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**“OUT OF THE EAST CHRIST CAME”:  
SERBIA IN THE EYES OF AMERICAN WOMEN  
IN THE GREAT WAR\*\***

**Abstract:** This paper is based on research into American magazine accounts of Serbia, as well as on reports on Serbia made by eyewitnesses, American journalists, and humanitarians who visited Serbia. Many of them made a large contribution to the formation of a positive image of Serbia and above all, of the Serbian people. A special emphasis is placed on the discourse and activism of three American women, who were personally and professionally linked to Serbia in the years of the Great War. Demetra Vaka Brown in 1917 considered political commentary a central part of her work, and her commentaries on politics during WWI were especially in demand. Amelia Peabody Tileston was a humanitarian, whose letters are abundant in data on Serbia, its people and soldiers, and the atmosphere at the Salonica Front. Another American who witnessed the ravages of war in the Balkans after WWI was Rose Wilder Lane who was sent to the Balkans by the Red Cross to investigate conditions there.

**Keywords:** First World War, Serbia, America, women, Amanda Peabody Tileston, Demetra Vaka, humanitarian work.

The involvement of American women in the First World War represents a huge area for research. WWI coincided with the Progressive Era of domestic reform within the United States, and women’s struggle for suffrage and enhanced civic rights. When the United States entered the conflict in April 1917, the administration needed the loyalty of a divided nation, including the

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vital support of women on the home front.<sup>1</sup> The army depended on women in new ways, especially in terms of the civilian workforce. Eric Leed argues that WWI created for women “an enormously expanded range of escape routes from the constraints of the private family.”<sup>2</sup>

This paper is based on research into American magazine accounts of Serbia, as well as on reports on Serbia made by eyewitnesses, American journalists, and humanitarians who visited Serbia. Many of them made a large contribution to the formation of a positive image of Serbia and above all, of the Serbian people. A special emphasis is placed on the discourse and activism of three American women, who were personally and professionally linked to Serbia in the years of the Great War. Of course, these are only selected testimonies, among other memoirs of Americans who visited Serbia in WWI. Serbian historiography has shown a certain interest in the humanitarian aspect of American engagement in the Balkans.<sup>3</sup>

During WWI information on Serbia streamed into the US public through daily newspapers, magazines, and scientific literature. Articles on Serbia had become more and more frequent in the American media since 1916, and especially in 1917, as a part of Woodrow Wilson’s campaign to enter the war. Perhaps the best description of American knowledge about Serbia was given in 1918 by professor Eva March Tappan, who noticed that when the war broke out, it was announced in big headlines in newspapers, but many Americans had to take down their atlases to make sure just where Serbia was.<sup>4</sup>

One of the first descriptions of Serbia that did not deal only with war efforts came from the pen of Demetra Vaka Brown in 1917.<sup>5</sup> Demetra Vaka was born in 1877 on the island of Prinkipo near Istanbul. She came from an Ottoman Greek family and was educated in Greek schools in Istanbul and France. The death of her father when she was eleven drastically changed her life. She had to support the family by getting a job or finding a wealthy husband. That was mainly the reason why she emigrated in 1895 as a governess and companion of the children of the Turkish consul to New York.<sup>6</sup> Soon she

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<sup>1</sup> Kimberley Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva, American Women in the First World War*, Urbana&Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2008, viii.

<sup>2</sup> Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How War Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, 384.

<sup>3</sup> U. Ostojić-Fejić, *Sjedinjene Američke Države i Srbija*, Beograd, Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1994, 60–78, 99–114.

<sup>4</sup> E. M. Tappan, *The Little Book of the War*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1918, 86.

<sup>5</sup> D. Vaka, *The Heart of the Balkans*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1917.

<sup>6</sup> R. Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem*, London&New York, I.B.Tauris, 2004, 24.

became a part of the mainly male Greek immigrant society in the USA. In 1904 she married the American author Kenneth Brown and became one of the first Greek women to join mainstream American culture and society. Vaka Brown worked as a correspondent and journalist, specialising in political commentary about the Balkans and the Middle East and penning popular fiction, often romances on Oriental themes. Her book, *Haremlik: Some Pages from the Life of Oriental Women*, published in 1909, was based on her own experiences when modernization entered Ottoman domestic life. On the one hand, *Haremlik* was nostalgic for the Ottoman life that was rapidly disappearing, and on the other hand, the author enjoyed the freedoms of a professional American woman.<sup>7</sup>

Vaka Brown considered political commentary a central part of her work, and her commentaries on politics during WWI were especially in demand. *The Heart of the Balkans* gives an account of peoples and politics in Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania, Montenegro, and Greece, based on her travels as a teenager and after. She provided a different worldview to the Americans, and was considered an authority on the Eastern Question: “To the average American world politics were of no interest until after the world wars; but to us in the Near and Middle East, politics were a living concern, since they affected our daily lives.”<sup>8</sup> Demetra Vaka Brown was placed in the middle social spectrum of life in America, which allowed her to gain access to more elevated circles of society.<sup>9</sup> Taking advantage of the American interest in the Orient, she used her own experiences to prove herself as a writer and journalist.

Vaka’s book on the Balkans came as a result of her journey in the early twentieth century. She accompanied her brother on an intelligence mission for the Turkish government, on a journey through Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece. She was not much interested in the political aspects of the expedition, but rather in culture, customs, and the position of women in these countries. *The Heart of the Balkans* consists of nine chapters, with the fifth dedicated to Serbia: “Servia, the Undaunted.”<sup>10</sup> Vaka had come to Serbia from Montenegro, a “stony parcel of land ruled over by Prince Nicholas.” She

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<sup>7</sup> Yiorgos Kalogeras, New Introduction in: *Haremlik, Some Pages from the Life of Turkish Women by Demetra Vaka Brown, Cultures in Dialogue: First Series 2*, Piscataway NJ, Gorgias Press LLC, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism*, 27.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, 34.

<sup>10</sup> The chapters are: “Wild Albania,” “Romantic Albania,” “Through the Lands of the Black-Mountainers,” “The Eagle and the Sparrow,” “Servia, the Undaunted,” “The Gypsies of the Balkans,” “The Prussia of the Balkans,” “The Sons of the Hellenes,” and “Saloniki, the City of Histories.”

recorded the first impressions of Serbia: “The standards, the attitude toward life, even the material comforts were of a different world. It was the Balkans still, far behind the rest of Europe; but the Balkans a trifle mellowed, a trifle civilized, a trifle humanized.”<sup>11</sup>

Vaka knew that Serbian history was made of great battles, for instance the battle of Kosovo, “glorious as any of the battles of ancient Greece,” and that “Serbia fought against Turkey, as Belgium fought against the Germanic invasion, in our time.”<sup>12</sup> She noticed that there were no big cities in Serbia, not even Belgrade or Niš, because the shadow of Austria was falling upon it “like a blight,” preventing its growth.<sup>13</sup> Vaka suggested that although Serbian history was the most heroic, Serbians were concerned with their present, jeopardized by the “black and menacing” shadow of Austria and the “treachery of Bulgaria, whom Austria was ever using as a weapon against Serbia.”<sup>14</sup> She explained that the borders of Serbia drawn by the Treaty of Berlin were not good for Serbia, but pleased Austria.

Demetra Vaka saw Serbia as the country where women were no longer valued for their physical endurance alone, as in Montenegro and Albania. Serbian women “prized education as only the people of America do, and they looked upon it as the greatest sign of civilization.”<sup>15</sup> Her Serbian acquaintances often remarked that Greece was the most civilized country in the world, since it was the first to give equal rights to education to men and women. Vaka also remarked that daughters of the higher classes could read and write, and several could speak French. Young girls learned needlework, and spent their time visiting and church-going. The women of the lower classes, like those in the other Balkan states, worked in the fields.<sup>16</sup> Vaka noticed that there was something soft and tender about Serbian women, who sang about the glorious past, and still spoke of the wonders of love and marriage, with a feeling quite different to the women of Albania, Montenegro, and Bulgaria.

“The Servians will dance on the slightest provocation,” writes Vaka. She described people dancing the kolo between cattle and pigs at the cattle fair. The women were dressed in gay colors and men were holding their sashes: “They were in a circle, the men coquetting with the women, and the attitude of the men toward the women was quite different from that of the Albanians, Montenegrins or Bulgars toward *their* women. It was more Latin than

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<sup>11</sup> D. Vaka, *The Heart of the Balkans*, 110.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, 116.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, 114.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, 122.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, 123.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, 124.

Balkan.”<sup>17</sup> In Serbia the attitude toward the poor was brotherly and democratic. The Servians had little, but that little they divided. No matter what people talked about, they always came back to politics.

Vaka writes that Serbia was misgoverned by King Aleksandar and Queen Draga Obrenović, who ruled the country at the time of her travels with her brother. On the other hand, she praises King Petar Karađorđević: “Servia today is ruled over by a man and a warrior: a man who can rule in peace and lead in battle. We have seen Servians in three consecutive wars, and we know what they can do when they are led by a man.”<sup>18</sup>

Vaka spent six weeks in Serbia, and had only pleasant impressions. Students hailed them in Greek and the authorities did not examine their passports. She hoped that when the current war ended, Serbia would get its chance, “unless the Christian Powers again squabble among themselves, and again call upon Servia to pay the price.”<sup>19</sup>

Amelia Peabody Tileston came from a different milieu than Demetra Vaka. She was born in 1872, the daughter of paper manufacturer John Boies Tileston and poet and author of spiritual literature Mary Wilder Foote Tileston.<sup>20</sup> Amelia’s life was directed at doing charitable acts such as walking unadoptable dogs from the Animal Rescue League, studying nursing in Boston, and working at day camps for tubercular patients.<sup>21</sup> In October 1914 Amelia Tileston went to England where she worked in the Anglo–American Hospital, helping mostly Belgian refugees. In January 1915 she went to Italy, where she was told about the great suffering in Serbia. Nevertheless, she had to go back home to Brooklyn in September 1915. Moved by the Serbian suffering during the retreat over Albania, Tileston collected money for Serbs and studied Serbian grammar to prepare herself. At last, she succeeded in reaching Salonica in October 1916. There she joined Emily Simmonds,<sup>22</sup> who had been working for the Serbians from the beginning of the war.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, 134.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, 128.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, 144.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.backtothebible.org/authors/mary-wilder-tileston>

<sup>21</sup> Anthony Mitchell Sanmarco, *Milton. A Compendium*, Charlston 2010, 139; Cheryl Forbes, *Women of Devotions Through the Centuries*, Baker Books, 2001, 76.

<sup>22</sup> Emily Simmonds (1888–1966), a British-born and American-trained nurse. She worked in Serbia from 1914 (first at the hospital in Kragujevac), survived typhus in Valjevo, rescued Serbian refugees in Albania and soldiers in Corfu, fought cholera on refugee ships, cared for children in Brod and refugees in Vodena, set up soldiers’ canteens in Macedonia and Belgrade, helped defeat typhus in Dubrovnik, and fed the starving in Russia.

At the Salonica Front, Tileston helped at the First Field Hospital of the Moravska Division until March 1917. Then she and Simmonds were asked by the Red Cross to start a camp for 500 elderly men, women, and children refugees at Vodena. From May 1917, Tileston ran by herself the canteen for the soldiers on their way to the front at Vladova.<sup>23</sup> Two Serbian soldiers, Jovan Mitrović and Milorad Gligorović (Gligorijević?) “Cheecha” helped her until February 1918, when the canteen was closed. Soon she opened a new canteen at Vertekop, an official military station. She cooked them meals and tea, and gave them cigarettes and quinine.

In the meantime Tileston cooperated with Mrs. Evelina Haverfield<sup>24</sup> and Miss Flora Sandes<sup>25</sup> and opened canteens at Petalini for the Moravska and Dunavska divisions. In April 1918 Tileston moved to Gosturian with the Second Serbian Army, and opened a canteen for the Timočka and Vardarska divisions. After the offensive in October 1918, she opened a large canteen in Skopje for the Serbian Army. She also took care of 200 Italian prisoners who had been captured by Bulgarians. The next canteen was opened in Čačak in November 1918. Tileston came to Belgrade in January 1919, suffering from malaria.

Then she left to America for two months in the spring of 1919 to arouse fresh interest in Serbia. Upon her return to Serbia she found that Miss Simmonds had taken charge of a camp at Avala for 400 children (the Children’s Fresh Air Camp). It was closed in October, and then, with the help of Simmonds, she started a large canteen in Belgrade for the demobilized soldiers. Each day she made a great canister of tea, which was distributed to the

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<sup>23</sup> *Amelia Peabody Tileston and her Canteens for the Serbs*, Boston, Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920, 34 [hereinafter: *Canteens for the Serbs*].

<sup>24</sup> Evelina Haverfeld (1867–1920) joined the Scottish Women’s Hospitals in early 1915. She served in Serbia as a hospital administrator, until she was taken prisoner by the Central Powers. After liberation she came back to England, where she raised money for clothing and canteens for Serbian soldiers and gave public speeches on behalf of Serbian relief. After the armistice she returned to Serbia to supervise the distribution of much needed food, clothing, and medical supplies. In 1919, she founded a home for Serbian war orphans in Bajina Bašta.

<sup>25</sup> Flora Sandes (1876–1956), member of the St. John Ambulance unit raised by Mabel Grujić, the only British woman who served in Serbian army. She became sergeant major and captain in the Serbian army; F. Sandes, *An English Woman-Sergeant in the Serbian Army*, London, Hodder&Stoughton, 1916; F. Sandes, *The Autobiography of a Woman Soldier: A Brief Record of Adventure with the Serbian Army 1916–1919*, London, H.F&G. Witherby, 1927; L. Miller, *A Fine Brother: The Life of Captain Flora Sandes*, Richmond, Surrey, Alma Books, 2012.

soldiers at the railway station. Besides the tea, she provided cigarettes, socks, gloves, or whatever she was able to secure.

Amelia Tileston worked alone, using money of her own. She was not connected with the Serbian Red Cross, but was a volunteer under the Serbian Army, with the honorary rank of officer. Unfortunately, Tileston died of pneumonia on February 22, 1920. She had a military funeral, with full honors. The book *Amelia Peabody Tileston and her Canteens for the Serbs*, published in 1920 by Mary Wilder Tileston, represents a collection of letters written by Tileston from 1915 to 1920 to her friends and family in the USA. The book begins with a short history of Serbia in the World War, and Tileston's letters are abundant in data on Serbia, its people and soldiers, and the atmosphere at the Salonica Front.

In a letter from Niš dated February 18, 1915 Amelia records her first impressions of Serbia: "Servia is about as big as a New York State . . . Typhus is raging all over Serbia. We saw the most pitiful wrecks of Servian soldiers at the railway stations. They looked like living skeletons. It was a very cold day, with snow, and a bitter wind. The soldiers mostly had no hats or overcoats . . . one of the most heart breaking things that I have ever seen."<sup>26</sup> Tileston writes that there was no running water in Serbia except in Belgrade, mortality was very high, and people were thoroughly exhausted by cold and hunger, to which they succumbed very easily. Meanwhile, Niš was "most fearfully crowded with refugees." Although Tileston was one of few women among soldiers, she was never bothered in any way and was able to walk around in perfect safety.

"The Servians are a very thrifty, industrious and sober people. They are also most democratic, officers and men being on the friendliest of terms . . . They are the bravest soldiers in Europe."<sup>27</sup> She saw Austrian prisoners, who were allowed to go freely about the streets, and who were given pocket-money by Serbian women. In Niš she met Colonel Subotić, a famous Serbian surgeon.<sup>28</sup> Amelia was shocked by the condition of the sick, who had no beds,

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<sup>26</sup> *Canteens for the Serbs*, 43.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, 46.

<sup>28</sup> Dr. Vojislav Subotić (1859–1923), a surgeon and head of the Surgical Department of the General State Hospital in Vračar. At the beginning of the war he was transferred to the Military Hospital in Niš, where he became a reserve medical. He experienced the Salonica Front, and worked in Paris and London from 1916 to 1918 as a Serbian delegate. During his time in London, he gave a lecture on the epidemic of typhus that raged in Serbia from 1914 to 1915. At the beginning of 1918 he became head of the Surgical Hospital in Dragomanci, near Bitola. He was named a member of the Association of War Surgeons of the United States and the Association of War Surgeons of England. After the war, he became professor at the Medical Faculty in Belgrade and founded the first surgical clinic.

clean linen, or underwear. There were not enough doctors, since many of them had died. "One must admire the Servians greatly, for their patriotism, courage, patience and industry, but one loves them for their simplicity, their gratitude, and open-hearted kindness," writes Tileston.<sup>29</sup> She concludes that Americans ought to help "the little nation" that was fighting against the tyranny of militarism.

Tileston spent March through October 1916 in Italy, waiting for permission to travel to Corfu or Salonica. She received a cable from nurse Simmonds to immediately come to Athens. During her time spent in Salonica, in November 1916, she tried to learn Serbian. Meanwhile, she was waiting for provisions from America, especially flour. The fund was worth \$15,000 (that is over \$350,000 in 2017). In January 1917 she was in Monastir, helping nurse Simmonds. The Serbs called her "*dobra sestra*" (the good sister), because she gave them cigarettes, mainly purchased by herself.<sup>30</sup>

To her, the Serbian soldiers seemed very nice, patient, brave, uncomplaining, and grateful. The Bulgarian prisoners were in fairly good physical condition, although tired of war. In her letter from Vodena on March 4, 1917, she regretted the fact that fourteen automobiles sent from the USA had been sunk by a submarine, which left them without any means of transport. Tileston started a canteen with \$100 donated by her cousin Susy, and distributed tea, coffee, cigarettes, and beans to Serbian soldiers: "The poor old Serbs are *so* tired by the long march up."<sup>31</sup> About one hundred soldiers per day visited the canteen.

In June 1917 Amelia settled in Vladova, in a tent under a nut tree. She complained that America had forgotten the war. In the canteen she gave tea and sugar only to the Serbs. Tileston had two Serbian orderlies, and one of them was in charge of cooking.

Amelia Tileston did not have a good opinion about the people in Macedonia: "The people are primitive to a painful degree, in spite of the fact that a lot of the men have been to America and returned; four hundred young men have gone from Vodena alone!"<sup>32</sup> The only industry in the area was the silk business. On the other hand, she writes: "The Serbs are really wonderful, so patient and uncomplaining, and brave. They ought to be petted and cared for always to make up for what they suffered."<sup>33</sup> In a letter on July 27 she writes to her sister: "I wish that America could send a hundred and fifty thousand

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<sup>29</sup> *Canteens for the Serbs*, 50.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, 67.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, 80.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, 85.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, 85.



men out here to relieve the Serbians, as another winter campaign will quite finish them."<sup>34</sup> The Serbian Minister of War once visited Tileston's camp, but she was in Salonica.

After the malaria attack in September, she had to rest for a while, so she left on a French hospital-ship for Paris. Paris was full of Americans, but she wished them to begin to help in the war:<sup>35</sup> "The Serbian soldier gets five dollars a month, and wants to send money to his family in Serbia."<sup>36</sup> Tileston's letters of 1918 are full of compassion for the Serbian people. In January 1918, she wondered why America could not send enough clothes to equip the Serbs properly, since theirs were in rags.<sup>37</sup>

In January 1919 Amelia Tileston was in Belgrade, thinking about how to provide enough supplies for demobilized soldiers. Conditions were almost harder than before the armistice. The lack of transport created a fearful situation, and there was also a lack of all supplies. Tileston writes that practically all Serbians needed new clothes and new furniture.<sup>38</sup> In May she came back to the USA, where she tried to collect money to buy medical books and instruments for the doctors in devastated Serbia. In November 1919, Amelia opened a tea canteen for passing soldiers, opposite the railway station in Belgrade. She did most of the cooking, since "Serbians put in too much grease and paprika for our taste."<sup>39</sup> During the winter she caught pneumonia. In her delirium, she talked about her work, and about the Serbs, and nearly always in Serbian. She died on February 22, 1920.

Amelia Tileston was a tireless worker for the relief of the poor and unfortunate of Serbia during and after WWI. No one else was feeding the troops with hot meals on their way to the front: "Amelia was the only American woman who lived with and for the Serbs."<sup>40</sup> Tileston's story of the hardships she experienced do not concentrate on gory details. Instead she tells a remarkable tale of bravery, dedication, and loyalty to a group of men and a nation that she had adopted.

Another American who witnessed the ravages of war in the Balkans was Rose Wilder Lane (1886–1968). An American journalist, novelist, and political

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, 96.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, 100.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, 107.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, 111.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, 138.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, 159.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, 42.

theorist, Rose was a daughter of the famous writer Laura Ingalls Wilder.<sup>41</sup> After the end of WWI, she was sent to the Balkans by the Red Cross to investigate conditions there; her reports were published in the *Red Cross Bulletin*. Crucially, Lane also stayed for a time in the newly formed Soviet Union, an experience that would destroy her sympathy for communism. Rose Wilder Lane saw all the miseries of poverty, war, and pestilence on Monastir Road. She notes that Serbia, “a fleeing nation,” had been dying along its borders; nevertheless, “[i]n 1918–1919 the American Red Cross, symbol of America’s good-will to man, took Him back.”<sup>42</sup>

Lane quotes the words of a Serbian peasant who said that when a man is dying, society is to blame, but when a nation is dying, certainly humanity is guilty.<sup>43</sup> She understands his words as expressing the mystical sensibility of the East: “All the world’s great religions have come from the East, and all of them preach the brotherhood of mankind, its common sorrows, its common guilt, its common salvation through love. Out of the West comes science, with a message that man’s real fight is not against man, but against common enemies—sickness, hunger, etc.”<sup>44</sup>

Rose Wilder Lane claims that the full tragic story of the retreating armies of Serbia would never be written. Serbians defended every inch of the bare hills and rocky slopes of their land. She presents the shocking story of Serbian children, who were dying of hunger and exhaustion during the war: “War is the great revealer; inexorably it has shown that the death of Serbian babies means the shadow of death over every American home.”<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the women of America became a link between American mothers and the mothers of Serbia.

During WWI the American Red Cross organized the American Women’s Hospitals. Dr. Regina Flood Keyes, a gynecologist at Buffalo General Hospital and one of the noted surgeons in America, first established a hospital in Vodena, near the Greek–Serbian border. After the armistice, this hospital was transferred to Monastir, where it was known as the American Women’s Hospital of the American Red Cross.<sup>46</sup> Rose Wilder Lane writes that as a woman doctor, Regina

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<sup>41</sup> Rose Wilder Lane is considered one of founders of the American libertarian movement, <http://www.libertarianism.org/publications/essays/rose-wilder-lane>. Her mother, Laura, is the author of the *Little House on the Prairie* series of children’s novels.

<sup>42</sup> R. W. Lane, *Out of the East Christ Came*, Good Housekeeping 69 (5) (1919), 85.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, 152.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, 152.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, 155.

<sup>46</sup> Ellen S. More, ‘A Certain Restless Ambition’: *Women Physicians and World War I*, *American Quarterly* 41 (4) (Dec. 1989) 636–60, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2713096>;

Keyes encountered many problems. To the general astonishment of the Serbian people, she was fighting a new war for humanity against disease: “But an American woman who was a doctor, who ordered that babies be taken from their mothers’ arms and placed in tubs of water, who cherished a strange hatred for such accustomed things as flies, they could not understand.”<sup>47</sup>

In Monastir Dr. Keyes came upon horrible scenes: walking human skeletons wrapped in rags were digging the earth for roots to eat. Serbia had become a land of orphans—three hundred thousand of them, as estimated by Wilder Lane.<sup>48</sup> She called upon all nations to learn the brotherhood of mankind:

Nineteen hundred years ago the Child was born, who was to tell humanity that all men are brothers. He came from the East and He spoke to the hearts of men. But the world has not been ruled by human emotions, it has been ruled by human reason. Man has been armed against men, in peace and in war; there have been strife and jealousy between individuals, hatred and rivalry between nations. Out of these came the Great War ... The hope of saving the world lies now in the hands of the West, namely the Red Cross.<sup>49</sup>

The so-called women’s magazines in America had a role in shaping public opinion about Serbia, and were mainly interested in humanitarian aspects of the war.

In May 1916, in a column “The World of Busy Women,” *Ladies Home Journal*<sup>50</sup> published a text by Mrs. Mabel St. Clair Stobart on her experiences with the Serbian army.<sup>51</sup> Stobart worked in Serbia as a commandant of the First Serbian-English Field Hospital from April to December 1915. She writes that the Serbian peasant-soldier is not the truculent, fierce, fight-loving savage as often represented, “but loves—with the enthusiasm of a poetic nature—his family, his home, his bit of land and his country. The Serbian Ideal is represented by the word *Maika*, which means ‘Mother.’”<sup>52</sup>

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P. Paunovi, V. Josimovska, *Prve Zdravstvene Ustanove na Oslobođenoj Teritoriji za Vreme Solunskog Fronta*, Timočki Medicinski Glasnik 39 (3) (2014), 142–46.

<sup>47</sup> R. W. Lane, *Out of the East Christ Came*, 157.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, 159.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, 161.

<sup>50</sup> *Ladies’ Home Journal* first appeared in 1883, and eventually became one of the leading women’s magazines of the twentieth century in the United States. It was the first American magazine to reach one million subscribers in 1903.

<sup>51</sup> Mrs. St. Clair Stobart, *What it Means to Retreat With an Army. A Woman’s Marvelous Experience Told by Herself*, *Ladies Home Journal* 33 (May 1916).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, 31.

Stobart tells the story of the hospital's retreat by "those wonderful American automobiles" that performed acrobatic feats. Towns were evacuated, bridges were being blown up, the telegraph and telephones were destroyed. Serbian soldiers said that rain was the best friend they had, since it hindered the progress of the enemy's big guns. Stobart records the nightmarish picture of drably dressed, weary soldiers, splashing their feet in the sloppy mud, often bootless, only asking for a piece of bread.<sup>53</sup> She describes how the expectation of help from the Allies had ceased, and the only hope that remained was for the army to escape intact. She seldom saw Serbian people in retreat sleeping or eating, and she was surprised by their silence: "The silence of a funeral procession, as indeed it was."<sup>54</sup>

Wagons were filled with little children, and the oxen were led by weary women. The journey on foot over the mountains of Montenegro and Albania, from Ipek to Scutari was "a combination of mental and physical misery difficult to depict in words."<sup>55</sup> Stobart concludes that the behavior of the Serbian army was marvelous, and she is thankful that she was able to help it and the Serbian people, whom she loved and respected.

In an attempt to bring Serbia closer to the ordinary reader, *Collier's* magazine sold millions of copies of published short stories reflecting the suffering of the Serbian people in the war. For instance, in January 1917 the magazine published "A Daughter of Nish."<sup>56</sup> This very touching short story follows a young woman Darinka and her baby, refugees from Niš, who are fleeing ahead of the Bulgarian army. She does not hesitate to kill an enemy soldier for a piece of cheese, and joins the Serbian army retreating towards Pristina. In vain expectation of help from the Allies, refugees suffered from hunger and cold at Kosovo Field. Both Darinka and her baby perish. Symbolically, only one young Serbian soldier manages to escape and head towards the main body of Serbian forces.

William Frederick Bigelow, editor of *Good Housekeeping*, advised readers that the need for nurses at the European front was so great that women could easily fill men's places. The call for nursing work in Europe was announced for 25,000 women aged 19–35, who were recruited by the Woman's Committee of the Council of National Defence. The call was made for "wiping away Belgium's tears and healing Serbia's wounds."<sup>57</sup> Great sympathies were

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, 69.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, 70.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, 73.

<sup>56</sup> C. H. Crawford, *A Daughter of Nish*, *Collier's* 58 (September–March, 1916–17).

<sup>57</sup> *What the Editor Has to Say*, *Good Housekeeping* 67 (4) (1918).

shown for the children in Serbia: in “The Rights of Childhood,” for example, Dr. Henry Dwight Chapin writes that in Serbia no babies have been born for three years, and that many young children turned seriously ill, while the rest of the population lacked the bare necessities.<sup>58</sup>

*The Women’s Home Companion* published texts on the situation of children in the invaded countries. Namely, the extended physical and mental suffering retarded the normal development of children, especially among adolescents. The result was a large number of boys and girls in a highly nervous state. The suggested remedy was sought in “working therapy”—trade schools for boys and domestic science schools for girls, along with abundant food and regular physical training.<sup>59</sup>

No wonder that the American public thought of the Balkans as the Orient; even the State Department’s officials referred to it as the “European Orient.” Testimonies on Serbia in WWI by three American women of different backgrounds—one a naturalized American, one from a well-to-do family, and one brought up on the prairie—share a common denominator in their sympathy towards Serbia. Although it was seen as the Orient, on the pages of their works emerges an image of Serbia as more “civilized” and “humanized” than other Balkan countries, with “democratic” traits in behavior towards women and soldiers. The American women give their attention to the way of life in Serbia, the appearance and activities of its inhabitants, who are presented as resilient, kind, and morally strong. Serbian peasants, who became outstanding soldiers, have nothing in common with Oriental “fight-loving savages.” They are described as brave and devoted family men, who deeply love their piece of land. American women’s magazines, for their part, emphasize the humanitarian disaster in Serbia and made appeals for the salvation of the Serbian people. After the war, the positive image of Serbia helped in shifting public opinion in favor of creating a new state in the Balkans—the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

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<sup>58</sup> Henry Dwight Chapin, M.D., *The Rights of Childhood*, *Good Housekeeping* 69 (6) (1919) 39.

<sup>59</sup> C. Kellogg, *The Little Old Children: What German Terrorism and Oppression have Done to the Innocents of the War-Swept Countries*, *Women’s Home Companion* 46 (9) (1919). Charlotte Kellogg, the wife of Vernon Kellogg, was the only woman member of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, where she came in July 1916.

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**Биљана ВУЧЕТИЋ**

**„ХРИСТ ЈЕ ДОШАО СА ИСТОКА”:  
СРБИЈА У ОЧИМА АМЕРИКАНКИ ТОКОМ ВЕЛИКОГ РАТА**

**Резиме**

Први светски рат је успео, бар на кратко, да уздрма односе међу половима. Од избијања рата у Европи, Американке су волонтирале у цивилним организацијама на хуманитарним пословима, најчешће као лекарке, болничарке, возачи амбулантних возила, телефонисткиње, забављачице и новинари-извештачи са ратишта. Србија се нашла у фокусу америчке јавности због хуманитарне катастрофе услед епидемије тифуса, 1915. године. Перцепција Србије међу Американкама може се посматрати на основу извештаја такозваних „женских” магазина, (*Good Housekeeping*, *Woman’s Home Companion*), стручних часописа (*National Geographic*) и литературе. Драгоцена сведочанства о Србији и Солунском фронту оставиле су малобројне Американке – лекарке, неговатељице и новинарке које су боравиле на ратишту. Американке су испољавале „контрадикторна осећања” жалости према ратним дешавањима и поноса на сопствени хуманитарни рад. Текстови посвећени Србији углавном су писани са великом наклоношћу, представљајући је као храбру малу земљу, опустошену ратним разарањима, којој је за опстанак неопходна помоћ Сједињених Држава. Велика пажња је усмерена ка патњама цивилног становништва, посебно деце и жена, током изузетно окрутне аустроугарске и бугарске окупације. Американке су позивале на помоћ Србији не само у области медицине, пољопривреде, финансија и образовања, већ и на помоћ у збрињавању бројне ратне сирочади.

**Кључне речи:** Први светски рат, Србија, Америка, жене, Аманда Пибоди Тајлстон, Деметра Вака, хуманитарни рад.

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