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ISIDORA SEKULIĆ AS FEW KNOW HER ISIDORA AS AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER AND A PUBLIC WORKER

Resume: In this paper are represented the less known events from the life and professional activity of the esteemed writer Isidora Sekulic. In this paper information, from a number of archives, which has not been previously published, was used. Isidora Sekulic completed the Teacher Training school in Sombor and graduated from the pedagogical school in Budapest, as an elementary school teacher she worked in Pančevo, Šabac and Belgrade. In the period before the First World War, on which this paper focuses on, she was active in public life as a supporter of the arts, women's rights and the progress of Serbs in the Kingdom of Hungary.

Key words: education system, teacher, literature, school, biography

The renowned writer and academic Isidora Sekulić (1877-1958) was also a teacher, the author of teaching plans and numerous scholarly articles in the field of teaching methodology. Isidora taught algebra, nature and society, chemistry and minerology, and at one point gymnastics and drawing. Although her creative work was characterized by writing about her travels, human destinies, and the influence of history on them, she found the greatest value in natural sciences: "In this time the technical disciplines, which are founded on mathematics and geometry, have the greatest growth and power, together with the natural sciences, which are based mainly in chemistry and physics, these sciences are in our time half of the world." (Sekulic I: 1931, 72-73.)

Isidora Sekulić was born on the 16th of February 1877 in Mosorin (Bačka). She was christened on the 21th of February 1877 and the godfather was PhD Milovan Đorđević, the editor of "Zastava" in Novi Sad. Isidora was the second of three children of Danilo and Ljubica Sekulić. When she was one, the family moved to Ruma, from there to Zemun, in which she spent her childhood. At the end of 1881 Isidora's seven year old older brother died, and on the 22nd of December 1883 her mother Ljubica died of tuberculosis, when she was 30 years old. Both she and her brother had bad health. Isidora once said that her father comes from a lineage of crazy and irritable people, while her mother comes from a lineage fraught with tuberculosis (Dordevic C, 1998:34). In a conversation with Siniša Paunović in April 1957, she said: "When it comes to my childhood, my desire for school, knowledge and travel – none of it has anything to do, I think, with my mother. All of that was passed down to me by my father. Everything connected to the mind and heart comes from him; from my mother –poor health. With my father begins and finishes my brothers and my joy from knowledge, reading, music. When she became a writer, Isidora Sekulić traveled to the already impoverished Bačka, and on her return

¹Flag

she described memories of her early childhood and hometown. There we have descriptions of the village in which she was born, grass, a watermill which she visited as a child, a November day in which her friend and Isidora rescued a baby outside of the city near a river, and the baby taught them to be kind – “tiny bugs also have a part to play in the civilization of mankind”. Latter, at the beginning of the occupation, she added a text about her father, speaking about his deep and dark seriousness, religiousness and gratitude for the meals, the connection to the ancestors, all of which he instilled in her. (Sekulic I, 2001: 313-339).

Isidora started her schooling in the General elementary school in Ruma, where she finished the first semester of her first grade. After that, with her father and younger brother Dimitrije-Mita, she moved to Zemun, where her father was named city captain. She loved books and music, and in school she was very hard-working, but she “grew up close to the deaths door” since she and her brother were frail. The Greek private school in Zemun offered high culture and an excellent education, in it studied Sima Milutinović Sarajlija, Ilija Garašanin, Đorđe Protić. In the summer of 1887 Isidora had finished the fourth grade of a Serbian elementary school, and in October 1887 she enrolled in a private higher school for girls, which was founded by Marija Getsgebpl Krihstern, and in which the sciences, craft and the German language were taught. In the school year 1887/1888 she enrolled in the fifth grade of the higher school for girls on VelikiTrg in Zemun, and was the 15th on the enrolment list. She was diligent, and stood out from her peers because of her education. Because of this she was often lonely, always the “first to be marked”, the same was true in her sixth and seventh year of schooling (Radio Belgrade, Show: *With two white pigeons* 26th April 2004).

Isidora loved the old part of Zemun. Once she said that in Zemun she thinks of the deceased, her childhood and youth, friends scattered across the world. The deepest traces of a childhood in Zemun stayed in her for the rest of her life. Their first apartment was in the Street of three pigeons, today known as Zmaj Jovina Street, surrounded by shops. She reminisced: “We lived in a very narrow Street, the church and the church yard were a skip and a jump away. This fact made our apartment special. The rooms were often filled with the resonance of the ringing bells, we would unexpectedly smell the incense, the tower with the birds was always visible, from the dining room we would watch how the candles and cressets shined through the huge glass doors in the front of the church.” After 1895 the family moved to Molinarijeva Street no. 23, today Svetosavska 19. Reliable documentation about this period in Zemun were left by PhD Petar Marković, who was mayor at the time, in the book *Zemun od najstarijeg vremena do danas (Zemun from the earliest times until the present, 1896)*. Isidora said: At one time, when I was about 12 years old, I used to spend whole days and nights staring through the window looking at the Danube. The only window in my room looked at a short and narrow street which widened as it, in a way, flowed into the Danube. The river, at that time, still had not been constrained with a stone embankment. The Danube could be clearly seen and heard, powerful, blustering, generating waves in two rows, one above the other, the lower row thick, dark water, the upper row pure energy.” In the short story *Children* she wrote about the inhabitants of Zemun at the end of the XIX century: “The border town was able to gain a lot of money through legal and illegal trade. Furthermore, Austria was inclined towards this small town, which was directly across Belgrade. Therefore, in Zemun there were many artists, musicians, painters and reciters, especially governesses, this meant that in the hour for walks one could more frequently hear French, German, and English than Serbian.” She wrote the works *A small town and its last Greeks*², and in 1940 she published one of her

² Title in Serbian: *Palanka i njeni poslednji Grci*

greatest works *The Chronicle of a Small Town Cemetery*, published by the Serbian literary fellowship, which was dedicated to the old Zemun. One of the heroines in the book, Lady Nola, probably represented Marija Lazarević Tetana, who was a benefactress and Isidora's neighbor from Molierova 20 Street, or represented Neda Nikoloc who was another noble woman from Zemun (IAB, Arhiv Zemunskog magistrata, 1883). Isidora observed them and understood, she sympathizes with the world which was disappearing.

She was a reserved child, and liked to isolate herself from others. "In that dilapidated cottage I learned to love what I cannot see, what I do not possess, what needs to pass... The small heart of a child who still did not know what is the present, suspected that it has a fleeting existence and a past, that it has a moment when one withers, falls and becomes cold, that an hour is approaching when the proud dragonflies, which fly high underneath the sun, are the same as the stolid blind worms which slither underneath the ground." "... I wish I could buy it, and build it into a tower, to lock the tower with nine keys, so that I could from time to time lock myself in it, and in the dark and silence I would bizarrely imagine that I can build into it the traces of dead days. (Sekulic I,1974: 19, 24). The feeling of inadequateness, which had followed her and saddened her, she described in these words: "I had the rare opportunity to be thrust into the world of science and work from my earliest days. I knew a lot and unwittingly showed it, because it was impossible to hide it. I stood out from my environment and the other children despised me. In my school bag, on my way home, I used to find mocking notes, my caricature, and everything amounted to my burying myself in books and boasting about it. This was not true; I sank into myself and escaped to the last rows, into the darkest corners. I felt that I was a bother that I provoked with my wish for knowledge. I was very unhappy in those years. " "I have had my chalk drawn circle since childhood - I sit with a book in a corner. Rectangle, with my back turned to the room. And unless my father or brother called I would not react. I would say to myself: latter..."

She had loved traveling since she was little, and with time she became famous for her travel writing. All her life she lived modestly so that she could travel. "I went to Tsargrad when I was 9 years old. For every trip I prepared long and hard. My father Danilo, when I was supposed to go to Italy, told me that I had to study for a year before going, because there I would encounter twenty centuries. I spent studying not one but two years. I read everything that I had found: literature, other art, geography, history, in the end I knew more about Italy than the tour guides." (Vlajnic, "Bazar", 14th March 2014). As a teacher she spent her summer and winter breaks traveling through Europe, North Africa and the Near East. She was a polyglot and a translator.

Isodora grew up in a time of the battle for the abolishment of the "fourth class" - disempowerment of women in society, inferior position in the family, unavailability of schooling and employment, to inequality of the genders in front of the law and voting rights. On the other hand, society had high expectations of them, as keepers of the household and traditions, and with it of the people and state. And even when they were officially suppressed, women had their contribution in the decision making process. Apart from acting from "the shadows", women as inspiration and muses, women as beloved daughters, girlfriends and wives, mothers and grandmothers, do not allow a one sided approach to history. Judging by the information on the position of women in society, especially connected to education, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire children of both genders had equal rights. Because of this Serbian women in the Austro-Hungarian Empire were more educated. Even village children were schooled. They went to elementary school in their villages, and in the city to higher school for

women, or teacher training schools, a small number of the rich went to foreign institutions, such as the Serbian women institution of Mother Angelina in Pest, or in a monastery (Izzenskogsveta, "Mlada Srbadija", 1870; Sekulic I, Savic-Rebac A, 1925, Curic Radoslav, 1961: 5). Teachers were among the first educated girls, they were responsible for spreading the schooling of girls. They were mostly from families of tradesmen and clerks and families of teachers and craftsmen, more rarely were they from families of clergymen and farmers. Teacher marriages were a common occurrence, but many female teachers remained unmarried and financially supported the rest of the family. Although, when it came to their education, work with children and educational work after classes they were metaphors for the new age and patriotism, teachers often attracted jealous looks, they were the subject of gossip, the remains of the petty bourgeoisie would pry into their private life and scheme (Durovic A, 2004: 409-413, 751). In the beginning, teachers from higher schools for women, were accepted because of high achievements, or charity, but with time more and more teachers had graduated from Preparandijas³.

Isidora also followed along that path. After she had finished the third grade in a school in Zemun, Isidora Sekulić went to the higher school for women in Novi Sad, both of which she had finished with the highest grades. From 1892 she was a student at the Preparandija in Sombor. As someone with excellent grades, she had the honor to make a speech at the ceremony organized to celebrate 40 years of teaching and literary work of Nikola D. Vukicevic, who was the head of the Preparandija. The ceremony was held in the fall of the year 1893, on the 29th October in a bar "Lovackirog". This speech was published in the "Skolski list"⁴, the same place where, half a year later (March-April 1984) her first literary work *Stasu Srbinu gusle* was published. Isidora's father was one of the people who congratulated Vukićević: "To the hardworking teacher of Serbia's teachers and my dear daughter Isidora's teacher, the industrious worker for education and the school, I wish to wholeheartedly congratulate you on 40 years of work and 100 years of life." Radmila Sučević wrote about Isidora's first work: "*Sta su Srbinu gusle*⁵ shows us a well-read and literate young woman, educated to respect the victims of her people, to hate the Turks..., to feel gratitude towards the guslar⁶... Quite conventionally, but not without warmth and sincerity, she reminds the Serb to listen and try to hear "whether in the galaxy one can hear other noises apart from cries". The letters of the young school girl, which would shed some light on this period of Isidora's life were lost, as well as the letters to her teacher which she signed with Sida, and the ones that she had burned. She spent her summer and winter breaks in Zemun, she read a lot, played the piano with her brother who accompanied her on the violin. She was in Zemun on the 19th June 1895, at the celebration of Stevan Popović's 50th birthday. He was a writer and the head of Tekelijanum. Isidora also had tied to this institution (Dordevic C, 1998: 8-9, 18-19, 21.).

In the autumn of 1894 she enrolled in the higher school for pedagogy in Budapest for the math-physics group of sciences. In June 1897 she graduated with the highest grades and got an academic diploma. The papers published: "Miss Sidonija, the daughter of our renowned town captain Danilo Sekulić, has finished in Budapest a higher course of state pedagogy with the highest grades. The same young lady finished all of the grades in elementary school,

³ Teacher training schools

⁴ School paper

⁵ What are gusle to a Serb

⁶ People who play the instrument gusle

higher school for women in Novi Sad and Preparandija in Sombor with the highest grades. We congratulate Sidi and her father on such an immense success.” (“Novo vreme” 29.June 1897).

That year she spent the summer with her brother and father in Zemun. In the autumn of the same year, on the 3rd October, she sent an application for the position of a math and natural sciences teacher to the Serbian higher school for girls in Pančevo. In the application Isidora stated that on the basis of the certificate of the Budapest Royal Hungarian women's Preparandije for state high schools she is qualified to work as a teacher in higher state and municipal schools in all math and natural sciences related subjects. With the application she also submitted the confirmation form the Magistrate in Zemun that she is “in every aspect in good moral conduct”. At the special session of the Serbian Orthodox Church Municipality in Palcevo Assembly, on the 9th Novemebr 1897, Isidora was unanimously appointed to be the math and natural sciences teacher, “and according to the circumstances for other subjects as well”. Isidora reported for duty on the 4th December 1897. She taught 18 classes a week: math for all four grades, natural sciences in the first two, physics and chemistry in the third and fourth grade. Only in the first year of her career did she teach gymnastics in all four grades. (Djordjevic C, 8-11, 14-23.)

In the beginning Isidora Sekulić was unsatisfied with her position in the school. She addressed the school council asking for the salaries of male and female teachers to be equal, as well as for the salary of her colleague Danica Vujasković, who got 800 forints and 80 forints for an apartment, and Isidora's, who got 600 forints and 60 forints for an apartment, to be equal. Apart from the feeling of injustice in comparison to others, she was troubled by the fact that she had the highest education, but was paid as if she did not have it, and because life in Pančevo was expensive. The committee approved her request on the 14th December 1897, which was signed by the patriarch – the metropolitan of Karlovci – Georgije Branković. Her salary was then increased to 800 forints, and she was given 80 forints for an apartment. (Leskovac M, Zbornik Matice srpske za knjizevnost br. 18, sveska 2, 1970)

In Pančevo before the establishment of the higher schools for girls, there were few female teachers and they only taught craft (sawing, knitting...) (IAP, Skolski fond, 72/1872). The first female teachers were ahead of their time and paved the way for new generations by making a specialized teaching plan, without waiting for the country to do it (IAP, Fond skolskog odbora, 90/1872, 77/1872). According to the Regulation from the 17th July 1872 male and female teachers became equal regarding salaries, however in real life the situation was different. The unequal and unjust position of female teachers is vividly represented in the fact that in Pančevo, in the time of demobilization, the female teachers were paid only 120 forints, which is less than a fourth of what the male teachers were paid! (IAP, Fond Skolskog odbora, 69 I 78/1872). There is no doubt that the fear of sex equality was the cause, it was masked by unconvincing explanations that female teachers needed a smaller salary because if they are young ladies they live with their parents, or if they are married, they only contribute to the family, where the main source of income are the husbands (Stolic A, 2003: 99-100). From there stems the injustice that befell Isidora, an injustice which she could not accept.

The next year, 1898, she passed the state exam. “Miss Isidora Sekulic, a teacher at the SVDS, last week passed in Budapest the exam in the French language and literature with the highest mark and therefore became competent to teach this subject in higher schools for girls and state schools. We congratulate her on such an immense success. We are pleased that our school for girls has such qualified staff.” Apart from this statement of congratulations in the

Pančevo's newspaper "Gradanin"⁷ by Nikola M. Kosanić, there was another report in "Ženski svet"⁸: "Isidora Sekulić, teacher at the SVDS in Pancevo, last month in Budapest passed the state school exam in the French language and literature, with the highest mark. Cheers! ("Zenski svet" br. 11 od novembra 1989, str. 174)

The Serbian higher school for girls in Pančevowas founded, like the ones in Novi Sad and Sombor, in1974. They were based on the German schools for girls in the former Banat border and on the higher school for girls, which wasfounded 11 years earlier by Prince Mihailo Obrenović. The respected citizens of Pančevo and women associations addressed the committee in Karlovci and the Kingdom of Hungaria committee, which agreed to help. The school became a hub of excellent teachers and a disseminator of educated girls, in a time when the education of female children was rare in Europe. The core of education was in the study of religion, science, and art, but also in the practical knowledge and ethics. The highest achievers of this institution were two girls who graduated from university: PhD Marija Prita, the first woman doctor in the Kingdom of Hungary, the second in Serbia, and Jelena Sopović, a pianist and a piano professor. School days passes regularly, but there were also exceptional days even more worth remembering, such as the visit to Belgrade and celebration of the 25th Serbian higher school for girls' anniversary in 1899. (Spasovic I, 2014)

On the first day of Easter on the 3rd April 1900, Danilo Sekulić, the father of Isidora Sekulić died, and three months later, while he was 21 years old, her brother Dimitrije also died. Upon hearing of the death of his dear friend Danilo Sekulić, Milan Savić (1845-1936), father of the famous Anica Savić-Rebac (1893-1953), the translator and scholar, wrote a necrology ("Branik" br.44 from 13. (26) april 1900, "Branik", no. 84, Thuseday, 18. (31) July 1900). Isidora was filled with grief. She was very close with her father. In *Pisma iz Norveske*⁹(1913) she wanted to write a dedication to her father: "To my greatest teacher, and also my father, Danilo Sekulić, who I lost as a father in youth, who as I teacher I still have today", but this stayed only on the manuscript. This is why she dedicated *Kronika palanackog groblja*¹⁰(1940) to him, "This work I dedicate to the shadow of my father Danilo Sekulic". She blamed herself for never reciprocating enough love to her father. He used to tell his Sida: "People created the difference between men and women. A difference which is detrimental to women. Nature has entrusted women with a hard task, therefore it had to give her great strength. Everything is within the upbringing and society in which the female child lives"(Radovanovic S, 1986: 26).Isidora's absence from the Easter celebration in Pančevo worried her friend and colleague, the composer MitaTopalović. She also could not attend the trip to Karlocvi and Novi Sad, for the Pentecost on the 10th, 11th and 12th June 1900. She wrote to Arkadije Varadaninu: Dear respected gentleman! I was prevented by grief from personally attending the walk through Novi Sad and in the children's games in the afternoon, I nonetheless consider it a pleasure to thank you in my and my colleagues name for the warm welcome and ask that you convey our sentiment to your teaching staff. Regarding myself, be assured that it was greatly pleasurable for me to see my dear and respected colleagues all together again. With this in mind I would like to give my regards to Miss Savić, Mister Jorgović and other respected teachers. Your blessed student respectfully bids you farewell. I Sekulić, Pančevo, 15th June 1900."

⁷ "The citizen"

⁸ "Women's world"

⁹Letters from Norway

¹⁰The Chronicle of a Small Town Cemetery

At the beginning of the 20th century Isidora returned to teaching. At that time, she addressed the school authorities in Sremski Karlovci numerous times for different concerns. Patriarch Georgije Brankovic on the 13th (26) September 1902 declined her request to go abroad to perfect her knowledge of the English language, together with the School council, with the explanation that the girls at school need her. In 1903 she sent requests to the School council for a one year leave of absence for medical treatment of catarrh of the lungs. Because of her poor health and because she was from a village, Isidora had a healthy diet and loved to visit the open market in Pančevo, which was always full of fresh fruit and vegetables, eggs, dairy products and honey. The first doctor examination was in 1903 in Belgrade with Dr. Simonović and again on 24th December 1904. Dr. Kosta Aleksic and Dr. Stevan Jovanovic wrote: "With this we confirm that we have examined Isidora Sekulić, a teacher in the Serbian higher school for girls in Pančevo, and concluded that she suffers from chronic catarrh in her lungs. Therefore because of her bad health she needs at least sixth months rest i.e. leave of absence for at least 6 months." Even before the beginning of the school year, on the 13th (26) August 1904 the School council ordered the school counselor to "because it is clear from the submitted report that the health of Isidora Sekulić, teacher at the Serbian higher school for girls, is quite poor, because of which the aforementioned teacher received a one year leave of absence through the verdict III C 349/294 ex. 1903, which she did not wish to implement, and because the poor health of the aforementioned teacher negatively affected her teaching and work at school, so that in the previous school year numerous complaints for her behavior towards the pupils were received from the student's parents, and because of her poor health could endanger the pupils health (and lastly because the School council had learned that her moral behavior was not in accordance with her profession), we direct the aforementioned teacher to be examined by the head physician, to see if she is still capable of performing her duties, and also direct the main school counselor to carry out an investigation against the aforementioned teacher because of her unseemly conduct towards the pupils and her behavior as well as to present a report to the School council about his findings and give a suggestion." Because of medical treatment, Isidora also asked for a one year leave of absence on the 25th February (10th May) 1905. (ASANUK, School council, verdict 60/180, ex 1905) It was then decided that half of her salary would be given to Isidora and the other half would go to Mara Maksimović, her substitute. On a session which was held on 12th (25th) June 1906 the committee came to a decision to, after Isidorasent a request to the Serbian Publick Council of Curch and School¹¹in SremskiKarlovci (because reasons for the leave of absence still had not been accepted and on sick-leave she did not receive enough money) and after she had been examined by a committee whose members were Dr. Jovanović, Dr. Panta Teodorović and Milan Mandrović, give her a pension in the amount of two years last pay of 3200 kronas.

Apart from health and financial problems, as well as the inability for professional development, Isidora Sekulić had problems in communication with the pupils. In the investigation of her alleged inappropriate behavior towards the children, the main school counselor came to a conclusion that "the mistakes in the choice of disciplinary means and conduct towards the children, because of which some of the parents had complained, are not of a type which require a disciplinary measure. Therefore Đorđe Popović concludes that verbal directions need to be given to the teacher in question." The statement from Karlovci was as follows: "Sekulić is in excellent command of the material which is required; she has enough skill for teaching the subject matter and uses all of the allotted time. Her success rate is good, one could even say very good. However, concerning the issue, in my presence she admitted

¹¹ In Serbian Visokoslavni Srpski narodni crkveno-skolski savet

that there is some truth in these complaints, but that she cannot guarantee that in the future she will be able to overcome them and deal with the children without complaints.” (IAP, Fond Srpske vise devojacke skole). The costs of the investigation were the equivalent of Isidora’s three month rent. After this, there were no more complaints about her work, only compliments.

As a young teacher, Isidora Sekulić was famous in school circles, and the School council had a high opinion of her professional and pedagogical work. From 1901/02 she was appointed head teacher of the Serbian higher school for girls, as a substitute for Milan Mandrović (Dolovo 1870-?), who had graduated in History and Latin in Budapest, he was a teacher in Pančevo from 1894, and until 1900 the head teacher (and previously, as a substitute of Jovan Petrović), and also the president of the Serbian youth folk dance group “Uzdanica”. Successfully and with great care she prepared a program for celebration in honor of St. Sava in school Redenicka in 1903. Isidora had taught in this school since it was founded. She had also worked as a school librarian.

On the crossroads of two centuries, more and more women had finished Preparandija in Sombor. The commitment of these teachers, their knowledge and educational beliefs are best upheld from the introduction of the Serbian higher school for girls yearly reports. Darinka Bugarski in *Upliv u Srpske devojačke skole na vaspitanje* pointed out that the goal of this school was not a specific vocational competency of girls for independent living, but a general higher education of future mothers. Katarina Petković advocated for a practical application of school basics in the family in *O vaspitanju i nastavi*¹². Danica Vujasković-Ilić presented a whole study of the women’s position in the world and her achievements in the battle for her rights in *O strucnom obrazovanju žena*¹³. Jovanka Damjanović discussed the relationship of the children’s parents towards teachers in *Učitelji roditelji*¹⁴ (Curic R, 1961: 114; Srdanovic- Barac O, 1958: 560). In the name of the School council Đorđe Popović ordered all schools to regularly hold methodology conferences for teachers, in which subject matter would be divided into monthly periods, plan implementation would be monitored, a connection would be made between similar subjects and where all teaching problems would be discussed in detail. Isidora Sekulić, with an intention to insert novelty, said that the than implemented school system was “completely wrong”. She wrote a number of significant works in the fields of pedagogy and teaching methodology.

The first article of Isidora Sekulić *O sreći*¹⁵ highlighted her erudition since she was a young girl, and the second, *Za život*¹⁶, critiqued the lowly social position of women, in a time when Babel was opening parliament for them. In the text *Za život* she wrote: „For us women it is the opposite: as students and as workers on a public field we are still looked at over the shoulder – by both the female circle and the male, but from different perspectives – in social life only to entertain oneself and others, gossip and plot, but to freely think, independently act, and make reforms, this is what almost all husbands and fathers refuse to accept; the well-known cult for “the Mother”, “the caretaker”, “angel od the home” – even it is, learned by heart until the fourth grade of elementary school, and later found only on paper; and the female citizen with Civil Rights is particularly a plot for comedy.” This article is popular even today since “the skill

¹²About education and teaching

¹³About the professional education of women

¹⁴Teachers and parents

¹⁵About happiness

¹⁶For life

of education for life” never becomes outdated. In a pedagogical way, she speaks about how upbringing and education should be, but speaks without beating around the bush and states that the educational system of that time was bad. About upbringing and education she says: “I shall also join in the song, which is constantly played: somber is the picture of today’s society, and pitiful are the children of modern society and today’s rachitic education..., generally today’s education is together with the modern civilization rotten and harmful.”. She was rightfully baffled that the whole pedagogical wisdom could be summarized in 5-6 points and that in such a way one could reach the prescribed or even ideal success in the classroom. Isidora presents sharp insights about schooling and obvious illogical ideas in education, throughout the whole article a strong pessimistic opinion can be felt. “I profusely think and read about education for life, in that end I observe myself and others, my impressions I strictly control and correctly note down... For myself, primarily for myself I learn, for myself I grab experience and understanding, for myself I play and sing – if the Gods of luck leave me, if among people I feel bitter and troubled, so that I can say: everything aside, I am enough for myself. Pedagogy as a science does not fit into my selected enjoyments, circumstances in my life and the life of some who were close to me, nudged me towards frequently thinking and reading about education in my life.” As a pupil and student she did not agree with the idea that pedagogy should be summarized in 5-6 or 8-10 points. She forestalled the ridicule of the older colleagues, because sometimes someone of twenty-something years can see, think and know from experience more than the older colleagues. She considered it the duty of the school and parents to first educate for life, and latter about sciences, but reality shows two types of woman: anxious body with an empty head in affluent homes and anxious body with an empty head in teachers etc. On the other hand – poverty. Second, the privileged position of the man, the ones who deal with woman issues are between two extremes: Bebel opens the door to parliament, while Goncourt considers that educated women are not women. Songs about the mother, caregiver and angel of the home..., until the fourth grade and latter only on paper. Third, when and how to start with education, neither too early nor too late, but with taking into account the sole, and this requires making connections with psychology, but psychology itself is not yet complete. If humans could understand their internal life, there would not be any tension in relationships with others. Examples of literary heroes for whom I have understanding, or doctors and lawyers for criminals, but in normal life not even for misunderstandings. To have brains and heart! Fourth, the health of the teacher is important, and it depends on the relationship of the country and the society towards her. Fifth, intelligence and education do not allow the outer world to harm the individual. About the position of women she wrote: “Men are somewhat more protected when it comes to education and upbringing: firstly when it comes to scholarly education they are the rulers, the position of a citizen in the country, the place of a man in society, the dignity of a father in the family is defined, generally accepted and respected; therefore their education for life is to a certain extent easier, because those laws, civil and social, at least form a course and define a goal in education and upbringing (Sekulic I, *Zazivot*, *Izvestaj SVDS* za 1903/1904, juna, 1904).

As a teacher of natural sciences she felt a need to write a paper in that area. This is how she wrote a text *O nekim morskim životinjama*¹⁷. In it she spoke about the unexplored parts of the sea, the travels of scientists and laboratories on the coast, about oysters (connected to eating) since the ancient times, about their kinds, artificial cultivation, about pearl oysters, the artificial pearls in Paris, corals, sponges (Sekulic I, *O nekim morskim životinjama*, *Izvestaj SVDS* za 1897/98, 3-9).

¹⁷About some sea animals

A special contribution to the position of women, schools for women and educated women Isidora gave by publishing the text: *Društveni položaj žena u Vojvodini I početak njihovog školovanja*¹⁸ an article about the natural sciences in higher schools for girls. Furthermore, she wrote a review of school books by Đorđe Vujaklija, *Prirodopis* (Dordevic C, 1998:55).

Another article worthy of attention is *Svečana sednica „Uzdance“ u spomen Antonu Fabrisu* about her impressions from a patriotic lecture in Pančevo. Anton Fabris (1864-1904), journalist, cultural and political worker, renowned national fighter for rights and cultural uplifting of Serbs in Dalmacija, Dubrovnik and Herzegovina, because of which he was arrested a few times by the Austrian authorities. He was the editor of the political newspaper “Dubrovnik” and the literary paper “Srd”. “Uzdance” was a Serbian youth folk dance group in Pančevo. It was established in 1904 as one of the respectable and influential Serbian groups in Pančevo. The president was professor Milan Mandrović, vice president Dušan Bošković, and the sessions were held in the building of the Serbian higher school for girls. Isidora went to their session expecting the lecture from PhD Stanojević and the reciting of “Bokeljske noći”, but left amazed by PhD Stavojević’s words about the holy trinity in Fabris: patriotism, intellect and humanity, which was “in content truthful, in meaning deep, in form witty”... Isidora went to England, “the land of Shakespeare and bankers”, in 1906. After she came back in November 1906, she held a lecture in the Serbian youth folk dance group “Uzdance”. This was an indication of Isidora’s travel writing, but this lecture was never published. When she left Pančevo in 1909 the president of the group was Vladimir Aleksić, who was Isidora’s close friend while she was in Pančevo (“Gradanin” no. 46, 19 novembar 1906).

Apart from the gatherings of “Uzdance”, the only evening activities of the young teacher were theatre plays. She also left a written trail about this. The Serbian national theatre visited Pančevo 26 times from 1861 to 1914, more than in other cities, except for Novi Sad which it visited 38 times and performed 1000 plays during those fifty years. From 1891 until 1909 they visited Pančevo every other year for a period of two to three months: *Protekcija, Kneza Ivu od Semberije, Običan čovek, Tako je moralo biti, Pučina, Pod starost, Naša deca, Svet*. Isidora wrote a review on the performance of Nušić’s play *Svet*, on the 6th February 1909 (“Branik” 10. Februar 1909). She also wrote reviews of: Predić’s *Golgoma*, Maksim Gorki’s *Na dnu* along with three foreign plays all published in “Branik” 1909.

From her colleagues she was friends with Mita Topalović, compositor and music professor (IAP, Fond SVDS, 61/1889). And his assistant, compositor Petar Krnjačević, who was related to the famous violinist Dragomir Krnjačević, was also her friend. Because of this Isidora had unpleasantness since Anastasije Krnjačević accused her of being in a relationship with his son and that this relationship was harmful for their reputations and the reputation of the school. She replied that they were not in a dishonorable relationship but rather in a noble relationship, because she wanted to save mister Petar from moral and material ruin, but then he moved from Pančevo.

Another Isidora’s friendship from Pančevo was ruined. She was close to Vladimir Aleksić a doctor and founder of the first private sanatorium for hydrotherapy, a poet and a writer, a polyglot and a translator, the owner of the first automobile in Serbia (from 1908), and even a plane, with which he first flew on the 17th September 1909. One of the sad events in her life happened near the end of her teaching in Pančevo, when Vladimir and Isidora got in an

¹⁸The social position of women in Vojvodina and the start of their education

argument. About this destruction of a friendship she wrote to her friend, teacher at the Serbian Orthodox Great Grammar School and the president of the theatrical department of the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad, PhD Tihomir Ostojić from Pančevo, on the 7th October 1908: “AltosilenyiosposciadovefuTrioia” (A deep silence rules, there was Troy). She also said that “during the discussion they made some discoveries, which were unrelated to the subject of the debate, but which separated us, forever tore us apart”(Dordevic, 1998:73-74). What is even more sorrowful is the fact that they did not get the chance to meet again and settle their differences, Dr. Aleksić during an operation of the appendix in Belgrade died in 1911.

After classes, Isidora would visit Olga Smederevac (Kostic D, 2001), to whom she continued to write to after she had left Pančevo. Olgica’s uncle was Vladimir Aleksić (ASANU14725/16, *Pismo Isidore Sekulic Olgi Smederevac* ASANU, 14725/14, *Isidora Sekulic-Olga Smederevac*, Beograd, 7 maj 1956; Pekovic S, 2001, 124-127).

In the autumn of 1909 she became a teacher in Šabac. She “followed the swallows” as she wrote to Dr. Tihomir Ostojić. In Isidora’s teaching position in 1906 came Mara Maksimović (Uljma, 1880-Pancevo, 7 maj 1936) and worked as a teacher until 1920. She came from a family of teachers, she finished her elementary school in Uljma, Higher school for girls in Pančevo, State Teacher Training school in Subotica and Pedagogijum in Pest – natural sciences group. She spoke Serbian and Hungarian. Since 1900 had been a teacher in elementary schools in Subotica, and from 1903 to 1906 a teacher in the state and higher school for girls in Budapest, for math, natural sciences and craft. Mara Maksimović kept collection for physics, chemistry, nature and society and literature, she wrote articles on the importance of women education, translated from Hungarian, wrote literature for children and adults. She was also a writer. Her first poem was published in “Golub¹⁹” 1895, and she also published in “Naš list²⁰” 1923-1924. Her pedagogical article was published in the Report SVDS 1909-1910. Mara also wrote and in 1911-1912 published a course book for chemistry: Chemistry for higher schools for girls (Kikinda, 1913 IAP, Fond Srpske vise devojackeskole, 91/1906 ASANUK, Skolski savet, 951/479 iz 1911). She was a translator and translated the following novels: P. Taborije, *Poslanstvo Đorda Rakocija*, St. Bečej; 1897, K. Mihaelis, B. Balas, *Ivantijela. Dnevnik jednog čovjeka i jedne žene*; Bardonji, *Silni treći*; a large number of plays for children; L. Zilahi, *Smrtno proleće*, Zagreb, 1924; she started the translation of: Erdeš Rena, *Veliki vrisak* (it was finished by Poznanov), she wrote the novella *prokleti svet. Iz srpskog života*, Stari Bečej, 1897.

While she was working as a teacher, Isidora started to get involved in politics. She was the representative of the Democratic Party of Serbs in the Kingdom of Hungary. Apart from sharing the ideas of the party, it is certain that her friendship with the dignified members of the party lead to her activation – they were Veljko Petrović (about whom she also wrote) and Dušan Bošković. In the last decades of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century the Serbian society in its economic development was in a crisis, therefore it was increasingly incapable and unwilling to engage in a political fight. This is also a time when the Austro-Hungarian government pressured the population with a well thought out Hungarianization, which had been started with the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 and the movement of the border in 1872. With a wish to “stop the decadency of Serbs in Vojvodina”, at the end of 1906 in Velika Kikinda a group of ambitious intellectuals gathered. At the head of the

¹⁹Pegion

²⁰Our paper

gathering were prof. Milutin Jakšić and lawyer PhD. Vasa Jakšić. In the battle which Hungarians of that time fought against Austria with the goal to gain complete political and economic independence of Hungaria, the politicians in Kikinda sided with the Hungarians (“I feel closer to a Hungarian democrat, than to a Serbian aristocrat”), because they believed that only in a free Hungary will they be able to ensure their freedom as Hungarian citizens. Furthermore, they were convinced that it was in the interest of Serbia to cooperate with the Hungarians who were the protective layer between them and the German DrangnachOsten-y. Their opinion is more understandable in the context of the Austro-Hungarian power and Serbia’s weakness which was shown in the annex of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They fought for the right of free voting in secret and the right to gather and organize, a fair distribution of taxes and the support of cooperatives, the preservation of school and church autonomy. They founded the paper called “Srpski glas²¹” on the 21st April 1907 (The paper “List nezavisnih Srba²²” and similar from 1910: “List Srba demokrata²³” until the unexpected death of Vesa Jakšić). “Srpski glas” (1907-1913; 1919-1920) – was an organ of democratic thought which not only informed the readers about the political happenings, but in accordance with the democratic aspirations for the metamorphosis of the Serbian society, educated them. The paper had a permanent literary section in which a lot of attention was given to the issues in literature, where the educational conception of Vasa Stanojić prevailed. Prevailing in this paper were patriotic lyrics as applied literature, satirical poetry as a form of an active literary word, while poetry was markedly the carrier of educational rationalism and morality (Krestic, 2013: 420-431; Isti, 1980: 344-360, Isti, Ljusic R, 1991, 401-403.). Isidora also worked for the paper: “Novi Srbin²⁴”. The weekly paper of high school Serbs in the Kingdom of Hungary. “Novi Srbin” was published from 1912 to 1914, the last year in Pančevo, under the editorship of Milan Stričević, while the head editor was Vasa Stajić who also published the paper “Srpska prosveta²⁵” in Pančevo in 1914. In both of his papers Stajić supported one of the National defense movements, which gathered around the historian Stojan Novaković and which were active after the Basnia annexation uproar and the Skadar crisis had passed, it was as follows: “battling with a book and education” (Golubovic V, 2001: 510-515). Primarily literary in character the paper “Novi Srbin” gathered important people such as: Isidora Sekulić, Veljko Petrović, Mileta Jakšić, but among the associates there were also scientists for example Jovan Cvojić (Maticki M, 2010: 393, 404-405).

From the 7th October 1909 Isidora Sekulić was a teacher in Šabac, in the higher school for girls. She taught the German language and gymnastics. In the beginning she was accepted as a temporary homeroom teacher, because she had come from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but when in 1910 she received the citizenship of the Kingdom of Serbia – she got permanent employment. Like in Pančevo, in Šabac she became noticed in the public life, although in this city on the river Sava, she had only spent three years. In Šabac, she wrote to the editor of “Brankovo kolo”: “I have a bad habit of thinking only in monologues.” In those years, 1907-1914, she communicated more through letters, usually sending them to Dr. Tihomir Ostojić who published a monograph about Zaharije Orfelin, and with whom she shared books, everyday topics, and who confided in her information about his unhealthy family, and whose work she shared with her pupils.

²¹Serbian voice

²² The paper of independent Serbs

²³ The paper of democratic Serbs

²⁴ The New Serb

²⁵ Serbian education system

From 1912 Isidora worked in Belgrade as a teacher. There she passed the professor exam and became a teacher in the Higher school for girls in Belgrade, together with Nadežda Petrović. She was dignified and in the company of the elite. One of her former pupils 18 years latter commented that Isidora “only studied and quietly watched them”.

During 1914-1915 she worked as a nurse, and latter spent the occupation in SokoBanja and Belgrade. After the war, in the paper “Nova Evropa”²⁶, the editor of which was Milan Đurčin, she published texts about the First World War: *Kako je upravobiloand Tamo-amopookupaciji*. She also wrote the song *Tihestrofe*, dedicated to Stanislav Sondermajer, the youngest fighter who died in Carskabarica, the son of Dr. Roman Sondermajer, Professor at the University in Krakow, the Chief of Serbian Medical Corps and father of war surgery, and mother Stanislava who also died in the battle of Cer (Krasic Marijanovic O, Marinkovic M, 2014).

She returned to writing about school topics when she published *Pretrpane gimnazije I darovita deca*²⁷ in 1923.

Isidora’s first book *Saputnici* was published in 1913, and her impressions of her travels in Norway she eternalized in her book *Pismima iz Norveške* in 1914. She was full of impressions from the capital city of Christiania, fascinated by the writer Strindberg, compositor Sibelius and Grieg, the Norwegians (“The Norwegians like and withstands being alone” “Who knows to speak beautifully, can build the world”), Norwegian society, the only one in which family law was favorable towards the woman and where a child out of wedlock had the same rights as a child from a marriage (Hobsbaum E, 2004: 238-240, 240-242, Markovic P, 2007: 101-106). Concerning the life of Norwegian women, Isidora wrote: “The Norwegian woman is maybe among all of the other women the most free, the most woman-worker and woman-human being”. A contrast to this is Isidora’s perception of the Serbian woman, eternally represented in the text *Srpskažena*, which she wrote as a wakeup call in Šabac in 1912 (Sekulic I, 2001:49-51).

The appearance of a woman – a great writer, and also a teacher, was the beginning of a new age. Staniclav B. Cvijanović is the publisher who is credited for publishing Isidora’s first books. Svetislav and Vera Cvijanović had three children: Ljubica, Živojin and Nada. Svetislav’s sister was Mara, a teacher and writer; she was Isidora’s friend in Pančevo and years later, when they both went from the city on the lake Tamiš. Mara Cvijanović was the first teacher for white laundry in the Women’s craft school in Pančevo. She had finished a college in Zagreb and was competent to be “a teacher for white stiches and all sorts of needle work”. When she left she was replaced by Mara Nikolić who had finished the same school as Mara Cvijanović. While Isidora was working on her doctoral thesis, 1922, the two teachers and writers spent time together in Berlin. It is also known Isidorathat called Mara Cvijanović and Dr. Milan Đuričin to be her guests. She exchanged many letters with Milan about literature, but they were connected also by Pančevo, Milan’s home town and the town in which Isidora worked in education (IAP, Zbirka profesora Zivanovica, 79; Sekulic, 2004: 31-72, 90, 141; Sekulic, 2003: 336).

Isidora Sekulić held private math, Serbian, biology and German classes even after her retirement. She remained strict, as she was in the classroom.

²⁶ New Europe

²⁷ Crammed grammar schools and gifted children

The days of schooling and being a teacher are Isidora's young years, a time in which, like other girls, she fell in love, but she hid the secrets of her heart well. She was alone all her life. There are many suspicions and guesses connected to Isidora's love life. From the letters to the poet Milan Đuričin one can sense amiable feelings towards the officer Milan Pribičević (1877-1937) the brother of the politician Svetozar Pribičević (Pribičević, 1933). In the letter written in Belgrade on the 10th March 1913 Isidora says: "... You ask a lot and I will tell you only a little. I barely saw Milan Pribičević, believe me. That is how we both wanted it. Sometimes we would meet. He would salute for a long time, I would say my hellos and we would pass by each other. When I step back, stop, turn around, and watch until I can see the profile of those with a strange elegance sloped shoulders, and search under the firmly pressed hat for one forehead and two eyes... Like that. This is how one keeps, what I am keeping now. It is the only way in which it can be saved now. As Laza Kostić threatens: so that it does not go away, it goes forever. He went from the Second to the Twentieth regiment, and now he is under Adrianople. Not now, but for a long time already. He has withstood those harsh winters, blizzards and snowdrifts. He has seen the white death." And in the letters from Christiania, 27th September 1913, she asked Đuričin if Milan Pribirović had gotten well from his illness. In December 1918 Milan Pribirević was appointed to be a member of the Serbian military mission in Zagreb, as a colonel! Isidora's letters reveal her whole internal life, as well as the lives of the people who marked her life (ASANU, 11041/1-41; 14575/707, 708,709,785).

At the end of August Isidora travelled by train to Christiania from where she informed her friends that she had married Dr. Emil Stremnicki, a Polish man who no one in Belgrade had ever met and who was reported in "Politika" to have died in the beginning of 1914. *Death of Emil Stemenicki*, Politika, 1st January 1914. With this Isidora's spinster complex had been destroyed, the complex which the petty-bourgeois imposed on her. Many interpreters of Isidora's work doubted her marriage. On the other hand, according to Dejan Marković, Isidora Sekulić left Pančevo because of false accusations that she ruined marriages, as well as remarks that Stremnicki does not exist. She told Medaković: "I had gotten married out of pity, and he soon died from cancer" (Medaković, 2001: 10, 15). The psychiatrist Dr. Vladimir Adamović, researched the love lives of famous Serbs. When it comes to Isidora Sekulić he believes that a number of unlucky circumstances made the writer make a life conversion: Problems with one male pupil in grammar school, the unrealized relationship with Milan Pribičević, the enigmatic marriage to Dr. Stremenicki and his unexpected death, which disturbed the people in Belgrade at the time, and that through sublimation she transferred her emotional problems into cerebral ones, and in such a way made it possible for Jovan Skerlić to claim that everything about her is "intellectual" ("Politika", 4 novembar 2013., str. 10).

Immediately after the end of the First World War, 1919-1921, she began writing *Đakon Bogorodičine crkve*, which was published by Vasić a publisher in Zagreb, and *Iz prošlosti*, which was published in Sarajevo by Đurđević. It is hard to fight the impression that in *Đakon Bogorodičine crkve* there are biographical elements, that the character Ana Nedić, a volin teacher, was modeled after Isidora in the way she saw herself while she was working as a teacher in Pančevo, when she was also at that age. She evoked the spirit of the beginning of the twentieth century and, probably, Pančevo, as well as the importance of the church to the Serbs in the Kingdom of Hungary. Above all the love of the pianist Ana Nedić and the deacon Irinej, and the marriage to Dr. Pašković. "No, there is nothing new that can come, the person needs to be the new in everything, as well as in music... The church should be love, because

music is also the church.. Is there not a flame which does not extinguish?" (Sekulic I, 2001: 5-212).

After the First World War, she was a teacher of the Third grammar school in Belgrade. Isidora started suffering from tuberculosis in 1906, she went into a pension as permanently disabled for the teaching position (IAP, Fond Srpske vise devojacke skole, 216/1901, 42/1906) and she was completely retired in 1931 as a teacher of the Second grammar school in Belgrade. In the meantime, in 1922 she finished her doctoral studies in Germany on a topic from the field of Philosophy. She died in Belgrade on the 5th April 1958 at 07:55 pm at the internal ward in the hospital "Dr. Dragan Mišić", and was buried at the Topčidersko cemetery on 7th April (ASANU, 14285, *Poslednja volja Isidore Sekulic, diktirana melefonom 10. I 1958*).

Biographical note

PhD Ivana B. Spasović (Piroć, 1972), completed the studies of history at the Faculty of Philosophy Belgrade University, where she graduated in 1996, completed her MA studies in 2003 and her PhD studies in 2013. From 1996 to 2009 she was a history teacher at the economy school "Nada Damić" in Zemun. During 2005-2007 she participated in the creation of the Educational standards for the end of obligatory education of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, for the subject history. From 2009 to 2014 she was employed in the Historical Archive in Pančevu, and from 2015 she has been working as a historian in SANU Archive in Belgrade. She is the author of course books, monographs, a large number of scientific studies, in the field of history teaching methodology and archival science, exhibitions, public lectures as well as papers in print and in the electronic medium.