

WOMEN DOCTORS IN THE SERBIAN SANITARY SERVICE DURING THE BALKAN WARS

LIJEČNICE U SRPSKOM SANITETU TIJEKOM BALKANSKIH RATOVA

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SUMMARY

The objective of this text is to point out the problems connected with the organization of Serbian sanitary infrastructure during Balkan wars (1912 – 1913) which brought to the end of supremacy of the Ottoman Empire over the Balkan states.

The Serbian sanitary service in the Balkan's wars was well organized according to the foreign physicians participating in those wars.

During the Balkan wars, twenty Serbian women doctors joined the medical corps. They were mobilized by order of the Ministry of War or assigned as directors of the reserve military hospitals developed from the former district civil hospitals. In several districts they were the only medical doctors in the town.

Key words: History of medicine, 20th Century, military medicine, Women doctors, Serbia

With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1912 for all the Balkan countries a new historical period started after the London Peace Treaty was signed in 1913 between the Porte and the Balkan countries governments.

The Serbian sanitary service in Balkan wars joined the armed forces which were organized by king Milan Obrenović in 1886, comprised, with

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some corrections, three armies. Thanks to this a good quality professional staff was created working on improving sanitary service and health conditions [1].

This period was exceptionally well studied by the most eminent Serbian and foreign military doctors participating in those wars. In all the studies a special emphasis was made first on the surgical service then on the epidemiological service of the Serbian sanitary service. The organizational problems were treated as well as the problems of the army sanitary service. In the Archives of the Military-Historical Institute of Belgrade, an important part of various archive materials were conserved as well as by the Health Department of the Ministry of War 1910-1912, comprising very important documents relevant to those wars [2].

Although the period of 1912-1913 was exhaustively studied, except some sporadic notes, neither of the authors mentioned the participation of 20 women doctors in that difficult war period, while those women highly contributed in diminishing sufferings of victims, wounded or sick, so completing the lack of medical staff.

We will quote a letter of the Minister of War read at the session of the Main Committee of the Serbian Red Cross on September 20, 1912 [3].

“In the whole of Serbia there are 370 doctors only, out of which 296 are selected for the war field, 74 doctors remaining in the rear lines. Since from that number we should take off doctors working in central administration (six), doctors which because of the old age or poor health are incapable (eight) and doctors having abandoned their profession long ago (three) for the sanitary service in the rear lines, among the population and the army, only 57 doctors, remain, including 16 women doctors.

With such a small number of doctors the health service cannot be carried out, not in regular times, less even under war circumstances [4].

A great help to the Serbian sanitary service was offered by foreign doctors, foreign medical missions, who volunteered to come to Serbia, having been motivated by different factors, objective or subjective. Medical staff comprised of about 200 nurses, among them were Serbian women from respectful urban families who worked with foreign nurses with devotion and merit, taking care of a great number of wounded and sick soldiers.

The first war operations started in Montenegro which declared the war with Turkey on October 8, 1912. Then Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece

joined, by breaking diplomatic relations and declaring the war with Turkey.

Serbia was well prepared for this war, equipped with modern arms. The supreme commander of the Serbian army was king Petar I, chief of the general staff was Radomir Putnik, commanding three Serbian armies were the heir to the throne, Aleksandar, General Stepa Stepanović and General Božidar Janković. The first, battle of Kumanovo, presented a dazzling victory for which the general Putnik was granted the highest military rank of duke. Further operations lead to victory of the Serbian army in the battle of Bitola in the second half of November 1912. In this way the Turkish army in Macedonia was completely defeated.

The war operations continued in January 1913. The Bulgarian forces, with the help of Serbian units, conquered Jedrene. The fall of this town symbolically represented the defeat of the Turks. A plan was conceived In Vienna regarding the creation of an independent Albanian state, which would present a natural obstacle to Serbia for having an access to the sea. The plan was executed by proclamation of the independence of Albania on November 18, 1912 in Valona.

The war operations were going on. The town of Shkodër surrendered to Montenegrins, but due to a great pressure of the Austro-Hungarians, the Montenegrin army had to cede this town to Albania. The first Balkan war ended with the Peace treaty signed with Turkey on May 30, 1913 in London. Turkey resigned from all its territories on the Balkan Peninsula to the West of Enez - Midia. The access to the Adriatic Sea was not allowed to Serbia. Greece gained Thessaloniki, Crete and islands in the Aegean Sea; Albania was placed under international protectorate, which will lead to further wars. Serbia and Greece made a new alliance which was later on joined by Montenegro.

Serbian demands for the revision of the treaty of 1912 were the main cause of the conflict with Bulgaria. Loosing its access to the sea Serbia was now in a less favorable position in regard to other Balkan nations. With the creation of an Albanian state Serbia lost an important part of the territory it laid claims to. Bulgaria claimed the major part of the liberated territory in Macedonia.

Bulgaria had pretensions in regard to the town of Thessaloniki and to some areas on the Aegean coast. Bulgaria succeeded in breaking the Balkan alliance. Facing a new threat, Serbia and Greece entered a new alliance joined later by Montenegro.

Wishing to compromise, Serbia accepted the Russian tsar as arbitrator and promised to accept his decision. However, Bulgarian army suddenly attacked Serbia in the night between the 29th and the 30th of June on the river Bregalnica, confluent of Vardar, and the second Balkan war started. All commanding officers, with the exception of the general Živojin Mišić, assistant to the duke Putnik, were for the retreat of the Serbian army. However, Putnik accepted the proposition of Mišić. A heavy battle was storming in which the Serbian army lost 16,000 soldiers and Bulgarians 25,000. The Serbian victory motivated Rumania to wage war against Bulgaria, which was a final blow to its destiny in the Second Balkan War. Greece also destroyed the Bulgarian army, Rumanians entered into South Dobruđa, went over the Danube and made progress towards Sofia. Turkey, finally, on July 15, attacked Bulgaria and gained Jedrene. Attacked from all sides, Bulgaria demanded armistice. Peace negotiations started by end of July. The peace was made on August 10, 1913. By this peace treaty Balkan wars ended, the first, a liberation war, and the second, a tragic Balkan war [5].

During the Balkan wars, twenty Serbian women doctors joined the medical corps. They were called up under the general mobilization, as well as by order of the Ministry of War [6].

Besides the Balkan wars, they participated in all other wars until 1918. They had completed medical studies abroad, in Zürich, Geneva, Paris, Nancy, Rome, Berlin, Prague and Petrograd, in the period from 1866 to 1911 [7].

They were:

Dr. MARIJA SIEBOLD-FJODOROVNA (Riga, 1849 – Belgrade, 1939). Born into a German Protestant family. Completed secondary school in Petrograd, and medical studies in Zürich in 1874, where she became friendly with Dr. Draga Ljočić and came to the Principality of Serbia during the 1876 war. She participated in the Balkan wars as a member of the medical corps of the Serbian army having the military rank of major [8] (Figure 1).

Dr. DRAGA LJOČIĆ (Šabac, 1855 – Belgrade, 1926). Completed secondary school in Belgrade and medical studies in Zürich in 1879. The oldest Serbian woman doctor, participant of all the wars from 1876 to 1918. In the Balkan wars she served as lieutenant of the Army medical corps in Belgrade [9] (Figure 2).

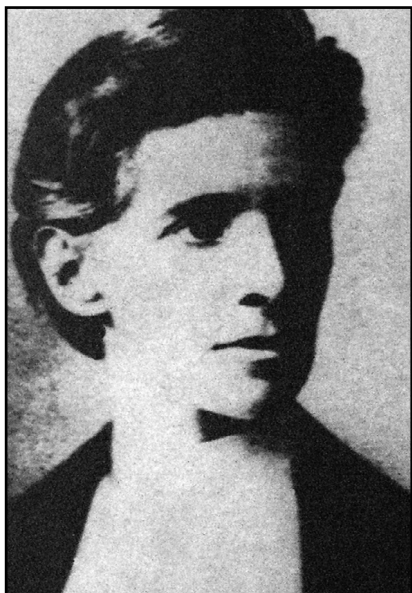


Fig. 1 Dr. Marija Siebold-Fjodorovna
(Riga, 1849 – Belgrade, 1939)



Fig. 2 Dr. Draga Ljočić
(Šabac, 1855 – Belgrade, 1926)

Dr. DARINKA KRSTIĆ (Šabac, 1885 – Belgrade, 1929). Completed secondary school in Belgrade. Medicine and gynecology specialization completed in Paris in 1895. During the Balkan wars she worked as a doctor of the Reserve Military Hospital in Belgrade [10].

Dr. MARIJA PRITA (Pančevo, 1866 – Belgrad, 1954). Completed in Paris secondary school in 1884 and medical studies in 1892. During the Balkan wars she was municipal doctor in Belgrade, replacing her husband, Dr. Nikola Vučetić, who was working on the front lines [11] (Figure 3).

Dr. LJUBICA ĐURIĆ (Belgrade, 1880 – Belgrade, 1923). Completed secondary school in Belgrade. She studied medicine in Geneva where she graduated in 1904, and completed specialization in Paris. During the Balkan wars she worked in the General State Hospital in Belgrade [12].

Dr. STANISLAVA JOVOVIĆ (Kruševac, 1878 – Belgrade, 1950). Completed secondary school in Kiev and medical studies in Petrograd in 1902. During the Balkan wars she was director of the Reserve Military Hospital in Užice [13].

Dr. ZORKA BRKIĆ (Šabac, 1878 – Šabac, 1950). Completed secondary school in Belgrade in 1896 and medical studies in Petrograd in 1902. During



Fig. 3 Dr. Marija Prita
(Pančevo, 1866 – Belgrad, 1954)



Fig. 4 Dr. Jelena Popadić
(Paris, 1886 – Belgrade, 1954)

the Balkan wars she worked at the General and District Hospitals in Šabac, then as director of the Second Reserve Hospital [14].

Dr. ANA BRKIĆ (Šabac, 1880 – Šabac, 1948). Completed secondary school in Belgrade in 1898 and medical studies in Petrograd in 1904, where she specialized in internal medicine. During the Balkan wars she was member of the medical corps in Belgrade [15].

Dr. KATARIIJA JAKŠIĆ (Glina, 1884 – Belgrade, 1954). Completed secondary school in Zagreb and medical studies in Zürich in 1908. In Sarajevo; the Austro-Hungarian authorities granted her the permit to come to Serbia as a volunteer. The Ministry of War appointed her to the Reserve Military Hospital in Kragujevac where she had been working during the Balkan wars [16].

Dr. NATALIJA NIKOLAJEVIĆ (Šabac, 1884 – Belgrade, 1951). Completed secondary school in Belgrade in 1902, medical studies in Zürich in 1908, and specialization in internal medicine in Berlin, in 1910. During the Balkan wars she worked as a doctor specialist of medical corps in Belgrade [17].



Fig. 5 Dr. Radmila Milošević
(Belgrade, 1886 – USA, ?)



Fig. 6 Dr. Božana Bartoš
(Niš, 1886 – Belgrade, 1952)

Dr. DESANKA STOJILJKOVIĆ (Požarevac, 1885 – Požarevac, 1928). Completed secondary school in Belgrade in 1896, medical studies in Paris in 1902, where she specialized in surgery. During the Balkan wars she was surgeon assistant to Dr. Vojislav Subotić at the surgical department of the General State Hospital in Belgrade [18].

Dr. STAKA ČUBRILOVIĆ (Bosanska Gradiška, 1885 – Belgrade, 1975). Completed secondary school in Belgrade and medical studies in Prague in 1911. With the permit of the Austrian authorities in Sarajevo, she came as a volunteer to Serbia. She reported to the Ministry of War and was assigned to work in the Reserve Military Hospital in Kragujevac [19].

Dr. JELENA POPADIĆ (Paris, 1886 – Belgrade, 1954). Completed secondary school in Belgrade in 1904 and medical studies in Nancy in 1911. During the Balkan wars she was director of the Reserve Military Hospital in Aleksinac and the *only* doctor for the districts of Morava and Aleksinac [20] (Figure 4).

Dr. RADMILA MILOŠEVIĆ (Belgrade, 1886 – USA, ?). Daughter of Dr. Draga Ljočić, first woman doctor on the territory of ex Yugoslavia. Completed secondary school in Belgrade in 1904 and graduated in medicine



Fig. 7 Dr. Draginja Babić
(Valjevo, 1887 – In The War, 1915)



Fig. 8 Dr. Nadežda Stanojević
(Pirot, 1887 – Belgrade, 1978)

in Zürich in 1911. During the Balkan wars she worked at the surgical department of the General State Hospital in Belgrade [21] (Figure 5).

Dr. VERA MARKOVIĆ (Belgrade 1886 – Belgrade, 1952). Completed secondary school in Belgrade in 1906 and medical studies in Zürich in 1911. During the Balkan wars she was director and the *only* doctor of the 12th Reserve Military Hospital in Belgrade [22].

Dr. BOŽANA BARTOŠ (Niš, 1886 – Belgrade, 1952). Completed secondary school in Belgrade and medical studies in Nancy in 1911. During the Balkan wars she was director of the Reserve Military Hospital in Kraljevo, and, at the same time, the town doctor for railroad staff [23] (Figure 6).

Dr. DRAGINJA BABIĆ (Valjevo, 1887 – in the war, 1915). Completed secondary school in 1906 in Belgrade. Started medical studies in Zürich in 1907 and graduated in Berlin in 1911. During the Balkan wars she was director and the *only* doctor at the Reserve Military Hospital in Valjevo [24] (Figure 7).

Dr. NEDA JOVANOVIĆ (Cetinje, 1887 – Belgrade, 1950). Completed secondary school in 1906 in Belgrade and medical studies in Rome in 1910, where she specialized in paediatrics. During the Balkan wars she was direc-

tor of the Reserve Military Hospital in Čuprija, then director of the District Militarized Hospital in Jagodina and the *only* doctor in the town [25].

Dr. NADEŽDA STANOJEVIĆ (Pirot, 1887 – Belgrade, 1978), Completed secondary school in Belgrade and medical studies in 1911 in Petrograd. During the Balkan wars she was director of the District Military Hospital in Pirot and the *only* doctor in the town [26] (Figure 8).

Dr. SLAVKA MIHAJLOVIĆ (Belgrade, 1888 - Belgrade, 1968). Completed secondary school in Belgrade in 1905 and medical studies in Geneva in 1911, where she defended her doctoral dissertation. “The Malaria in Serbia“ . During the Balkan wars she was director of the Reserve Military Hospital in Niš [27].

Table 1. Serbian women doctors graduated from the medical schools of European universities 1876 – 1918

Tablica 1. Srpske liječnice koje su diplomirale na medicinskim fakultetima europskih sveučilišta od 1876. do 1918.

UNIVERSITY	MEDICAL SCHOOL	SPECIALIZATION
19 th century		
Zürich	5	
Bern	1	
Geneva	1	
Paris	-	1 (gynecology)
Vienna	-	1 (gynecology)
20 th century		
Petrograd (Petersburg)	8	1 (dermatology)
Paris	6	2 (paediatrics)
Nancy	5	2 (surgery and gynecology)
Zürich	6	
Geneva	5	
Berlin	1	1 (internal medicine)
Rome	1	1 (paediatrics)
Vienna	1	1 (gynecology)
Prague		1 (dermatovenerology)
Budapest	1	2 (gynecology and dermatovenerology)
Total	41	13 specialists



Fig. 9 Medical staff of the hospital in Čačak, 1912.

Those women doctors played a definite role during the Balkan wars in wiping out epidemics of dysentery, smallpocks, abdominal typhus, recurrent fever, typhus fever and cholera, that were raging throughout the country. Their work at the reserve military hospitals, off the railroad line Belgrade-Bitola was painstaking. They bravely bore all calamities of the war, the same as soldiers on the front lines. They carried out surgical interventions, performed autopsies of dead bodies and made out expertises.

In December 1912, there were 34 reserve military hospitals in Belgrade, where, besides Serbian doctors, over a hundred foreign doctors have been working too. The hospitals managed by women have been surprisingly well organized. After the battle of Kumanovo the wounded were transported to Belgrade where they received urgent medical aid.

The women doctors, by their number, their high professionalism, devotion and self abnegation, had played an important and many-sided role in the 1912-1913 Balkan wars.

We shall conclude with the wise reflections of the head of sanitary service, Gojko Nikoliš: "Because, the whole pleiad of women doctors from Draga Ljočić, Draginja Babić, Marija Prita, Božana Bartoš to Nadežda Stanojević – that whole procession of frail feminine figures marching at men's pace in the

columns of soldiers, confronting war atrocities, misery, sickness and the death, possessed something in common, much stronger than the generation gap, what was the attachment to their people, to the liberty, their devotion to the essentially human profession of the true and effective humanity."

SOURCES

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SAŽETAK

Namjera je članka prikazati najnovije rezultate istraživanja problema vezanih uz organizaciju srpske sanitarne službe tijekom Balkanskih ratova (1912.–1913.) koji su doveli do sloma dominacije Osmanskog Carstva u balkanskim državama.

Prema navodina stranih liječnika koji su sudjelovali u Balkanskim ratovima, srpska sanitarna služba bila je dobro organizirana. U tim je ratovima u srpskom sanitetu sudjelovalo i dvadeset liječnica koje je mobiliziralo Ministarstva rata. Neke od njih vodile su rezervne vojne bolnice koje su se razvile iz okružnih civilnih bolnica. U pojedinim okružjima bile su jedini liječnici.

Ključne riječi: *povijest medicine, XX. stoljeće, vojna medicina, liječnice, Srbija*