
THE HADASSAH
RESEARCH INSTITUTE
ON JEWISH WOMEN

JEWISH WOMEN 2000:

CONFERENCE PAPERS

FROM THE HRIJW

INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARLY

EXCHANGES 1997-1998

EDITED BY HELEN EPSTEIN



WORKING PAPER 6 / NOVEMBER 1999

.....

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTRIBUTORS	1
EDITOR'S NOTE	7
<i>by Helen Epstein</i>	
JEWISH WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES.	13
<i>by Riv-Ellen Prell</i>	
WOMEN AND RESEARCH ON WOMEN IN ISRAEL.	21
<i>by Hanna Herzog</i>	
ITALY	31
<i>by Micaela Procaccia</i>	
LATIN AMERICAN JEWS.	39
<i>by Judith Laikin Elkin</i>	
IRANIAN JEWISH DIASPORA WOMEN	49
<i>by G.B.</i>	
JEWISH WOMEN IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA	59
<i>by Ana Lebl</i>	
BEING A JEWISH WOMAN IN FRENCH SOCIETY	65
<i>by Regine Azria</i>	
SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH WOMEN	71
<i>by Sally Frankental</i>	
MIZRAHI WOMEN IN ISRAEL: THE DOUBLE ERASURE ...	79
<i>by Pnina Motzafi-Haller</i>	
JEWISH WOMEN IN MEXICO	97
<i>by Paulette Kershenovich</i>	
ISRAELI WOMEN AND HEALTH	109
<i>by Susan Sered</i>	
REPORT FROM LITHUANIA	117
<i>by Basia Nikiforova</i>	
CANADIAN, JEWISH AND FEMALE.	123
<i>by Norma Baumel Joseph</i>	
HOMING PIGEON: A SEPHARDIC JEW	129
<i>Ruth Knafo Setton</i>	

continued



TABLE OF CONTENTS, *continued*

THE MOTHERS OF PASTEUR STREET: THE STRUGGLE FOR PLURALISM IN ARGENTINA	137
<i>by Edna Aizenberg</i>	
IRANIAN JEWISH WOMEN DISCOVER THE POWER OF WORDS	145
<i>by Farideh Dayanim Goldin</i>	
TESHUVAH AMONG FRENCH JEWISH WOMEN.	161
<i>by Laurence Podselver</i>	
JEWISH WOMEN IN CHILE	169
<i>by Marjorie Agosin</i>	
ISRAELI WOMEN: COLLECTIVISM AND INDIVIDUALISM	173
<i>by Eetta Prince Gibson</i>	
HUNGARY	183
<i>by Katalin Taliygás</i>	
BOOKENDS.	187
<i>by Pamela S. Nadell</i>	
JEWISH WOMEN IN BRITAIN	191
<i>by Marlena Schmool</i>	
GENDER AND LITERACY AMONG YOUNG ORTHODOX JEWISH WOMEN	199
<i>By Tamar El-Or</i>	
JEWISH WOMEN IN LATVIA	233
<i>By Ruta Marjasa</i>	



NORMA BAUMEL

JOSEPH is an Associate Professor in the Department of Religion at Concordia University in Montréal, Convener of the Chair in Quebec and Canadian Jewish Studies and Director of the M.A. in Judaic Studies and Director of M.A. in Judaic Studies. Her teaching and research areas include women and Judaism, Jewish law and ethics, and women and religion. Founding member of the Canadian Coalition of Jewish Women for the *Get*, Dr. Joseph successfully persuaded the Canadian Federal Government to pass a law in 1990 that would protect Jewish women in difficult divorce situations and aid them in their pursuit of a Jewish divorce. Following the Canadian achievement, Dr. Joseph helped form and presided over the International Coalition for Agunah Rights, for women whose husbands refuse to consent to a Jewish divorce.

PAULETTE KERSHENOVICH

was born in Mexico City in 1972, left when she was eight years old, lived in the United States until she was 16, and then returned to Mexico where she graduated from the U.S. International University with a B.A. in International Relations. She is currently a doctoral student in Contemporary Jewry and the Women's Studies program at the Faculty of Political Science of Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Her dissertation will be on Jewish women and their role in the Mexican community. She has lived in Israel for the past four years.

SUSANNA KEVAL

was born in 1955 in Bratislava, then Czechoslovakia. Since 1968, she has lived in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, where she finished school, did her M.A. in cultural anthropology and Ph.D. in sociology. She is affiliated with the Interdisciplinary Center for Gender Studies at the University of Frankfurt, where she does research on Jewish women's studies. In addition, she is editor-in-chief of the Frankfurt Jewish Community Magazine.

ANA LEBL was born in 1959 and grew up in Belgrade, where the former Yugoslavia's largest Jewish population (1,500 people) was centered. As an active member of that community and through working with the Jewish Historical Museum, she developed a strong Jewish identity. In 1987, she married and moved to Split (then Yugoslavia; now Croatia) joining the Jewish community of about 100. She received her B.A. in Near Eastern Archaeology from the University of Belgrade and her M. Litt. degree in Maritime Archaeology from St. Andrew's University in Scotland. She now works as a Coordinator of Cultural, Educational and Religious Activities in the Jewish Community of Split, is a member of the Jewish Women's Section of her community and of the Jewish Women's Union of Croatia. Ana has two daughters.

EDITOR'S NOTE



FOR SEVERAL MONTHS NOW, I have been editing the papers of 24 women working in different fields and in different places throughout the world. These women also come from very different parts of the Jewish community and work in a variety of settings: some are academics; some are writers; some are social workers. All originally presented papers in 1997 and 1998 at the Hadassah Research Institute on Jewish Women located at Brandeis University. Reading their work, thinking about their ideas, and sometimes struggling to translate them into English has been an unexpectedly absorbing experience for me and I've wondered what it is, exactly, that I find so rewarding. I've concluded that spending time in the company of an international, interdisciplinary group of Jewish women begins to fill a most basic and persistent need in me: the need of human beings to see themselves sympathetically represented and reflected in their culture.

As a Jewish woman growing up in post-war America, I rarely saw any semblance of my reflection in the mainstream culture. Although I grew up in the middle of New York City where almost everybody in my immediate world was Jewish, representations of Jews were absent from the museums I visited, the movies I saw, or the books I read in school. Except for *The Diary of Anne Frank*, which I consider problematic reading for a young Jewish girl, there was no Jewish heroine in the books of my childhood. I identified with active, adventurous girls like Jo March, Nancy Drew or Cherry Ames and liked reading about the dramatic lives of European and English queens. I didn't then notice that none of the women I was reading about were Jewish, or that Archie and Veronica seemed to have no Jewish friends; that there were no Jewish Mouseketeers; or that there were no Jewish girls in *American Girl* or *Seventeen*.

I was in my forties and listening to West Indian writer Jamaica Kincaid speaking at the Isabella Gardner Museum in Boston, when I suddenly perceived their absence (like Pnina Motzafi-Haller in her essay about *mizrahi* women in Israel, I applied the insight of an African-American woman to my own life). Jamaica Kincaid had done a brilliant and audacious thing: invited to choose her favorite painting at the museum and speak to a large audience about the reasons for her choice, she had beamed an old snapshot of her mother on the museum's large screen and talked about it.



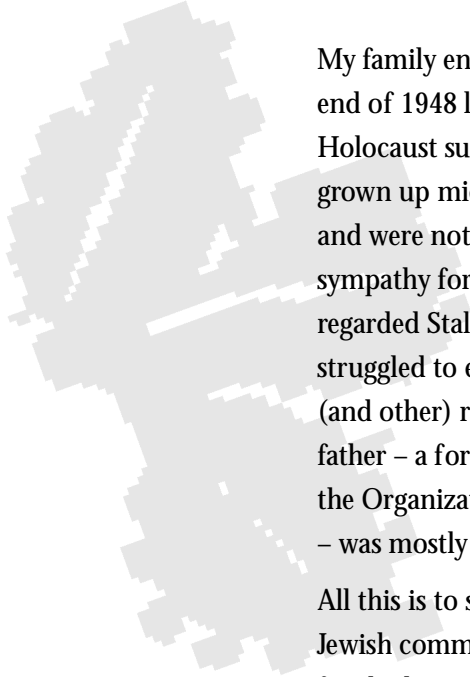
All of us in the audience, of course, had been accustomed to viewing the parade of art history on such a screen – from the Greeks to the Renaissance masters to the Impressionists and Abstract Expressionists. We were accustomed to oil portraits and elaborately framed photographs. The effect of Kinkaid's snapshot was shocking and made the author's point more forcefully than her words: Had we ever seen the image of an ordinary West Indian woman on the walls of a museum? Had we ever contemplated her face? Her body? Her surroundings? Her life? How did we ascribe value to this snapshot when it was viewed in a private photo album, in a newspaper, or here, in the context of other portraits in the museum? We had all read or at least heard of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, but what about the invisible woman? In this case, what about an entire sub-culture usually hidden by the majority African-American minority culture?

I viewed many of these working papers as such snapshots that raised some of these and many other questions.

In addition to experiencing a kind of invisibility as a Jewish girl in America, I also felt an invisibility in the Jewish community as the daughter of Czech Jews (of *ashkenazi* descent on my mother's side; *sephardi* on my father's). We lived on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, where there were many Jewish refugees from Central Europe but where the definition of Jewish culture was determined by people who, like the majority of American Jews, were of Russian and Polish descent.

This particular group, I later learned, had jettisoned their working-class, Yiddish-speaking parents (as well as their working-class culture) in the Bronx, or Brooklyn, or Queens, or the Lower East Side. They were West Siders now, middle-class, highly educated, new Jews, who frequented the American – not Yiddish-language – theater and Lincoln Center, collected art, read the cultural sections of the *Times* and the *New Yorker*. The men worked as professionals; the women were delighted to be full-time homemakers in the image of Betty Crocker. Most were political liberals who had flirted with Communism or Socialism in college; they had friends or acquaintances who were blacklisted and were deeply affected by McCarthyism. They had also been deeply affected by the events of the second world war and were in every way invested in a prototypically 1950s American mainstream lifestyle.

.....

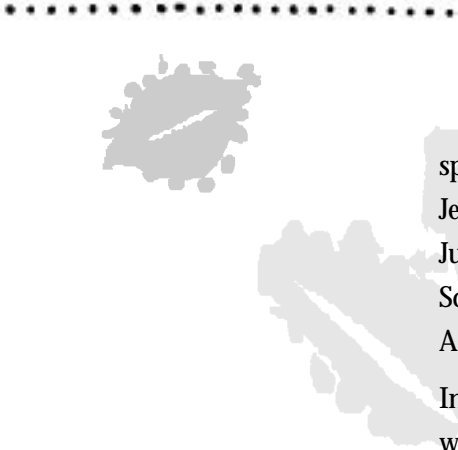


My family entered this Upper West Side Jewish milieu towards the end of 1948 like creatures from another planet. My parents were *both* Holocaust survivors and political exiles from Communism. They had grown up middle-class, did not speak Yiddish, had never seen a bagel, and were not especially interested in Israel. Although they had no sympathy for McCarthyism, they were staunch anti-Communists who regarded Stalin as another version of Hitler. During the 1950s, they struggled to earn money and to adjust to America. Like many Jewish (and other) refugee women, my mother supported the family. My father – a former Olympic water polo player and sometimes officer of the Organization of Czech Sportsmen in-Exile-in-the Western World – was mostly unemployed until I was ten years old.

All this is to say that, as I was growing up, I felt as invisible in the Jewish community as I did in the American one. And when I had finished growing up, although I was counted as an American Jew, I still did not feel like American Jewish culture included me. G.B. could have been describing the Epsteins when she writes “Iranian Jews do not easily mesh with the majority Jewish culture. Those who live in North America feel marginalized: their experience has been that American Jews know nothing about them... The Iranian Jewish diaspora is triggering a re-examination of hegemonic notions of American Jewish identity. Iranian Jews with their own ethnic and cultural tradition are challenging the American Jewish culture that was brought from Eastern Europe and that is presumed to apply to all arriving Jews regardless of their background. This ashkenazi standard for Jews is similar to the WASP standard for assimilation to North American society.”

The issue of cultural hegemony is addressed in an even more dramatic way by South African Sally Frankental. “It is a truism to note that all Jewish communities, in all times and places, reflect the context in which they are located,” she writes. “In the South African case, the segregationist policies of the colonial authorities, the Boer republics, and the Union, followed by the apartheid system of the past fifty years, form the inescapable frame for all who live in South Africa... the disproportionate numbers who arrived from one region, Lithuania, gave the community an unusual degree of homogeneity relative to other diaspora communities. This was reflected in the virtual absence of Hasidism (until the 1970s), in the particular form of Yiddish

.....



spoken, and in a variety of foods and customs particular to Lithuanian Jewry. In addition, the east Europeans' lack of exposure to Reform Judaism meant that Reform or Progressive Judaism was established in South Africa only in 1933, far later than in most diaspora communities." All this, of course, shaped the lives of South African Jewish women.

In reading these papers, I was struck by how many kinds of Jewish women there are, how profoundly we are influenced by our country of origin and the continuity or discontinuity of Jewish life within its borders, and by our experience of such factors as entitlement, dislocation, prejudice and outsider status. History, particularly this century's history, has not treated all Jewish women equally. In writing their papers, some authors – like Katalin Talyigas of Hungary – was reconnecting to and reconstructing the history of Jews in their country for the first time. Others, like Micaela Procaccia, who lives in Rome, is steeped in her history and writes with the surety of long immersion in the past: "In the year 1537, a Roman Jewish working class girl named Lariccia cried for days because of an unwanted match," begins her paper. "The day before the *qiddushin*, or betrothal, a washerwoman named Clemenza heard Lariccia saying to her father: "I do not like this man, nor do I desire him. I refuse him and reject him, nor do I want him." She declared herself to be "the unhappiest of all women," and on the next Shabbat, she told her father that she would not agree to let "the *qiddushin* become *nissu'in*.' Her father then hit her with the butt of a knife."

The biographical section of this volume itself makes for fascinating reading – as much for the wide geographical spectrum represented as for the facts each woman deemed important to include. As different as each woman is, I find much in common with her. It was easy for me to enter into her world.

Although this first HRIJW collection of writing by Jewish women around the world is inevitably uneven and incomplete, it is a respectable beginning. The authors represented here are, in some countries, part of a larger scholarly and cultural project of researching and writing about women's lives; in others, they are pioneers – the first of their kind. In some countries, they have been able to draw on a large body of data and literature; in others, they are themselves creating that data and literature. Ana Lebl from Split (now in Croatia) lives in an aging and relatively poor community of only 100 Jews



with scarce resources; Americans Riv-Ellen Prell and Pamela Nadell enjoy the support of Jewish Studies as well as Women's Studies departments at major American universities. Our Israeli and Latin American contributors bring both these realities into yet another perspective.

Some of the authors chose to spend time reworking their original presentations; others were content to have published what they originally presented. Many have struggled to express themselves in English – their second or third or fourth language. As a writer who has often had to communicate in foreign languages, I admire their pluck; as editor, I hope they forgive my journalistic bias, my many questions, and my inadvertent mistakes. Parts of all their work – even where it represents a starting point – moved and inspired me. I hope it will move and inspire you.

Helen Epstein

October, 1999

.....

JEWISH WOMEN IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

by Ana Lebl

The earliest traces of Jewish presence on the territory of the former Yugoslavia are archaeological finds from Roman times. We have so far excavated remains with Jewish symbols from over ten different sites. An epitaph found in ancient Pola (Croatia) from the second or third centuries C.E. bears the name of Aurelia Soteria. Her sons, Soter and Stephanus, dedicated the monument to the memory of their mother, God-fearing and pious sympathizer of the Jewish religion.



After a gap of many centuries, the earliest written sources on the Jewish presence in this area date from the fourteenth century. The largest wave of Jews arrived in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, following the expulsion from Spain and Portugal. Sixteenth-century documents also offer some information on Jewish women. We read, for example, about Donna Gracia Mendez Nasi, born in Lisbon. She is remembered for her outstanding knowledge, intellect, wealth, and business relations, all of which she used to help Jews in need. She was recorded to have visited Dubrovnik, in Croatia, on her way from Italy to Constantinople in 1553.

More substantial information on Jewish women exists from the mid-nineteenth century. It was the period of great social changes, in Jewish as well as the greater society. On the territory of the former Yugoslavia there were both *sephardi* and *ashkenazi* communities. Typical examples of nineteenth century Jewish centers are the predominantly *sephardi* Sarajevo in Bosnia, *sephardi* and *ashkenazi* Belgrade in Serbia and mostly *ashkenazi* Zagreb in Croatia.

Bosnia had been part of the Turkish Empire for four centuries. From old photographs, we can see that *sephardi* women in Sarajevo were dressed very much like Turkish women, possibly respected and opulent, but hidden behind their clothes. In 1878, the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia slowly brought in a European flavor, a new way of life, which is obvious from the fashionable women's dresses. The way women were dressed indicated their social status and their life-style.

Laura Papo-Bohoreta, born in Sarajevo in 1891, was an exceptional Jewish woman of her time. The most recent and detailed source for her life and work is a book on Judeo-Spanish literature in Bosnia and Herzegovina published in Sarajevo during the war of 1992. She spoke six languages, taught French and literature, wrote poetry, short stories, plays and prose, including 15 pieces in various Jewish magazines between 1924 and 1936. Her essay named in Ladino "*La muzer sefardi de Bosna*" meaning "*Sephardi* woman of Bosnia," was written between 1931 and 1932. Two hand-written versions of it are still kept at the City Archive of Sarajevo (as are most of her other works). They have not been published or translated. Perhaps such a translation would be a project for the HRIJW.

Realizing that the old *sephardi* dresses and traditions were starting to disappear, she wrote a study of the *sephardi* woman in Bosnia at the turn of the century. Bohoreta described in detail the woman, her home, her neighbors, cooking, holidays, weddings, children, charities, her relationship with her mother-in law. She described the *sephardi* woman of 19th century Sarajevo as very proud, concealing her problems, moral to the point of fanaticism, merry, curious, patient. Bohoreta also compiled texts and music of old *sephardi* romances, proverbs, rituals and traditions.

European influence was stronger and came earlier to the ashkenazi communities of Zagreb and Belgrade. There, *ashkenazi* women, usually wealthy, were dressed like their European neighbors. We can see their leisurely life-style in the style of their dresses. The fact that 15-20 meters of textile were used for each dress and that the ritual of getting dressed obviously required plenty of time, shows that they lived in comfort, had a lot of free time and were allowed to show off in public.

The social changes of the second half of the nineteenth century brought emancipation to European Jews. They began to work in new professions and became more integrated in non-Jewish society. The founding of the first associations of Jewish women in what was Yugoslavia coincided with the establishment of similar non-Jewish organizations.

Women gradually gained the right to education and participation in social and public life. The first school for Jewish girls from age six to 13 was opened in Belgrade in 1864, only four years after the first girls' school in the area. Attendance was, at the beginning, only a privilege of girls from well-to-do families. For a few more years, higher education was restricted to private, expensive schools. Girls there could study, together with non-Jewish girls, music, foreign languages and handicrafts for a year or two. In Serbia, schools became obligatory for girls in only in 1882.

Despite differences in traditions notable until the second world war, both *sephardi* and *ashkenazi* women organized into Jewish women's associations that had similar ideas and goals. The first women's charitable "ladies' societies" of the mid-19th century in Croatia were multi-ethnic and multi-religious, including Jewish women as active members. The first Jewish women's associations in Croatia were created in 1861 in Vukovar and in 1887 in Zagreb. The women who created these philanthropic societies were usually from wealthy homes, educated far above the level of the majority of women, and natural leaders. The first women's organization in Belgrade was the Jewish Women's Association, founded in 1874. Soon after, the Ladies' Society was established in Sarajevo too.

The main motivation for these societies was the same as today: to be able to help the needy. The charitable work included helping impoverished, pregnant and ill women, gathering dowries for poor girls and providing various means of relief to the members of the community. In times of economic crisis, the differentiation between members grew bigger. It was important to overcome the disparities and to enable every woman to feel comfortable, not to lose her dignity. Each member of the women's society had the feeling of belonging, and an opportunity to contribute and help others in one way or another.

In times of war, urgent charitable and humanitarian actions left no time for planning. During the Balkan wars Jewish women took active part as volunteer nurses, in collecting and producing donations for hospitals and for the wounded. The *sephardi* community provided everything necessary for a military hospital of 100 beds and the *ashkenazi* community organized "The 22nd reserve military hospital for *ashkenazi* Jews" with 40 places. All nurses were members of the Jewish Women's Societies.

Neti Munk is the example of a Jewish woman whose activities brought her the recognition of non-Jews. Born into a wealthy Jewish family in Belgrade in 1865, Neti Munk was a volunteer nurse in all wars between 1885 and 1918. She was awarded the highest military, Red Cross, crown and church medals and plaques of the time. She was one of the most active members of the Executive Board of the Jewish Women's Society. She was buried in 1924 at the Jewish military cemetery in Belgrade with the highest military honors.

At the turn of the 20th century there were eleven Jewish women's associations in Croatia alone. That number increased during the first decades of the 20th century to 31 organizations in 1929. In the 1920s, many Jewish girls in Croatia studied in Jewish schools and had their *bat mitzvah*. They grew up fully conscious of their future role and joined Jewish Ladies' Societies as a natural continuation of their education.

Until the end of the first world war, *sephardi* and *ashkenazi* women's organizations were separate. WIZO, the Women's Zionist Organization, founded in Zagreb in 1924, put all Jewish women together in one organization. Left-oriented Zionist girls' movements focused on promoting Palestine, studied Jewish topics, organized cultural and sports activities and also read and studied communist, often forbidden, literature.

Jula Weiner said in her speech at the founding conference of WIZO in Zagreb: "The status of a poor Jewish woman in some of our towns is desperate. It is not enough to visit them once or twice a year during our philanthropic campaigns. WIZO has to find ways of improving their social and economic status." By 1930 WIZO already existed in all, large and small, Jewish communities in Yugoslavia. In 1940 there were as many as 67 WIZO organizations in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Between the two World Wars, the number of Jewish and non-Jewish women's associations increased rapidly, with Jewish women as members of both. For example, in 1928 Paulina Lebl Albala, an active Zionist, founded the "Yugoslav Association of Women with University Degrees" in Belgrade.

The importance the Jewish community attributed to women is evident from the article called "The status of the Jewish woman," written by the Chief Rabbi of Vrsac Dr. Hinko Urbach in 1927. The Rabbi compliments "our charitable women's societies that do invaluable humanitarian, social, hygienic and educational work, full of understanding for social needs, with a lot of sensibility for calm and tender generosity, without much talking and spectacle."

The period after the WWI was peaceful and fruitful for women's societies. There were about 35,000 Jewish women in Yugoslavia in the period before the second world war. They organized many events, including activities oriented towards the education and health of children, and towards young mothers and their problems. Jewish summer camps were organized for hundreds of Jewish children. During the 1930s, thousands of Jewish refugees from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia found temporary haven in Yugoslavia. Jewish women's organizations helped them in many ways, before they faced the same fate in 1940.

Of the 71,000 Jews in Yugoslavia registered in 1939, only about 12,000 survived the war. Of the entire Jewish population of Yugoslavia 83% perished in the Holocaust. Five aliyot of Yugoslav Jews left for Israel between 1948 and 1952. Only 6,200 Jews remained in Yugoslavia.

Of the 35,000 Jewish women in Yugoslavia before the war, only about 7,500 survived the *Shoah*. They returned after the most terrifying experiences, many with their husbands and children missing or killed, their homes burnt. Yet, hundreds of orphans, as well as old and sick and hungry people, needed help. Jewish women found new strength to distribute aid parcels, to cook meals, to reopen kindergartens and old age homes.

It was not before 1951 that women were able to renew Jewish women's organizations. By then, only about 2,700 Jewish women remained in Yugoslavia. The Jewish women's sections were revived in Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo and in a dozen smaller towns. They all united into the Coordination of Jewish Women's Sections of Yugoslavia in 1958.

Although Yugoslavia at that time was a Communist country, there was relative freedom of religion. Since it had always been a multi-national country, national minorities were accorded the right to keep their traditions. There were no Jewish schools, but there were numerous other activities. Jewish summer camps were permitted, as well as other country-wide Jewish youth gatherings. It was possible for Yugoslav Jews to cross the borders and travel to Israel and other western countries. *Madrichim* (group leaders) from Israel and the USA were also able to participate in our summer camps, etc. Unlike in other eastern European countries, it was no problem for Jews to declare themselves as Jews, without facing any discrimination or anti-Semitism. In many ways, the situation of Jews in Yugoslavia is similar to that of Jews in some post-war western European countries. The Jewish women's sections organized many public Jewish activities, even during the 1950s, such as lectures about the state of Israel, and on aspects of Judaism, as well as about local Yugoslav themes – something unheard of in other Communist countries at that time.

The 40 years from 1951 to 1991 were prosperous in the work of individual women's sections and in the Coordination of Jewish Women's Sections of Yugoslavia. In other Eastern European countries, the Communist years are usually described as the Dark Ages, when everything Jewish was forbidden. But in the Jewish community of Belgrade, for example, during only three months of 1958, there were 14 lectures given for several hundred women. The topics ranged from Judaism and the modern state of Israel, medicine, arts and education, to the analysis of the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. All the Jewish holidays were celebrated along with official Yugoslav and international communist holidays. The Coordination of Jewish Women's Sections became a member of ICJW and Jewish Child's Day, and kept in close contact with the women's section of the Association of Yugoslav Jews in the USA, Swiss Women's Union etc. This Coordination existed for 33 years.

The partition of the former Yugoslavia resulted in the establishment of several countries (namely: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia and Yugoslavia) each with growing national and religious feelings of their majorities and at the expense of the identity of the minorities. In 1991 the Coordination of Jewish Women's Sections of Yugoslavia ended its existence.

However, all of the new countries still have some form of Jewish women's organizations. In Bosnia, the war in 1992 dictated the activities of the Jewish community. A dozen Jewish women who remained in the hell of Sarajevo, under the leadership of their president Sonja Elazar, organized themselves for work in war conditions. These courageous women did not only look after themselves, but managed to help the weak, elderly, and sick. The Jewish Women's Society provided help for all that needed it, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, often risking their lives. They named their section after Laura Papo-Bohoreta, but each and every of them deserves to be called a Bohoreta of the present.

The Jewish Women's Union of Croatia is based in Zagreb. It consists of women's sections of Zagreb, Osijek, Rijeka, Split and Dubrovnik with about 150 members. The Union of Jewish Women of Croatia is a member of the ICJW and is connected to other international Jewish women's organizations.

The Jewish community of Split, where I live, has about 120 members, of which 65 or 55% are female. Out of 45 women, 20 are registered with our women's section. During the war in Bosnia from 1992-1996, Split was the main center for getting people and goods to and from Sarajevo. Women from the Jewish community in Split played a vital role welcoming people who came in Jewish convoys from Sarajevo.

Exhausted and hungry refugees, desperate after leaving their homes and their past, found women who cared. Many of them were old people, Holocaust survivors, refugees for the second time, who often fled Sarajevo with not more than one bag.

Lenka Montiljo-Bilalagic, herself a refugee from Sarajevo, initiated the work of the Menorah club for needlework. She organized a group of refugees accommodated in hotels in Makarska, to sit, chat and work together during their endless refugee days. They crocheted *kippot* of their own design. The *kippot* were distributed and sold through the JDC in western countries. That way their dull refugee days became shorter and they regained some measure of being useful again, of earning some money and not being completely dependent on relief to keep going and to preserve their dignity.

Thanks to generous help from American Jewry, through the UJA and the AJJDC, many food and clothing packages reached Split, and, from here, other places. Jewish women tirelessly helped in the distribution of aid. Jewish refugees were all accommodated safely and comfortably. Some elderly refugees, who could not go on traveling and moving, remained in Split. Our community became their new home and family. Women from Sarajevo enriched our women's section.

Today, the Women's section is the most active part of the Jewish community in Split. The section meets once or twice a month to discuss current problems and needs. We organize visits to the lonely and sick members, and try to attract more, especially younger women. The members of the section prepare food and decoration for all our communal celebrations and are the best lecture audience. Our members travel to various meetings in Croatia and other countries. Four of our members took part in the last ICJW meeting in Prague in May 1998.

Despite the fact that we are a very small community and although active young women are few, our daughters are a promise of a bright future!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum. Vol. I. 1936, Rome

Levy, Dr. M., 1911, *Sefardi u Bosni*, Sarajevo.

Nezirovic, M., 1992, *Jevrejsko-spanjolska knjizevnost*, Sarajevo.

Radovanovic, V. and Mihajlovic, M., 1998, *Jewish Customs – The Life Cycle*, Belgrade.

Spomenica Jevrejskog zenskog drustva u Beogradu 1874-1924, 1924, Belgrade.

Spomenica Saveza Jevrejskih opstina Jugoslavije 1919-1969, 1969, Belgrade.

Svob, M., 1998. *Razvoj zenskih opcih i zidovskih dobrotvornih organizacija. Dva stoljeca povijesti i kulture Zidova u Zagrebu i Hrvatskoj*: 268-284.

Tadic, Prof. Dr. J., 1959-1960. *Iz istorije Jevreja u jugoistocnoj Evropi; Gracija Nasi ñ Beatrice de Luna. Jevrejski almanah*: 36-39

Vajs, E., 1957-1958. *Ucesce zena u jevrejskom javnom radu u Jugoslaviji. Jevrejski almanah*: 149-155.

Veselinovic, J., 1998. *Jevrejska zena u Beogradu od druge polovine 19. veka do drugog svetskog rata. Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije ñ Polozaj zene kao merilo modernizacije: naucni skup*: 485-495.

Urbach, Dr. H., 1927-1928 (5688). *Polozaj jevrejske zene. Jevrejski almanah*: 64-74.

