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Letters preserved in the Archives of Croatian academy of science and arts reveal some information about Ivan Ožegović, who was up to this time unknown member of the Ožegović family. Eleven of his letters sent to Matija Mrazović speak of his private life, as well as of services he administered. We therefore learn that in the 1850s Ivan administered a certain public service in Križevci, most probably related to legal affairs. Not long after he was transferred for a short period to Požega and subsequently to Zagreb. Based on several later letters we can conclude that he lived and worked in Varaždin and afterwards in Križevci, where he served as vice county prefect. He subsequently served as president of the Governor's table. The letters Ožegović sent to Mrazović in the second half of the 19th century speak not only about his professional affairs, but also about his family circumstances, which makes them even more interesting. Character and content of the letters reveal that Ožegović was on friendly terms with Mrazović, whom he frequently informs about the problems he is facing, seeking advice and assistance regarding both professional and private difficulties. Research of his life could contribute to understanding of political situation in Križevci in the second half of the 19th century, as well as to more transparent perspective of the Ožegović family.

Keywords: Ivan Ožegović, Križevci, vice county prefect, Governor's table, Križevci county

Letters of Ivan Ožegović to Matija Mrazović, written in the period from 1850 to 1874, are a part of *Matija Mrazović's legacy* in the Archives of Croatian academy of science and arts in Zagreb. The life of Ivan Ožegović has up to now not been a subject of more detailed research and there is little information regarding his activity. However, it is known that he administered various administrative duties in the Križevci county in the second half of the 19th century and served as president of the Governor's table. According to the source material he undoubtedly belonged to the Ožegović Barlabaševčki family, although we are probably talking about some side branch of that family, unexplored and unfamiliar to the public, whose members also administered significant public services during

the 19th century. Affiliation to this family is also substantiated through register data stating that in Križevci, on May 14, 1824, Ivan Ožegović was born, the son of „illustrious and noble gentleman Mirko Ožegović Barlabaševčki“. It is also noted that his father Mirko was a distinguished notary in Križevci.¹ Matija Mrazović, whom the letters were sent to, was a distinguished Croatian politician and publicist in the 19th century. He was a member of the editorial staff of several journals of that time, member of the People's party, representative in the Croatian parliament and founder of the Independent national party. Through his activity he

¹ Croatian state archives, M-141: Register of births in Križevci parish 1815.-1836., str. 54.

interceded for greater independence of Croatian territories within the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy. He is linked to Ožegović not only through the same year of birth, namely 1824, but also through a long lasting friendly relationship reflected in the letters that are analysed within this research.²

Almost all the letters begin with »kind Mato...«, and end with »...your sincere Ivan.« These parts of the letters, as well some information which they reveal, lead to conclusion that they were linked with a strong bond of friendship and perhaps also with some family ties. Ožegović names Mrazović's son Lacko his godson, and in a substantial number of letters he shows interest in the rest of the Mrazović's family, whereby he calls Mrazović his most devoted friend. The letters also confirm that they exchanged information regarding various topics for some twenty years, which can most certainly be assessed as a period of considerable length.³

The earliest findings on life of Ivan Ožegović following his birth data are found in the first of the analysed letters, written in Križevci in September, 1850. In this letter Ožegović asks Mrazović to provide clarification for court fees related to certain business activities and it can therefore be concluded that he was most probably linked with court duties. Furthermore, the other parts of the letter lead to conclusion that at earlier times he might have completed the studies of law.⁴ No sooner than in the second letter from December of the same year he writes about the future changes in his life and work because he is to be transferred to Požega. In this letter he openly states that he was transferred against his own will and it can therefore be speculated that he may have made a mistake in some of his duties or that he did not get along with someone from his environment, so he was sent away from Križevci. This is substantiated with his words defending himself of »recklessne-

ss« he was accused for, but he does not consider himself guilty.⁵ Unfortunately, he fails to mention what it was about, so it is impossible to establish whether it was related to professional omission or private disagreements with his colleagues.

The next letter was written in January, 1851, following his transfer to Požega. This letter can be described as a true lament for his old life in Križevci, which he praises in comparison to Požega, stating that it has none of the characteristics typical for towns of certain significance. He describes Požega as a mere shadow of Križevci. Description of Požega and its inhabitants should be interpreted as subjective experience of a new place he is so anxious to leave. He therefore describes it as ugly, unfriendly and unpleasant. He complains about costliness and describes his stay in the town as exile. Inhabitants of Požega did not make a good impression on him. He considers himself unable to have a meaningful conversation with anybody, stating that he observed a great amount of indifference regarding the issues of national interest. In his opinion, people of Požega fail to foster either national, Hungarian or Austrian spirit. This indicates that the nationality issue was of utmost importance to him at that time. He also mentions visits to distinguished individuals in the town, who also failed to make a good impression on him. The only person he mentions with admiration is Julije Janković, member of a distinguished noble family and administrator of significant public duties in that period. He also speaks of the illness and regrets that his acquaintances did not write to him, including his own father, which could, together with several indications in the other letters, lead to conclusion of unsettled family relations in this branch of the Ožegović family.⁶ All these negative aspects that Ožegović mentions regarding his life in Požega could be related to his attempt to use such an account in order to obtain Mrazović's assistance in sooner departure from the place where he did not want to come in the first place. The letter from March of the same year no longer depicts

2 Milan Grlović, *Album of distinguished Croats of the XIX. century: 150 curriculum vitae, photographs and signatures*, Rijeka: Printing house Rijeka, 1992.

3 Archives of the Croatian academy of science and arts, Fond: *XV/46 Legacy of Matija Mrazović*.

4 *Ibid.*, *XV46A/Ož. 1*.

5 Archives of the Croatian academy of science and arts, Fund: *XV/46 Legacy of Matija Mrazović*, *XV46A/Ož. 2*.

6 *Ibid.*, *XV46A/Ož. 3*.

such gloomy atmosphere of Ožegović's life, so it could be concluded that he, to a certain extent, got used to life in Požega. He reveals that he attended numerous parties organized at shrove-tide and that he visited the nearby estates in the company of the great county prefect. This letter yet again provides room for speculation regarding his transfer from Križevci since it mentions gossip of some people from Križevci related to his relationship with an anonymous individual. He also mentions tense relations with his sister Vikica. Ožegović therefore considered Mrazović his close friend, since he wrote to him about his personal family problems.⁷

Events in Požega evidently intensified because three months later he sends another letter in which he speaks about possible marriage with some girl from Požega. He seeks Mrazović's advice regarding the wedding. From other sources we find out that Ivan was married, but unfortunately no source provides the name of the girl he intended to marry so it can not be established whether he carried out his intention to marry a girl from Požega.⁸ His stay in Požega, which was unhappy at first, was finished soon afterwards, since in the same month, i.e. in June 1851, he informs Mrazović about his obtained transfer to the service of county prefect of Zagreb. The letter is very brief, but it gives out Ožegović's excitement and happiness related to the above mentioned event.⁹

These letters written from Križevci and Požega in the 1850s are followed by some kind of a pause, since until the second half of the 1860s there is no written evidence regarding the communication between Ožegović and Mrazović. However, it can be presumed that within this period of ten years their correspondence continued to exist, although written evidence thereof failed to be preserved. The letters from the 1860s and 1870s are to a certain part similar to the former ones, with visible increase of political themes that Ožegović was occupied with due to official work he conducted. In the former

letters Ožegović wrote mainly about his personal and professional circumstances, whereas the letters from the later period reveal general political and social circumstances of Croatian regions in the second half of the 19th century. This may be caused by the fact that at later times Ožegović administered more important duties where he was involved in decision-making regarding relevant political issues of that time and consequences of solutions he advocated for could affect not only the public of Križevci, but also the wider social public.

In 1867 Ožegović wrote about a significant problem that arose when the sovereign abolished recruiting based on the principle of annual contingent and introduced general military service and ordered administration of this regulation through county organs. The counties at first refused to administer the regulation thus showing their discontent with the approaching establishment of dualism. Nevertheless, the regulation was subsequently administered. The situation was worsened by the fact that the sovereign abolished the same regulation in Hungary.¹⁰ Ožegović writes to Mrazović about recruitment problems in Križevci county. At that time Ožegović was a vice county prefect of Križevci county, and Vukotinović was removed from the prefect position because he supported resistance. Ožegović wanted to summon the assembly at which a decision would have been made regarding further continuation of resistance regarding this decision, but at the same time he writes about his fear of losing his service, which was also present among other employees who opposed the implementation of recruitment. They feared that they could be replaced by followers of the unionists and that this could have negative consequences that would in the long run be far more destructive than the implementation of recruitment.¹¹ Such interpretation of the existing circumstances indicates that Ožegović understood

⁷ Ibid., XV/46A/Ož. 4.

⁸ Archives of the Croatian academy of science and arts, Fund: XV/46 Legacy of Matija Mrazović, XV46A/Ož. 5.

⁹ Ibid., XV46A/Ož. 6.

¹⁰ Tomislav Markus, *Petitions of counties and towns of Civil Croatia 1861-1867: selected documents*, Zagreb: Croatian institute for history, 2002, pp. 301-303.

¹¹ Archives of the Croatian academy of science and arts, Fund: XV/46 Legacy of Matija Mrazović, XV46A/Ož. 7.

political situation that Civil Croatia faced under the unionist pressure due to the forthcoming necessity to conclude an agreement with Hungary. We could therefore say that Ožegović, during the previous period he spent administering various county duties, not only advanced in his service, but also matured politically and was thus able to react calculatingly in a given moment, bearing in mind the wider aspects of consequences that might result from his decisions. This letter also speaks about how much he respected Mrazović both as a politician and an intellectual, since he seeks his immediate advice in order to solve the above mentioned situation. He completely trusted Mrazović's assessment of political situation of that time.

The letters from the 1870s, more precisely one letter from 1873 and two from 1874, bear witness of Ožegović's endeavours not to lose the important position he had, as well as to advance in his service, despite the new administrative organisation. He was at that time most probably the vice county prefect of Križevci county. In these letters he speaks about his expected nomination for the president of the Governor's table. Since the new organisation of counties was implemented in 1874, Ožegović wanted to use this nomination to prevent his official backsliding, since according to the new organisation his authority related to the function of vice county prefect would be diminished. He once again asks for Mrazović's assistance in order to accelerate the nomination. However, after that he writes that he would rather assume the position of the great county prefect and remain in Križevci. He asks from Mrazović that he advocates for him with the governor. These letters clearly indicate that in Mrazović he saw not only a friend, but also a patron, and he hoped for his help in difficult personal and professional situations.¹² We find out from other sources that later on Ožegović none the less served as president of the Governor's table until he died of asthma in 1881.¹³

According to the outlined data it can be concluded that Ivan Ožegović actively participated in social and political events in the second half of the 19th century advancing within twenty years of service from county clerk to vice county prefect and president of the Governor's table. During the entire period he communicated with Mrazović as his friend and counsel who advised him on professional and private matters, which represents additional evidence of the connection between these two significant families. It would be interesting and useful from the aspect of historiography if letters that Mrazović sent to Ožegović could be found. Their correspondence would be complete and we could learn more about Ožegović's activity and Mrazović's attitudes regarding certain issues. Discovered data on Ivan Ožegović represents contribution to knowledge of his life. It would surely be worth while to conduct further research of his family branch and services he administered, which would most definitely reveal additional information that could be of assistance in the attempt to place his family more precisely in the mosaic of the Ožegović Barlabaševečki family and contribute to more transparent estimation of the role of Ožegović family in political and social life of Križevci county in the second half of the 19th century.

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¹² Ibid., *XV46A/Ož.* 8-11.

¹³ Croatian state archives, *Register of deaths 1878.-1893*, str. 66.