Participation of Women in War in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995

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SUMMARY

Many authors wrote about the participation of women in the war in BiH and beyond. These were the women in role of health professional. So in our area during the World War II there is mentioning of Dr. Olga Dedijer, Dr. Irina Knezevic, Dr. Rosa Papo, Dr. Julka Mestrovic, Dr. Frida Gutman, partisan nurse Vuja (Hanika Altrac) and others. Participation of women in BiH during the 1992-1995 war, also, was numerous and significant. According to the original data in the Army of BiH there were 5360 recruited women. They were on different functions from those that were engaged in logistic activities, to the well-known fighters. For example, on the army poster was for long time picture of Ms Kiselica Semsa. Because of their courage in carrying out successful assignments they were called “Amazon women”. Fadila Odzakovic – called Zuta (Yellow), received the award “Medal for courage”, and the living recipients of the biggest award during the war, the “Golden lily”, was awarded to Fadila Bajric, Zlata Gazibara, Dzevada Tartaragic and Aida Zuko. Posthumously awarded are Emira Basic, Mevlida Elcic, Kornelija Juric, Atifa Karalic, Razija Merica, Indira Pjanic and Nevzeta Sefer. Besides they are posthumously awarded with the “Golden lily”, Fadila Odzakovic – Zuta and Edina Camdzic are also awarded with the “Order of the golden coat of arms with swords” or the medal for bravery. Dervisic Satka received international recognition for a nursing care, Florence Nightingale Award, and Ms. Advija Custovic received the rank of Major for participation in the defense of the country. The review will present the characters of the brave women who have a motivating effect on the current generations.

Keywords: Army of Republic of BiH, women, bravery, acknowledgments

1. INTRODUCTION

About the participation of women during the wars led in BiH, wrote many authors. Mostly about the women heroes, renowned health and social workers, nurses, teachers, politicians. History of World War II captures the courage of women who were teachers, service workers and many others of professions, which they performed during the war devastation and defense. Particularly prominent women–heroes, known health workers in BiH were Dr. Julka Mestrovic, Colonel-General Roza Papo MD, Olga Dedijer MD, Frida Gutman MD, Hanika Altarac-partisan sister called Vuja and many others. This paper presents the women of the various professions that were directly and indirectly aided the defense of the country of BiH, stay and return of people to their homes, and which work mark the time in which they acted. In the war in BiH (1992-1995) actively involved in the defense of the country was involved large number of women. According to the source data, in the Army of BiH there was 5360 women. Women were at various functions, from those involved in service, education, social, health and other sectors to known fighters and the holder of the largest awards of war (1). Number of women who organized themselves in the associations, and thus assist in the defense of the country of BiH was far greater.

2. GOAL

The aim of this paper is to denounce the most prominent women and their self-organization during the war in BiH (1992-1995), who through their work, humanity and courage contributed to the defense of the country.

3. ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN SOLDIERS

It is known that there were a significant number of women who are as patriotic volunteers joined the Patriotic league and the Army of B&H. Among them, particularly stood out Odzakovic Fadila, called „Zuta“ Yellow (born on March 14, 1958 in Gorazde, died on September 20, 1992 at Mount Zuc, Sarajevo). This brave woman was posthumously awarded with the “Golden Lily” (Zlatni lijiljan) in 1993, and decoration “Order of the Golden shield with swords” in 1994 (2). Dzenita Ljuca joined the Army of BiH as a student of the Academy of Fine Arts and as a member of the Army of BiH remained severe disables. Participant in the Army of BiH was also Semsa Kiselica whose character with a gun in sight, was on a beautiful poster of the Army of B&H (3, 6).

Live awards winners of Golden Lily are Fadila Bajric, Zlata Gazibara, Dzevada Tataragic, Aida Zuko, Meliha Dedovic and Lozic Ramiza–Bella. Ramiza Lovic–Bella was a member of assault units, wounded in 1992, participated
in the founding of the French hospital and entered with the first convoy of food in besieged Dobrinja (3).

Were awarded posthumously:

- Emira Basic, born on July 3, 1969 in Bosanski Novi, killed November 27, 1993 in Sarajevo. She was a graduate of the Faculty of Political Science. She shows great skill in providing first aid.
- Mevlida Elcic, born on June 29, 1963, killed July 28, 1993 at Golo Brdo - Igman, as the soldier nurse;
- Kornelija Juric
- Bjelka Mednolucanin
- Atifa Karalic, born on December 31, 1957 in Novi Seher, Maglaj, nurse. Killed on September 03, 1993 when giving first aid to the wounded soldiers near Gornji Vakuf. She was a member of the Famous 317 mountain brigade.

Winners of Golden lilies are also Razija Meric, Indira Pjanic, Nezveta Sefer. Fatima (Salih) Fako, born on May 30, 1962 in the village Izbisna (Foca), joined the organization “Green Beret” and was a member of the Bosnia 23. At the beginning of the war, she was appointed to main chef of the Army of BiH. During the great shelling she was killed on June 20, 1992 in front of headquarters, while she was on duty (3).

Little is known that the women in the Army of BiH self-organized and founded Women’s Association of fighters with only one mission: to help themselves and the people in needs that are specific to women during the war. They are still little known and even less is written about them. However, there have been individual cases of women who have contributed much to improve the situation in very difficult war situations. The most famous Halida Bojadzi the legend of 1992-1995 war in Bosnia, who at the beginning of the aggression has lost her two sons. Younger son had a 13 and older one 15 years. During all the war she was with the army in the ranks of the Army of BiH, working as a cook, laundress, and a social worker or as a “shoulder to cry.” War veteran is also a judge from Zivinice, Zuhra Brkic who adopted a child found in the refuge during the war in BiH 1992-1995. Minister of Education in the Tuzla Suljevic, Masic Mukadesa in Dobrinja, Mirjana Micunovic and Mirsada Hodzic in Sarajevo, and many other teachers and professors have dedicated themselves to education of children during the war in BiH (2, 4, 5, 6).

Similar is the work of individual women from Dobrinja. One of them, Muamera Puska (she was not a nurse) went to the besieged residents of the Dobrinja and collected all what anyone could give (medicines, medical instruments and various objects that were needed for hospitals and treatment for patients), and was called the “Mother Theresa” (2, 4). “House Amazons» saved the Dobrinja says Carol Mann in his book House Amazons from 2006 on page 54 (2).

Ms. Emira, architect from the municipality New Town, Sarajevo for 14 months has transformed Dobrinja. Her husband was killed in the war of snipers. She remained alone in the building with her two children and three cats. Other tenants from her ravaged streets were moved out, and there were 108 of them. Emira has launched a tailor’s atelier, fashion shows, print shop that printed one cook, photographs manual for youngsters, manual for small greenhouse. Emira has opened an architectural office, which started the work on solutions for the reconstruction of the city (4,7).

Women who were the core of civil resistance in Dobrinja from the first communist generation from the World War II, mostly middle class, educated, which speak at least one foreign language, more English than French, aged 35-45 years. They were by profession clerks, teachers, experts in various fields and similar (4, 8). In all communist systems of higher education women remained at home. If the war was a male principle, then place of city under the siege belongs to women. Prize “Crystal Eagle” got Arijana Saracevic, best war reporter. The award was given by the International Foundation for women in the media that she was honored at a ceremony in New York (9).

Among young athletes should be especially mentioned Maja Djokic, seventeen year old girl who was killed in Sarajevo, on April 09, 1995 by the Karadzic hell soldiers shell. Maja tragic death has linked Sarajevo, California, Washington, Bologna, Athens and many other cities (5, 6).

Michael Mahoney helping young people around the world has established more memorial funds, among others in the memory of killed children of Sarajevo. The story of the Maja death circled the world. Slobodan Stajic from the destroyed building of newspaper “Oslobodjenje” through Bologna and Athens, and through the good people of Mira Poljo and Leonidas Hadziprodromi sent
two stories that were released the same night in Bologna, and Athens "Eleferotopia" that were transferred by this and other newspapers. About the suffering in BiH, have published numerous reports in the American press, which has motivated humanist Mahoney to establish a fund in memory of young Sarajevo girls. Particular attention on the establishment of links between California and the Sarajevo assisted embassy of BiH girls. Washington. On the occasion of this event, one of the chroniclers wrote: "If in April of 1995 Maja life flight was really broken, then it is us now, even indirectly, through the Fund, is reminiscent of the mythical phoenix bird, because she continues to refines us, as evidenced by the first scholars of the Fund Patrick, Kevin, David Alan Walthali, Joel. O. Wetrosky and others".

Mirsada Hodzic, Sada Kanita, Aisa Maca and Pava Barisic, were founders and active members of the Forum of parents “All for All” (7). They saved the children from the hospital in Cavtat, and boarded them to the ship “Marina” and the children were saved. Forum of parents “All for All” was particularly important in the actions for the return of young soldiers and their withdrawal from the Yugoslav National Army, when it was clear that the Yugoslav army became the aggressor, not the people’s army, where the tragic end found the members of non-Serb nationality, the Forum of women parents has “broke” in the Assembly of B&H, and asked to leave to Belgrade with the aim of releasing the soldier from the Yugoslav Army and the cessation of recruitment of them from Bosnia. In addition, parents Forum “All for All” was particularly engaged in preparing young soldiers for the defense of the country and inspired the patriotic spirit with which the young soldiers entered the Army of B&H (7).


During the war in BiH, the country left a very large number of health professionals, at various grounds. There have been cases that some departments of clinics, hospitals and clinical centers remained almost without a single expert. The women health professionals who remain in the war deserve only admiration and respect. Among them specially stand out doctors, masters of pharmacy, doctors of dentistry and nurses (5).

Nurse Sadeta Dervisevic, called Satka, winner of the award, “Florance Nightingale” as a health professional-recognized humanist. They called her the “Heroin of Dobrinja” because she was one of the founders of Dobrinja hospital, along with her husband Sead Dervisevic and Jusuf Hadzir MD (3, 8).

What has brought our nurse Satka world recognition? The patient Branka Petricevic received an infusion, but did not have the strength to return home, and this noble sister decided to go with her across the meadow, which was covered with sniper fire and escort her to the house. After a couple of steps shooting began, and both were lying on the ground. Nurse Satka was seriously wounded in the leg, while she had a white coat. Gunfire continued in order to kill her. With calm, which nurse Satka maintained, people have managed to get away, but she remained 60% disabled. Satka injury is documented on video tape. Her wounding was shown not only at the Dobrinja television, but this recording went on air via satellite exchange. Canadians from this video footage made a documentary film entitled “Your life for the lives of others.” For this event came the largest award in nursing activities.

Nurse Custovic Advija was particularly active in the military hospital on mountain Igman (8). She was a constant companion and a good associate of her husband Izet Custovic MD, the chief military surgeon, and head of the war hospital at Igman. She was wounded at the Igman, transferred to a hospital in Hrasnica, and then to a Kosevo hospital in Sarajevo. After leaving the hospital she returned to her unit, 101 Mountain Brigade. Received the rank of captain on February 23, 1996 by order of the Presidency, no 02-011-138/96 and watch with dedication of General Commander of the Army of BiH. Izet Custovic MD is a holder of the Golden Lily.

Otolaryngologist, Aida Volic MD, along with doctor Cera from Zenica, opened a hospital in Suhodol, which operated continuously for 2 years. During these two years, for 3 months she was the only doctor in the hospital. Performing surgeries on civilian population of the surrounding villages, births, treatment for the wounded. She knew to operate for 8 hours and her nurses, among which there were some only taught, was giving her “standing drinks,” while others pedaling of the bike, “produced electric energy” in the moment when it was needed. This work followed the International Red Cross and hospital work in Suhodol received no objections (8).

It is interesting to tell a story about the work of medical doctor Volic Aida with the wounded. Soldier Darko from Kiseliak, a member of the HVO (Croatian Council of Defense) was badly wounded and left on the line of demarcation. B&H Army fighters brought Darko to the hospital, and doctor Aida operated him. About how it was a humane gesture, is as evidence that Darko agreed that members of the unit “Laste” from Sarajevo came for him in Suhodol and take him to Sarajevo where he was evacuated for treatment in the United States. Doctor Volic informed Darko’s family about his wounding and say to them, where Darko is. This is a unique case, or rather rare...
in our region, and little is known about it. Permanent friendship between doctor Aida Volic and wounded HVO soldier and his family is talking about the possibility and necessity of a common life in our region.

The Army of BiH was proud to have doctor Edin Hrešnović, lieutenant by rank and officer of medical services of the 105th Motorized Brigade and doctor Senid Sujojnović, lieutenant in action on the first line of Sarajevo defense (9). Medical doctor Silva Rizvanbegovic sent an appeal through the media to help the Department of medical urgent assistance in Sarajevo, when they vehicles were kidnapped or shelled, and she died in the ambulance car when accompanying her patient (3).

Graduate of Medical School Suada Dilberovic from Dubrovnik, was killed in the anti-war demonstrations.

Hungarian in origin, a professor of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports, Borborela Homolja (she stayed all time during the siege in Sarajevo), through the radio was calling “Breathe in the air, breathe out love,” actually worked to preserve the mental health of citizens and many others (5). Master of pharmacy Biljana Mirza and her husband came every day from Dobrinja in Sarajevo and passing through Serb checkpoints thanks to Biljana Serbian name. They walked 12 miles every day (2).

The abilities that have presented many nurses Suvada Svrakic, Fatima Zaimovic, Tatjana Jeremic in providing medical care for the huge number of wounded during the war in Sarajevo, speaks the famous Sarajevo war surgeons in the Clinical Center of Sarajevo University. When stocks of medical supplies were missing, the nurses have made the substitution. From the patches was made, “Fatima’s quilts” which are used by surgeons for the care of serious bleeding. Nurse Zlata Pasevski at General Hospital in Sarajevo pointed out as top instrument assistant and one of the members of the team in the preliminary solution of the Sarajevo war fixators. For the production of saliva, analgesics, antiseptic and various other disinfection means medicines for the eyes, skin, infectious diarrhea and severe injuries made pharmacists at the “Pharmacies Sarajevo”, which received war awards (8).

5. WOMEN ASSOCIATIONS AND THEIR ASSISTANCE IN DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY

Associations of Women “Someja”, “Ajasna”, “Mak Palanka”, “Sarajke”, “Zene za Zene” (Women for Women), “Biser” (Pearl) and many others have helped the Army of B&H. For their bravery and actions during the war they have received military decorations and awards. Humanity, which they showed in providing the aid to the wounded and sick were aligned in rows of winning world recognition and awards from medical ethics. Of course, we must stress that there are a large number of anonymous, unknown women who are not mentioned, which have left an indelible mark, success in the defense and care of people when confronted with a brutal attack by the aggressor forces, which main goal was to kill, destroy and disable, primarily civilian population, women, children, elderly, unarmed civilians, etc.

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