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PAULINA LEBL-ALBALA (1891-1967):  
BETWEEN NATIONAL MOVEMENTS  
AND THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT\*

**Abstract:** The paper deals with Paulina Lebl-Albala's complex relationship with Serbian and Jewish national movements on the one hand and with the feminist movement, which is basically international on the other hand, which prevailed in her personality during various phases of her life.

**Keywords:** Paulina Lebl-Albala, feminism, Zionism, Yugoslav unitarism

*Introduction*

When Paulina Lebl-Albala (1891, Sofia – 1967, Los Angeles) is mentioned, she is usually mentioned in the context of feminism, education, or Zionism in Belgrade during the inter-war period. Until recently, however,

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the broader Belgrade public was not acquainted with her person and activity. According to the justified opinion of Jovanka Veselinović, she was “unjustly neglected in both Serbian and Jewish historiographies”.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, once this had been realized, her autobiography and biography of her husband, Dr. David Albala, which she had penned, was edited and published. These two works offer an insight into her view on socio-political events she witnessed and explain the background of her thoughts and actions connected with the Serbian national movement and later on, with Yugoslav unitarianism, feminism, and Zionism.<sup>2</sup>

Paulina Lebl-Albala was an Ashkenazim Jewess born in Sofia in 1891. She spent her childhood and youth in Niš and Belgrade and was one of the few women who attained a university degree in Serbian and French literature in Belgrade before WWI.<sup>3</sup> With her activities, she made her mark in Serbia before WWI, on the cultural life of Belgrade, and on Yugoslavia, too. Although her interdisciplinary cultural and social work speaks of her character, the scope of her mentioning in modern historiography, in works on the history of Yugoslav feminism, literature, and Jewish

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1 Јованка Веселиновић, “Јеврејска жена у Београду од друге половине 19. века до Другог светског рата”, *Србија у модернизацијским процесима 19. и 20. века. 2. Положај жене као мерило модернизације*, ур. Латинка Перовић, (Београд: Институт за новију историју Србије, 1998), 493.

2 Paulina Lebl Albala, *Tako je nekada bilo*, eds. Aleksandar Lebl (Београд, 2005); Paulina Lebl Albala, *Vidov život: biografija Dr Davida Albale*, priredili Aleksandar Lebl, Latinka Perović, (Београд: Čigoja štampa, 2008).

3 She started studying in 1909 and took her degree in 1913.

studies<sup>4</sup> confine themselves to mentioning her name and her educational achievement without going into deeper analysis. Manyfold activities of Paulina Lebl-Albala comprised enlightenment of Yugoslav women<sup>5</sup>, editing of fe-

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- 4 On emancipation of the Belgrade Jewesses at the turn of the 20th century cf. Jelena Filipović, Ivana Vučina Simović, “Philanthropy and Emancipation among Sephardic Women in Balcans in Times of Modernity”, *Journal of Sephardic studies* 2013, 78-95; Edita Vajs, “Učešće žena u jevrejskom javnom radu u Jugoslaviji”, *Jevrejski almanah* 1957-58, 149-155; Јованка Веселиновић, “Јеврејска жена у Београду од друге половине 19. века до Другог светског рата”, 485-495; Čedomila Marinković, “Abandoning Yalia – from Pijada Kapetanović to Paulina Lebl Albala: Development of education and social activism of Jewish women from the mid-19th century until World War II”, *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU* 70/2022, 37-53 and others. On feminist organizations and press in the Kingdom of the SCS/Yugoslavia and their connection with Paulina Lebl-Albala: Tamara Kosijer, “Udruženje univerzitetski obrazovanih žena 1927-1941”, *Istorija 20. veka* 2/2021, 295–312. On analysis of her literary work: Сара Матин, “Мужевни добри, мужевни храбри: дискурс о смрти вољеног мушкараца у женској мемоаристици 20. века”, *Књижевство: часопис за студујие књижевности, рода и културе* 13/2023, 69-85. The second diplomatic mission of Paulina’s husband Dr. David Albala is analyzed in detail in the paper Milan Koljanin, “Druga misija dr Davida Albale u Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama 1939-1942. godine”, *Zbornik 8: Studije, arhivska i memoarska građa, Jevrejski istorijski muzej - Beograd = Jewish studies 8: Studies, archival and memorial materials*, (Belgrade: Jewish historical museum, 2003), 8.
- 5 In her capacity as the chair-woman of the Society of Academically Educated Women Paulina Lebl-Albala undertook various actions such as organizing competitions for scholarly works in order to create young female intellectuals, but on the other hand, she organized lectures at the People’s University transmitted on the radio to acquaint them with the necessity of their economic emancipation.

minist journals<sup>6</sup>, membership in the Professors' PEN club, founding and chairing the Association of University Educated Women,<sup>7</sup> participation at feminist congresses,<sup>8</sup> but also work in such different fields such as co-authorship of the first Theory of Literature written by women,<sup>9</sup> Zionist

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- 6 Paulina Lebl-Albala was one of the editors of the Journal Женски покрете/*Ženski pokret/Žensko gibanje* since its foundation in 1920. Later on, from 1935 she became editor and editor-in-chief of the journal of the Yugoslav Female Union – *Glasnik*.
- 7 Женски покрет: орган Друштва за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права/The organ of the Society for Enlightenment of Women and for Protection of their Rights in which Paulina was editor, informed in no. 22 of December 1927, on p. 4 that the Society of Academically Educated Women was constituted at the meeting on December 11, 1927 where Mrs. Leposava Petkovic, chair-woman of the People's Female Union and chair-woman of the constative assembly of the Society held a speech, Mrs. Paulina Lebl-Albala the above mentioned lecture and Miss Dr. Jelica Petrovic who submitted a "report on the work of the Action Committee, on the Statutes of the International Federation of Academically Educated Women and read the Statutes of the new Society that were adopted. The following Management was elected at the meeting: Mrs. Paulina Lebl-Albala as chair-woman and 22 members of the Management and three members of the Supervising Board." Other than representing the Society at conferences of the International Society of Academically Educated Women, Paulina Lebl-Albala worked at spreading the network of this society in Zagreb, which was followed by founding of branches in Ljubljana and Sarajevo during the next decade.
- 8 As the chair-woman of the Society Paulina was also the delegate at conferences of the International Federation of Academically Educated Women where she often held lectures. She also held a lecture at the 9th annual assembly of the Yugoslav Female Union in Zagreb in 1930.
- 9 Катарина Богдановић, Паулина Лебл-Албала, *Теорија књижевности и анализа писмених састава: за средње и стручне школе*, (Београд: Геца Кон, 1923).

work within the Belgrade Jewish community and espousing Yugoslav unitarianism that will be addressed later on in this paper. Unfortunately, regardless of numerous mentions in works from various humanistic disciplines and of the accessibility of her work today, to our knowledge, her contribution has not been analyzed thus far.

The goal of this paper is to cast a new, all-encompassing view on the historical personality of Paulina Lebl-Albala, as well as on her work, “created by her own pen”, acquired by the analysis of her works (her autobiography and the biography of her husband), her articles published in feminist journals between the two world wars, her papers at international feminist conferences, articles published in the newspapers of the Belgrade Jews and finally, from her personal, unpolitical diary that she kept during her stay in Switzerland during the WWI that is preserved in the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade. The life and activities of Paulina Lebl-Albala, seen so broadly, will make it possible to show a three-dimensional, complex personality and to observe the plurality of her identities. In order to do it better, the activities of Paulina Lebl-Albala will be put into the context of the position of the Jews, especially in Belgrade, where she spent most of her life in Serbia, having in mind the improvement of the situation of women in the Jewish society in Belgrade at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the work of the female Jewish humanitarian organization. Furthermore, the full picture of Paulina’s feminist activities can be acquired if it is seen within the framework of modern ideological tenets.

Paulina’s activity will be regarded through the prism of feminist ideas of the first wave of feminism from the

early 20<sup>th</sup> century that was characterized by ties to liberalism, nationalism, and socialism<sup>10</sup> and that can be regarded above all as “liberation from the subservient conditioned by biological sex”. This global phenomenon will also be regarded through the prism of relations between bourgeois and workers’ feminism on the global scene, as well as in the context of the women’s movement in the Kingdoms of Serbia and Yugoslavia. Regardless of the cultural, social, and legal attainments of the French Revolution and of English liberalism in the shape of John Stuart Mill’s ideas and later socialist principles, the backward position of women in the legislature passed under the influence of French and German juridical practice, left its mark on the position of women in Serbia too.

Understanding of female emancipation in South-East Europe as transit from the private sphere into the public one during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by nationalism that was identified with the enlightenment of the people, where an emancipated woman was seen as an “educator of future generations [...] of the nation.”<sup>11</sup> This was the dominant form also in Serbian society on the eve of WWI. Not particularly opposed to this form of emancipation was the one within the patriarchal Jewish,

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10 Karen Offen, *European Feminisms 1700–1950. A political History*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 20.

11 Sonja M. Dujmović, “Nacionalizam kao put ženskoj emancipaciji? Vidljivost i uloga žene u Bosni i Hercegovini u austrougarskom periodu prema *Bosanskoj vili*”. *Zamišljanje žene o ideološkim i kulturnim konceptima ženskog roda u povijesti Bosne i Hercegovine*, ed. Sabina Veladžić, Aida Ličina Ramić, (Sarajevo: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung/Fondacija Heinrich Böll, Sarajevo, 2023), 97, 104.

mostly Sephardim, community in Serbia – forming female societies on the Western European model as a means to gather women in the public sphere independently of men that impacted emancipatory tendencies,<sup>12</sup> was started exactly by Belgrade Sephardim Jewesses. Such understanding of emancipation existed also in the territory of the Habsburg Monarchy, in the Vojvodina, during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, within the framework of the “United Serbian Youth” headed by Draga Dejanović (1840-1870).<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, when dealing with female societies and emancipation as a product of feminism, one should keep in mind their originally philanthropic and humanitarian character, especially if one regards feminism as primarily a social movement of women as Gisela Bock does.<sup>14</sup>

The following analysis will be deduced through three segments – Paulina’s relation to the Serbian national question that was topical before WWI, as well as, partly through its continuation in the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes/Yugoslavia, her relation toward Zionism as the Jewish national question and finally, her relation toward feminist movement and its internationalism. These three segments are not strictly delineated and will be supplementing each other.

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12 Светлана Стефановић, “Жене у служби нације и војске”, *Књиженство* 6/2016.

13 Svetlana Stefanović, “Radnički vs. Građanski ženski pokret u Srbiji i Jugoslaviji 1910-1940”, *Antropologija* 20, 1–2/2020, 57.

14 Gizela Bok, *Žena u istoriji Evrope. Od srednjeg veka do danas*, (Beograd: Clio, 2005), 200-201, 403.

*Paulina Lebl-Albala as “Serbian National Worker”*

The relation of Paulina Lebl-Albala to the state in which she lived was depicted best by words from her autobiography *It was so once* that was written most probably around 1944 during her stay in the United States of America. Talking about her ancestors, she wrote that her family “had concluded a pact of loyalty with the Serbian land and the Serbian people a long time ago”,<sup>15</sup> stressing that her grandfather Lebl was a collaborator of Pince Miloš Obrenović and that her grandmother Jelena Lebl “jumped to help the national cause” as a nurse during the Serbian-Ottoman war, which in itself was a “precedent for a woman”, earning her the decoration from the Metropolitan Mihajlo in 1876.<sup>16</sup> A culturological bond with the nation into which they had come was forged also by Paulina’s mother and her sisters, who immigrated to Serbia from a village in Galicia.<sup>17</sup> One of Paulina’s aunts, Ruža, married in Niš a medical doctor Selaković, most likely a Serb. Other two aunts, one after the death of the other married Dr. Pops, a Jew (in the practice of sororate), and gave their sons Serbian names – Aleksandar, Radoslav, Vojislav, and Miroslav.<sup>18</sup>

Paulina’s memoirs are interwoven with constant mentioning of patriotic feelings for the state in which she had been living since her earliest childhood. Furthermore,

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15 Lebl Albala, *Tako je nekada bilo*, 10.

16 *Ibid.*, 10.

17 *Ibid.*, 9.

18 *Ibid.*, 9.



she remembers exactly when “the feeling of patriotism” awoke in her – when her sister explained to her the meaning of Čele-kula [tower of Serbian patriots’ skulls in Niš]. She claims the contemporary Serbian school system of the time, as well as her own understanding of historical and contemporary events she had witnessed developed that feeling “to the maximum”.<sup>19</sup> In her memoirs, Paulina admits that during that youthful period, she did not think “if nationalism was a good or a bad thing”. It took Hitler’s accession and his successes to make Pulina think “nationalism was one of the powers that undermine civilization”.<sup>20</sup> During her life in Niš, she associated with Serbian girls, friends from school and the neighborhood, and even if some intolerance existed, she never ascribed it to her Jewish origin, but to lowly material, and thus the social status of her family and to her lack of beauty. Furthermore, Paulina describes lively rare visits to her aunt Ruža and her uncle Dr. Selaković, mentioning the family patron saint whom they revered,<sup>21</sup> whereas she attended religious instruction in state school although she was Jewish.

The Lebl family managed to move to Belgrade in 1902.<sup>22</sup> Although patriotic, Paulina was critical of the clammed, insufficiently modern, patriarchal society of Niš at the end of the 19th century.<sup>23</sup> The content of Paulina’s autobiography from her arrival in Belgrade until the end of WWI can be read as a complex, emotional, almost sen-

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19 *Ibid.*, 22.

20 *Ibid.*, 246.

21 *Ibid.*, 25.

22 *Ibid.*, 56.

23 *Ibid.*, 14.

timental connection between her patriotism and feminism that found its expression, above all, in the possibility for a woman to become well educated. Paulina comments in detail the changes of formal, state-sponsored education for small girls and girls in Serbia, as one of the emancipatory methods.

Paulina's enrollment in secondary school in Niš, after four years of elementary school, took place "at the turn of the century in 1900" when girls were forbidden to attend gymnasium – probably due to a high number of interested candidates. For that reason, she had to enroll in the Higher Female School<sup>24</sup> that she would continue in Belgrade.

Having finished the fourth grade of the Higher Female School in Belgrade, Paulina enrolled in the Female Teachers Training College that was supposed to provide her with the best education but also, to capacitate her for an independent life – most probably that of a village school teacher. "The tone was very stern, serious, very much patriotically tinged". The students were indoctrinated that the future of the nation was in the hands of school teachers, that they "were the creators of happiness of their people, that they decided its destiny". This conviction remained with her even later when she thought that serving the people was the meaning of life – being the consequence of years spent at the Teachers Training College.<sup>25</sup> Although Paulina believed she was ready to become a village teacher, she was hardly completely aware of all measures of

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24 *Ibid.*, 51.

25 *Ibid.*, 73-74, 93.

discrimination against this comparatively new, but radical identity group that was under constant pressure from the government, the Church, and local officials whose discrimination did not end with 20% lower wages than for male teachers, but also included “celibacy” ordered by law.<sup>26</sup>

Attending the “first female gymnasium in the Serbian nation”, as Paulina stated, one could not avoid a nationally tinged tone of the lectures; on the contrary – the students of the first generation “were instilled with the idea” that “we had to be proud because of the great work that waited upon us on leaving school, that we had to be fighters for liberation and unification of all South Slav peoples”.<sup>27</sup> The headmaster of the Gymnasium, Sreten Pešić, preached that it was important for the “national cause” that women were educated because the education of women was one of the yardsticks of modernization of the society. This was completely in keeping with Paulina’s convictions that she also expressed through her feminist activity later on at her mature age. However, one cannot disregard the fact that there was something ‘Spartan’ in such view of a woman’s role, i.e., that her education was valuable inasmuch it helped the collective, national movement and not her individual desire for improvement education and independence as the final product of that process.

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26 Neda Božinović, *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX i XX veku*, (Beograd: Devedečetvrti, Žene u Crnom, 1996), 84; Svetlana Tomić, “The First Serbian Female Teachers and Writers: Their Role in the Emancipation of Serbian Society”, *Serbian Women and the Public Sphere: 1850-1950, Serbian Studies, Slavica Publishers* 25/1, 2011, 64.

27 Lebl Albala, *Tako je nekada bilo*, 80-81.

Regardless of collective national awareness and personal experience of strict bourgeois upbringing typical of the girls at the time, Paulina remained an individualist. Despite her respect for authority, it could hardly be said that she “kowtowed to them”<sup>28</sup>, especially if one considers her undisguised intolerance of the autocratic tendencies of her professor Kruna Aćimović who evinced them by punishing freedom of thought and of expression and “riding roughshod over those who were weaker” which Paulina ascribed to her education in Czarist Russia.<sup>29</sup> Having been freed from “high school restraint and discipline”, wishing to make her own decisions,<sup>30</sup> Paulina cherished freedom of choice, even if belonging to a collective movement, such as the Serbian or Jewish national of feminist movements.

Intolerance toward imposed authority, but acceptance of a collective one if it appealed to her, led her to refuse participation at the gathering of the socialist youth. Although she intimately approved of socialist ideas, the “strong doses of preacher-reforms” was surely too authoritarian and at odds with her upbringing in which “respect for authority, time-tested principles and conventions” was central and coupled with the known principles of the national idea, but above else, with her intellectualist spirit.<sup>31</sup> The feminism of Paula Lebl could

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28 Latinka Perović, “O sudaru srpske patrijarhalne zajednice sa modernim društvom” <http://elmundosefarad.wikidot.com/o-sudaru-srpske-patrijarhalne-zajednice-sa-modernim-drustvom>

29 Lebl Albala, *Tako je nekada bilo*, 83-84.

30 *Ibid.*, 121.

31 *Ibid.*, 103-104.

not transcend the national frameworks of the Serbian national question, and subsequently, of Yugoslav unitarianism with which she became intimate throughout her education and of the framework of the Jewish national question with which she became acquainted later on. The international character of socialism that was accepted by many highly educated women in Western Europe, and one could even say the international character of feminism, was unfamiliar to her.

Paulina's first attempt at political activism occurred during her study of literature under the auspices of Jovan Skerlić, and it was neither of feminist nor of nationalist character; it concerned neither struggle for female suffrage nor for improved educational conditions and it was not a critique of the schooling system. For a person who, according to her own testimony, could not be part of the socialist youth, Paulina was not only easily active among the 'Serbian Youth', but wrote in their name political protests to the French government on the occasion of events at the beginning of the First Balkan War.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the protest ended only with Skerlić's lecture on world politics to the young activist concerning her fiery excursion in the political sphere, with the moral that in diplomacy, one should not always say what one thinks. This unsuccessful attempt during her studies did not kill Paulina's wish to go into politics, and already by the end of her studies, one observes her interest in the improvement of the situation of women, not only in the field of education. However, at the moment, she was happy just to be "a professor, like my

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32 *Ibid.*, 189-190.

dear master [Jovan Skerlić]”.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, during the First Balkan War her activities were redirected only to humanitarian work with no possibility of political influence, either in public, or among her academic crowd. As a nurse in the Second Reserve Hospital at Vračar she was awarded the Cross of Mercy by the Ministry of the Army of the Kingdom of Serbia.<sup>34</sup>

Interestingly enough, when she got the teaching job in the Second Female Gymnasium, she had a chance to meet a colleague and famous authoress Isidora Sekulić who, in her own words, would influence Paulina more in her mature years – probably by the time when Paulina’s identity had developed the second, feminist, and the third Zionist, facets. Skerlić took exception to Isidora Seculić’s individualism and she to his nationalism: “He did not understand there was no real nationalism without internationalism. I love other peoples nationalistically.”<sup>35</sup>

The WWI that Paulina witnessed on flights throughout Serbia, on return to Belgrade, and in exile in Switzerland, contributed to her personal development. The end of the war and creation of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (SCS) almost symbolically coincided with the expansion of Paulina’s identity that not only gradually acquired its plurality, but of which she started to be aware in her mature age.

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33 *Ibid.*, 196.

34 *Ibid.*, 189.

35 Dejana Vukadinović, “Književnost i Srbija: Isidora Sekulić – ‘ikona srpske književnosti’”, žena koja je pisala muški”, April 5, 2022, accessed 06/30/2024: <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-60972028>

### *Paulina's Zionism*

In the few works that do mention Paulina Lebl-Albala, she is mentioned as a Zionist and a feminist. Jovanka Veselinović pointed out that Paulina herself held “Zionist convictions”, which can be seen from her speech on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Jewish Female Society, entitled *The Duties of a Modern Jewish Woman*.<sup>36</sup>

If WWI was the moment she became aware of the feminist movement, the end of the war and meeting with Dr. David Albala, a Belgrade Sephardim, also meant acquaintance with the Zionist movement, of which she had never heard before. On meeting her, he introduced her to the management of the Jewish National Society he himself had founded. Paulina pointed out that the Zionism of Dr. David Albala developed as a reaction to unjust religious discrimination suffered during his work within the People's Radical Party of Nikola Pašić, but she does not fail to add that even more important was the influence of greater Antisemitism he had experienced “outside the borders of our state”, above all during his studies in Vienna.<sup>37</sup> It is interesting that, unlike Paulina, David Albala was more inclined to accept international movements as a means of suppressing the centuries-old persecution of the Jews: he considered the Jews would be persecuted until they founded a state of their own in Palestine or until “na-

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36 Веселиновић, “Јеврејска жена у Београду од друге половине 19. века до Другог светског рата”, 493.

37 Lebl Albala, *Vidov život: biografija Dr Davida Albale*, 95, 107.

tionalism disappeared from the face of the earth and internationalism appeared [...] as close connection between all peoples”.<sup>38</sup> Communist ideas, as an expression of democracy and life in the USSR, appealed to him more than life in “a mercantile state”.<sup>39</sup> A gloss by his daughter noted beside this statement in the original of this work, testify to her father’s idealism and lack of information as he formed that opinion.<sup>40</sup>

From her autobiography, it can be discerned that David Albala considered her way of thinking until then a fruit of Paulina’s “assimilationist position”, and he tried to convince her to become an “active champion” of the Jewish national question that would be solved by the creation of the Jewish state, which was obviously out of the comfort zone of her personality and of her quiet, intellectual character that was more inclined to long deliberation before forming an opinion. According to her personal admission, Paulina heard of that idea for the first time only after WWI, since until then, her personality and one could say her everyday work, as well as her intellectual activity, were influenced by “Serbian, i.e. Yugoslav nationalism”; however, she connected with the idea not through the religious element of the Jewish culture, but on an intellectual level: “connecting myself with such a highly cultured and meritorious people, I as a Serb and a Yugoslav, felt to be worth three times more”.<sup>41</sup> It is interesting that Paulina mentions German moralist writer Friedrich Wilhelm Fesler who influenced her in

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38 Lebl Albala, *Tako je nekada bilo*, 276.

39 Lebl Albala, *Vidov život*, 97, 117.

40 *Ibid.*, 146.

41 Lebl Albala, *Tako je nekada bilo*, 276.



the “direction of Christin improvement”,<sup>42</sup> whereas, in her autobiography, there is no mention of any religious influence of Judaism on the development of her personality and of her work, unlike her husband of whom she wrote that he “considered Moses’ religion as the expression of the national soul of the Jewish people.”<sup>43</sup>

In the afterword to Paulina’s biography of Dr. David Albala, Latinka Perović wrote it had been difficult to distinguish from one another the work and thoughts of the two marriage partners concerning the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine, although it is obvious that Paulina’s Zionism survived in no small degree thanks to her admiration for the personality and work of her husband.

The opinion that the situation of the Jewish population in the modern Serbian state was *de facto*, if not *de jure*, better than in other countries of southern Europe or even in Austria-Hungary during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and most of the time during the existence of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia is often accepted narrative in historiography about the Jews in Yugoslavia.<sup>44</sup> However, Paulina’s claim that “the Jews of Serbia could never complain of having been discriminated against”<sup>45</sup> is, if not illusionary, then naïve because

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42 *Ibid.*, 213.

43 Lebl Albala, *Vidov život*, 148.

44 Harriet Pass Freidenreich, *The Jews of Yugoslavia. A Quest for Community*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 30- 33; Esther Benbassa, Aron Rodrigue, *The Jews of the Balkans. The Judeo-Spanish Community, 15th to 20th Centuries*, (Oxford, Boston: Blackwell, 1955), 89-91; Ignjat Šlang, *Jevreji u Beogradu*. (Beograd: Štamparija M. Karića, 1926), 101.

45 Lebl Albala, *Vidov život*, 124.

her personal experiences tended to tint the broader picture; from Paulina's works, one can see that she believed that she had never been victim of any kind of religiously or ethnically based discrimination. This was possible if she did not realize the subtlety of discriminatory behavior since the *de iure* discrimination against her as a woman throughout her education and career and within the family as the "child of the second order" was more obvious.<sup>46</sup> Regardless of having been completely accepted by the majority population in Serbia Paulina married a Belgrade Sephardim Dr. David Albala, because her previous Serbian wooers hesitated to propose marriage, her mother disliked them and it seems the family of her great flame, Svetislav Petrović, was against him marrying her.<sup>47</sup>

The Jewish Women's Society was founded in 1874 as a brainchild and on the initiative of Ester B. (Benjamin) Pinto, née Alvu (1840-1909), wife of a Belgrade flour producer and wheat merchant Benjamin Pinto (? - 1888), and her two friends and co-founders, Toni Azrijel and Sara J. Alkalaj (1841-1917). It was the first Sephardim female society in the Balkans and the Near East at large and the first ever female society in the Principality of Serbia that initially engaged only in philanthropic work. Although it is considered that the struggle for female emancipation in Serbia started in the 1870s, it was only after WWI that socially more important women took active part in it in a more radical way.<sup>48</sup> On the 50<sup>th</sup> anni-

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46 Lebl Albala, *Tako je nekada bilo*, 197.

47 *Ibid.*, 261, 282; "Паулинин дневник", рг.бр. 6053, Јеврејски историјски Музеј, ЛФ - Паулина Албала, к.1.

48 Radina Vučetić, "The Emancipation of Women in Interwar Belgrade and the 'Cvijeta Zuzorić' Society", *Gender Realitions in South Ea-*

versary of its existence in 1924, its chair-woman Jelena de Majo mentioned several important characteristics of the Society: the Society developed its activity on a broader basis, connecting the progress of the Society with that of the Principality of Serbia, making “patriotic feelings of the then Jewish women” visible, it took example from the work of the “Serbian Women’s Society” that was created later [1875], and that it accepted non-Jewish members such as the authoress Slavka Subotić, moving thus beyond its ethno-religious boundaries and “starting having an interest in our whole society”.<sup>49</sup>

Two of Paulina’s sisters were members of the Board of Managers of this Jewish Female Society in the years after WWI; they took an active part in its work and taught at the Handicrafts School of the Jewish Female Society.<sup>50</sup> The connection between Paulina herself and the Jewish Female Society can best be seen in her paper *Duties of the Modern Jewish Woman which* testifies to her Zionist convictions.<sup>51</sup> In her exposition, Paulina stresses two duties: toward the state in which one lives, reminding in that context the Jewesses in Serbia of their obligation toward the “neighborhood and people where we live”, but warns

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*stern Europe: Historical Perspectives on Womanhood and Manhood in 19th and 20th Century*, eds. Miroslav Jovanović, Slobodan Naimović, (Beograd: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju; Graz: Institut für Geschichte der Universität, Abteilung Südosteuropäische Geschichte, 2002), 165.

49 “Јеврејско женско друштво у Београду. 1874-1924”, *На дан педесетогодишњице од оснивања*, (Београд: Издање Управе Јеврејског Женског Друштва, 1924), 13, 16.

50 *Ibid.*, 23, 30.

51 *Ibid.*, 61-65; Веселиновић, “Јеврејска жена у Београду од друге половине 19. века до Другог светског рата”, 493.

Jewish women of Serbia, an especially of Belgrade, to strive for Yugoslav unitarianism through aid for the Jews who were made part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, “through their female organizations and otherwise, through personal contacts, to influence, for their part, that this coming together and affiliation with our country came as soon as possible”.<sup>52</sup> Paulina saw the other duty in “raising of Jewish national consciousness” and not only in preserving the Jewish tradition.<sup>53</sup> This paper of hers is one of the rare statements that link Paulina’s Zionism with feminism among the Belgrade Jewish women, but also one into which Yugoslav unitarianism is inseparably inwoven.

When one keeps in mind the intersection of feminism in the Kingdom of the SCS, Jewish communities in it, and the traditional position of women within them, it should be stressed that “Jewish women achieved equality in Jewish communities” only in 1933, as a “result of their national and feminist aspirations”.<sup>54</sup>

Paulina Lebl-Albala wrote about other Jewish questions besides the role of the Jewish woman. She collaborated with the Herald of the Union of the Jewish Religious Communes and made a report on the situation of the Jews in Germany in 1933 when the question about it was raised at the PEN-congress in Dubrovnik. She reached a too-

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52 Јеврејско женско друштво у Београду. 1874-1924. *На дан педесетогодишњице од оснивања*, 63.

53 *Ibid.*, 64.

54 Давид А. Алкалај, “Утисци са Конгреса Савеза јеврејских веоисповедних општина”, *Гласник Савеза јеврејских вероисповедних општина*, July 1933, no.2, 116.

early and too-optimistic, almost utopian-like conclusion that the congress in Dubrovnik was an “obvious triumph of justice over violence, of truth over obscurantism”. It seemed to her that it sufficed that persecution of the Jews under Hitler’s regime became the “subject of discussion among the greatest luminaries” to make “the Jews of the whole world” satisfied.<sup>55</sup>

Obviously, there were different views on the Jewish national question in the Belgrade Jewish community itself that made themselves evident on the occasion of the election of the chairman of the Sephardim commune. She mentions its chairman, Dr. Jakov Čelebonović (1868-1950) who was replaced by Albala, as the man of opposite conviction.<sup>56</sup> It seems this prominent member of the Belgrade Sephardim community “made difficulties” also for Moša Đerasi who renewed the first secondary school Zionist society ‘Gideon’ back in 1909-10 and whose adoption of the Zionist idea was, as with Dr Albala, the consequence of experience with discrimination by his gymnasium Latin teacher who called him “a kike swain”.<sup>57</sup> There was also opposition to founding a Zionist association for girls in Sarajevo during the inter-war period.<sup>58</sup> Paulina believed that if David Albala had not been exposed to discrimination during his studies in Vienna, he would have remained

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55 Паулина Лебл-Албала, “Конгрес Пен-клуба у Дубровнику од 25 до 28 маја 1933 године”, *Гласник Савеза јеврејских вероисповедних општина*, July 1933, no .2, 119-122.

56 Lebl Albala, *Vidov život*, 132.

57 Jasna Ćirić, “Teško je biti siročić”, accessed 30/6/2024: <http://el-mundosefarad.wikidot.com/tesko-je-bit-siroce-dr-mosa-derasi>

58 Lebl Albala, *Vidov život*, 125.

“one of the excellent representatives” of the ‘Serbs of Mosaic faith’ as many intellectuals before WWI”, because she was convinced that the Belgrade circles did not discriminate against their Jewish fellow-citizens.<sup>59</sup>

Paulina does not hide her husband’s disappointment, which she probably shared, with the attitude of ‘Western powers’, above all of Great Britain, France, and the USA toward the Jewish question, but also towards the suffering of the Slavic peoples under Hitler’s regime,<sup>60</sup> as well as his disappointment in the lethargy of the Jewish community in the USA itself concerning these issues, and furthermore their understanding of the unfavorable position of Afro-Americans, of the autochthonous population of the USA and of Chinese immigrants in, as Paulina, underscores, the “democratic” USA.<sup>61</sup> However, similar disappointment in dormancy shown by some Western European countries, as well as the USA, concerning the situation of the Jews in general, and especially their attitude concerning the Jews in ‘South-Slav’ countries during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was not confined to Paulina Lebl-Albala and David Albala. Rather, it existed in Jewish communities in the Kingdom of the SCS/Yugoslavia and was expressed in articles in Jewish periodicals. It can also be similarly seen in the understanding of the situation of non-European populations and their struggle against colonial regimes, in critique of orientalism in the so-called western ‘gaze’ that teemed with egocentrism “and adoration of oneself, that

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59 *Ibid.*, 120.

60 *Ibid.*, 97, 103, 109, 139.

61 *Ibid.*, 77.

no doubt continued to measure the cultural level of the Orient, depending on how many hygienic and technical improvements it had taken over from Europe, and to judge the cultural needs of these peoples according to how much they spent on products of European technology and industry”.<sup>62</sup> Also, the “deep understanding” for the fate of African-Americans was not shared only by Paulina Lebl-Albala and Dr. David Albala, but was, together with the critique of unconscientious, “false” construing of the Jewish Bible on part of “religious Americans” that denied the idea that “we were all children of one Heavenly Father”, but also scientific conclusions of anthropology that there were “no savage and civilized peoples”, found expression among members of Jewish communities in the Kingdom of the SCS.<sup>63</sup>

Zionism of Paulina Lebl-Albala was shaped and expressed in the social framework of the Belgrade Jewish community, where representatives of the Belgrade Sephardim deemed the contribution of the Sephardim to the Jewish national movement was negligent in comparison to that of the Ashkenazim. They also thought it necessary to emulate the Serbian national movement that was characterized by the fact that “out of a tragic event – the Kosovo disaster – it made itself a cult of inestimable value for the

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62 Dr. Julije Dohany, potpretsjednik Saveza Cijonista u Kraljevini S. H. S, Karlsdorf: “»Young India« — Jung Juda”, *Jevrejski almanah za godinu 5686*, (Vršac: Savez rabina Kraljevine S. H. S., 1926), 83-86.

63 Dr. Lavoslav Šik prvi potpretsjednik Izraelitske Bogoštovne Općine u Zagrebu, “O potrebi povjesnice Jevreja u Jugoslaviji”, *Jevrejski almanah za godinu 5686*, (Vršac: Savez rabina Kraljevine S. H. S. 1926), 90.

magnificent deed of national unification”.<sup>64</sup> However, the difference between the members of the Jewish community in Yugoslavia, and especially in Belgrade, between those led by “Zionist principles” and those who did not support that idea, or who supported it coyly out of fear to “make, as citizens of this country, an offense by showing their Jewishness more openly and a bit further than the last houses in the Jewish quarter”, was not only visible but was discussed in public.<sup>65</sup>

### *Paulina’s Feminism*

Paulina mentioned the term feminism even during her schooling – when the girls of the Higher Female School in Belgrade chose their idol among the teachers and older students. Paulina thought more about women’s rights, surely already as a teacher at the Second Female Gymnasium; even if it was still in the realm of fantasy, there were discussions on what women could be named principal.<sup>66</sup>

However, it was only during the part of WWI that she spent in Belgrade that Paulina, according to her own admission, accidentally started to be acquainted with feminism when she and Zora Kasner were invited by Slovene-Croat authoress and feminist Zofka Kveder to collaborate on her

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64 Арон Алкалај, “Сефарди, сефардски покрет и његов значај”, *Гласник Савеза јеврејских вероисповедних општина*, Јул 1933, по. 2, 88, 91, 94-95.

65 Давид А. Алкалај, “Утисци са Конгреса Савеза јеврејских вероисповедних општина”, *Гласник Савеза јеврејских вероисповедних општина*, Јули 1933, по. 2, 118.

66 Lebl Albala, *Tako je nekada bilo*, 202.



journal *Jugoslovenska žena* (Yugoslav Woman). At that moment, Paulina became equally enchanted by the journal's tone, which was still at odds with her personality, but also with the plethora of contents connected with the so-called women's question which she realized for the first time that it stretched far beyond enabling women to acquire higher education, into political, economic and social fields. The Serbian bourgeois society of the capital in which Paulina moved was still confined to these first stages of feminist struggle. Unlike the development stage of the feminist movement in the rest of Europe, there was no organized feminist movement. Looking back two decades later, Paulina summed up the problem: "On the whole, we regarded the entire feminist movement as a movement for higher education of females."<sup>67</sup> Paulina Lebl-Albala certainly must have seen the core of the problem in the center of which was the political question of suffrage. However, her feminist activity and contribution remained, to large extent, confined to matters of education and professional improvement within higher education and were the expression of the personal experience of a student and a gymnasium teacher. The feminism preached by Zofka Kveder, rooted in unitarist Yugoslavism, with traits of humanitarian female societies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and with arguments typical of relational feminism,<sup>68</sup> was a feminism nationally-oriented Paulina could accept more easily than internationa-

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67 *Ibid.*, 244.

68 Зорана Симић, "Феминизам и Југословенство: Зофка Кведер и Женски покрет", *Модернизам и авангарда у југословенском контексту*, 2, ed. Биљана Андоновска, Томислав Брлек, Видић Андријана, (Београд: Институт за књижевност и уметност у Београду, 2022), 83-84; Offen, *European Feminisms 1700–1950. A political History*, 134– 137.

lism of the social youth in her high-school days. During the days of occupation, Paulina thought out how to create a movement for “education of women and for protection of their rights” and how to enlarge it by fusion of various aspirations of different female groups – a movement she would head together with Zora Kasnar. It should be noted that during various phases of WWI female doctors, nurses and medical staff of the Scottish Women’s Hospital stayed in Serbia who, with their wartime engagement, wanted to convince the British public that women were worthy of suffrage. Paulina does not mention them, probably because she was not aware of their work – which also testifies to the isolation of the women’s movement.

Regardless of their faith in readiness to create feminist organizations right after the war, she herself realized how difficult it was to demand equality, primarily for herself as a woman. When Professor Pavle Popović told her he could not make her his successor because she was a woman, Paulina was sorry because she “took his words as beautiful acknowledgment and praise” instead of “crying out as a militant feminist, What does it matter that I’m a girl?”<sup>69</sup> As a result of all events after the end of WWI, the feminist movement crystalized in Belgrade, where a group of well-known female intellectuals founded the ‘*Society for Enlightenment of Women and Protection of their Rights*’. The leading role was entrusted to Paulina’s friend Zora Kasnar, in Paulina’s opinion, due to Zora’s combativeness and self-assuredness, whereas Paulina got the role of the Society’s secretary.<sup>70</sup> Ten years after the cre-

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69 Lebl Albala, *Tako je nekada bilo*, 268.

70 *Ibid.*, 269.

ation of the “Women’s movement”, the existence of a burgeoning parallel feminist movement in Belgrade was mentioned. It was started by Annie O’Brien Christitch, a British(Irish)-Serbian philanthropist by “gathering around her young women” and “discussing all planks of the feminist program” with the goal of founding a women’s society in Belgrade after the war. Since the Society for Enlightenment of Women and Protection of their Rights learned of the group around Annie O’Brien Christitch only in 1919, they invited them to continue the work of the two movements together.<sup>71</sup>

The Society for Enlightenment of Women and Protection of their Rights had its journal *Ženski pokret* (Women’s Movement) on whose editorial board Paulina also set. The society was extremely successful in spreading its ideas since soon after it was founded a string of such societies with the “same name and purpose” was founded in Sarajevo, Kragujevac, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Split and other towns.<sup>72</sup>

Paulina’s youth was marked by her mother’s aspiration that Paulina enrolls in the newly opened First Female Gymnasium. Awareness of the importance of woman’s independence,<sup>73</sup> on one hand, and of her mother’s unhappy marriage,<sup>74</sup> on the other, must have shaped Pauli-

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71 “О десетогодишњици ‘Женског Покрета’ у Београду”, *Женски покрет: орган Друштва за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права/Друштво за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права*, 17/20, October 1929, 1-2.

72 *Ibid.*, 1-2.

73 Ljubinka Trgovčević, “The Emancipation of Women in the Professions in 19th-Century Serbia”, *Serbian Studies, Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 25/2011, No. 1, 12.

74 Lebl Albala, *Tako je nekada bilo*, 8.

na's attitude toward female emancipation. Maybe the first expression of feminism, of woman's self-sufficiency, and even of male redundancy, can be read in Paulina's description of the return of her vagabond father who had left them right after her birth and whom she met then for the first time: "Something more was strange to me: my mother did not chase him out of the house, as she, in my opinion, should have done with the man who had refused to know anything about her for almost eight years. If we have lived so long without him, we can go on living without him. What do we need him for now!"<sup>75</sup> Paulina's relationship with men she came across during her pupil's and student's life, the idea of marriage as something unclean and immoral, even the founding of a society with somewhat pretentious name 'Society Against Falling in Love', were coupled with puritanism as a characteristic of bourgeois moral, but also with "the characteristic of a modern woman" to "renounce romantic love" as an obstacle to self-fulfillment.<sup>76</sup>

Paulina took part in work on the journal *Женски покрет*/*Ženski pokret*/*Žensko gibanje* as a member of the editorial board and as an authoress. The years of Paulina's writing contributions confirm the claim that during its first years, the journal represented a "platform for articulation and discussion of literary modernism and Avant-

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75 *Ibid.*, 27.

76 Jelena Lalatović, "Između , 'proleterskog' i 'gradjanskog' feminizma: oblici moderne ženske subjektivnosti u časopisu *Ženski pokret* (1934-1938)", *Женски покрет: зборник радова*, ed. Jelena Milinković, Žarka Svirčev, (Beograd: Institut za književnost i umetnost u Beogradu, 2021), 486.

guard”<sup>77</sup> to which she contributed certainly more as literary theoretician than with discussions on political aspects of feminism, siding with the contents of her contributions with ‘culture’ in the “division between culture and politics” that was typical of the journal.<sup>78</sup> Her literary review of the novel *Before Happiness* by lady writer Milica Janković in which she praised her “purely female way of writing, full of warmth and tenderness”, could also be taken as a testimony of Paulina’s relation to feminism.<sup>79</sup> Paulina commented on the social position of women in the Kingdom of the SCS in her obituary for the co-founder of the Society, Ruža Stojanović, a mathematics teacher at a female school who had committed suicide over extra-marital pregnancy, confronting ‘modern social reformer Ružica’ with the reality of “traditional exigencies of conventional social and family morality”.<sup>80</sup>

Most of Paulina’s contributions can be seen as fruits of her profession of literary theoretician – comments on literature, or of a teacher – critique of pupils and curricula, and most importantly, of professional discrimination (pro-

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77 Симић, “Феминизам и Југословенство: Зофка Кведер и Женски Покрет”, 83-84.

78 Lalatović, “Između, ‘proleterskog’ i ‘gradanskog’ feminizma”, 485.

79 Паулина Лебл-Албала, “Књижевни преглед Милица Јанковић. Пре среће. Загреб, 1918. године, Издање ‘Књижевног Југа’”, *Женски покрет: орган Друштва за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права/Друштво за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права*, no. 1, April 1920, 15.

80 Паулина Лебл-Албала, “Рујица Стојановић 1891-1920”, *Женски покрет: орган Друштва за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права/Друштво за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права*, no. 7, October 1920, 5.

hibition for women to teach at faculties, discrimination in wages for the same work). She praised the changed, post-war kind of female pupils who were aware of women's duty to society, and not only to family, and who were more interested in social, political, and scientific questions than in modesty, tidiness, or nice writing.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, one cannot but remark with doses of irony, that she criticized the pupils who dressed up, although in her memories of her days in the gymnasium, she clearly expressed a lack of understanding and intolerance of [...] inappropriate strict rules of behavior and bearing of pupils prescribed by her class-mistress Kruna Aćimović, neé Despotović.<sup>82</sup>

Paulina's feminist activity was also a criticism of the society, laws, and government organs that demeaned female self-respect because "many an office any male mediocrity can hold always remain out of reach of women". It was also criticism of her professors, Pavle Popović, above all, who encouraged female students but were too cowardly "to quit with the tradition" and name them as their successors.<sup>83</sup> She wrote on the image of women and their capabilities and rights in the works of two literati, Dositej Obradović, and Petar Petrović Njegoš, as a yard-

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81 Паулина Лебл-Албала, "Наше ученице Одломак из студије 'Наш женски Подмладак'", *Женски покрет: орган Друштва за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права/Друштво за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права*, no. 1, January 1921, 29.

82 Lebl Albala, *Tako je nekada bilo*, 84.

83 Паулина Лебл-Албала, "Могу ли жене доћи на универзитетску катедру", *Женски покрет: орган Друштва за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права/Друштво за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права*, no. 4, April 1921, 107-109.

stick of modernization of the society, or on authors who wrote on proto-feminist ideas (such as Madame de Staël).

In her works, Paulina never stresses the situation of Jewesses in Serbia or in Belgrade, either as pupils or students, or concerning the rights their culture ensured them, and with it the place in the broader culture of a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society, such as the new state was. The female movement blended Paulina's feminism and professional life, which was epitomized in *The Theory of Literature* that she co-authored with Katarina Bogdanović, which was the first "schoolbook written by women."<sup>84</sup>

Less than a decade after the foundation of the *Society for Enlightenment of Women and Protection of their Rights* in which she held the office of the secretary (because she did not believe she was militant enough to be the chair-woman) Paulina showed that she had matured in the struggle for feminist ideas by founding the *Society of Academically Educated Women* in 1927 that she headed for many years.<sup>85</sup>

The very founding of such a society and the election of Paulina Lebl-Albala for its chair-woman was the reflection of Paulina's activities in a sphere she knew from personal and professional experience that she acquired in middle-class

84 "Из књижевности", *Женски покрет: орган Друштва за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права/Друштво за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права*, no. 7, September 1923, 336.

85 "Удружење универзитетски образованих жена", *Женски покрет: орган Друштва за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права/Друштво за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права*, no. 12, 1927, 3; "Организовање универзитетски образованих жена", *Време*, 12. децембар. 1927, 5; "Скупштина жена са факултетском спремом", *Политика*, 12. Децембар 1927, 5; "Организовање универзитетски образованих жена", *Време*, 12. децембар 1927, 5.

circles; her feminism was a bourgeois feminism concentrated on solution of the problem of equality of a close circle of female intellectuals. Although she had experienced poverty in her early childhood, and although her mother failed in an attempt to make her living as a woman artisan sewing socks on a machine, in her feminist endeavors Paulina did not go about solving the problems of uneducated women of the working classes in towns. Indeed, she did not even mention them. In her speech [Development of University Education of our Women] Paulina dwelled first on “education of junior scientists, preparation of independent scholarly workers” under the auspices of Serbian higher education that was “backward in comparison with Europe.” This was the reference to the so-called female question of an extremely small number of women, as was the case in the world too. She did not hesitate to address the “opponents of feminism” who did not want their superiors in the profession to be women, nor to lash out at the lack of meritocracy and the existence of gender discrimination in the promotion of employed female intellectuals in their work places.<sup>86</sup>

We read on the founding of the Society of Academically Educated Women in the journal *Ženski pokret* as well as on Paulina Lebl-Albala’s activities in connection with its everyday functioning. However, we do not hear any more about her engagement in writing in the journal itself. As the chair-woman of the Society Paulina was also a delegate at the conferences of the Federation of Academically Educated Women, where she often held lectures.

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86 Паулина Лебл-Албала, “Развој универзитетског образовања наших жена”, *Летопис Матица српске*, Book 316, Vol. 1, April 1928, 17-28.



*Ženski pokret* reported that the Society of Academically Educated Women was founded at the meeting in 1927, when the management was elected, and “Mrs. Paulina Lebl-Albala as chair-woman”.<sup>87</sup> The chair-woman’s activities comprised opening the Evenings of the Society of Academically Educated Women,<sup>88</sup> opening of regular assemblies of the Society, and taking up connections with similar societies abroad and with the International Federation of Academically Educated Women,<sup>89</sup> at whose meetings she took part as delegate.<sup>90</sup> Paulina supported the idea that the Kingdom of the SCS host the international Congress of the Federation 1932, giving grants to foreign female scholars to “study our national sciences”, to delegate “our female experts” with the League of Nations, but also to change the name of the Kingdom of the SCS into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in international relations.<sup>91</sup>

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87 *Женски покрет: орган Друштва за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права/Друштво за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права*, no. 22, December 1927, 4.

88 *Женски покрет: орган Друштва за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права/Друштво за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права*, no. 1/2, January 1929, 6.

89 *Женски покрет: орган Друштва за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права/Друштво за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права*, no. 5, March 1929, 4.

90 *Женски покрет: орган Друштва за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права/Друштво за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права*, no. 13/16, August 1929, 6.

91 “Годишњи извештај универзитетски образованих жена за другу редовну скупштину која ће се одржати 9. фебруара 1930 год.”, *Женски покрет: орган Друштва за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права/Друштво за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права*, no. 1/2, January 1930, 3.

During her feminist activities, Paulina expressed her opinion on a curriculum for female pupils<sup>92</sup> and criticized the lack of civic education as a school subject after national goals had been achieved, stressing that this led to the survival of nepotism when hiring.<sup>93</sup> She kept that opinion years later when in her memories of her high-school days in her autobiography she exceptionally criticized the Serbian society in which schools had developed national awareness of the pupils at the expense of knowledge about the “construction of the state and the society, conditions and foundations on which they rested, and even less were the reforms one had to implement indicated to us...” – all out of fear of changing what the society had already surpassed, out of fear of causing dissatisfaction among the young and of creating “rebels”.<sup>94</sup>

### *Conclusion*

“Only I was never a believer in one God, a monotheist. I bowed before many altars at the same time.”<sup>95</sup> – said Paulina, speaking about the plethora of ideals that she respected and pursued during her life in Serbia and Yugoslavia. Pauli-

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92 “Годишња скупштина Југословенског женског савеза. Девета скупштина Југословенског женског савеза одржана је у Загребу од 12—15 т. м.”, *Женски покрет: орган Друштва за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права/Друштво за просвећивање жене и заштиту њених права*, no. 19/20, October 1930, 2.

93 Паулина Лебл-Албала, “Развијање социјалне свести”, *Летопис Матице српске*, Book 326, Vol. 3., December 1930, 211-219.

94 Lebl Albala, *Tako je nekada bilo*, 104.

95 *Ibid.*, 121.

na Lebl-Albala, the teacher of the Second Female Gymnasium literary theoretician, summed up best in this sentence the plurality of her identities – national, ethnic, religious, and ideological that was visible in her adherence to several seemingly disparate ideological movements such as Serbian national movement and Yugoslav unitarianism, Zionism and feminism. With seeming ease this enabled her to balance in herself these ideals and activities she undertook to develop and to realize during her life.

All the ideals she “worshipped” were the reflection of her personal and professional experience, and above all of her free choice because throughout her life it was impossible to impose ideals on her and enforce her obedience to them.<sup>96</sup> In that spirit one should understand her belief that “being a real patriot of the country in which we live and a good Jew does not exclude one another”. Furthermore, one could not go wrong if it was understood that her “human heart [...] was complex, and what it could hold!” It certainly held feminism too.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-84.

<sup>97</sup> *Јеврејско женско друштво у Београду. 1874-1924. На дан педесетогодишњице од оснивања*, 65.

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