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## **UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE FAMILY: WOMEN IN SERBIA**

**Vera GUDAC-DODIĆ\***

### **Abstract**

This study focuses on the changes within the traditional Serbian family in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, highlighting the impact of the socialistic economic and political development upon family life and the position of women. In addition to this, the attention in the paper is drawn to domestic violence directed against women and children. The analysis especially emphasizes different roles within the family and the position of women within family relations.

**Key Words:** Women, Family, Children, Household, Domestic Violence

**D**uring the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Serbia was an extremely agricultural country with a predominantly rural population. The majority of people lived off the land. Small estates and parcel holdings dominated the overall structure. Properties were often carved up into a large number of smaller parcels, with the average parcel amounting to around half a hectare. One of the basic characteristics of the rural economy was the imbalance in the degree of development between various regions and parts of the country. Vojvodina apart, which was home to capitalist estates and elements of capitalist agriculture, village life in the rest of Serbia was chiefly marked by bartering and small-scale production of goods. Natural production was characterised by primitive farming methods and the predominance of manual labour in agriculture. Production was primarily geared towards satisfying one's own needs, while families spent the majority of income on their estates, and only a small amount on the market. The predominance of manual labour in agriculture was a result of agrarian over-population and a surplus work force, as well as insufficient technical resources in agriculture (Gudac- Dodic, 1999:11-16).

Industry in Serbia was developing, though it was unable to change the economic structure before the war. Industry was focused on the bigger towns and the mining sector.

This general situation in Serbia was accompanied by the existence of various family models (Kazer, 2002: 38). Differences in the structure of families and in the degree of representation of the diverse types of family units were particularly pronounced between urban and rural environments. The transformation process of family collectives and the separation of homes of that special type of complex family unit that existed in certain parts of the Balkans began taking shape in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Collectives were made up of a number of families, while other blood relatives were also included. Back in 1939, Vladimir Dvornikovic noted that a collective family in the shape of an extended family and economic community with an elected chief in its old and original form was fairly rare. It survived only in southern Croatia, the Dalmatian Zagori, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in western and southern Serbia (Dvornikovic, 1939: 679). With their origin in the patriarchal structure of Serbian society, they gradually began to disappear in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The basic features of a family collective were patri-linearity, the existence of a principle of seniority, general male domination, strong group identity, and a diversity of functions (Miteraer, 2001: 173). In terms of family structure in Serbia, the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup>

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\* Vera Gudac Dodic, PhD, historian, Institute for Recent History of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia, E mail: ljuvenido@ptt.rs

century were marked by the existence of different types of family: from the nuclear, mainly in the cities, through extended family units, all the way to families of a complex structure, who were most often present in rural areas.

The inferior position of women compared to men and the latter's domination of the former was reflected not only in an unequal legal status, but also in other areas. The patriarchy was rooted in tradition, customs and culture. The patriarchal system of values governed people's way of life and created behavioural norms in many spheres of life. One of the chief hallmarks of a patriarchal family in Serbia was female subservience to men, particularly wives to their husbands. Male domination also characterised everyday life. The patriarchal order stressed men's authority over women, directing her primarily towards the home, family and children. Isolation in the family and family privacy, however, did not mean that a woman's role was confined merely to herself (Vuletic, 2006: 135).

General trends in the country's social and economic development after World War II had an impact on the family too and triggered changes therein. The post-war model of Yugoslavia's economic development that was shaped and harnessed by the Communist Party was geared towards accelerated industrialisation. Forced industrialisation of the country was seen as the basic and central model of modernisation. Accelerated modernisation was carried out under full state control in a planned and guided manner. In an explicitly agrarian country, accumulation for such development and start-up accumulative funds for industrial investment could only be drawn from agricultural production. The theoretical and ideological basis for such a developmental model was founded on so-called socialist industrialisation, whose priority was development of heavy industry. This developmental model involved transferring a section of the labour force from the provinces into the cities and mobilising the labour force for industry (Gudac-Dodic, 1999: 54). In the post-war period, Yugoslavia was characterised by robust deagrarianisation and a rapid exodus of the population from the villages to the cities. In the time span of three and a half decades, between 1945 and 1981, the percentage of the agricultural population in the overall population fell from 75.3% to 28.9% (Veselinov, 1987: 110). In Serbia and Montenegro, this figure fell from 72.3% in 1948 to 17.3% in 1991 (*Yugoslav Statistical Yearbook 2000*: 61). The urban population rose from 1,154,558 in 1948 to 5,321,364 in 1991. The urban population's share in the overall population rose from 16.7% in 1948 to 51.2% in 1991. (*Yugoslav Statistical Yearbook 2000*: 60). That same year, just over half the population of central Serbia, some 54%, lived in towns and cities.

Speedy deagrarianisation led, among other things, to high agrarian over-population; intensive industrial and agricultural development; agriculture's inferior position in overall economic policy and a demand in a number of Western European countries for additional labour force (Veselinov, 1987: 111). This facilitated the economic migration of the population.

Deagrarianisation movement, the fact that there was an increasing number of people living and working in the cities, in a new environment, in different living and working conditions compared to those who had stayed behind in the villages, was reflected on the family too. The process of acceleration was one of the basic factors that impacted on changes to the family structure and the traditional family model (Mitterauer, 2001: 315-323).

Besides acceleration, expanding industry and the increasing engagement of the population in industry and the service sector, another factor that had a major bearing on the traditional family was mass employment and education of women.

Increased mass education and employment of women, based *inter alia* on the principle of equality, was promoted from the early days of the socialist state. The efforts to raise female literacy and, subsequently, to improve the very low level of education among the female population, led to mass attendance by women in all school institutions, starting from primary school to university. Socialist modernisation of society involved raising the rate of employment among the female population. Work outside the house and home, as well as women's increased economic independence, also left its mark on the family.

Modern studies of the family in the Balkans show that female equality in particular, the relationship between parents and children, and the right of inheritance were viewed as the key factors in combating the patriarchal structure (Kazer, 2002: 447).

Basic Constitutional principles and legal decisions of the Yugoslav State shaped in line with the ideology of the Communist Party, among other things, enabled women to leave their privacy and enter public life. The principle of equality in socialism was promoted as one of the guiding principles of the party state, which stemmed from the very ideological being of order and, at the level of law, had a positive and emancipating effect on the position of women. Undeniably, compared to the law in place prior to World War II, the socialist authorities' constitutional and legal acts significantly helped eliminate discrimination and the unequal legal position of women and men, lifted legal barriers, and helped empower women in many spheres.

Women gained a number of rights on a formal and legal basis, including the right to schooling and education under equal conditions, the right to work and equal pay for the same work, active and passive suffrage, paid maternity leave, social insurance, the right to divorce, abortion and others. Socialist society adopted a raft of legal and normative acts guaranteeing gender equality.

Big changes were rendered especially in the field of the legal position of married women and the status of marital and family relations in comparison with previous practice and the laws that existed prior to World War II. Under Serbian civil law that was adopted way back in 1884 and was not repealed until 1946, married women had, in terms of their general working ability, the same status as minors, the mentally ill, wastrels and down-and-outs. Their legal position was such that they were completely subservient to their husbands. In the event of divorce, male children over the age of four and females over the age of seven were always put in the custody of fathers etc. Testing and proving fatherhood of children born out of wedlock was illegal, except in cases of abduction or rape (Draškić & Popović-Obradović, 1988: 11-26). The founding law on marriage repealed or amended all hitherto existing state laws on marriage. Constitutional and legal provisions altered the legal position of married women and put an end to male superiority in the eyes of the law.

The socialist state's adoption of formal and legal equality for women and gender equality at legal level was enshrined not only in the Constitution of 1946, but also in a range of other laws enacted in the first years after the liberation. The Founding Law on Marriage was of particular significance from the point of view of the family and relations therein (The Founding law on Marriage, 1946). Women's legal position in marriage was equalised with that of men. The structure of marital and family relations foreseen by this law constituted a major break from prior legal practice and laws that had existed in Serbia before its adoption. The Serbian Civil Code, which had stipulated married women's subservience to men and had outlawed paternity tests for children born out of wedlock etc., ceased to exist as a legal basis for discrimination against married women and a legal basis for patriarchal families (Draskic, Popovic-Obradovic, 1988: 12).

Promoted as a legal norm, female inequality in the sphere of inheritance in pre-war Serbia was part and subject matter of everyday life. Men's privileged status and explicit discrimination against women, which was particularly pronounced when it came to inheritance rights, were abolished by law after World War II. The Inheritance Law of 1995, guaranteed the equality of men and women in the sphere of inheritance.

Full liberalisation of divorce was achieved after the war, accompanied by the relevant legal acts. Apart from assets that one spouse had prior to concluding a marriage and those received as gifts or bequeathed, all remaining property acquired during marriage was considered shared. In the event of divorce, spouses split shared property according to their respective contributions.

The elimination of male supremacy and the inferior status of women in the eyes of the law did not mean or lead to the complete disappearance of male domination in other fields of life.

The relationship between parents and children gradually changed. The supreme authority of parents weakened; the ties of unconditional obedience and full fatherly authority, which had been one of the key hallmarks and bastions of the patriarchal family in Serbia, began to weaken. Children became ever more independent, particularly in urban areas. Children's increased freedom was reflected in independent choices on everything that affected their lives: school, profession and, finally, their future marital partner.

For the majority of the Serbian population during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, marriage continued to be the inevitable framework for building a family and the most acceptable form of shared life. Changes that emerged in terms of the new way of life, the prevailing ideology and the promotion of other

values in many spheres of life were no threat to the institution of marriage. Marriage survived -at a high percentage, moreover- notwithstanding the transformations that were taking place within the family. The high number of marriages was a feature of the whole post-war period. Over two-thirds of women and men over the age of 15 entered wedlock. According to censuses, the majority of people in Serbia over the age of 15 were married.

These trends continued later. During the 1990s, around 66.5% of the population was married (Copic, Grupkovic, Lazic, Dobrosavljevic-Grujic, 2001: 20). The popularity of marriage was also confirmed by a study conducted among Belgrade secondary school pupils. The findings showed that young generation too believed that marriage and a harmonious family life was one of the main goals to aspire to (Dimitrijevic, 2002).

The fall in the number of relatives living in families and the intensification of the process of the nuclear family was also one of the indicators of change. Changes in the number of household members were one of the basic elements and indicators of family transformation. The average size of households fell in the post-war period in Serbia. In central Serbia, the most common households were those with four members (24%), then two members (22.1%), three (18.9%) and finally five members (9.8%). In Vojvodina, the most common family unit consisted of two members (25.9%), followed by four members (23.8%), three (20.3%) and one member (17.9%). By contrast, in Kosovo and Metohija, the most common family unit was made up of eight or more members (35.2%), followed by five (12.4%), six (12%), four (11.9%) and seven (8%) (*Demographic Statistics 1997, 1999: 27*).

In Serbia, the number of members of a household fell from 4.4 in 1948 to 3.6 in 1991. The size of the average household varied from region to region. In the early 1990s, the number of household members in central Serbia was 3.4 (compared to 4.5 in 1948), in Vojvodina 2.9 (compared to 3.6) and in Kosovo 6.8 (compared to 6.4) (*The World's Women 2000: 50*). Kosovo was the only region that saw a rise in the number of members per household.

After a decade of post-war development, the most common form of family in Serbia was the nuclear family. It was the most representative of all the forms of family (57.3% - 1991). Less than a third of all families were made up of spouses without children (Blagojevic, 1997: 34). Extended families continued to survive, but they were fewer than before. In rural areas, however, shared households were still commonplace. According to studies on the position of women in rural Serbia conducted on the basis of an interviewed sample, one in five families was nuclear in type (Rajkovic, 2006).

The birth rate in Serbia has fallen down. The average number of children per family is 1.14 (Copic, Grupkovic, Lazic, Dobrosavljevic-Grujic, 2001: 20).

One of the factors that had a major bearing on changes in the family structure was the drop in birth rate and the decline in population growth, which has been particularly visible since the 1950s. The number of newborn babies per 1,000 of the Serbian population has been in constant decline. The fact that fewer children are being born than before is not unique to this part of the world. Central Serbia has a negative birth rate, falling from -0.1 per 1,000 of the population in 1992 to -1.8 in 1997. This figure is all the more striking given that in 1952 it stood at 16.7 per 1,000 of the population. The rate of natural growth in Vojvodina has been negative since 1989 (*Demographic Statistics 1997: 58, 59*). In other words, more people are dying than are being born.

The declining number of children in families has had a powerful impact. Families with one child or those with no children at all are fundamentally different from families with a large number of children (Mitterauer, 2001: 329 – 330).

From a sociologist's point of view, almost all aspects of family life had undergone far-reaching changes by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: "the decline in births, increased birth control, sexual freedom, the process of gender equality, alternative forms of marriage and families, the large number of women in work, the rise in youth delinquency, the increasing number of divorces leading to single-parent families, increased use of drugs, AIDS, changes in family norms and values, increased domestic violence, particularly towards children, increased life expectancy" (Milic, 2001: 71).

Life expectancy rose during the post-war period. Besides other factors, that rise came as a result of advances in medicine. In the space of four decades, male life expectancy in Serbia rose from 57.06 in the

early 1950s to 68.48 years in the early 1990s, and for women from 58.77 to 74.27 years (*Demographic Statistics 1997*: 30). In the last four decades, life expectancy for newborn males has risen by just over ten years and by almost fifteen years for females.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although people were waiting longer to get married than before, females still entered marriage, particularly first marriages, at a fairly young age. In the 1950s in Serbia, the average age for men entering marriage was 26.7 years. By the end of the century, in 1997, the average male was getting married at the age of 30.18. In the 1950s, women entered wedlock at the age of 23.76 on average. A few decades later, in 1997, the average had risen to 26.41. In central Serbia, men were entering wedlock then at an average age of 30.64, and in Vojvodina at over 31.15. The figures for women were 26.73 and 27.44 respectively. Statistics show that the average age of spouses entering marriage in the post-war period continued to rise, but also indicate that women tended to enter marriage earlier than men on average.

The slight shift in age limits is also visible in terms of the average age of spouses entering wedlock for the first time. In 1997, the average age of men entering marriage for the first time was 27.7 years, and, for women, 24.3 (*Demographic Statistics 1997*: 134).

A number of factors played a part here: first and foremost, the increased duration of schooling for children, including at the highest educational levels, as well as mass employment of men and women compared with earlier period.

The post-war period saw fluctuations and oscillations in the number of divorces in Serbia. Divorce was largely unpopular in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There were relatively few divorces in Serbia prior to World War II. Patriarchally structured families and social relations favoured marriage and the enduring nature of that institution.

Divorce was gradually fully liberalised in Serbia after World War II. Divorce proceedings were launched by a petition from one or the other spouse, or could be reached through mutual agreement.

Laws governing marriage and family relations in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century highlighted the legislator's intention to address the interests of children first and foremost in the event of divorce.

Practice showed that in the majority of cases, custody of children was awarded to the mother, although women would often encounter many difficulties even if they received a court order entitling them to alimony payments.

In practice, discrimination existed against women and children from divorced marriages throughout the post-war period. Surveys conducted in certain companies and centres for social work showed that a high percentage of divorcees received no maintenance for their children. In the early 1960s, of ninety divorcees surveyed, sixty received no maintenance from their former spouses, even though they were legally obliged to pay alimony (Belgrade Historical Archive, Conference on Women's Social Activities, 1961). A survey carried out by the Belgrade Centre for Social Work in 1962 covered around 200 children. The majority of these children's parents (65%) paid no alimony. Only a quarter of parents paid alimony regularly (25%). Around eight percent of the surveyed children's parents gave alimony periodically and irregularly. Of those parents who paid no alimony at all, 43% gave no money because the other spouse had not asked for any. Around 31% did not want to pay any maintenance, while 26% were unable to for financial reasons, because they were unemployed. The situation was even worse when it came to the percentage of divorced parents who had reached an agreement over schooling, education, medical treatment and other issues linked to children's upbringing. Only 3.5% of parents regularly discussed and agreed over all this. Children very rarely saw the other parent. Astonishingly, almost one in every two parents, 48%, never saw their children at all. In only 5% of cases did parents who lost custody of their children spend the summer holidays with them. The results of the study showed that the majority of parents who lost custody of their children after divorce, ceased to have any interest in them (Conference on Women's Social Activities, 1961).

The number of divorces fell during the 1990s. The divorce rate in Serbia per 1,000 of the population fell from 1.2 in 1987 to 0.7 ten years later (*Demographic Statistics 1997*: 58). The low divorce rate in Serbia was particularly pronounced in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There were a number of contributing factors for this, not least the stark impoverishment of the population. The primary cause for the

fall in the divorce rate could be linked to the expected existential uncertainty following divorce. The issue of legal obligations for child maintenance compounded this problem all the more. A number of couples continued to live together even after divorce, which highlights both the lengthy process of division of assets between spouses and the unfeasibility of an adequate solution to the problem of housing. The enduring problem of housing at the time is reflected in a study performed on a sample of some 200 children from divorced marriages in Belgrade in 1962, which showed that over 11% of parents and former spouses continued to live together in the same flat after divorce (Conference on Woman's Social Activities, 1962).

The fall in the number of divorces was also affected by one socio-psychological factor: the reliance on the family in times of crisis, the strengthening of family ties and the heightened perception of the family as a bastion. The ageing of the population was also one of the causes of the decline in both the number of marriages and divorces.

The average age of men and women at divorce in Serbia also rose over the course of several decades. The average age for men rose by almost six years, from 33.69 in the early 1950s (1952) to 39.42 in 1997. For women, the average age at divorce went from 30.54 in 1952 to 35.87 in 1997 (*Demographic Statistics 1997*: 141).

Neither the state's legislative activities, nor statistical data and yardsticks that highlight changes in marriage duration and the increasing frequency of divorce, can even partially reflect the reality and repercussions of divorce. Divorce is unquestionably one of the most stressful events in life, right behind the death of a family member or a loved one. The psychological after-effects of divorce were felt not only by former partners, but on their parents too. It was particularly traumatic for children. Although the effects are not always immediately visible, they can be devastating primarily both for the youngest children, and those in puberty too. Psychologists warn that small children view themselves as the main culprits for their parents' divorce, which can leave lasting consequences and can result in developmental problems. It is often difficult to adjust to the new situation. Divorce has an adverse effect on youngsters and they find it very difficult to deal with. Indeed, divorce is one of the most common causes and a major factor in the appearance of many problems in children's emotional and social development.

The problem of society's negative attitude towards children from broken homes, which was characteristic of patriarchal environments and pronounced in former times, has largely been overcome, at least in urban environments.

Even though, it sometimes meant leaving behind a hellish situation, freedom from domestic violence and abuse -both physical and, more frequently, psychological- divorced women and children from those marriages were sometimes subjected to various difficulties in the form of covert discrimination.

The collapse of the patriarchal society and the weakening of the traditional system of social values, combined with increased economic and all other forms of independence for women, partly undermined the stability of marriage. Both the ever rising number of divorces and the emergence of new forms of shared life and non-marital unions etc. should be regarded in that light.

Nonetheless, the most common form of family in Serbia was the nuclear family (Blagojević, 1997: 34). Besides this, there was still the extended family, though it was less common. According to the 1991 census, 20.2% of families in Yugoslavia were extended in type. In the heart of the provinces and villages, there were many such family households, which live on to this day here and there. The patriarchal cultural model survived in rural areas, and laws often played second fiddle to traditional rules. The retention of patriarchal relations in many rural families also determined women's position and privacy, tying her, above all, to the family, parenthood, and work in the home and fields.

Mass female employment and the fact that, in socialism, women spent more time in school institutions than was the case earlier, meant that they entered wedlock later in life.

Statistical data and average benchmarks that illustrate change in the family cannot fully reflect the profound differences that endured between urban and rural areas during the post-war years. The glaring differences that existed during the inter-war years in terms of the way of life and position of women in urban and rural areas did not fade completely.

The stark contrasts between urban and rural areas defined the differing everyday lives of women in the city and the countryside. Provincial problems -especially villages in undeveloped regions- the jobs done

by women, the conditions in which they lived and worked, often drastically differed from urban life and led to acute differences in women's ways of life. Customs survived in the villages more than in the cities; they carried significant weight in rural areas, sometimes even the power of laws. Women in rural areas remained steeped in traditional morals for a long time to come. The position of women in rural and urban families was not the same.

Mixed households, which were most common in suburban areas, are a story unto themselves. There were many such households. Many rural families had members employed outside the agricultural industry. Their earnings there often exceeded those they had from farming and work on their own estates. In general, men were employed in the cities, while women would stay on their agricultural estates and chiefly produce what was needed to satisfy the family's needs (Conference on Women's Social Activities 1966).

The position of women in rural families in Serbia varied from region to region. Nevertheless, in a woman's life there were tedious and difficult conditions. The system of norms and conduct that was part and parcel of patriarchal ideology in rural areas was more influential in the provinces than in the towns and cities. Women were often on the verge of exhaustion with their work in the field and home, tending to cattle, not to mention taking care of all the household chores, looking after the home, and bringing up and looking after the children (Isic, 1988: 183-200).

Besides the fact that shared households and extended families were commonplace in rural areas, other indicators too show that the modernisation process for rural families and changes in that direction were neither straightforward, nor fully able to overcome patriarchal order. According to certain studies, in terms of relations between men and women, the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in rural families in central Serbia was met "with a reliance on the patriarchal system of relations." (Rajkovic, 2006). Manifestations of patriarchy can be tracked at several levels in many rural areas.

Extended families tended to include relatives on the male side. The attitude towards children born out of wedlock was particularly negative. The fact that, shortly after the war, the rights of children born out of wedlock were equalised with those of children born in wedlock and paternity tests becoming legal did little to change attitudes in rural areas. Studies reveal that those children were "looked on with contempt" due to the "low acknowledgement of paternity", while the "attitude towards children born out of wedlock was catastrophic." Traditional rules in rural areas continued to carry great weight and restricted women's rights in the area of inheritance. Property and homes were usually bequeathed to sons or brothers. Female children became heirs only when there were no male children in the families, or in families where women lived alone. In spite of legal changes, the practice of denying women's equal inheritance rights persisted.

All women covered by this study cited child birth and procreation as their main reason for getting married. Having given birth to the desired number of children, with priority continuing to be given to having a son or giving them priority over female children even at that early stage led to the preference to the most popular way of controlling fertility, by terminating pregnancies. For the women interviewed, abortion was the most dominant form of birth control, while contraception was not accepted. In terms of the number of intentional terminations, the majority of women interviewed had had four or five abortions (Rajkovic, 2006).

The public perception at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century of gender equality in marriage shows that views differed here. In a study performed on a sample of 2,200 people, to one of the questions posed - "Does equality exist between spouses in marriage?" - 65% agreed, although 47% of women questioned replied that men had a dominant position in marriage while 5% of men replied that women were dominant in marriage (Milosavljevic, 2002).

Domestic violence was often concealed from others, a well-kept secret or rather a grim part of privacy for those who had to live with it. Hidden from the public eye and frequently outwit the influence or control of the state or social institutions, it was left unrecognised as a separate criminal act for decades. Its victims were most frequently women and children, while it was not unusual for a woman to endure it for years, powerless to resist her tormentor.

Domestic violence was neither specially sanctioned under the Yugoslav Criminal Law of 1951, nor under the Serbian Criminal Law of 1977. Criminal law contained no precisely defined legal provisions exclusively pertaining to domestic violence or violence perpetrated by someone in the home. Cases of

violence committed by family members were grouped under and subject to general provisions of criminal law, pertaining to the crime of inflicting grievous bodily harm, jeopardising security and violent conduct. Cases of domestic violence also came under the category of public order offences (Nikolić-Ristanović, 1988: 31).

Not until the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in 2002, was a Law on Amendments and Annexes to Criminal Law adopted, which, *inter alia*, provided for the insertion of a separate article foreseeing sanctions for domestic violence (*Criminal Law of the Republic of Serbia*, 10/2002.). Besides making domestic violence a criminal offence, amendments were also rendered regarding the crime of rape.

Nor was child abuse uncommon within the family. Of the 15,000 cases of child abuse reported to the Anti-Domestic Violence Advisory Bureau, an average of 3,000 were received on an annual basis. The perpetrators of domestic violence were most often husbands and extra-marital partners (in 78% of cases). However, cases of violence by sons on mothers or by fathers on grown-up daughters were also reported. Child abuse was not carried out by fathers alone. According to that organisation, mothers were responsible for four out ten cases of violence against children, and fathers for six (Djordjevic, 2001).

The experiences of organisations offering assistance to female victims of violence show that women from all professions and walks of life were exposed to violence. Domestic violence against women was most frequently committed by partners (husbands, followed by ex-husbands and extra-marital partners). In certain cases, it was carried out by sons and sometimes fathers. In almost half of reported cases, the perpetrators were alcoholics. Violence was also perpetrated by people with higher education, upstanding citizens, people from all social strata, and those with high earnings.

A study on violence against women that covered 700 women from urban and rural areas was carried out by the Serbian Victimologist Society. The study's findings were depressing, indicating that one in every two women had suffered some form of psychological domestic violence (46.1% of all investigated cases), while one in three had been physically attacked by another member of the family (30.6%). According to the study, the perpetrators were most commonly the husband (74.8%), the father (12.1%), the mother (5.6%), a brother or sister (4.7%), and a former partner (4.2%). The most common forms of physical domestic violence were slaps (12.9% of female respondents had suffered that form of violence) and beatings (9%). Some women had been kicked, had their hair pulled, been punched, belted, struck with other objects, while there were also cases of cigarette butts being stubbed out on women's bodies. The list of violent acts against women did not stop here, moreover, as there were even incidences of women being shut inside barrels or forced to kneel in corn etc. Over 7% of respondents had been subjected to by a family member's violence by a weapon or tool against them causing severe injury. Furthermore, 8.7% of all women had been subjected to sexual violence in the family, with the most common perpetrators being husbands or partners, followed by ex-partners, fathers-in-law and sons-in-laws (Vujovic, Gajin, 2002).

Steps to modernise the socialist state and changes that the family went through after the war, had an impact on women's place in the family and reflected in her lifestyle. Full legal equality for women and men, longer schooling and increased economic independence, based on the fact that the percentage of women in work was much higher than before, all had a major bearing on her status. The process of family nuclearisation, liberalisation of divorce and the possibility of birth control were all key determinants of the position of women in socialism. None of this was enough to entirely overcome traditional mindsets in terms of the essence of women's social functions, to rely upon deep-rooted values, or to change the traditional roles of men and women within the family. Women continued to do the majority of household chores and look after the children, even when they were employed.

The high influx of people into the cities from the villages allowed patriarchal, traditional awareness of the roles of men and women in the family and mindsets associated with rural areas to partially survive in the cities too. Despite many changes to families' appearance and functioning, awareness of the sexes' role within its framework, were deep-rooted and changes in that sphere were insufficient to ensure female equality within the family. Economic independence and legal equality were unable to fully change the image of women in family relations. Women in work, though strained to the limit, continued to perform the majority of household chores and family work. A great deal hinged on women's unremunerated housework. A plethora of diverse professions were interwoven in her daily housework. Women were exhausted and often left at the end of their tether by the various roles they had to fill. Attempts to socialise certain family functions, the state's assumption of care for children by creating day-care institutes for pre-



school children, and extended primary education for children as a means of enhancing the position of working women still failed to overcome the conflict of roles.

Housework, invisible and unappreciated, yet vital for a family and society's functioning, which absorbed hours and hours of predominantly women's time, and on which she spent almost as much time as she did on work outside the house, was the subject of many a debate in Europe too (Bok, 2005: 384, 385). Women often accepted jobs that they could fit into their family commitments, like bringing up children and household chores. Clearly, this could be a restrictive factor in terms of career advancement and further professional affirmation.

Karl Kazer stresses that Balkan particularities are not the only reason why developmental processes have failed to threaten the survival of traditional male and female roles. These roles have changed little since "social change does not automatically bring a new culture, or a completely new set of ideas. People often uncover a number of cultures or aspects of various cultures, and they are prone to be contradictory. The idea of equality was a ubiquitous theme, but it has nevertheless failed to overcome traditional concepts of life" (Kazer, 2002: 448).

Together with the stark difference between women's standing and way of life in urban and rural areas, in various forms of family, transitional forms and varieties between them, along with the clamour for emancipation on the one hand and the presence of tradition on the other, coupled with all the changes brought by socialist modernisation, female inferiority lives on, particularly in terms of traditional roles in the family.

### Conclusion

Modernising processes that took place in Serbia in the post-war period had an impact on the family, the position of women and her life in it. Full legal equality between men and women, extended schooling and increased economic independence, based on the fact that the number of women in work is much higher than before, had major ramifications for her status. The process of family nuclearisation, liberalisation of divorce and the possibility of birth control were all key determinants of the position of women in socialism. None of this was enough, though, to entirely overcome traditional mindsets in terms of the essence of women's social functions, to rely upon deep-rooted values, or to change the traditional roles of men and women within the family. Women continued to do the majority of household chores and look after the children, even when they were employed. All the changes that took place in the post-war years were not enough to annul the glaring differences that existed during the inter-war years between the position of urban and rural women. The system of norms and conduct inherent to patriarchal ideology in rural areas had a bigger impact and significance than in towns and cities. Many indicators show that the modernisation process for rural families and changes in that direction were neither straightforward, nor fully able to overcome patriarchal order. Together with the pronounced difference between women's standing and way of life in urban and rural areas, in various family forms, along with the clamour for emancipation on the one hand and the strong presence of tradition on the other, female inferiority lived on, particularly in terms of traditional roles in the family.

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