Place of Women's Rights in Supranation-Building: Comparison of Socialist Yugoslavia and the European Union[1]

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Summary

In both Socialist Yugoslavia and the European Union, the establishment of women's rights can be determined as an integral part of supranation-building. While bearing in mind the long and unbroken tradition of patriarchy, both entities, partially under the influence of feminist theory and practice, have integrated the fight for women's rights into their political agendas, using them as an identity tool in establishing a clear distinction from the opposed political, economic and socio-cultural systems. Imposed from the above, the introduction of gender equality policies and legislation to many of their (nation) states came as a shock therapy, challenging existing traditional cultural patterns and norms while making the results uneven and fragile. Women's rights policies were, especially in the beginning, primarily economic in nature, concentrating on the inadequate position of women in the labor market and ignoring the structural reasons behind inequality.

Keywords: Women's Rights, Supranation-Building, Socialist Yugoslavia, European Union, Feminism

Introduction

When researching the history of utopias and of utopian thought, I have asked about the place women and women's rights occupy in them. Guided by the philosophical tradition of the Frankfurt School, I have understood utopias not in a popular sense

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of imaginary and impossible places concocted in the minds of naïve idlers, but in a philosophical sense of intellectual orientation towards overcoming the existing and focusing on a better future created by careful and controlled human action and intervention (Maskalan, 2015). Unfortunately, history proves that as far as utopia is concerned, women were often understood as already living in one, undeserving of a better future or a better destiny. The change in such an understanding was brought about by utopian socialists (Charles Fourier, Robert Owen, Étienne Cabet, Henri de Saint-Simon), who were among the first to notice the connection between improving women's social position and creating a better community and a world as a whole.

I believe that Socialist Yugoslavia and the European Union represent two distinctly different examples of utopian projects with the intention of creating a community that will bring peace and prosperity to its members. An important premise of both creations was the construction of a supranational community as a form of overcoming national identity and nationalism while "the erosion of familism, localism and religion would allow the state to oversee humanity's progress towards a global society and culture" (Smith, 1991, p. 145).

In this paper, I touch on the role that the political establishment of women's human rights and gender equality played in building the supranational identities of the European Union and Socialist Yugoslavia. In doing so I look back at the key processes and challenges of developing women's rights in these two political entities from their establishment to, in the case of Yugoslavia, its disintegration, and, in the case of the EU, its modern-day trials and tribulations. Despite their undoubted differences – the most important being certainly the different historical context in which they developed as well as the economic and political foundations on which they rest(ed) – I anticipate that the mentioned processes have a number of common features, which I address below. Namely, this paper will show that the establishment of women's rights in both entities can be determined as an integral part of supranation-building, building that takes place primarily from above, through the efforts of political institutions.[2] In both cases women's rights have been an identity tool in establishing a clear distinction from opposed political, economic and socio-cultural systems. In the case of Yugoslavia, identity was manifestly shaped in opposition to the capitalist West (and the etatist Soviet Union), while in the case of the European

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[2] "The value of gender equality", claim Pető and Manners, "may be the only value that was shared by political actors on both sides of the Iron Curtain during the Cold War. This value, that equal pay should be given to men and women for equal work, was one of the founding principles of the 'statist feminist' communist states in Eastern Europe guaranteed by the Stalinist constitutions. It was also a basic value of the European Community from 1957, located in article 119 of the Treaty of Rome guaranteeing 'equal pay for equal work'" (Pető and Manners, 2006, p. 97).

Union, it is still latently being shaped in opposition to the non-white, Muslim and migratory East and South.

Yugoslav leaders from the beginning sought to integrate women's rights into the discourse of class struggle and the prosperity that will follow from it. Unfortunately, over time, their work on gender equality has been postponed indefinitely. In the EU case women's rights only later became an important part of the image of Europe as a guardian of human rights capable of overcoming its many diversities through its project of equality. In both cases, the primary preoccupation with the economic aspects of women's rights and shortcomings in addressing the structural causes of gender inequality have called into question the success of supranation-building on such foundations or, possibly, the women's support for it.

Supranation-building is defined here as a process of creating a supranational identity with the intention of achieving a permanent supranational integration (Mylonas, 2017). While national identity is founded on the idea of solidarity through sharing common memories, myths, history and language, a supranational identity is expected to transcend and supplement those with common consent and shared (cosmopolitan) moral values (Kraus, 2003). The integration is considered as a necessary precondition for political stability and peace, as well as for social and economic prosperity and development. Although the importance of structural processes such as industrialization, urbanization or social mobilization is recognized, the construction of supranational identity is also dependent on what Mylonas (2017) understands as deliberate policies aiming at homogenization along the lines of a *specific constitutive story*.

In the continuation of this paper I focus precisely on the constitutive story that lies in the foundations of Socialist Yugoslavia and the European Union and the position that women's rights and gender equality occupy in it. As used here, the term *Socialist Yugoslavia* means the Southeast and Central European country founded in 1945 under the name Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and from 1963 Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which collapsed in 1991-92 amid bloody ethnic conflicts.

Women's Rights in Socialist Yugoslavia

After the establishment of Socialist Yugoslavia in 1945/46 the modernization processes under the strict supervision of the Yugoslav Communist Party led to significant changes in many aspects of social life including health care, education and women's emancipation (Milošević, 2017). As far as the latter is concerned, it is true that hitherto the work on women's rights in the Balkans was primarily a matter of individual and not particularly successful efforts, which is why the intention of the Party to make women's emancipation a result of an organized policy seemed like

a step in the right direction. It should be noted that women's rights were not something added to the socialist project, but an integral part of it. It was believed that the roots of women's oppression did not lie so much in their oppression by men, but rather that their status was linked to the existence of class society founded on the exploitation on the basis of private ownership. In his famous 1884 book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, the cofounder of modern communism and a point of reference both in the USSR and in Yugoslavia Friedrich Engels insisted on historical rather than genetic or biological causes of female subordination. The social position of women in capitalist societies and their ideological construction of the monogamous family were tightly bound, serving, in his view, to ensure the inheritance of ruling class property. Hence, the emancipation of women was considered impossible without the overthrow of the class society (Engels, 2004). In this way, resolving the women's issue, at least in the beginning, became a constitutive part of the establishment of Yugoslavia which I will discuss in more detail below.

For the reasons mentioned, women's rights reform in the former Yugoslavia was primarily economic in nature and should have had unequivocal economic effects. Emerging in Bebel's, Marx's and Engels's texts, the socialist understanding of women's emancipation was connected with the necessity of their introduction, by means of education, into the sphere of productive labor, and liberation, by means of legislative interventions and social infrastructure development, from the burden of reproductive, domestic labor.[3] And while the first process was very successful, the second proved not to be so. It should be noted that the first major momentum in the direction of women's emancipation after the Second World War was due to women themselves and their participation in the National Liberation Army, bringing to many women commanding positions and statuses of national war heroes. In 1942, the Women's Antifascist Front (WAF) was founded as a socio-political organization whose primary mission was to encourage women to directly and indirectly participate in the communist-led anti-fascist resistance. In addition, WAF sought to raise literacy levels[4] among women while targeting their subsequent edu-

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[3] See, for example, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, published in 1848 (1969), *Woman under Socialism* by August Bebel, published in 1879 (1904), and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* by Friedrich Engels, published in 1884 (2004).

[4] One of the burning Yugoslav issues to be faced with was illiteracy. In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929-1941) in 1931, 44.6% of the population over the age of 10 was illiterate. The share of women among the illiterate was significantly higher: in Yugoslavia every other woman (55.6%), compared to every third man (32.27%) could not read or write. At the same time, huge differences in literacy among the population were recorded throughout the Yugoslav territory. Thus, in the southern parts of Yugoslavia that included Macedonia, south Kosovo and Serbia, as many as 70.86% of the population (85.5% of women) was illiterate compared to only 5.54% (5.79% of women) in Slovenia in the north of Yugoslavia (Turosienski, 1939).

cational and cultural development. It eventually became the strong driving force of women's emancipation and gender equality in Yugoslavia, managing the project of creating an emancipated and enlightened socialist *new woman*.[5] At the First Conference of WAF that was held in 1942, president Josip Broz Tito gave a famous speech in which he stated his pride in standing at the head of the army "in which there is a huge number of women. I can say that women in this fight due to their heroism and endurance were and are in the first place and at the forefront, and our Yugoslav nations are honored to have such daughters" (Tito, 1942, as cited in Čerkez, 1974, p. 6). In the same speech Tito made clear that the women of Yugoslavia, who made numerous sacrifices in the name of the national liberation struggle

> here today, once and for all, have a right to establish one fact: that this struggle must bear fruit for the women of Yugoslav nations and that no one will ever be able to snatch this expensive fruit from their hands again! (...) The People's Liberation Army and all the women who are at the forefront of the great struggle (...) passed the maturity exam; they have shown that they are capable not only of working at home, but also of fighting with a rifle in hand, that they can also govern (...) and hold power in their hands. And this assembly is proof that our women seriously take the destiny of the people and their destiny into their own hands. The Women's Anti-Fascist Front, which managed to unite women for the great goals of the struggle, for the final victory over the occupier and his servants, aims to bring women to final liberation, to win their civil equality, their social equality (*ibid*., p. 7).

Although women already exercised their right to vote since 1941, during the elections for the National Liberation Committees[6] and especially in 1945, during the Yugoslav parliamentary elections, when they voted for the abolishment of the monarchy and for the proclamation of Democratic Federal Yugoslavia,[7] suffrage was officially recognized by the declaration of the first constitution of Socialist Yugoslavia in January 1946. The 1946 Constitution introduced the principle of gender equality, equality of civil marriage and the right of women to inherit property. It also

[5] For the history and role of the WAF, see, for example, Majstorović, 2016; Sklevicky, 1996; Božinović, 1996.

[6] The Foča Regulations from 1942, a collection of laws on which the Yugoslav legal system was based, stipulated the fundamental principles of the organization and functioning of the people's liberation boards that served as the local authorities in the territories liberated by the partisans. The Foča Regulations also secured the foundation of the new election system and confirmed the women's right to vote. See: Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2016.

[7] Democratic Federal Yugoslavia became the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia with the Constitution of 31 January 1946 and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia with the Constitution of 7 April 1963.

guaranteed equal pay for equal work, employment protection and protection of interests of mothers and children, especially by establishing maternity hospitals, children's homes and kindergartens, and by giving women the right to paid leave before and after childbirth (*Ustav Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije*, 1946). As a result of WAF's activities in Yugoslavia, "although the social subordination of women was traditionally accepted, formal conditions were created for public, ideologically channeled, women's activism against it" (Vrcelj and Mušanović, 2011, p. 30). Although the opinion on the feminist movement itself was not particularly positive, since feminism was considered as a Western bourgeois phenomenon and a hobby of privileged women of high-class (Lóránd, 2018a; Kesić, 2017),[8] the Party indirectly incorporated into its policy numerous feminist ideas. Such a practice gave Yugoslav women a certain advantage over those in many Western countries, including Western Europe,[9] where retraditionalization of gender roles occurred (Lóránd, 2018b), and the USA, where a kind of biopolitical "baby boom" project took place, aiming to contribute to the revitalization of the nation by returning women to the domestic sphere (Zaharijević, 2008).

While relying heavily on those early women votes after the war, the socialist regime supported women's rights, primarily those affecting their work life, and did not question, at least for a while, WAF's ideas and far-reaching achievements. Unfortunately, just ten years after the war, the revolutionary charge subsided, being replaced by the glorification of motherhood (Baradić, 2017) and the accompanying reduction of the role of women to the biological, non-political or even anti-political. On a symbolical level, change started when the WAF lost its organizational autonomy and was finally dissolved in 1953. The Party's argument for that move was that the existence of an autonomous organization separates women from joint efforts to solve social problems and supports the misconception that women's issues are separate from those of the rest of the community, the issues of all socialist

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[8] That socialist women's rights activists also understood feminism as bourgeois was confirmed by Clara Zetkin, German Marxist theorist and member of the Social Democratic Party, stating in a speech to the Second International in 1889 the following: "The working women, who aspire to social equality, expect nothing for their emancipation from the bourgeois women's movement, which allegedly fights for the rights of women. That edifice is built on sand and has no real basis. Working women are absolutely convinced that the question of the emancipation of women is not an isolated question which exists in itself, but part of the great social question. They realize perfectly clear that this question can never be solved in contemporary society, but only after a complete social transformation" (Gaido and Frencia, 2018, p. 4).

[9] One of the many examples is that in the countries of the former Yugoslavia there was and still is a smaller gender pay and pension gap than in other European countries (Tkalčec, 2020). Equal pay for equal work as well as a special protection of employed women were guaranteed by Article 24 of the Constitution (*Ustav Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije*, 1946).

fighters (Tešija, 2014). Croatian feminist philosopher Blaženka Despot referred to this by saying that, by determining the solution of the women's question as secondary to the solution of the class question, the former was postponed indefinitely and consequently neglected (Despot, 1987). In other words, support for women's emancipation became declarative and focused on their economic independence perceived only as a precondition for much needed industrialization and urbanization (Blagaić and Jambrešić Kirin, 2013). In their ethnographic study of women employed in the Split factory Jugoplastika, Blagaić and Jambrešić Kirin showed how "unqualified, cheap but extremely responsible and disciplined labour of girls and women was important for the rapid socialist industrialization and its productivist orientation" (*ibid*., p. 66), being followed by "passivization of the woman as a political subject and the commodification of her image in the mass media" (*ibid*., p. 40). This means that any other more significant effort to address the structural problems of gender inequality was often absent and even undesirable. Moreover, in the decade after the war there was a kind of regression of values in the direction of traditional social patterns turning Yugoslav women from decorated warriors into pacified doubly oppressed workers,[10] domesticated housewives and pre-capitalist consumers (Blagaić and Jambrešić Kirin, 2013; Katunarić, 1984).

This so-called 'redomestification of the revolution' (Baradić, 2017) was also confirmed in the speeches of Josip Broz Tito in the 1950s, praising the reproductive role of women in society, a tendency that is still present today. While in 1942 Tito emphasized how the anti-fascist struggle "must bear fruit for the women", in 1953 he said: "It is true that a woman is first and foremost a mother, but precisely because she sacrifices the most of herself, raising new generations, she has an even greater right to say her word as a mother in a community like ours – in the socialist community" (*ibid*.). Even if we do not question the good intentions of the socialist government, it is indisputable that the political introduction of revolutionary social changes in Yugoslavia, as well as in other socialist countries, marked by "a three pronged attack on male privilege and supremacy over women, pre-capitalist property, and religious orthodoxy" (Molyneux, 1981), did not sit well with the people on the ground, with ordinary citizens and also with men in positions of power. Giving up on the further development of women's rights was maybe a small government concession to their "peace of mind".

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[10] Double oppression here refers to the workload resulting from a combination of paid labor in the labor market and unpaid domestic labor (housework and caregiving). Often called *double burden* or *double duty*, it is a phenomenon that is gaining momentum in the twentieth century with the mass entry of women into the labor market and should be considered as a direct result of patriarchal views on gender roles. See, for example, Ward-Griffin *et al.*, 2005; Väänänen *et al.*, 2005; Harvey and Shaw, 1998.

In the years and decades that followed, despite modernization and significant shifts in many aspects of social reality, the discrepancy between the proclaimed policy of gender equality and its actual acceptance and application became increasingly apparent.[11] For example, advances in the eradication of illiteracy and women's education did not erase the strict gender division and accompanying hierarchy of occupations. The mass entry of women into the labor market only added new types of discrimination to the old ones, and although state institutions were supposed to make it easier for women workers to care for children, the infrastructure was often insufficient (Jerončić, 2015). Also, despite the formal opportunities and quotas that allowed for political careers, women found it difficult to reach high state/party positions (*ibid*.). Of course, there were interesting exceptions.

It should be noted that for women rising to the political top was difficult but not impossible, since Yugoslav history is marked by some, albeit rare, important female political figures such as Milka Planinc (1924-2010) – Prime Minister of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav "Iron Lady", Savka Dabčević-Kučar (1923-2009) – President of the Executive Council (Prime Minister) of the Socialist Republic of Croatia and Latinka Perović (1933-) – Secretary of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia. Like the original "Iron Lady" Margaret Thatcher, Milka Planinc ruled the country in the 1980s and during one of its most serious economic crises[12] marked by accumulated foreign debt and inflation. She introduced the Long-term Economic Stabilization Program that involved a number of austerity measures leading to shortages of consumer goods such as meat, sugar, chocolate, oil, detergents, coffee and medicines. A rational supply of petrol was introduced by restricting car driving and the famous "even-odd" system meant that on certain days only car owners with even or odd license plates could drive.

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[11] The mentioned discrepancy is described by Blaženka Despot while referring to Simone de Beauvoir: "From such a relationship, despite the declared rights of women's equality, real equality does not exist, just as the socialization of the means of production *eo ipso* does not mean the abolition of the subjective essence of private property, the abolition of the division of labor. Therefore, Simone de Beauvoir embraced the theories of the autonomous feminist movement, independent of the labor movement, as she expressed it in an interview with Jean Paul Sartre on the women's movement: '... I think with the same attitude we both believed that the socialist revolution will necessarily bring with it the emancipation of women, that neither in the Soviet Union, nor in Czechoslovakia, nor in any of the so-called socialist countries we know, were women in fact equal to men'" (Despot, 1987, p. 97-98).

[12] A similar comparison could be drawn with European Commission President Ursula Gertrud von der Leyen, the first woman in that position in the history of the European Union. Like Planinc, the first female head of government of a diplomatically recognized communist state in Europe, and perhaps not coincidentally, von der Leyen has taken on the perilous task of resolving Europe's debt problems, with additional tasks brought about by the global health crisis caused by COVID-19.

Soon shortages became a political problem, and people increasingly questioned the legitimacy of the socialist system (Sitar, 2015). Under the influence of the opening of Yugoslavia to the West and the weakening of numerous repressive institutions, struggle for women's rights gradually abandoned the framework of the labor movement and increasingly began to resemble that of the feminist movement in Western countries. Thus, for example, in the 1970s and within the Croatian Sociological Society the section on "Woman and Society" emerged – the first feminist group in the non-Western world to exert an immense influence on feminist theory and practice in the former Yugoslavia.

Concluding this part, it should be said that although the Yugoslav supranational project was never realized in its entirety, it is indisputable that especially in the beginning it sought to be ideologically built, among other things, on the shoulders of women. Unfortunately, all that was left of that project can be symbolized in the song of the Yugoslav pop icon Lepa Brena called "Jugoslavenka" that dominated the regime media two years before the Balkan wars and the final collapse of the state. And while in the song's lyrics Yugoslav identity was invoked and Yugoslavia personified in the character of an enchanting and spirited young girl, the music video showed Brena either flying over vast fields in a military helicopter or gazing seductively at the camera having Yugoslav flags in the background. At the time, it was the dying state's swan-song and/or a very unsuccessful attempt to survive through the invocation of long-forgotten dreams of unity.

Women's Rights in the EU

Unlike Yugoslavia, the creation of the EU involved women's efforts and original commitment to a significantly smaller extent. In both cases historians insisted on the role of "founding fathers" (Abels and MacRae, 2021; Videkanić, 2010) – a few great men with a great dream – unjustly excluding the role of female politicians and activists in building these new political orders. However, the difference that is established between the two political entities primarily concerns the ideological assumptions and expected bearers of social and political change. In other words, for the establishment of the EU and European identity women's emancipation was originally not a *conditio sine qua non*. And while the connection between the construction of Yugoslav identity and the realization of equality between men and women was immediate and straightforward, women's issues became important for European identity only later. Today women's rights and the accompanying system of values gathered in the notion of gender equality are an important part of the self-proclaimed image of Europe as a civilized, developed, tolerant and emancipated community, a world bastion of human rights, among which those of women appear as the shiniest star. At the same time, women's rights rhetoric is too often

utilized or even exploited in cases of negative identification, i.e. proclaiming what European culture is and is not compared to others, which, paradoxically, negatively affects the realization of both human and women's rights.

As in the case of Yugoslavia, work on women's emancipation in the European Union was originally based on the economic assumptions of social change. Consequently, gender equality was introduced at the political level, although at first very cautiously, through Article 119 of the 1957 Treaty of Rome claiming that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work (Mazey, 2012). Subsequent equal treatment directives during the 1970s and early 1980s were directed towards the eradication of gender discrimination within the workplace. Sonia Mazey claims that this first legislative phase was followed by EU-funded positive action programs and soft law measures with the intention to secure equality of opportunity for both sexes within and beyond the labor market. The third or gender mainstreaming phase started in the 1990s and it was based on a clear "recognition of socially constructed differences between men and women in terms of socio-cultural roles and socio-economic status" (*ibid.*, p. 126). Ratification of the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam marked a significant change in equality politics by defining the gender equality as a "fundamental principle", by incorporating a gender mainstreaming strategy and by expanding the legal community's capacity to intervene against discrimination (Mazey, 2012; Elman, 2007). This last move has allowed greater influence of the EU on member states on issues it has not dared to interfere too much in until then. Also, the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon introduced the human rights-based concept of gender equality defining it as a fundamental European value, non-compliance of which can have a negative impact on accession to the European Union (Mazey, 2012).

Therefore, although the Treaty of Rome introduced equality in pay between men and women, thus providing a foundation for the future activities of national women's groups, in my opinion this is not a sufficient reason to proclaim women's rights an integral part of the building of the EU and its identity from its very beginnings. In the opinion of the historian Yves Denéchère (2020), there are no founding mothers of Europe: "Eleanor of Aquitaine (ca 1122-1204) or Queen Marie-Amélie de Bourbon (1782-1866), or even more so Queen Victoria (1819-1901), are often given this title in order to attract visitors to an exhibition, or to make a good title for an article. None of them built Europe, and the name of 'grandmother of Europe' is due solely to their descendants, who spread across the continent." With the aforementioned lack of initial political influence of women, potentially weaker valorization of their war role (compared to Yugoslavia) and a political worldview that did not directly link women's liberation to its own political essence (compared to Marxism), women's emancipation officially gained status of a fundamental attribute of European identity, in my opinion, only later, with the Treaty of Lisbon. On a simi-

lar note, Abels and Mushaben claim "static calculation flaws" and "design errors" stemming from the lack of gender issues from the integration project (2012, p. 1), while Macrae calls gender equality a foundational myth of the European union that is being "exaggerated through the Commission's presentation of the gender project" (2010, p. 157).

> The implication is that, unlike nation-states, where women had to fight for inclusion, they have always been full and equal members of the European polity. While it is true that equal pay for men and women was included in the founding treaty, the Commission dramatically overstates the institutional commitment to this principle. Many of the measures in the area of gender equality developed not out of a concern for women's rights, but through competition policy and the need to harmonize social provisions in the face of the free movement of goods, services and people. In fact, it is not a stretch to say that gender equality has often been a side effect of other European policy initiatives (*ibid.*, p. 128).

In connection with the above, what feminist authors often note and criticize is the strong link between European gender equality policies and market needs (Elomäki, 2015; Jacquot, 2015; Kantola and Squires, 2012). A similar problem could be observed in Yugoslavia, where it seemed that when there was no direct benefit for the economic progress of the state, there was neither sufficient will nor interest to work on gender equality issues. It's hard not to notice that in the EU the emancipation of women often becomes secondary to the competitiveness and the economic growth, and has value as long as it serves the interests of the neoliberal project, the same one that often stands behind the increase of gender inequality and injustice.[13] However, differences in the economic situation of men and women are just one of the many symptoms of gender inequality whose causes are primarily to be found in the structural, patriarchally-rooted aspects of social reality. As already indicated above, only in recent years has there been a greater orientation of EU institutions towards solving those deeper problems of inequality that are not just related to the economic aspects of women's work and employment, but consider issues such as imbalance between work and family life, violence, women's health and many others (Mazey, 2012). At the same time, the dominant rhetoric that accompa-

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[13] Kantola and Squires claim in their article that "a negative reading of recent developments highlights the normalization of neoliberalism and the ways in which women's policy agencies are embedded in it. The agencies are actively taking part in neo-liberal reforms and rendering legitimacy to it by making them 'more gender equal'. At its most extreme, neoliberal policies can signify the disappearance of women's policy agencies in states. Moreover, changing practices and priorities can result in the loss of certain feminist political agendas. For instance, a radical feminist critique may become increasingly difficult to sustain when claims have to be framed within a language of competition and productivity" (2012, p. 395).

nies these efforts is still primarily focused on economic benefits, which raises the question of whether these efforts would have taken place if there had been no economic benefits of them.[14]

Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that, even in such conditions, European gender policies have yielded significant results. Also, unlike the Yugoslav government, which was quick to renounce women's organizations in the name of the class struggle, the EU officials did not make the same mistake. The success of gender policies is largely due to the strong synergy between feminist associations, women's networks and lobbies[15] on the one hand, and influential EU policy entrepreneurs within the European Commission, European Court of Justice and European Parliament on the other (*ibid*.). Since the 1970s, women's groups have recognized the potential of EU mechanisms to deal with problems in their own nation-states, which is why Mazey speaks of the Union as a "supportive 'opportunity structure' or alternative policy making arena for women" (*ibid*., p. 128).

What appears as an obstacle to gender equality policies in the EU, and which the Yugoslav government did not have to bother with due to the specific political structure of the country, are compromise solutions and soft law measures as often the only tools available to the Commission when it comes to politically contentious areas to which, unfortunately, certain aspects of gender equality still belong. In other words, it proved to be very difficult to establish binding legislation, especially keeping in mind political differences and consequent lack of commitment and even direct opposition in EU countries.[16] One of the best examples of this is gender-based violence as a form of structural injustice that most EU members refuse to face in a comprehensive manner and which the EU has not yet adequately addressed within its treaties or the Charter of Fundamental Rights (Roggenband, 2021). The argument that the reason for this weak EU performance when it comes to gender-based violence is a consequence of already mentioned historical concentration on the la-

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[14] It is my opinion that the mentioned economic rhetoric is more often than not just a pragmatic tool used by the women's networks and lobbies to convince national governments and European Union agencies themselves of the necessity of introducing gender equality policies, i.e. of acting in the right direction. However, the very fact that it is necessary to use certain *tricks* to persuade anyone to act shows that on the European level injustice is still not in itself a sufficient argument for action and that the EU still has a long way ahead to reach gender equality.

[15] Some of the examples are: European Network of Women, European Women's Lobby, Centre for Research on European Women, etc.

[16] In addition to these, Mazey (2012) cites the following obstacles to gender mainstreaming: weak understanding of the concept among policy-makers; budgetary constraints; conflicting national gender regimes and cultural norms; weak women's national policy machinery; competing national and EU policy frames; and weak incentives for compliance and lack of sanctions for non-compliance.

bor market and women's employment accompanied by the neglect of the structural causes of injustice seems convincing, although perhaps not entirely complete. The problem of gender-based violence is interesting for another reason, and it concerns the so-called culturalization of violence, i.e. the tendency to look for the causes of violence in cultural differences (Montoya and Rolandsen Agustin, 2013).

It is paradoxical that the "rhetorical regard for women's human rights" in this context has been recklessly taken over by its historically great opponents, the European right-wing, traditionally highly Islamophobic, parties, which use it in their declarations of "war on terror" and of "saving Muslim women from Muslim men" (*ibid*., pp. 534-535), while appropriately turning debates exclusively to topics such as forced marriage, genital mutilation and honor killings. At the same time, this takeover of moral authority serves in my opinion not only to establish power over others but also to divert attention from the fact that violence against women is still a prevalent and difficult problem[17] to solve in most European countries. The consequence of this normalization is further marginalization of the vulnerable through the perpetuation of violence, the neglect of its real causes, and the indefinite postponement of its solution.

Unfortunately, such practices have also been observed at the level of the most important European policy-making institutions – the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, and the Parliament – which did not seem to be able to decide whether they wanted their discourse on violence against women to be inclusive or exclusive. Research by Montoya and Rolandsen Agustin (2013) showed that through decades of fighting against it, European institutions' rhetoric on gender-based violence has shifted from emphasis on gender itself to emphasis on cultural differences, creating a false dichotomy between allegedly nonviolent Europeans and allegedly violent others – mostly migrants, citizens of European periphery countries and those awaiting accession to the European Union – Turkey being the best example. Interesting examples are the Commission's progress reports on domestic violence during the accession process of candidate countries showing quantitative and qualitative differences with the passage of time. While for countries undergoing the first wave of accession in 2004 (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia,

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[17] See, for example, data provided by the European Commission while proposing EU-wide rules to combat violence against women and domestic violence: "Violence against women and domestic violence are pervasive throughout the EU and are estimated to affect 1 in 3 women in the EU. One in two have experienced sexual harassment. One in 20 women report having been raped. Online violence is also on the rise, targeting in particular women in public life, such as journalists and politicians. 1 in 2 young women experienced gender-based cyber violence. Women also experience violence at work: about a third of women in the EU who have faced sexual harassment experienced it at work" (European Commission, 2022).

Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia) domestic violence was mentioned in 10% of the reports, for countries under consideration for membership after 2004 (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey) domestic violence was mentioned in 87% of the reports. Although the reasons for this increased scrutiny were many, including the Parliament's decision to monitor domestic violence more closely, the researchers noted that in the monitoring process "culturalized conceptualizations of violence" played a subtle role and that they were accompanied by the rhetoric of countries being "less European" than others (*ibid.*, p. 553).

Given the phenomenon described, in the EU gender equality is much too often mobilized in relation to European supranational identity in times of real or imagined threats to European cultural values. It seems that mostly at this point it becomes important to highlight the emancipation and freedoms of European women as fundamental European values opposed to habits and customs of those who are not white enough, Christian enough or Western enough. Unfortunately, it is not only gender-based violence that becomes a tool of right-wing parties and groups using feminist rhetoric for populist purposes (Meret and Siim, 2013; Andreassen and Lettinga, 2012). Topics such as wearing headscarves often target migrant women deeming them fanatical and subservient to their husbands. At the same time, topics of poverty of migrant women are used against feminists' current struggles for women's rights by deeming their demands selfish in comparison (Meret and Siim, 2013). A good example of the latter is the statement of the former Norwegian President of the Progress Party and Minister of Finance in the Solberg Cabinet, Siv Jensen, saying "it makes me sick to see that Norwegian feminists demonstrate to get more women into management positions, while immigrant women still lack access to the most basic rights" (as quoted in *ibid*.).

Finally, when it comes to women's rights, the ultimate paradox is that in modern Europe they serve its disintegration as often as its integration, as they are seen from the perspective of right-wing parties, religious leaders and some national governments as an expression of Europe's depravity, moral decay and its wrongful promotion of anti-family and non-traditional values. Support for women's rights and gender equality is thus often defined as a "gender ideology"[18] transforming

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[18] I use the term "gender ideology" referring to a right-wing populist discourse surrounding "women's and LGBT rights activism as well as the scholarship deconstructing essentialist and naturalistic assumptions about gender and sexuality. Erasing fierce controversies within gender and sexuality studies and the complex interplay between activism and the academy, it regards gender as the ideological matrix of a set of abhorred ethical and social reforms, namely sexual and reproductive rights, same-sex marriage and adoption, new reproductive technologies, sex education, gender mainstreaming, protection against gender violence and others" (Kuhar and

European culture, when it comes to, for example, issues of women's reproductive health, into a "culture of death" that is contrasted with the "civilization of life" (Żuk and Żuk, 2017).[19] Undermining women's rights thus becomes just one of the tools towards democracy obliteration and promotion of nationalism founded on the ideas of family, domesticity and natural hierarchy. Equality between men and women (and any other equality regarding human rights whatsoever) is seen here as a threat to God-given order which, like disease, eats away at the fabric of the nation. Political attacks on the right to abortion in Poland, referendum against gay marriage in Croatia, campaigns against trans people and the 'manosphere' movement, uniting men in opposition to feminism in Spain, Austrian welfare cuts reinforcing traditional gender roles and patriarchal interdependencies, Hungarian fight against migration as the main enemy of the nation and the family, exploitation of the pandemic with the aim of retraditionalizing gender roles and attacking the right to abortion in Germany (conspiracy theories about vaccines made from child fetuses), and pan-European encroachment on women's reproductive rights in the name of demographic change with a constant attack on the Istanbul Convention more often than not include strong Euroscepticism and a call to turn one's back on contemporary European values.[20]

All of the above suggests the fragility of European gender equality as well as the possibilities of its exploitation for both integration and disintegration purposes. The EU's tiptoeing around the issue of inequality instead of dealing with it more seriously is not only due to the real limitations of the mechanisms at its disposal, or the inability to reconcile great national differences in understanding and dealing

Paternotte, 2012, p. 5). Kuhar and Paternotte claim that the term is often used during anti-gender mobilizations and campaigns, giving the example of the Polish Minister of Justice Jarosław Gowin publicly opposing the ratification of the Convention on the Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) by calling it a "carrier of gender ideology".

[19] See, also, the following examples: "Family is the foundation of society! Our European civilization, our life, our cultural values are built on the values and traditional ways of life in Europe that have been established thousands of years ago. These values of ours are systematically destroyed by the criminal activities of the New World Order representatives, and the Bilderberg. They wish to destroy the essential attribute of our society! They want to destroy the institution of family! They want to destroy the fact that a family consists of a man, a woman and their children. To participate in this referendum seems to be the last opportunity for us to save our society from these unnatural values. Let's stop them brothers! (Stanislav Mizik, member of People's Party Our Slovakia)" (Ďurinová, 2015, p. 116); "Gender ideology (...) got a brutal support from Brussels. Tiny, but loud lobby groups want to force this, I think deviant, view to the world (Zsolt Semjén, Hungarian Deputy Prime Minister and the chairman of KDNP)" (Félix, 2015, p. 69), etc.

[20] For an insight into the mentioned European examples, see Grudzinska, 2021; Sata, 2021; Anastasiadou, 2020; Blum, 2020; Götz, 2020; Gwiazda, 2020; Obst, 2020.

with inequality, but also perhaps due to the fact that women's rights are still disputed in and out of Europe, and that they have a tendency of becoming too easily an element of controversy that serves more to erode the supranation project than to develop it.

Concluding Remarks: Feminists as Bearers of the Supranational Identities vs. Yugo- and Euro-Sceptic 'Ordinary Women'?

Given the described political integration of women's rights in the processes of building a Yugoslav and a European identity, while keeping in mind its shortcomings, the question of women's support for the Yugoslav project on the one hand and for the European project on the other hand arises. In other words, given the alleged importance of gender equality in its construction, it is legitimate to ask if women of Socialist Yugoslavia preferred to identify as Yugoslavs, rather than as members of some of the Yugoslav national or ethnic groups. Also, since the European supranational government often cares more about their rights than their nation-states, do European women today gladly take on a European supranational identity? The answer to both of these questions will not only to some extent indicate the success (or its lack) of supranational gender equality policies, but also suggest the success (or its lack) of the project of building a supranational identity and, ultimately, a prosperous and long-lasting supranational community as well.[21] The census procedure in Socialist Yugoslavia made it possible to declare oneself a Yugoslav since 1961. The largest share of citizens who identified as Yugoslavs was recorded in the 1981 census and amounted to 5.4%, reaching a share of 8.2% in Croatia (Mrđen, 2002; Sekulić, Massey and Hodson, 1994; Flere, 1988); 1981 was also the first year when a somewhat larger proportion of women than men identified themselves as Yugoslavs: 5.3% men and 5.5% of women (*Statistički godišnjak Jugoslavije*, 1991). These, as Mrđen called them, *authentic representatives of the spiritual heritage that is recognized as the identity of Socialist Yugoslavia* (2002, p. 90) were primarily members of the post-war, primarily younger, population from ethnically mixed marriages. In 1991, just after the process of disintegration of Yugoslavia began and before the Balkan conflicts exploded on the wings of nationalist ideologies, Yugoslav identification decreased (only 3% of Yugoslavs) with the biggest change happening in Croatia, where only 2.2% of citizens identified themselves as Yugoslavs (Baltic, 2007; Mrđen, 2002).

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[21] Of course, although the connection between a common identity and the sustainability of a community is important, it is not absolute. In the case of Yugoslavia Sekulić, Massey and Hodson (1994, p. 95) claim that there is no clear and unambiguous link between the failure to create a common identity and the collapse of Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, a common identity would certainly slow down this disintegration and perhaps make it significantly more difficult.

Even if women recognized the (gender specific) values of the Yugoslav project during and after the Second World War, it seems that this recognition did not significantly influence their Yugoslav identity or its lack. Whether the results would have been different if the Yugoslav gender equality project had been more convincing is difficult to say and can only be speculated about. However, it is interesting to note that in times of complete severance of ties between the Balkan nations, the rare voices that called for unity and Yugoslav identity were women's, more precisely, feminist voices. The Balkan conflicts have led to the proliferation of women's activist initiatives whose, in the words of Vesna Kesić, "'missions' and areas of activity (...) were diverse, but in the segment in which they self-identified as feminist, anti-war and anti-nationalist, they were explicitly and practically focused on the Yugoslav space or, in second-wave feminist jargon, on 'crossing borders' imposed by wars and policies of new political and intellectual elites" (Kesić, 2017).[22] Although Kesić rightly noted that feminists were sometimes defenders of the institutions of socialism, it is obvious that their views, for reasons that go beyond the limits of this paper, did not spill over into the general population of women.

Unlike Yugoslavia, where feminists functioned in parallel with the state, sometimes even strongly criticized by its representatives,[23] the European Union integrated the feminist groups and lobbies into its political bodies. Feminist Members of the Parliament, despite their criticism of European policies and procedures (as often too male, too white, too colonial, too Christian, too heterosexual...) and a constant reminding of the need for Europe to "practice what it preaches", rarely question the primacy of European values over often discriminatory national practices. But what about the average European female citizen?

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[22] In her book *Feminist Activism at War: Belgrade and Zagreb Feminists in the 1990s* Ana Miškovska Kajevska gives examples of the anti-nationalist feminist non-governmental organizations Vesna Kesić refers to when mentioning "crossing borders": Autonomous Women's House Zagreb, B.a.B.e., Center for Women War Victims, Centre for Women's Studies, Women's Information and Documentation Center (Women's Infoteka), and Women's Lobby Zagreb, Autonomous Women's Center, Belgrade Women's Lobby, Women in Black, and Women's Studies Center (Miškovska Kajevska, 2017).

[23] Zsófia Lóránd describes the anti-feminist backlash of the late 1970s and early 1980s when Yugoslav feminists were occasionally proclaimed enemies of communism. The best example is that by Stipe Šuvar, one of the most influential politicians in Yugoslavia, who called feminism "another form of conservative social consciousness" whose ideas are based on "essayistic wittiness about the male chauvinistic pigs, meaning, about the oppressed sex, as a sex related to the sex which oppresses. This is the original sin of all forms of feminism, without consideration which theses it is varying, because it progresses and by it new accents are coming along" (Šuvar, 1982, as cited in Lóránd, 2018a, p. 65). Among the populist critics was Slaven Letica, a Yugoslav intellectual and later Croatian conservative politician who mocked feminist intellectuals, argued that they practiced feminism solely for career reasons, and called for abandoning women's issues as a whole (Lóránd, 2018a).

Although the available research on (supra)national identification in Yugosla-via and the European Union is not fully comparable,[24] some common conclusions can be drawn. When it comes to the EU, earlier public opinion surveys at EU level regarding the tendency to identify as European shows that, as in the Yugoslav case, the young were more prone to this trend than senior citizens (Risse, 2010; Fligstein, 2009). Gender differences could also be seen here, as women were less likely than men to see themselves as Europeans. They were also more ambivalent towards the EU than men. On levels of trust, image and perceived benefits of EU member-ship women scored lower than men, showing women's attitudes to be less positive (*2010 – Seminar – Women and the EU*, 2017). Interpretations of these data mainly focused on the fact that young people and men are more inclined to travel beyond national borders and then interact with citizens of other countries. Risse (2010) also concluded on a lack of connection between European identity and material bene-fits which is why women, despite favorable European policies, preferred to remain faithful to their national identity.[25]

Recent research shows similar results.[26] A Eurobarometer survey of national and European identity in 2018 showed that on average 10.6% of European citizens considered themselves primarily Europeans (European Commission, 2019). As ex-pected, the majority of European citizens, 89.4%, identify as members of their own nations. Gender differences are also present since European identity is still more preferred by men, 12.4% of them compared to 9% of women.

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[24] While the supranational identity was verified through the Yugoslav census, where being a Yugoslav was one of the offered answers to the question of nationality, Eurobarometer surveys of values and identities of EU citizens allow for both national and supranational identifications that are not mutually exclusive. To the Yugoslav version, the closest claims are found in the of-ten scrutinized Moreno's question, the standard measure of European self-identification that has been sporadically asked in the Eurobarometers since 1992 and which reads as follows – *Do you see yourself as...?* – and offers the following answers: 1. (nationality) only; 2. (nationality) and European; 3. European and (nationality); 4. European only (see for example Petrović, Fila and Mrakovčić, 2022; Dalton, 2021; Royuela, 2019; Mitchell, 2014; Moreno, 2006). When analyz-ing European data and for the purposes of comparability with Yugoslav data, I decided to pay attention only to those who chose the third and fourth answers to Moreno's question.

[25] Risse goes a step further by concluding that women have benefited more from European policies than men, with which it is difficult to agree. Namely, the fact that European policies do not explicitly emphasize men does not mean that they do not benefit from them. Moreover, all indicators continue to suggest that European society remains unequal and will need at least sixty years to achieve gender equality between women and men (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

[26] For a more elaborate discussion and analysis of European identity and identification, see the paper in this thematic block by Nikola Petrović, Filip Fila and Marko Mrakovčić "Yugoslavs and Europeans Compared: Supranational Polities and Supranational Identification" (2022).

As socioeconomic status in general is a strong predictor for European identity (Risse, 2010), it is expected that women, as traditionally poorer members of society, will be less likely to identify as Europeans. Despite the EU's numerous efforts to improve women's social status economically, many women do not sufficiently recognize or benefit from these efforts, which then possibly affects their sense of belonging to the supranation. But that doesn't mean there are no surprises here. Research on the pro-EU movements during Brexit show that the masculine subtext of the Brexit campaign as well as its militaristic and exclusionary discourse forced many, even conservative, women to play a central role in the anti-Brexit mobilization following the vote (Galpin, 2021). This case shows the possibility and importance of gendered engagement with the EU amongst a traditionally non-mobile and economically less stable female population who in times of national crises is capable of reclaiming its European identity and citizenship. It also reminds us of the example of Yugoslavia where the loudest voices against its disintegration and the impending war were those of women.

Despite the above-mentioned data, it should be noted that almost every tenth woman in the EU chooses a European identity and it is to be expected that with the increase of women's economic power, their education, mobility and safety, their share will increase over time. It is also to be expected that economic shocks, especially if not accompanied by structural engagement with gender inequality, will negatively affect their European identity, European integration and the building of the supranation as a whole.

As a conclusion, it should be said that although the political establishment of women's human rights and gender equality played a role in building the supranational identities of the European Union and Socialist Yugoslavia, the efforts of the two communities were not the same, nor their effects. Although the Yugoslav project may have seemed more successful at first, incorporating gender equality into the very essence of its own ideology, the European Union's slow but persistent path towards equality in recent decades is gaining momentum, representing an unprecedented success on a global level. As far as Yugoslavia is concerned, it is always possible to speculate would it have disintegrated if the Party and its leader had been more committed to their promises to Yugoslav women. And although it is entirely presumptuous to try to answer this question, it is justified in my view to believe that the positive effects of gender equality would spill over into other areas of social life making the Yugoslav identity somewhat stronger and need for its disintegration less obvious. The dedicated work of the European Union on gender equality also cannot promise its longevity, but it certainly contributes to it. At the same time, expanding its scope is a step in the right direction, as well as being careful that its content does not become a tool of opposite, anti-EU tendencies.

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