return of the Serb population to Tuzla. She sees that as an example of the international community asking “in the most insolent way” “that a history as bloody as the Bosnian one forgets its victims.”³⁸ By writing that May 15, 1992 and May 25, 1995 are the two bloodiest events in Tuzla, she puts them in the same context, and further in the column implies that if one [May 15, 1992] is not celebrated, the other [May 25, 1995] will not be commemorated or allowed to be mentioned. She concludes that the question arises whether the parents of Tuzla children and all other Bosnian children will have to visit the cemetery in secret since there are attempts to diminish the importance of May 15. She introduces here two highly evocative figures – the figure of a murdered child and the figure of a raped woman. Elissa Helms writes that the issue of the rape of Bosniac women in the war is used in order to “depict the wartime rape of Bosniac women as symbolic of both the nations’s innocence and suffering and of the

³⁷ Almasa Hadžić, “Krvavi datum prošao šutke,” *Dnevi avaz*, May 16, 1998, 5.

³⁸ Ibid., 5.

barbarism of their enemies,”³⁹ adding that “in post-war Bosnia, women raped, displaced and bereaved during the war became the symbol of each nation’s victimization and innocence, especially among Bosniacs.”⁴⁰ The figure of a murdered child is an epitome of a civilian victim together with the figure of a woman, showing how the concept of the innocent victim is, according to Charli Carpenter, gendered and the civilian status automatically awarded to women and children.⁴¹

As a reaction to her criticism, we find a press release by Selim Bešliagić on May 19, 1998. He emphasizes that May 15 is being marked “as usual” and that the Municipality of Tuzla is organizing the series of ceremonies and activities “Tuzla’s Days of Resistance” from May 15 to May 31. Bešliagić also states that the attempt to represent the marking of May 15 as marginalized is “an evil intention and misuse of May 15 for the election campaign and personal promotion.”⁴² Since *Dnevni avaz* was especially at the time seen as a mouthpiece of the SDA (Social Democratic Party, the Bosniac nationalist party) this is probably a reference to their politics. We can also find his statement in *Oslobođenje* on May 19, 1998, that the marking of the 15 of May, “the battle at Brčanska malta” is not marginalized in the municipality of Tuzla, and that such statements that it is are used for political purposes and attempts to win elections.⁴³ Here we can see that the narrative in the Federation of BiH is not a monolithic one. This is also an indication that the narrative as it is constructed in these two newspapers from the Federation does not necessarily have to agree with the narrative in Tuzla and that there is a constant struggle on how to “properly” mark May 15.

³⁹ Elissa Helms, “‘Politics is a Whore’: Women, Morality and Victimhood in Post-War Bosnia-Herzegovina,” in *The New Bosnian Mosaic : Identities, Memories, and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society*, ed. Xavier Bougarel, Elissa Helms and Ger Duijzings (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 237.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁴¹ Charli R. Carpenter, *‘Innocent Women and Children.’ Gender, Norms and the Protection of Civilians* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 25.

⁴² “Neistinite tvrdnje,” *Dnevni avaz*, May 19, 1998, 11.

⁴³ “Nije marginaliziran 15. maj,” *Oslobođenje*, May 19, 1998, 4.

On May 16, 1999, May 15 is briefly mentioned in *Dnevni avaz* as part of the activities related to “Tuzla’s Days of Antifascism” that included laying wreaths at various memorials and the formal session of the Municipal Council. The article states that the “Tuzla’s Days of Antifascism” start on May 9 and last until the end of the month, accompanied by numerous ceremonies and events.⁴⁴ In an article in the Tuzla local newspaper from May 21, 1999, we also find information on “Tuzla’s days of antifascism,” a series of events and ceremonies throughout May, including May 15 that is marked by the holding of the session of the Municipal Council. A member of the council and a participant of the event in 1992 stated that the battle at Brčanska malta was won with “brains, wisdom, will for survival and love towards the hearth.”⁴⁵ As it seems in this article, the month of May is filled with events-commemorations, sport activities and concerts.

In the following year, an article in *Dnevni avaz* from May 16 states that all ceremonies are postponed in Tuzla because of a day of mourning that was called in the Federation.⁴⁶ May 15, 1992 is characterized as “the day when Tuzla was attacked.”⁴⁷ There is a quiet period in 1999 and 2000 in *Oslobođenje* as well since nothing was written about May 15 in this newspaper in the period of mid-May.

In 2001, an article was published in *Oslobođenje* on May 16. The participation of volunteers-people from Tuzla with no military experience is mentioned and this is important because it constructs the Tuzla side as “people,” as previously mentioned. The article also states that the event was marked by laying flower wreaths at the memorial of the 1995 massacre and that the laying of the wreaths was followed by the session of the Municipal

⁴⁴ “Presudna bitka,” *Dnevni avaz*, May 16, 1999, 2.

⁴⁵ B. S. T. “Odbranjeno dostojanstvo građana,” *Front slobode*, May 21, 1999.

⁴⁶ The day of mourning was marked because of a big car accident that happened in Bosnia.

⁴⁷ “Zbog dana žalosti u Tuzli odgođene sve svečanosti,” *Dnevni avaz*, May 16, 2000, 8.

Council of Tuzla.⁴⁸ The reference to the massacre in 1995 and the relationship that is sometimes made between the massacre in 1992 and the one in 1995 can be seen as an attempt to make use of probably the only event that most people in Tuzla see as the worst during the war and the one event most people in Tuzla are likely to emotionally respond to, in order to legitimize, justify as well as silence other narratives that might exist about May 15.

Ilija Jurišić, the chairmen of the Municipal Council, is quoted in this article from May 16, 2001 saying that “the freedom of the town was defended with this country’s most valuable possession.” That possession, as he states, is the lives of its sons.⁴⁹ As Joane Nagel argues, “the national state is essentially a masculine institution.”⁵⁰ In the Federation/Tuzla narrative of May 15, men are the actors and the doers. The enemy men, on the other hand, are threats, either military as in 1992 or political threats in 2010, as we will see further on. Women are neither. However, they feature prominently as symbols of innocence and are instrumentalized for constructing the position of one side as the just and innocent one, the issue more elaborately addressed in the following chapter.

In 2002, an article in *Dnevni avaz* from May 16 writes about the laying of the flowers to mark May 15, 1992, “when the units of JNA and paramilitary units of the Serbian army tried to take the centre of the town.”⁵¹ What we can observe in this newspaper at this point is the emphasis on the position of Tuzla as being under attack by the JNA, establishing its civilian position.

The period of 2002 and 2003 is a silent period. In 2004, an article from May 17 gives a brief overview of May 15 at the beginning and states that people of Tuzla of all nationalities

⁴⁸ A.D.S., “Tolerancija potisnula mržnju,” *Oslobođenje*, May 16, 2001, 12.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁰ Joane Nagel, “Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 2 (March 1998): 251.

⁵¹ A.H. “Desetogodišnjica bitke na Brčanskoj maliti,” *Dnevni avaz*, May 16, 2002.

organized themselves in order not to suffer the same consequences as the people of Bijeljina, Brčko, and other places in northeastern Bosnia where crimes against Muslims were committed. However, the event is written about to commemorate the 16 of May, the Day of Tuzla (military) Units that were formed on the 16th of May 1992. That is commemorated, as the article states, by laying wreaths at various memorial sites in Tuzla. The article mainly criticizes the fact that few war commanders and town officials attended the event. This indicates that the event is not marked in an extravagant way or celebrated. The emphasis is on laying the wreaths for the killed members of the overall Tuzla military formations and May 15 is not much referred to as such.⁵²

However, an article from May 16, 2005 writes about the marking of May 15⁵³ and in 2006, we find one of the biggest articles on the event. The number of persons killed is given as thirty-five members of JNA and four members of MUP and TO. This article briefly notes that there are differences in the interpretation of the event, but does not mention the commemoration in Bijeljina. It also states that people of Tuzla fought in a humane way.”⁵⁴

In her column in *Dnevni avaz* from May 17, 2006, Almasa Hadžić criticizes the shifting of marking of May 15 to May 16 in Tuzla. She characterizes May 15 as “the day when this town managed to escape under the knife of JNA.” She writes that no one contacted the parents of the Tuzla soldiers killed on May 15 to ask them how they are doing and continues, “They also did not ask where are those who were mercilessly mowed down by the automatic rifles of the drunken reservists and the JNA soldiers with raised three fingers,

⁵² A. Avdić, “Gdje su ratni komandanti?,” *Oslobođenje*, May 17, 2004.

⁵³ “Godišnjica odbrane Tuzle,” *Oslobođenje*, May 16, 2005, 2.

⁵⁴ “Prvi poraz JA u Bosni i Hercegovini,” *Oslobođenje*, May 13, 2006, 11.

passing through Skojevska Street.” She states that JNA were butcherers “with knives already sharpened on Bosniac necks in Zvornik, Bijeljina, Bratunac.”⁵⁵

The year of 2007 is important for this narrative because of the arrest of Ilija Jurišić, one of the participants of May 15, 1992 from Tuzla. He was arrested in Serbia on May 11, 2007 as one of the persons responsible for the killing of the JNA soldiers. In May 13, 2007, Almasa Hadžić wrote her column criticizing the arrest of Ilija Jurišić and what she saw as an improper commemoration of May 15 since it was moved to May 16, holding the persons who made the decision to focus on May 16 responsible for the absence of arrests of Serb war criminals who committed crimes in the region of Tuzla. She states that, instead, there are prosecutions of the Army of BiH soldiers, whose only crime was that, “coming back from the battle line, they dug out a bag of potatoes in someone’s garden, or from some abandoned house ‘swiped’ a TV or a quilt in order to take it to their children to Tuzla.”⁵⁶ We can observe that the soldiers from “our side” are represented as fathers who, if they committed any crimes, they were petty ones in order to feed their children. No other explanation is allowed. In these narratives, the position of nation or people as a victim and the position of a perpetrator is absolute and mutually exclusive.

An article in *Dnevni avaz* from May 15, 2007 about the marking of May 15 notes that there is a counter-narrative, i.e. that there is an attempt to represent the event “as a crime against ‘innocent and unarmed soldiers of JNA,’ all of that, of course, followed by exaggerating the number of killed, wounded and imprisoned and other already familiar propagandistic methods.” Selim Bešlić is quoted saying in relation to May 15 that “patriotism and humanity won against aggression,” that it is an example of how “your country, [your] family” is defended. The title of the article states that Tuzla would have ended

⁵⁵ “Ko se u Tuzli stidi 15. maja?,” *Dnevni avaz*, May 17, 2006, 3.

⁵⁶ “Zločinci i branitelji,” *Dnevni avaz*, May 13, 2007, 3.

up like Srebrenica if it had not been for the 15th of May, which is part of a quote by a participant of May 15 who states that the battle happened after horrible crimes in eastern Bosnia had been committed and that the same would have happened to Tuzla had it not been for May 15.⁵⁷

2.3. “That is our intersection, and our town” - Two commemorations

An article in *Oslobođenje* from May 16, 2009 is the first time that a counter narrative from Bijeljina is mentioned in relation to the commemoration of May 15. We are informed that a religious service was held in Bijeljina on May 15 and that the number of the killed JNA soldiers, according to the Serbian Prosecutor’s Office, is 92. This information about Bijeljina is enclosed in the center of the article in a separate square. However, the article itself is about the disagreement between the politicians in Tuzla and the veterans regarding the way of marking the 15th of May. Jasmim Imamović, the town’s mayor, is criticized for not attending the marking of the event.⁵⁸ An article in *Dnevni avaz* from May 16, 2009 states that the marking of the anniversary was more modest than in 2008 and that veteran’s organizations laid flowers one hour after the members of the municipality, because, as the president of the organization stated, the municipality did not want to finance the sport content for the marking of the event and the veterans rebelled.⁵⁹ We can observe an inclination to restrict the budget for the series of ceremonies and activities, including sport activities, previously held as part of the marking of May 15.

In September 2009, Ilija Jurišić was sentenced to 12 years in prison, which was met with rage in Tuzla and the Federation. The May 2010 is the first time the commemoration from the RS visits Tuzla. An article from May 12, 2010 states that the families of the victims

⁵⁷ E. Huremović, “Da nije bilo 15. maja, Tuzla bi doživjela sudbinu Srebrenice,” *Dnevni avaz*, May 15, 2007, 10.

⁵⁸ A. Še., “Ceremonija posvađala borce i političare,” *Oslobođenje*, May 16, 2009, 6,7.

⁵⁹ E. Huremović, “Borci bojkotirali općinski protokol,” *Dnevni avaz*, May 16, 2009, 6.

from the RS announced their arrival to Tuzla. The article also states that, according to the BiH Prosecutor's Office, the war officials of Tuzla are not criminally responsible. The article states that veterans at first contemplated ignoring the gathering from the RS and coming to mark May 15 two hours later, but that they decided to be present at the intersection when people from the RS arrive. A subsection of the article is entitled "Mothers May" (i.e. that mothers are allowed to). A participant of the event in 1992 from Tuzla is quoted saying "Of course, every mother has the right to come and mark the place where her loved ones were killed, but we do not want politization! We will show that we are human! [Mi ćemo pokazati da smo ljudi!] There will be no incidents on our side, but we will be at Brčanska malta. That is our street intersection, and our town."⁶⁰ Stef Jansen writes that reconciliation attempts after the 1990's wars were often based on a universal humanistic framework, exemplified by the expression "ljudi smo!" (we are people!) which, as he argues, represents "the most elementary level"⁶¹ and was used to justify meetings across national/ethnic lines for the purpose of reconciliation. However, he argues that "people do not engage with each other based on some abstract common humanity." He adds that, instead, "humanity is given specific, often socially sanctioned shapes in particular contexts."⁶² In the example from this newspaper article, we find a similar expression: "We will show that we are people." However, in this instance it does not represent the attempt at reconciliation, but rather a form of moral superiority in relation to the other. Thus, calls to humanity do not necessarily have to imply calls to common humanity, but calls to "our humanity" in contrast to "the other" that has none.

Another article from May 15, 2010 is an account of the preparations for the 18th anniversary of May 15. A participant of the event from Tuzla gives his account of it and

⁶⁰ "Borci, ipak, na raskrsnici!", *Oslobođenje*, May 12, 2010, 6.

⁶¹ Stef Jansen, "Of wolves and men: Postwar reconciliation and the gender of inter-national encounters," *Focaal-Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 57 (2010): 37.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 37.

describes it as his second birthday because he was shot and was lucky to survive. The article then switches to the part that announces the arrival of the families of victims from the RS and the security measures that will be undertaken, such as closing off the intersection.⁶³ It is interesting that these two accounts are juxtaposed in this way, and that the news of the arrival of the commemoration from Bijeljina comes after the personal account of one participant from Tuzla. An article from May 16, 2010 titled “Tuzla won once again” writes about two commemorations, one from the Republic of Srpska which is seen as being political, and one from Tuzla which is not. Besides family members, it is written that the high-ranking officials of the Republic of Srpska and heads of the veteran associations also arrived in Tuzla. After the religious part of the commemoration, the article states the officials from the RS gave speeches about how the persons who committed “certain operations” are still walking freely.⁶⁴ This arrival of families, survivors and officials from the RS is seen as a political performance and a provocation in this article. The following excerpt is the depiction of the manner in which the RS arrivals left Tuzla and the reactions of the Tuzla journalists and police officers who were at the intersection:

Young men from the buses are raising three fingers, which brings smiles on the faces of the gathered police officers and journalists. Tuzla won once again! Three hours later we are at the intersection once again. The rain has stopped!⁶⁵

As we can see, the people from Tuzla who wanted to mark May 15 came to the intersection three hours after the people from Bijeljina had held their commemoration and there was no interaction between the two. The rain that the article states was falling at the beginning of the visit from the RS stopped when they entered the buses to return where they came from and in all likelihood the rain as used here does not refer to the actual weather

⁶³ “Raskrsnica pod policijskom opsadom,” *Oslobođenje*, May 15, 2010, 3.

⁶⁴ Tuzla još jednom pobijedila,” *Oslobođenje*, May 16, 2010, 2,3.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 3.

conditions. The newspapers discussed in this chapter rarely mention the commemoration in Bijeljina and when they do, it is to assert one's [in this instance Tuzla's] superiority in relation to it, as the title of the article ("Tuzla won once again") shows. Here we are informed how young people from the RS raised three fingers at the people of Tuzla, but were met with a civilized reaction, a smile, and an establishment of superiority. After the overview of the commemoration from the RS, the newspaper article in question switches to the overview of the gathering organized by the Municipality of Tuzla and the attendance of the former and current town officials, representatives of war participants and family members.⁶⁶ Two categories of "family members" are mentioned in this article – the one of people in buses arriving to Tuzla for the commemoration/political provocation and the other of the legitimate "family members," of the people from Tuzla that were killed on May 15. Jasmin Imamović, the mayor of Tuzla, stated about the arrival from mothers from the RS that "Every mother mourns for her child, regardless of which formation he was killed in."⁶⁷ The mothers mentioned here are mourning figures. Anne McClintock in her article on gender, nationalism and family also mentions the concept of the mother of the nation, stating that it is a social category, referring to the ways monuments were used to represent Afrikaner women as suffering and holding children in their arms and that the women's disempowerment was seen as representing national disempowerment.⁶⁸ McClintock also states that "all nationalisms are gendered"⁶⁹ and that women are symbolic bearers of the nation, but do not have relation to national agency.⁷⁰ Here, women are seen as symbols and not as a threat, unlike the politicians from the RS who also attended the commemoration in Tuzla and held speeches and are treated as political subjects. A mother is not there to make any kind of a political

⁶⁶ Tuzla još jednom pobijedila," *Oslobođenje*, May 16, 2010, 3.

⁶⁷ Tuzla još jednom pobijedila," *Oslobođenje*, May 16, 2010, 3.

⁶⁸ Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," *Feminist Review* 44 (Summer 1993): 71-72.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

statement, but to mourn the loss of her son. This essentialization will be further elaborated in the following chapter on the narrative of the RS where mothers have a very prominent position, important for the construction of the position of the innocent.

An article from May 15, 2010 in *Dnevni avaz* made a reference to Srebrenica – that Tuzla would have been like Srebrenica had it not been for May 15. The article states that the arrival of the families and survivors from the RS has been announced.⁷¹ An article in *Dnevni avaz* from the following day writes about the commemoration that was held, that flower wreaths were laid by the Tuzla side at the monument at Brčanska malta. The arrival from the RS is characterized as politization.⁷² The article below this one writes about the arrival from the RS, the emphasis being on the fact that there were no incidents or provocations, the credit for which was given to the people of Tuzla well as the local MUP who were in charge of security, implying that they are the civilized one who will now allow for any incidents to happen. The article mentions one man who was raising three fingers and one who made a comment on how they wanted to lynch him in Tuzla, but that no one reacted to that.⁷³

These articles from 2010 are examples of different representations of commemorations that are held at the same place and only hours away from each other. Even though they seem as distinct and separate, these narratives are in interaction with each other. There is a difference between legitimate “family members” of the killed from the “Tuzla side” and the family members of the JNA soldiers. The arrival of the commemoration is seen as political as well as the commemoration held in Bijeljina, whereas the commemoration that has been held in Tuzla since 1993 is not.

⁷¹ E. Huremović, “Na Brčanskoj Malti sve će biti mirno i dostojanstveno,” *Dnevni avaz*, May 15, 2010, 2.

⁷² A. Hadžić, “Braniocce grada ubili Dubajićevi rezervisti,” *Dnevni avaz*, May 16, 2010, 4.

⁷³ A. Hadžić, “Tuzlaci pokazali dostojanstvo,” *Dnevni avaz*, May 16, 2010, 4.

2.4. Concluding notes

As we can see, the event from May 15, 1992 has been characterized in the main Federation newspapers as an exemplary event and a lesson that Tuzla men taught JNA. It is also characterized as the most important war event, which determined the further course of the war. May 15 has also been described as a fierce attack and a lightning-quick action, an open battle, an open war and an eviction of JNA from Tuzla, the army that is otherwise seen as more powerful in “everything but the heart.” More importantly, the formations from Tuzla are presented as moral and humane and the JNA soldiers as drunken and insolent, as barbarous Chetniks on a murder spree, which is managed by making connections between the JNA soldiers in Tuzla and the crimes committed by other JNA soldiers in eastern Bosnia at the beginning of the war as well as to the mass murder committed by Bosnian Serbs in Srebrenica, and most importantly for Tuzla, by connecting it to the massacre of young people on May 25, 1995. The JNA soldiers are thus turned into the ones who can be legitimately killed. They, as killed persons, are present only as numbers and otherwise excluded from the Federation/Tuzla narrative of May 15 which is further evidenced by the fact that the two streets at the intersection are now called the Street of the 15th of May and the Street of the Tuzla Units.

The attempt is to present one side (i.e. Tuzla) as just, whether by stating that the Tuzla (military formations) were humane, that they killed because they had to, by emphasizing Tuzla’s multiethnic politics and by emphasizing, as it is done especially at the beginning of the narrative, that wounded soldiers were looked after in the hospital. Men are represented as fighting for their families and their country and fighting for a just purpose. The position of innocence is also constructed by othering the enemy, presenting the killed as Chetnik murderers. The mothers appear to be automatically seen as symbols of innocence and

suffering, whereas the figure of a father is evoked when it becomes necessary to present soldiers in a demilitarized context.

3. The Narrative of the Republic of Srpska

This chapter will give an overview of the development of the narrative of May 15 in the Republic of Srpska from 1992 to 2010 in three newspapers: two daily newspapers *Nezavisne novine* and *Glas srpski/srpske*⁷⁴ from the period of May 10 to May 20 and the local Bijeljina newspaper *Semblerske novine*. This local newspaper was printed once a month in the early 1990s, then twice a month or once a week later on so I was looking at the period of the month of May as a whole, with the exception of 1992 when I looked at the monthly edition of *Semblerske novine* from June 15 since the previous edition was the one of May 15 and the information on the event in Tuzla had not reached Bijeljina. Since May 15 was not written about in the 1990s to a large extent, although there were some exceptions, the articles from these newspapers will mainly be included here from 2000 to 2010. The first daily edition of *Nezavisne novine* came out in December 27, 1995. However, the articles from this newspaper will be included in the thesis mainly from 2002 to 2010, since that is the period of a more extensive writing on May 15. The narrative in all these newspapers follows the established line that soldiers of the former JNA were peacefully retreating from Tuzla and were attacked. As we will see, soldiers are usually represented as being very young and as being in Tuzla for the purpose of finishing their military service. The ones given a military status are the attackers, often referred to as Muslim fundamentalists or Muslim extremists.

3.1. *Mother and Son*

The first article about May 15 in the RS can be found in *Glas srpski* from May 17, 1992. It is a short article with little information. The event of May 15 is seen as an attack and we learn that nine soldiers were killed and that they were from the region surrounding

⁷⁴ The daily newspaper *Glas srpske* was called *Glas srpski* in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Tuzla.⁷⁵ In the local Bijeljina newspaper, *List SAO Semberije i Majevice* as *Semblerske novine* was called at the beginning, an article from June 15, 1992 is the first account of May 15 in Tuzla. The commander of the part of the JNA that was stationed in Tuzla states for the article that the authorities of Tuzla Municipality planned the attack and that the “Serb people” were tricked. The emphasis is on “Muslim [military] formations” and the event is given the status of a “massacre” in the title. The commander states that they were shot at, that they fired back and that they have information that soldiers were murdered on their way to the hospital [it is not stated exactly by whom] and that those who were in the hospital were not treated properly by the staff [nekorektan odnos].⁷⁶ These two articles from these two newspapers represent the beginning of the narrative associated with the RS. It is established that the event was an attack and a massacre and that the JNA soldiers did not fire first but were attacked by primarily Muslims. The narrative(s) will develop on the basis of these early accounts.

An article from May 16, 1995, the next one to appear, mostly writes about criminal charges brought against 59 persons in Tuzla by the Military Prosecutor’s Office [Vojno tužilaštvo] in Belgrade.

In the criminal charge it is stated that the accused, most of whom were members of the fundamentalist organization ‘the Patriotic League’ ‘in the beginning of May 1992 from the positions of Islamic fundamentalism made a decision about a military organizing of Muslims for making the Islamic state in the former BiH and eviction and destruction of the Serb people in the Tuzla region.’⁷⁷

As we can see from the excerpt, May 15 is framed as one of the first in a line of events that had a purpose to make BiH into an Islamic state. The article states that more than 200 soldiers were killed, that more than 140 were imprisoned and that wounded soldiers were murdered and kicked on the way to the hospital, adding that the bodies of the killed JNA soldiers were

⁷⁵ “Vojska napustila Tuzlu, *Glas srpski*, May 17, 1992.

⁷⁶ P. Simić, “Masakr je bio planiran,” *List SAO Semberije i Majevice*, June 15, 1992, 17.

⁷⁷ “Krivične prijave za ubice vojnika JNA,” *Glas srpski*, May 16, 1995, 3.

taken to the town's trash heap. This element of taking the bodies to the trash heap will be used later on as well, mostly to point to the barbarity of "Muslims" and the incomprehensibility and inhumanity of their actions on May 15.

In the meantime, the war was ended by a peace agreement in 1995 which officially recognized the Republic of Srpska as an entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One year later, an article from May 14, 1996 states that "both"⁷⁸ unprecedented and unimaginable conflicts with JNA, that had been a symbol of unified SFRY,⁷⁹ largely later determined the brutal course of the civil war in Bosnia."⁸⁰ It is indicative that the JNA is here represented as a symbol of the unification of the former Yugoslavia. What is left unmentioned is that JNA, as we saw in the Federation/Tuzla narrative, was no longer seen as representing the former SFRY in what is now the Federation of BiH. As we will see later on, the representation of the JNA as a symbol of "brotherhood and unity" and unrelated to the "civil" war in BiH will serve to represent the Muslims as people capable of killing their "brothers."

An article from May 15, 1997 states that The Association of Serbian Veterans from Ozren marked in Petrovo,⁸¹ a small town located between Tuzla and Doboj, the fifth anniversary of "the massacre" of the JNA soldiers "who were brutally killed by Muslim extremists," adding that it happened "during the evacuation from this Muslim town."⁸² The term "evacuation" establishes the power relations between Tuzla and the JNA. In contrast to the Federation/Tuzla narrative according to which the JNA is represented as a mighty and powerful military formation, the attempt here is to diminish its position. Tuzla is here presented as a place one rushed to leave because it was no longer safe. The assumption is that

⁷⁸ This "both" refers to the event at Brčanska malta and the event in Dobrovoljačka ulica in Sarajevo where a similar incident occurred earlier in 1992.

⁷⁹ SFRY stands for Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

⁸⁰ Miloš Jevtović, "Nekažnjeni zločini," *Glas srpski*, May 14, 1996, 2.

⁸¹ Petrovo (prewar name: Bosansko Petrovo selo) is a small municipality in the Republic of Srpska.

⁸² "Sveće za umorene," *Glas srpski*, May 15, 1997.

those who have to evacuate from somewhere are helpless to alter the situation and are in a subordinate position. The implication is that Tuzla is now a “Muslim town” as it is referred to in this article and that Serbs are not safe there. We will observe later in the narrative that the JNA was sometimes referred to as the Serb army, usually when the point to be made in the article was one of the suffering of Serbs in the war. The suffering of the Serb people is part of a larger narrative of suffering that is not related to the 1992-1995 war only.

An article from May 16 and 17, 1998 states that 235 soldiers were killed and that the majority of them were from the RS. The event is described as a “brutal attack” committed by “Muslim extremists” It is also mentioned that May 15 is celebrated in Tuzla.⁸³ As we will see as the narrative develops, there is a constant reference to the “celebration” of May 15 in Tuzla, which helps us to understand that, even though the narratives seem separate and commemorations held in different towns situated in different entities, the interaction between them is present, if only to establish one’s superiority over another and thus legitimize one’s narrative. Robert M. Hayden emphasizes the importance of Orientalist rhetoric for the war in the former Yugoslavia, as well as the usage of “othering” in order to justify partition. He argues that, in order to justify partition, a difference has to be constructed, but that, in order for that to be successful, the construction of the Other had to be negative.⁸⁴ Bette Denich, writing about the beginning of the war in Yugoslavia and looking at the increasing nationalistic rhetoric in the late 80s, notes that “each side presented itself as a victim or potential victim, and the Other as a threat or potential threat.”⁸⁵ Mirjana Prošić-Dvornić, also writing about the beginning of the war, notes that “former ‘brotherly’ nations were not only

⁸³ “Pomen nastradalim vojnicima,” *Glas srpski*, May 16 and 17, 1998, 2.

⁸⁴ Robert M. Hayden, “Muslims as ‘Others’ in Serbian and Croatian Politics,” in *Neighbors at War: Anthropological perspectives on Yugoslav ethnicity, culture and history*, ed. Joel M. Halpern and David A. Kideckel (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 118-123.

⁸⁵ Bette Denich, “Unmaking Multiethnicity in Yugoslavia: Media and Metamorphosis,” in *Neighbors at War: Anthropological perspectives on Yugoslav ethnicity, culture and history*, ed. Joel M. Halpern and David A. Kideckel (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 48.

represented as enemies, but also as inhuman monsters, worthy only of perishing for the good of mankind.”⁸⁶ She uses the example of Serbia and the representation of the Serbian nation as a “martyred, celestial people,” being morally superior.⁸⁷ As we will see in the narrative, May 15 is sometimes represented as a mass attack of not only Tuzla police or military formations, but of random citizens either shooting from their apartments at the JNA soldiers or killing them while they were lying injured on the street. The Tuzla side is frequently presented as butchering helpless young men and there is a constant emphasis on the incomprehensibility of the behavior of “Muslims.” This constructs a very negative perception of the other, the one of “inhuman monsters.”⁸⁸

Two commemorations are written about in two adjoining articles in *Glas srpski* from May 16, 2000. The first article⁸⁹ is about the commemoration in Petrovo and the second about the commemoration in Bijeljina and here the article states that the soldiers were young and serving the regular military service in Tuzla.⁹⁰ The commemoration in Petrovo is organized by members of the Association of Families of the Killed and Missing Soldiers of the Municipality of Petrovo and the article about that commemoration states that the JNA soldiers were “attacked and massacred” by Muslims.⁹¹ An article in *Semblerske novine* from May 15-May 31, 2000 is primarily about the experience of one mother whose son was killed in Tuzla, about her sorrow and mourning, about her searching for him while he was missing and finding out that he was killed.⁹² The article is very emotional and represents one of many articles where mothers are either central to the narrative or have a very important part in

⁸⁶ Mirjana Prošić-Dvornić, “Serbia: The Inside Story,” in *Neighbors at War: Anthropological perspectives on Yugoslav ethnicity, culture and history*, ed. Joel M. Halpern and David A. Kideckel (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 322.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 323.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 322.

⁸⁹ “Sjećanje na žrtve Skojevske ulice,” *Glas srpski*, May 16, 2000.

⁹⁰ “Pomen poginulim vojnicima NA,” *Glas srpski*, May 16, 2000.

⁹¹ “Sjećanje na žrtve Skojevske ulice,” *Glas srpski*, May 16, 2000.

⁹² Lj. Ljubojević, “Tuga za izgubljenim sinom,” *Semblerske novine*, May 15-May 31, 2000, 7.

legitimizing the version of the event and constructing the image of soldiers as (someone's) children.

The figure of a mother is also present in an article from May 15, 2001 which starts with a statement that trucks were on fire, that soldiers were on those trucks and that “whoever had an opportunity, with an axe, a bludgeon, I do not know with what anymore, hit those people. That is something a person will never be able to understand. As long as a person lives...”⁹³ The article states that this is a testimony of a mother whose son was killed in Tuzla and is still missing. She is represented in the article as an eye witness, even though she was not present at the intersection when the attack occurred. That statement at the beginning of the article is taken as the representative account of what actually happened, the event on May 15 represented as a massive all-in attack. The article emphasizes that the local television was showing the “massacre” as it happened.⁹⁴ The emphasis on this is important because it finds its place throughout this narrative in representing the people of Tuzla not only as knowing about this attack and having prepared for it, but as arranging for a local TV station to relay the exiting of JNA and the attack so they can watch it afterwards and enjoy. The article also stated that the Organization of the Families of Imprisoned and Killed Soldiers and Missing Civilians of RS emphasized that the event is “celebrated” in Tuzla and that no one is held responsible for it.

3.2. Mourning and Celebration

From this point on, the narrative from *Nezavisne novine* is included. The daily edition, first released in December 1995, did not contain any articles significant for the narrative until

⁹³ G. Klepić, “Zločin bez kazne,” *Glas srpski*, May 15, 2001, 2.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

2002. From 2002 to 2010, however, they give a useful insight into the framing of the Federation/ Tuzla narrative in the RS.

An article in *Glas srpski* from May 14, 2002 announces the burial of 30 unidentified soldiers in Bijeljina and states that May 15 is proclaimed as a Day of Mourning in some municipalities of RS.⁹⁵ An article from the following day includes information about the same event and states that, according to the testimonies of some survivors, even civilians were killing the soldiers, shooting from the apartments. One survivor is quoted saying that the attack was unprovoked, that they followed the agreement and that he felt sorry the most for the soldiers serving the military service from the former country. “I watched them kill wounded people,” he added. Another participant is quoted “It hurts the most when I remember the bodies of the dead young soldiers that were lying on the streets while we were passing by.”⁹⁶ An article from May 16, 2002 in *Nezavisne novine* contrasts the “day of mourning” in the town of Bijeljina and “all neighboring municipalities in RS” with Tuzla, where, as the article states, there is a celebration. A big portion of the article is given to the list of names and positions of prominent politicians in the Republic of Srpska who came to commemorate the event. One man who survived the event at Brčanska malta stated that it was a massacre, calling the soldiers martyrs.

Only God knows how I managed to survive during the massacre at ‘Brčanska malta’ in Tuzla, in that bloody 1992. I live and will live to testify before all the courts in the world. May those martyrs from the ‘Tuzla convoy’ rest in peace.⁹⁷

A politician from RS is quoted saying that it is “shocking” that Tuzla is celebrating while the neighboring municipalities are mourning. This part of the article, i.e. the statement of this politician is also put underneath the main title of the article and it ends the article as

⁹⁵ S.R. Todorčić, “Dostojna sahrana mučenika,” *Glas srpski*, May 14, 2002, 2.

⁹⁶ S. Račen-Todorčić, “Posljednja počast ‘tuzlanskoj koloni,’” *Glas srpski*, May 15, 2002, 3.

⁹⁷ D. Glišić, “U Bijeljini dan žalosti, u Tuzli dan pobjede,” *Nezavisne novine*, May 16, 2002, 6.

well.⁹⁸ The constant mention of the “celebration” in Tuzla is an indication of how the existence of the other narrative is important for the legitimating of one’s narrative, since the question that is implied is how someone can celebrate such a “massacre.” In an article in *Semblerske novine* from May 15-May 31, 2002 about the commemoration in Bijeljina, in which the soldiers are referred to as “young people”, one survivor stated at the commemoration that those who were shooting at them were, up until that point, their “comrades, friends, countrymen.”⁹⁹ This can be seen as an additional testament to the treacherous nature of the Muslim and the naïve nature and innocence of the ever-suffering Serb.

An article in *Glas srpski* from May 16, 2003 includes the statement of the President of the Assembly of the Organization of Families of the Killed Soldiers of RS given at the religious service for “the killed soldiers and civilians.” “On that horrible day in 1992, a terrible and monstrous crime happened against the innocent children, the soldiers of JNA and their elders, who according to the pre-existing agreement with the authorities of Tuzla, were peacefully retreating from that town.”¹⁰⁰ Even though I am not completely sure who are the civilians he is referring to, I can assume that he is either representing soldiers as civilians, because they were not in the position to fight back in his view, or that he is referring to people of Tuzla that might have been killed in the exchange of fire. Either way, the attackers as the ones who are killing civilians, whoever they were, are the ones who are barbarous and inhumane. Representing the soldiers as children, they are seen as apart from any military function and their position of an absolute victim, the one of a child, is thus established and cemented. In many war contexts, representing soldiers as children might seem unusual since soldiers are frequently seen in the context of combat. Čolović lists virility as one of the most

⁹⁸ D. Glišić, “U Bijeljini dan žalosti, u Tuzli dan pobjede,” *Nezavisne novine*, May 16, 2002, 6.

⁹⁹ E. S. N., “Napokon našli vječni mir,” *Semblerske novine*, May 15-May 31, 2002.

¹⁰⁰ “Pomen poginulim,” *Glas srpske*, May 16, 2003, 3.

basic features of warriors. He states that war propaganda is often based “on the identification of participation in war with initiation into the world of adult males”¹⁰¹ and that the calls to manliness are part of the war rhetoric. However, he argues that the image of a warrior cannot be reduced to the one of virility, but that there are other, even more important features of warriors, such as innocence.¹⁰² He argues that the most common metaphor for innocence is the one “that brings together the warrior and the child or a boy,”¹⁰³ and that “soldiers are most frequently referred to as our children, our sons.”¹⁰⁴ He states that the innocence attributed to a child is “necessary in order for the warrior to achieve the status of innocent, pure victim, but also in order that he should be a credible dead body.”¹⁰⁵ His argument can be applied to this narrative and the purpose of representing the JNA soldiers as children and naïve young men. In the postwar competition for the position of the ultimate victim, the notions of militarized, risk-taking, warrior masculinity become, for this narrative at least, an impediment.

The article from May 17, 2004 gives a similar account as the previous ones and follows an established narrative. However, in the middle of the article there is a separate part with some text entitled “Ruža” that tells that many Serb families were dressed in black on May 15 and that among them was Ruža, a refugee from the Tuzla region, whose husband and two sons had been killed.

That was my black day and black sorrow. My older son was married and two orphans stayed behind. My younger one was not even married. Black are my woes. The heart is breaking, but cannot break.¹⁰⁶

A bereaved mother in the narrative of the RS is used as a symbol of the suffering of the nation; in addition to that the presence of a mother in the narrative helps construct the

¹⁰¹ Ivan Čolović, “Warrior,” in *The Politics of Symbol in Serbia: Essays in Political Anthropology* (London: Hurst, 2002), 48.

¹⁰² Ivan Čolović, “Warrior,” in *The Politics of Symbol in Serbia: Essays in Political Anthropology* (London: Hurst, 2002), 56.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 52.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 52.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 54.

¹⁰⁶ S. Raćen-Todorić, “Pravda u slijepoj ulici,” *Glas srpske*, May 17, 2004, 3.

image of a soldier as a son and a child. Elissa Helms writes about the representations of Srebrenica women and argues that the Bosniac victimhood is usually depicted through images of mourning women, mostly older and represented as weeping, but also represented as requesting justice.¹⁰⁷ Charli Carpenter states that women, whose position implies helplessness, are automatically awarded the status of the absolute victim.¹⁰⁸ Helms argues that “the category of ‘woman is defined and affirmed by wartime events. Victim images have come to stand for all of Bosnian womanhood, leaving little space for women to construct identities other than as ethnicized, passive victims of enemy men.”¹⁰⁹ She also points to the local gender constructions in which men are the warriors and the ones who are politically active, whereas women are “passive (war) victims, mothers and nurturers-objects rather than subjects of political processes.”¹¹⁰ As Jean Bethke Elshtain argues, “women are seen as life givers, men as life takers.”¹¹¹ Women are given place in this narrative exclusively as mothers, instrumentalized as symbols and given a passive position.

An article in *Nezavisne novine* from May 17, 2004 mentions the Bijeljina commemoration for the killed soldiers and states that the flowers were laid for the “innocent victims.”¹¹² There is another article beneath this one which tells about the marking of May 16 (The Day of Tuzla Units) and certificates of merit that were given for their contributions to the defense of Tuzla.¹¹³ Even though there is no explicit reference to May 15, the two articles are not juxtaposed by accident. As in the previously mentioned article from *Nezavisne novine*

¹⁰⁷ Elissa Helms, “‘Bosnian Girl’: Nationalism and Innocence through Images of Women,” in *Reading Images in the Post-Yugoslav Space*, ed. Slobodan Karamanić and Danijel Šuber (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

¹⁰⁸ R. Charli Carpenter, *Innocent Women and Children: Gender, Norms and the Protection of Civilians* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 27

¹⁰⁹ Elissa Helms, “‘Politics is a Whore’: Women, Morality and Victimhood in Post-War Bosnia-Herzegovina,” in *The New Bosnian Mosaic: Identities, Memories, and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society*, ed. Xavier Bougarel, Elissa Helms and Ger Duijzings (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 237.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹¹¹ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (Brighton: The Harvester Press: 1987), xiii.

¹¹² D.G., “Ešdaun pozvan da formira komisiju za rasvjetljavanje zločina,” *Nezavisne novine*, May 17, 2004, 6.

¹¹³ J. Š., “Priznanja povodom Dana tuzlanskih jedinica,” *Nezavisne novine*, May 17, 2004, 6.

where the celebration in Tuzla is contrasted to the mourning in the municipalities in the RS, here the narratives are also juxtaposed to assert one's moral superiority and establish the other's barbarity, even though this seems like an equal covering of the news from the country. The superiority is achieved by stating that Tuzla is celebrating something that is mourned in another town.

An article in *Glas srpske* from May 14 and 15, 2005 mentions a survivor's statement that the Tuzla Convoy was "one of the most serious crimes when hundreds of soldiers and civilians were killed."¹¹⁴ The article from May 16, 2005 quotes a representative of the families asking, "What monstrous minds could have thought of and committed it?" **Those were our neighbors, friends and former members of the same army they shot at.** [Emphasis in the original.]¹¹⁵ Two mothers who never managed to find their sons are also given places in the article - one at the end as a final point, and one in a separate part within an article. They speak about their sons, how they were supposed to come home and both mothers state that they watched what was happening on May 15 on television. Their presence in this article frames it and highlights the incomprehensibility of the monstrous minds. An article in *Nezavisne novine* from May 16, 2005 writes about both Bijeljina and Tuzla. It starts with the commemoration in Bijeljina and the president of the Organization of the Families of the Imprisoned, Killed Soldiers and the Missing of RS is quoted: "It cannot be comprehended and it can never be forgotten what sinister minds planned and committed such a crime."¹¹⁶ The article then mentions the laying of the flowers in Tuzla, but ends by giving an account of the event that follows the established RS narrative.

¹¹⁴ S. Raćen-Todorić, "Pucali i iz bolnice," *Glas srpske*, May 14 and 15, 2005, 3.

¹¹⁵ S. Raćen-Todorić, "Da zločince stigne kazna," *Glas srpske*, May 16, 2005, 3.

¹¹⁶ "Obilježena 13. godišnjica stradanja kolone JNA," *Nezavisne novine*, May 16, 2005, 10.

An article in *Glas srpske* from May 15, 2006 entitled “Families seek truth” quotes a survivor stating that the soldiers were “beardless young men who came from Niš, Kragujevac, Pirot and other places to serve their fatherland [otadžbina].” He states that they were “falling like flies [kao snoplje] on the streets of Tuzla.” The article states that they “blindly trusted” the Tuzla formations and that they were “brutally killed.” The survivor is quoted as stating that physical wounds hurt him less than the ones in his heart, “I tried to help a boy that was laying in blood next to a truck, but I was shot in the stomach, both arms, and a leg.” The representative of the families stated that eye-witnesses allege that the bodies of the soldiers were taken to the trash heap. “Not even animals are buried like that,” he asserted.¹¹⁷ The soldiers are located in Kragujevac, Niš and Pirot, which are towns in Serbia. The implication here is that they were not from BiH and thus had nothing to do with the war, and moreover, that they were in Tuzla to serve their regular military service, as in the former country. The soldiers here are represented as inexperienced, young and naïve. They are “boys” who trusted the formations in Tuzla that they would be let go, but were tricked and murdered. The soldiers here, contrary to what we might expect of a narrative of a war event when manliness is highly prized, are depicted as helpless and as, moreover, simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

An article from the following day is an account of the commemoration in Bijeljina. In a square in the middle of the article and under the title “Tuzla celebrates” is the following statement by the President of the Veteran Organization:

Can anyone who is normal understand that they celebrate the day when children were killed, young soldiers who had just pledged that they will defend the country for which they are prepared to lay down their life, even for that Tuzla that laid a hand on them [harmed them].¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ G. Klepić, “Porodice traže istinu,” *Glas srpske*, May 15, 2006, 1, 3.

¹¹⁸ S. Raćen-Todorić, “Ubice još na slobodi,” *Glas srpske*, May 16, 2006, 3.

At this point it might be useful to remind ourselves about the position of the JNA at the beginning of the war in BiH and that the JNA was the army that supported the Bosnian Serb side. This is also an example of different notions of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of the war since the country the JNA soldiers, or young men, were prepared to lay down their life, is not the country the Tuzla side would see the JNA soldiers as prepared to lay down their lives for.

An article in *Nezavisne novine* from May 16, 2006 covers the religious service in Bijeljina. The President of the Veteran Organization RS is quoted: “In Tuzla they celebrate the Day of Liberation. Can anyone reasonable understand people who celebrate that 14 years ago they massacred and killed more than 200 young soldiers, women and children.”¹¹⁹ In an article in *Semblerske novine* from May 18, 2006, one official stated at the commemoration in Bijeljina that May 15 was a “horrible, monstrous crime against the innocent Serb soldiers and civilians,” adding that “young men” were “ambushed” and killed. There are calls for justice and truth.¹²⁰ We can notice a shift here since the soldiers are not Serb soldiers rather than JNA soldiers, giving them a more specific ethnic marking. Also, not only Serb soldiers, but Serb civilians are killed according to the above statement. This, as well as the oft used reference to “women and children,” points toward the establishing the status of innocence and victimhood. As noted above, the JNA is referred to as the army of the SFRY when the purpose is to represent the Muslims in a particular way. On the other hand, the JNA soldiers are represented as Serb soldiers when the purpose is to point out that the Serbs were the victims in the war. Also, there is no mention that Serbs from Serbia participated in the war in BiH.

In an article from May 16, 2007 about the commemoration in Bijeljina and politicians’ statements, the president of the RS was quoted that May 15 is an example of “the

¹¹⁹ Z. Kusmuk, “Odata počast žrtvama iz tuzlanske kolone,” *Nezavisne novine*, May 16, 2006, 8.

¹²⁰ Lj. Ljubojević, “Samo se istinom može graditi budućnost,” *Semblerske novine*, May 18, 2006, 5.

unscrupulous behavior of local authorities on the Muslim-controlled territories at the very beginning of the civil war in BiH.”¹²¹ This can also be seen as an attempt at the justification of the further course of the war. In an article in *Nezavisne novine* from May 16, 2007 about the commemoration in Bijeljina, Brčanska malta was referred to as the place “where a number of young soldiers of JNA was brutally killed.” The article adds that the gathering in Bijeljina made a call for the crime to be prosecuted.¹²² In an article in *Semblerske novine* from May 17, 2007, we find information about the commemoration and the mention of May 15 being celebrated in Tuzla as a “day of liberation.”¹²³

One year later, we encounter substantive writing on May 15. An article in *Glas srpske* from May 16, 2008 states that the President of the RS asserted that “beardless young men” were killed “in the convoy of youth and peace.” He also stated that the attackers violated “not only the agreement on retreating, but also the basic principles of international war and humanitarian rights, as well as human and God’s rights.”¹²⁴ As elsewhere in this narrative, there are calls for truth and justice “and not revenge.” These calls for truth and justice without revenge serve to establish a moral superiority of the Serb people in contrast to the Muslim beasts, as they are represented, that know only how to kill young people that are in no position to fight back, as this article also mentions. Each side in this narrative is trying to establish the position of a victim - Tuzla, by emphasizing the behavior of the JNA in the war prior to and after May 15 in other places in BiH and the support that the JNA gave to the Army of the Republic of Srpska as well as the massacre on May 25, 1995 in Tuzla; and Bijeljina, by representing soldiers as young sons and the people of Tuzla as Muslim extremists. “The beardless young men” in this article are depicted as symbols of youth and peace, forming an

¹²¹ M. Pajić, “Masakr pred TV kamerama, *Glas srpske*, May 16, 2007, 1.

¹²² Zorica Kusmuk, “Još nema kazne za počinioc,” *Nezavisne novine*, May 16, 2007, 7.

¹²³ Lj. Lj., “Zločin treba kazniti,” *Semblerske novine*, May 17, 2007, 3.

¹²⁴ Ž. Dobrić, “Kolona mladosti i mira poslata u smrt,” *Glas srpske*, May 16, 2008, 1.

image of a killed civilian rather than a killed member of the military formation. Similarly, a column in *Glas srpske* from May 17 and 18, 2008 begins with mentioning 19-year old soldiers. The author writes that the Tuzla Convoy was a basis for the BiH partition and soldiers are referred to as children who were killed “helpless.” He states that all righteous people want this crime to be punished, but that nothing is happening to make that possible, which is an indicator of what kind of truth the Muslim authorities want. He writes that the crime will “remain a permanent wound for the Serbian people” and that those soldiers, to paraphrase, only responded to the call, i.e. had no connection to the military except as conscripts serving the regular military service, and adds that the fact that they were conscripts was not important to those “disseminators of hatred,” cementing the position of the Barbarian Muslim and the Martyr Serb.¹²⁵ Also in 2008, we find two articles in *Nezavisne novine* from May 16 related to the event in question. The first one is about laying of the flowers in Tuzla as part of the marking of May 15 and May 16¹²⁶ and the second article below the first one is about the commemoration for “200 members of the former JNA.”¹²⁷ Since the number of the killed soldiers is not mentioned in the first article, this number given in the article on the commemoration in Bijeljina is taken as the only one, without mentioning that the number is in any way contested. The president of RS is quoted as saying that “we do not seek revenge, but we seek truth and justice.”¹²⁸

We find numerous articles on May 15 in the years 2009 and 2010. An article in *Glas srpske* from May 16 and 17, 2009 is an account of the commemoration in Bijeljina for the soldiers “killed in the attack of Muslim units.”¹²⁹ This persistent use of the term Muslim rather than the term Bosniac indicates the insistence on the negative association between

¹²⁵ Pantelija Matavić, “Kad pravda zakasni,” *Glas srpske*, May 16, 2008, 4.

¹²⁶ Jasmina Šarac, “Sjećanje na branioce i civilne žrtve,” *Nezavisne novine*, May 16, 2008, 6.

¹²⁷ “Kuzmanović: Ne tražimo osvetu, već istinu,” *Nezavisne novine*, May 16, 2008, 6.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 6.

¹²⁹ “Zločin nad ‘tuzlanskom kolonom’ još nekažnjen,” *Glas srpske*, May 16 and 17, 2009, 3.

Islam and fundamentalism. An article in *Nezavisne novine* from May 16, 2009 writes about the religious ceremony held in Bijeljina. The picture of a mother with a cross behind her is central to the article. The mother, Jelka Ilić, is quoted at the beginning: “**My child is buried** here with his friends, so his mother came today to light a candle for him and to embrace her child” [emphasis in the original]. One minister is quoted saying that it is difficult to explain to the families of the killed (“the families of more than 200 soldiers of JNA who were in a brutal way murdered and burned and wounded”) that no one has yet been brought to justice.¹³⁰ Another article from the same newspaper on the same day writes about Tuzla and the laying of the wreaths at the monument at various monuments. The chair of the Municipal Council Tuzla, Nada Mladina is quoted as stating that “we cannot hold against the people of Bijeljina that they have memory of the victims that fell here,” adding that we (the people of Tuzla presumably) understand all families of the victims and feel sorry for every person that was killed in the war that should not have happened.¹³¹ This statement can be taken as one of the examples of the tense relationship between the two narratives and the constant ping-pong game of responsibility. In an article in *Semblerske novine* from May 21, 2009, one official stated that they [the politicians], together with the mothers and their tears, mourn for the killed and the missing. The head of the Municipality of Bijeljina stated that religion teaches them [Serbs] to forgive, but not to forget. There are calls for justice in the article, soldiers are referred to as “young persons.” The president of the Veteran Organization RS called “the massacre in Tuzla” as “the crime of all crimes” and Tuzla is also mentioned as having a different narrative since head of the Municipality is quoted saying that “some celebrate the misery of the Tuzla Convoy as some victory and freedom.”¹³² In the account of the round table held on the topic of Tuzla Convoy held in Bijeljina and organized by the Bijeljina

¹³⁰ O. Stjepanović, “Sjećanje na žrtve ‘tuzlanske kolone’,” *Nezavisne novine*, May 16, 2009, 4.

¹³¹ J. Šarac, “Tuzlaci branili svoj grad,” *Nezavisne novine*, May 16, 2009, 5.

¹³² V. Z., “Žrtve ne smijemo zaboraviti,” *Semblerske novine*, May 21, 2009, 6.

Municipality and the Ministry for of Labor and the Veteran-Invalid Protection of the RS. The participants stated that what happened on May 15 was at the beginning of the war and had an impact on the further character of the war.¹³³ In these several articles, we can observe the symbolic use of mothers, the moral superiority of the Serbs and the May 15 as a motif for the later events in the war.

A column in *Glas srpske* from May 17, 2010 mentions mothers who with tears in their eyes commemorate their sons and then states that “mothers and fathers still cry for their children. For the children with a courageous heart, who were innocent and were killed one day in a place called Tuzla.”¹³⁴ An article in *Glas srpske* from May 17, 2010 includes a statement of the head of the Coordination Team for Investigating War Crimes in RS of the necessity to point to the “tragedy of Serbs in BiH” and that there are “political structures” that do not want to admit that there were crimes committed against the Serb people in BiH and that they make the situation in BiH difficult, but that “we” [Serbs] want to build a relationship of peace.¹³⁵ An article from Bijeljina local newspaper from May 20, 2010 is an account of the religious service that was held in Bijeljina. In addition to the parts of speeches by officials and the priests, one mother is also given a place in the article.

‘My child burnt in the truck, and my every day is hell after his horrible death,’ mother Sara said through tears, adding that she hopes that the killers of her son and of other innocent victims who were slain in the Tuzla Convoy would be punished.¹³⁶

By evoking the figure of a mother so many times in this narrative, the soldier is seen less as a military figure and more as a son. By seeing a soldier as a son, mourned by his mother, he is seen primarily as someone’s child. The figure of a mother who mourns for her

¹³³ Precizno planiran zločin,” *Semblerske novine*, May 21, 2009, 6.

¹³⁴ Vedrana Kulaga, “Tuzlanska kolona,” *Glas srpske*, May 17, 2010, 4.

¹³⁵ V.K. “Okupljanja na mjestu stradanja,” *Glas srpski*, May 17, 2010, 5.

¹³⁶ O. S., “Za zločin se mora odgovarati!,” *Semblerske novine*, May 20, 2010, 6.

son or who is still searching for his remains is a powerful image and emotionally evoking. Fathers are rarely mentioned in these narratives. When the image of a father is used, that is to depict a soldier as a father, as in the Federation/Tuzla narrative at times. The depiction of mothers as helpless features prominently throughout this narrative – they are either helpless to save their son and watch on television how they are killed or are represented as having a difficult life without their sons, life marked with sorrow. Mothers, used to establish the position of innocence and themselves represented as innocent, show that the innocence implies helplessness.

As we know from the previous chapter, May 15, 2010 is the first time the two commemorations (one from Tuzla and the other from the RS) are held in Tuzla, several hours apart. An article in *Nezavisne novine* from May 14, 2010 announces that two buses with 100 people from the RS are expected to come to Tuzla for the commemoration. The article states that Tuzla marks May 15 “as the Day of the organized resistance to the aggressor” as well as that the Tuzla party will lay flowers after the people from RS have left.¹³⁷ An article from May 16, 2010 writes about the holding of commemorations and that there were no incidents, as well as that people of Tuzla laid flowers three hours later and 20 meters farther at the memorial for the killed soldiers of the town. The article states that “irreconcilable views” were expressed at these two gatherings. One mother is quoted as saying that her son was from a mixed marriage and that he had been moved to Tuzla three days earlier. “He was frightened and he was crying. He wanted to escape but he could not, because they were packing.” The article states that her son was 19 years old. The head of the Coordination Team for Investigating War Crimes in the RS stated that the RS has a big responsibility to the families, and that a monument should be built on the place where the JNA soldiers were “innocently

¹³⁷ J. Šarac, “Na Brčanskoj malti ne očekuju incidente,” *Nezavisne novine*, May 14, 2010, 5.

killed,” a monument that “will warn of the suffering of the Serbian people in BiH as well.”¹³⁸ An omnipresent element in the RS narrative of the war is that Serbs suffered to the same extent (if not more) as did Muslims and that this is not acknowledged. Ger Duijzings writes that the most common reaction to the building of the memorial complex for the Muslim victims in Srebrenica was asking for the Serb victims to be recognized and urging the international community to do so. He adds that the “dominant Serb discourse, which is also shared by moderate politicians, equalizes Serb and Muslim suffering.”¹³⁹ With the commemoration on July 11 for the murdered Muslims in Srebrenica becoming more prominent and more institutionalized, the commemoration held by local Serbs in the nearby villages of Kravica and Zalazje on July 12 when the crimes were committed against Serbs by Muslims in the war also becomes increasingly useful for the Serbs.¹⁴⁰ As time goes by, the Srebrenica commemoration is becoming more and more covered in the media, and as Elissa Helms states, serves as “the ultimate symbol of Bosniac victimhood.”¹⁴¹ In articles from the Federation newspapers, we see how May 15 in Tuzla is connected to Srebrenica, stating that Tuzla would have suffered the same as Srebrenica had it not been for May 15. Srebrenica, having enormous symbolic power, is seen as enough of a justification and the barbarity of the Serbs evoked by its mentioning. On the other hand, even though the RS narrative does not make frequent explicit references to Srebrenica, the increasing emphasis on May 15 and on the sinister crime that happened in Tuzla against Serbs is part of a bigger narrative of the competition. As an example of this, an article in *Glas srpski* in 2001, states that the Organization of the Families of Imprisoned and Killed Veterans and Missing Civilians RS

¹³⁸ J. Šarac, “Bijele ruže za žrtve,” *Nezavisne novine*, May 16, 2010, 4, 5.

¹³⁹ Ger Duijzings, “Commemorating Srebrenica: Histories of Violence and the Politics of Memory in Eastern Bosnia,” in *The New Bosnian Mosaic : Identities, Memories, and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society*, ed. Xavier Bougarel, Elissa Helms and Ger Duijzings (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 162.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 162.

¹⁴¹ Elissa Helms, “Bosnian Girl! Nationalism and Innocence through Images of Women,” in *Reading Images in the Post-Yugoslav Space*, ed. Slobodan Karamanić and Danijel Šuber (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

states that, if it is insisted that a monument be built in Srebrenica, the same should be made possible for those killed in Tuzla.¹⁴²

3.3. *Concluding notes*

The worst crime in any war, in our imagination, is the crime against civilians, women, young people and children and wounded people. The soldiers are represented as young people, mostly by emphasizing their position as reservists serving their regular military service. This is the same way they are associated with civilians. Since almost all men in the former Yugoslavia had to serve their regular military service, soldiers are not seen in a combat military context, but more in the context of persons who found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time. Soldiers, apart from being represented as young people and young men, are also represented as children and this is where the figure of the mother has such a prominent and important part. By introducing the emotionally evoking figure of a mourning mother, soldiers start being seen as someone's children and someone's sons. The image of a soldier as a child, as a young man just doing the right thing and serving his country and helpless to fire back under attack, ambushed and brutally killed, a son who is missed and mourned by his mother, contributes to the building of an argument for innocence for a certain event in the war or of one's people, nation or side. The JNA soldiers are represented as trusting and naive, as well as helpless. As we can see, the emphasis is on depicting the people in Tuzla as Muslims, and moreover, as Muslim extremists or Muslim fundamentalists. Muslims are ascribed not only a very militarized status, but are also depicted as not being human, as being barbarous and merciless. This is emphasized even more by including the information that the local TV station was following the event as it happened and showing that on television, the implication being that the entire town knew that the JNA would be attacked

¹⁴² G. Klepić, "Zločin bez kazne," Glas srpski, May 15, 2001, 2.

and that they were enjoying the murder and massacre of young, innocent, unarmed people. The incomprehensibility of the crime is also very often emphasized. The position of a Muslim extremist is also established by the emphasis on the agreement made for retreat. In this narrative, the Muslims tricked the young men who trusted them, ambushed them, started shooting at them, and then, seeing them lying wounded, approached and murdered them. Soldiers from JNA, on the other hand, are given the status of martyrs. The Muslims, consequently, represented as monstrous, criminal minds that took the killed soldiers to a trash heap, the way “not even animals are treated.”

Women, otherwise completely absent from the narrative, are instrumentalized as bereaved mothers, symbolically used to establish the Serb side’s innocence. The image of a soldier, otherwise usually seen in a military context, is here reversed. Soldiers, frequently seen in wars as legitimate targets, now in order to be given the status of a victim and in order to be used as a symbol of the suffering of one nation, have to be seen outside of their militarized position. Associating a soldier with a child is “necessary in order for the warrior to achieve the status of innocent, pure victim, but also in order that he should be a credible dead body.”¹⁴³ The image of a man as a warrior, so useful at the beginning of the war for the purpose of mobilization, is in the context of the competition for innocence replaced with the image of a warrior as a child.

¹⁴³ Ivan Čolović, “Warrior,” in *The Politics of Symbol in Serbia: Essays in Political Anthropology* (London: Hurst, 2002), 54.

4. Conclusion

While examining the different narratives of May 15 in the Federation and the Republic of Srpska, we notice some similar patterns. One element that is present in both/all narratives is othering. The JNA in the Federation narrative is at the very beginning presented as being composed of people who are not to be trusted, who are taking weapons from the Tuzla military barracks, are drunk and shooting at residential buildings, celebrating and rejoicing. They are often referred to as Chetniks and their status as Chetniks is emphasized the most in the articles in *Dnevni avaz*. On the other hand, in the RS narrative, the enemy is often represented as a Muslim (extremist/fundamentalist). The Chetniks are represented in the Federation newspapers as butchering people before and after May 15, 1992 around BiH and Muslims are represented in the RS newspapers as burning young men and taking their dead bodies to the trash heap. The actions of both “sides” are represented as unimaginable and incomprehensible. There is a constant reference after 1995 in the Federation/Tuzla narrative to the relationship between the JNA and the Army of the RS by mentioning Srebrenica or the massacre in 1995 in Tuzla, committed by the members of the Army of the RS.

The initial accounts of May 15 represent it as a “serious incident, whereas later on and especially during the war period, it is represented as one of the most important events for the town, and as a “battle.” The representation of May 15 as an “attack on Tuzla” is the most explicit in *Dnevni avaz*. That representation that the Tuzla (military/police) formations were fighting back and demilitarizes their status, which is also achieved by representing May 15 as an act of people’s resistance against fascism. One of the most important elements in this narrative is a depiction of the Tuzla side as humane and moral. The theme of a moral killer and the one who kills only because he has to, is important for the status of innocence. In the postwar period and its competition for the status of a victim, representation of May 15 as an

attack on Tuzla is more useful. The emphasis shifts from the one participating or initiating an attack to the one being under attack. Stef Jansen also recognizes the commonality of constructing war experience as having no choice since circumstances were extraordinary. This self-identification “allowed the reconstruction of a positive self-image in deeply gendered terms, for defense was seen as a man’s job.”¹⁴⁴ However, this also indicates that there is not only one type of masculinity that we can associate with the war. R. W. Connell¹⁴⁵ emphasizes that masculinity should not be essentialized, but has to be seen as constructed in a certain context, adding that masculinity cannot be treated as an object, but should be seen through a set of processes and through which both men and women (since the notion of one is constructed in relation to the notion of the other) live their gendered lives.¹⁴⁶

In the Federation/Tuzla narrative, the JNA is represented as the mighty army and the Tuzla’s party as miniscule in comparison, whereas in the RS narrative, the JNA is represented as helpless and unarmed and the Tuzla party as well organized and ruthless. The moral superiority is evident in the RS narrative, especially in emphasizing that Serbs do not want revenge, but justice. In Tuzla as well, and particularly in 2010, Tuzla is represented as more civilized in relation to the persons from the RS coming to hold a commemoration for the JNA soldiers since the people of Tuzla do not react to provocations.

As we can see, both narratives have an established basis. The Federation/Tuzla narrative states that the JNA, while exiting Tuzla, started firing first. The RS/Bijeljina narrative states that the JNA was retreating from Tuzla and was attacked. However, we also find that the narratives are not monolithic or constant through time. In the Federation, as well as in Tuzla itself, we see that there are disagreements on how to properly mark May 15.

¹⁴⁴ This was the discussion of the work of Natalija Bašić in Stef Jansen, “Of wolves and men: Postwar reconciliation and the gender of inter-national encounters,” *Focaal-Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 57 (2010): 40.

¹⁴⁵ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 68, 69.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

Dnevni avaz offers criticism for the insufficient marking of the event and we also find information that the manner of marking May 15 organized by the Municipality of Tuzla is not accepted by everyone. In the RS, we can see two different representations of May 15 in *Nezavisne novine* on the one hand and *Glas srpski* and *Semblerske novine* on the other. *Nezavisne novine* attempts to cover ways May 15 is marked/commemorated in both Tuzla and Bijeljina, even though often by contrasting the two. The other two newspapers represent the marking of May 15 as a celebration. The commemoration in Bijeljina is rarely mentioned in the Federation narrative and when it is, it is seen as a political provocation and manipulation by the government of the RS in order to change the position of the victim. The marking of May 15 in Tuzla, on the other hand, is often mentioned in the RS narrative in order to emphasize that the people of Tuzla celebrate what is in the RS seen as the butchering of innocent youth. Both sides are referring to the other narrative in order to legitimize their own.

In the RS, there is an attempt to represent JNA soldiers as being in Tuzla only to serve their regular military service as the majority of men had to in the former country and they are often referred to as “young men” or “children.” In both narratives, mothers are seen as mourning figures and as passive, unlike men who are active participants. As Carpenter states, the difference is constructed between civilians who cannot be killed and combatants who can be killed legitimately. She states that the distinction between a combatant and a civilian is often established through the usage of gender. “This makes a difference because the category ‘women and children’ is not empirically interchangeable with ‘the civilian population,’ and all men are not ‘combatants.’”¹⁴⁷ She states that the distinction that should be made is between the one who poses an immediate military threat in a certain situation and the one who does not, by making an objective assessment. However, as she adds, assumptions about gender

¹⁴⁷ R. Charli Carpenter, *Innocent Women and Children: Gender, Norms and the Protection of Civilians* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 2.

usually result in women and children being automatically seen as civilians and adult males as not. She argues that the emergence of innocence as gendered is part of the historical process, especially

the emergence of modern militaries along with mass male conscription; and the emergence of national narratives associating 'women and children' with the protected, civilian, domestic space of the newly territorialized nation-state. These factors produced institutional and normative conditions favorable for gender essentialisms – the association of biological characteristics (male/female) with assumed social attributes – to be reproduced in the context of the civilian immunity norm.¹⁴⁸

According to Carpenter, men are excluded from the protection given to civilians, making all men into participants in the war and a potential threat, whereas women, especially mothers, and children, are given the status of civilians, and thus, of absolute victims. Since the term innocent civilian is so gendered, it implies vulnerability and the inability of a civilian (i.e. women and children) to protect themselves rather than non-involvement in combat. By wanting to associate the JNA soldiers with young men or children - by wanting to give them the status of civilians, they are associating them with someone who is helpless, as they are frequently referred to in the RS narrative. As Čolović also states, the association of soldiers with children is used to demilitarize their position in which they can be legitimately killed. In the Federation/Tuzla narratives, the JNA soldiers are constructed as the legitimately killed, which is shown by the fact that they are completely absent from the narrative as the victims since they are legitimate dead bodies. (Oni su mrtvi, ali nisu Mrtvi.) They exist in the Federation narrative only as numbers and the numbers that are given seems to have the sole purpose of being smaller than the number promoted by the RS and show how the RS is exaggerating and lying.

¹⁴⁸ R. Charli Carpenter, *'Innocent Women and Children: ' Gender, Norms and the Protection of Civilians* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 27.

In the narrative of the RS, the reference to soldiers as children and the presence of mothers is used in order to establish the position of innocence. The usage of precisely that rather than anything else shows that the term innocence has implications that cannot be disassociated from gender. The term innocence and the term civilian, rather than denoting someone who does not pose a military threat, implies weakness and helplessness and in order for men to achieve the status of innocence, they have to be seen as such. The contestation over the position of the JNA soldiers also implies how the position of a civilian is not always given. The distinctions between the persons who pose a military threat and those who do not, as well as the distinctions between who is a civilian and who is not are not self-evident and are often constructed.

5. Bibliography

Bhabha, Homi. "Introduction." In *Nation and Narration*, edited by Homi Bhabha, 1-7. London: Routledge, 1990.

Burg, Steven L., and Paul S. Shoup. *The War in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*. New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1999.

Carpenter, Charli R. *'Innocent Women and Children: ' Gender, Norms and the Protection of Civilians*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006.

Connell, R. W. *Masculinities*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Čolović, Ivan. *Politics of Symbol in Serbia: Essays in Political Anthropology*. London: Hurst, 2002.

Denich, Bette. "Unmaking Multiethnicity in Yugoslavia: Media and Metamorphosis." In *Neighbors at War: Anthropological perspectives on Yugoslav ethnicity, culture and history*, edited by Joel M. Halpern and David A. Kideckel, 39-55, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

Duijzings, Ger. "Commemorating Srebrenica: Histories of Violence and the Politics of Memory in Eastern Bosnia." In *The New Bosnian Mosaic : Identities, Memories, and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society*, edited by Xavier Bougarel, Elissa Helms and Ger Duijzings, 141-166. Burlington: Ashgate, 2007.

Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Women and War*. Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987.

Enloe, Cythia. "All the Men are in the Militias, All the Women are Victims: The Politics of Masculinity and Femininity in Nationalist Wars." In *The Women and War Reader*, edited by Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin, 50-62. New York: New York University Press, 1998.

Hayden, Robert M. "Muslims as 'Others' in Serbian and Croatian Politics." In *Neighbors at War: Anthropological perspectives on Yugoslav ethnicity, culture and history*, edited by Joel M. Halpern and David A. Kideckel, 116-124. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

Helms, Elissa. "Bosnian Girl: Nationalism and Innocence through Images of Women." In *Reading Images in the Post-Yugoslav Space*, edited by Slobodan Karamanić and Danijel Šuber (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

Helms, Elissa. "'Politics is a Whore': Women, Morality and Victimhood in Post-War Bosnia-Herzegovina." In *The New Bosnian Mosaic: Identities, Memories, and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society*, edited by Xavier Bougarel, Elissa Helms and Ger Duijzings, 234-253. Burlington: Ashgate, 2007.

Hoare, Marko Attila. *How Bosnia Armed*. London: Saqi Books in association with the Bosnian Institute, 2004.

Jansen, Stef. "Of wolves and men: Postwar reconciliation and the gender of inter-national encounters." *Focaal-Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* 57 (2010): 33-49.
Jones, Adam. "Gendercide and Genocide." In *Gendercide and Genocide*, edited by Adam Jones, 1-38. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004.

Kanaaneh, Rhoda. "Boys or men? Duped or "made"? Palestinian Soldiers in the Israeli Military." *American Ethnologist* 32, no. 2 (2005): 260-275.

McClintock, Anne. "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," *Feminist Review* 44 (Summer 1993): 61-80.

Munn, Jamie. "The Hegemonic Male and Kosovar Nationalism, 2000-2005." *Men and Masculinities* 10, no 4 (June 2008): 440-456.

Nagel, Joane. "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 2 (March 1998): 242-269.

Prince, Gerald. *Dictionary of Narratology*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987.

Prošić-Dvornić, Mirjana. "Serbia: The Inside Story." In *Neighbors at War: Anthropological perspectives on Yugoslav ethnicity, culture and history*, edited by Joel M. Halpern and David A. Kideckel, 316-335. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

Ruddick, Sarah. *Maternal thinking: towards a politics of peace*. London: The Women's Press, 1990.

Tonkiss, Fran. "Analyzing Discourse." In *Researching Society and Culture*, edited by Clive Seale (London: Sage, 1998).

Internet sources

"Bosnia-Herzegovina's Media Landscape – print media." *Vienna's weekly European journal*, January 15, 2009. Accessed May 30, 2011. <http://www.wieninternational.at/en/node/12040>.

"Tuzla: Različitosti nas čine bogatijim!." *Vijeće nacionalnih manjina BiH*. Accessed June 3, 2011. http://www.nacionalnemanjinebih.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=75:tuzla-razliitosti-nas-ine-bogatijim&catid=3:vijesti1&Itemid=75.

Periodicals

Dnevni avaz

Front slobode

Glas srpski

Nezavisne novine

Oslobođenje

Semberske novine