

## THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN CROATIA – MORE OR LESS KNOWN FACTS

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The purpose of this paper is to offer a basic overview of the events in Croatia during the First World War, but also to give some insight into how much research on this time period exists, and to offer some information on the availability of the relevant archival sources in Croatia and abroad. Due to the general lack of research on certain topics, the author has relied on her own research, with reference to further relevant literature available in Croatia.

**Key words:** Croatia, First World War, Zagreb, social history

The First World War, called the Great War by its contemporaries, could also be called the Forgotten War in Croatia today because it has remained insufficiently researched. Were it not for the 90th<sup>1</sup> and 100th<sup>2</sup> anniversaries, even

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<sup>1</sup> On the occasion of the 90th anniversary, several papers were published in two issues, under the collective name „Tema broja: Hrvati i europski bog Mars“ in: *Hrvatska revija* 4 (2004), no. 2: 15-63; *Hrvatska revija* 4 (2004), no. 3: 11-73. Three conference proceedings were published for the scientific conferences of the same name: Zlatko Matijević (ed.), *Godina 1918. – prethodnice, zbivanja, posljedice: Zbornik radova s međunarodnoga znanstvenog skupa održanoga u Zagrebu 4. i 5. prosinca 2008.* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2010); Branimir Bunjac (EIC), *Pomurje 1914-1920. / Mura mente 1914-1920.: Zbornik radova / Szöveggyűjtemény*, (Čakovec / Csáktornya: Povijesno društvo Međimurske županije, 2011) and Željko Holjevac, ed. *1918. u hrvatskoj povijesti. Zbornik* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2012). A scientific conference was held to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Field Marshal Svetozar Borojević in his village of birth, and a collection of papers was published a few years later: Marino Manin, ed. *Svetozar Borojević od Bojne (1856.-1920.). Zbornik radova:* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> The following books were published on the occasion of the First World War centenary in Croatia: Filip Hameršak, *Tamna strana Marsa: Hrvatska autobiografija i Prvi svjetski rat* (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2013.); Zvonimir Freivogel, *Austrougarska vojska u Prvome svjetskom ratu* (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2014.); Vladimir Huzjan (ed.), *Varaždin i sjeverozapadna Hrvatska u 'Velikom ratu' 1914.-1918.: Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa s međunarodnim sudjelovanjem održanim*

less would be known about it than it is now the case. Its contemporaries were aware of the fact that they were living through something that was unseen and unthinkable before then, and in every way exceptional – hence the name. However, radical political and social changes in Croatia have resulted in the war almost completely fading from popular memory. Few people in the country are aware of the war's significance for the history of mankind, Europe, or Croatia in particular, despite the fact that the war is considered to mark the end of an entire era in the history of mankind,<sup>3</sup> while in Croatia it marks the end of the "Time of Innocence" and the beginning of the "Century of War".

This fact was exceptionally well apparent during the commemoration of the centenary of this great historical event. Despite the lack of a plan or systematization for the commemoration on a national level, there were a rather large number of exhibitions, public lectures, round table discussions, concerts, and similar manifestations throughout the country.<sup>4</sup> If nothing else, a number of exhibition catalogues will be published in the following year, which is highly commendable.<sup>5</sup> The number of organized events was a pleasant surprise for all, including professional researchers of the First World War, because this event had previously been on the margins of cultural and social interest. The same can be said of the level of research that has been done on the topic in Croatian historiography, although it is readily apparent that progress has been made in that field. In the last 15 or so years, the number of historical studies and PhD theses published on the topic of Croatia during the First World War has significantly increased, but progress has been slow. This is especially apparent when compared with the volume of research in the countries which were once part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (especially Austria), or with Serbia. Until now, the Croatian public and historiography have focused on the Second World War and/or the Homeland War, and it will be interesting to see whether the upcoming anniversary will bring any changes in this context.

A major problem is that few people are currently researching the First World War in Croatia, of which only four have defended an MA thesis or PhD dissertation on a topic directly related to the war.<sup>6</sup> All four work at different

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*u Varaždinu 3. i 4. srpnja 2014.* (Zagreb – Varaždin: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 2014). An issue of *Hrvatska revija* was completely devoted to the First World War - *Hrvatska revija* 14 (obnovljeni tečaj) (2014), no. 3: 1-107, and a thematic bloc was published in the pastoral journal *Vjesnik Đakovačko-osječke nadbiskupije i Srijemske biskupije* 142 (6) (2014): 1-34.

<sup>3</sup> For more information see: Ljubomir Antić, "1918.: granica epoha", in: Željko Holjevac, ed. *1918. u hrvatskoj povijesti. Zbornik* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2012), pp. 11-16.

<sup>4</sup> The list is accessible at: <http://www.min-kulture.hr/default.aspx?id=10790> (Accessed 16 July 2014)

<sup>5</sup> According to my knowledge, exhibitions have thus far been held in Zagreb, Varaždin, Osijek, Virovitica, Đakovo, Valpovo, Sv. Ivan Zelina, Gornja Stubica, Zadar, Pula, and Crikvenica, and more are planned.

<sup>6</sup> These include the works of Ante Bralić (University of Zadar, Department of History), *Zadarsko novinstvo uoči Prvog svjetskog rata* (MA thesis – Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2002) and *Zadar u doba Prvog svjetskog rata* (PhD dissertation – Zagreb: Odjel za povijest

institutions, while those who give lectures at universities on the topic do so within the frame of a course of much broader scope (i.e. the First World War is merely one of several topics covered at the course). Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that there is not a single scientific project in Croatia that is in its entirety devoted to researching the First World War and its consequences. Apart from a lack of interest, there is also a lack of specialized researchers. For all these reasons, the period of the First World War remains one of the least well-researched periods of Croatian history, even though it is also within the purview of researchers specialized in 19th century history – the end of the war and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy also mark the end of the period of Croatia under Habsburg rule, which lasted for almost four centuries.

Research of the history of First World War in Croatia reached its peak during the time of the Independent State of Croatia, which is also the time when the most important Croatian works on military history in general and the First World War in particular were published.<sup>7</sup> The reason for this is most likely related to the fact that a significant number of people who actively participated in the First World War became high-ranking military officers by the time of the Second World War. The new war revived the memories of the former one, but this burst of research activity did not last long. The establishment of a new state order re-routed research efforts to other topics, and a war where the “people and ethnicities of Yugoslavia” fought on opposing sides. This newly-imposed paradigm did not apply to all the Yugoslav republics equally, since Serbia was allowed to continue nurturing its cult of the heroic Serbian soldiers, which was stretched to encompass practically every military conflict they participated in. This was made possible primarily because the Kingdom of Serbia had been on the winning side in the First World War.

In contrast, Croatia was a constituent part of the defeated Austria-Hungary and therefore subject to different rules. Of course, there were exceptions to the rule, but these were rarer and less dangerous because works on the topic

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Sveučilišta u Zadru, 2005); Vijoleta Herman Kaurić (Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb), *Funkcioniranje zdravstvene službe u Požeškoj županiji tijekom Prvog svjetskog rata - primjer Kraljevske zemaljske bolnice u Pakracu* (MA thesis – Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2002) and *Za naše junake... Rad dobrotvornih humanitarnih društava u gradu Zagrebu 1914.-1918.* (PhD dissertation – Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2007); Dinko Čutura, *Hrvatske postrojbe u Prvom svjetskom ratu i vojni raspad Austro-Ugarske* (MA thesis – Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2003) and *Stjepan Sarkotić. Časnik, strateg i političar* (PhD dissertation – Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2012); and Ivan Bulić (Croatian Catholic University in Zagreb, Department of History), *Vojna cenzura u Trojednoj Kraljevini Hrvatskoj, Slavoniji i Dalmaciji za vrijeme Prvoga svjetskog rata* (MA thesis – Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2007) and *Ivan Skerlec Lomnički 1913-1917 kraljevski komesar i hrvatski ban* (PhD dissertation – Zagreb: Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Slavko Pavičić, *Hrvatska ratna i vojna poviest i prvi svjetski rat* (Zagreb: Hrvatska knjiga, 1943); Slavko Pavičić, *Jugozapadno (talijansko) ratište u prvom svjetskom ratu* (Zagreb: Naklada autora, 1944), Vilim A. Bačić, *Poviest prvog svjetskog rata na Jadranu* (Zagreb: Hrvatski izdavački bibliografski zavod, 1945).

of Croatia and the First World War never went outside very specific thematic boundaries.<sup>8</sup> For this reason, Croatian historiography didn't achieve much progress in researching the First World War all the way until the country's independence in the 1990s. It was only then that a significant number of small, individual contributions towards researching various aspects of Croatian history on the eve of and during the First World War appeared.<sup>9</sup> The appearance of a long-awaited exhibition catalogue titled *Dadoh zlato za željezo 1914.-1918.: Hrvatska u Prvom svjetskom ratu [I Gave Gold for Iron 1914-1918.: Croatia in the First World War]*, linked to the exhibition held in the Croatian History Museum in Zagreb from December 2006 until October 2007, greatly helped in giving the time period its distinct visual forms.<sup>10</sup>

Following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise, the territory of what is today the Republic of Croatia was administratively divided between two political centres – Vienna and Budapest. Even though the official name of the country was the Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia, the ban's authority as well as that of the Royal Land Government in Zagreb did not encompass Dalmatia because it was one of the provinces in the Austrian part of Austria-Hungary. In contrast, Croatia and Slavonia were included in the Hungarian part of the country. During that time, Dalmatia was territorially larger than today because it also encompassed the Bay of Kotor,<sup>11</sup> had its own supreme legislative body (the Dalmatian Diet, *Dalmatinski sabor* in Croatian) and government (the Land Committee, *Zemaljski odbor* in Croatian) seated in Zadar. On the other hand, Istria together with the islands Krk, Cres, Lošinj and a part of what is now the Slovenian Littoral was a constituent part of the Austrian crown lands. That area was ruled by the Land Committee, headed by the President of the Istrian Diet (*Sabor*). Istria and Dalmatia sent their presidents directly to the Imperial Council, in contrast to Croatia and Slavonia, which did so within the frame of Hungary. One should keep in mind that the whole of Syrmia was part of Croatia at that time,<sup>12</sup> while the entire Međimurje,<sup>13</sup> Baranja,<sup>14</sup> and the city of Rijeka were part of Hungary proper.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See: Vijoleta Herman, "Bibliografija radova o Prvom svjetskom ratu objavljenim u historijskim časopisima u razdoblju 1945-1998. god.", *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest* 32-33 (1999-2000): 491-498.

<sup>9</sup> A detailed depiction of the historiographical works published until 2010 and according to topic can be found in: F. Hameršak, *Tamna strana Marsa*, pp. 177-192.

<sup>10</sup> Jelena Borošak Marijanović, ed. *Dadoh zlato za željezo.: Prvi svjetski rat u zbirkama Hrvatskog povijesnog muzeja* (Zagreb: Hrvatski povijesni muzej, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> The Bay of Kotor is today part of the Republic of Montenegro.

<sup>12</sup> Today most of Syrmia is part of the Republic of Serbia.

<sup>13</sup> The Međimurje is the region between the Drava and Mura rivers and is today part of the Republic of Croatia.

<sup>14</sup> Today around one-fourth of Baranja, the region between the Drava and Danube rivers, belongs to the Republic of Croatia.

<sup>15</sup> Ivan Beuc, *Povijest institucija državne vlasti Kraljevine Hrvatske, Slavonije i Dalmacije: Pravnopovijesne studije* (Zagreb: Pravni fakultet Zagreb, 1985), pp. 276-279, 351-352, 362.

According to this administrative division, the mobilized soldiers were assigned to Austrian or Hungarian military units. The units of the common Imperial and Royal (*Kaiserliche und königliche - K. u. K.*) Army from the territory of Croatia were under the command of the XIII Corps Command, while the units of the Royal Hungarian-Croatian Home Guard were part of the VI Home Guard District. Both were situated in Zagreb. The units from the aforementioned territory together comprised the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (based in Osijek), which consisted of the 13<sup>th</sup> Osijek and 14<sup>th</sup> Zemun brigades, and the 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (based in Zagreb), which in turn consisted of the 71<sup>st</sup> Rijeka and 72<sup>nd</sup> Zagreb brigades. Also under the same Command were the 13<sup>th</sup> Artillery and 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry brigades. However, today it is the regiments that are best remembered in the popular imagination. These include the 16<sup>th</sup> Bjelovar, 53<sup>rd</sup> Zagreb, 70<sup>th</sup> Petrovaradin, 78<sup>th</sup> Osijek, 79<sup>th</sup> Otočac, and 96<sup>th</sup> Karlovac Infantry regiments. The Home Guard units together formed the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, which consisted of the 83<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade (based in Zagreb), which was in turn comprised of the 25<sup>th</sup> Zagreb and 26<sup>th</sup> Karlovac Infantry Regiments, and the 84<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, comprised of the 27<sup>th</sup> Sisak and 28<sup>th</sup> Osijek Infantry Regiments, 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment (based in Varaždin), and the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Groups. The units of the common army based in Dalmatia were from 1909 under the command of the XVI Corps (based in Dubrovnik), which was also responsible for a part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The troops mobilized on that territory were assigned to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment (based in Split), and the Navy (based in Zadar), which had a separate administrative and military structure.<sup>16</sup> New units were formed during the war, filled with recruits from the territory of what is now the Republic of Croatia, while Croats were also assigned to units besides those mentioned above.<sup>17</sup>

Today there exists only general knowledge about on which fronts individual Croatian regiments were active. They were first sent to Serbia, then to Russia, i.e. the territory of what is today Ukraine (Bukovina and Galicia), and finally to the Italian (Isonzo) Front, where almost all Croatian units were assigned in late 1917 / early 1918. It is roughly known how much time certain units spent on individual segments of the fronts.<sup>18</sup> Some of these have been better researched thanks to the efforts of local enthusiasts,<sup>19</sup> but generally speaking Croatia knows very little about the fate of its soldiers in the First World War.

<sup>16</sup> Milan Pojić, "Ustroj austrougarske vojske na ozemlju Hrvatske 1868.-1914.", *Arhivski vjesnik* 43 (2000): 147-169.

<sup>17</sup> A detailed list of the military units and the changes introduced during the war can be found in: Dinko Čutura and Lovro Galić, "Veliki rat: pregled ratnih operacija", *Hrvatska revija* 4 (2004), no. 3: 56.

<sup>18</sup> D. Čutura and L. Galić, "Veliki rat: pregled ratnih operacija", pp. 13-55.

<sup>19</sup> Nikola Tominac, "79. pukovnija zajedničke vojske u Prvome svjetskom ratu", in: Željko Holjevac, ed. *1918. u hrvatskoj povijesti* pp. 283-322; Nikola Tominac, "Ličani u 'Velikom ratu'. Jedanaesta sočanska bitka, 17. kolovoza - 12. rujna 1917.", *Senjski zbornik* 39 (2012): 213-250.

One of the reasons for this state of affairs is certainly related to the fact that archival material of a military nature has been poorly preserved in the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb (*Hrvatski državni arhiv - HDA*) and its subsidiaries throughout the country. The material related to the Croatian units produced during the First World War is being kept in the Austrian State Archives in Vienna and several archives in Budapest. In contrast, thousands of boxes of documents were created within the frame of the administrative bodies of the state – the Sabor, the Presidency of the Royal Land Government, and certain government departments and lower administrative units (counties, circuits, individual towns or villages).<sup>20</sup> Most of this material has been preserved, albeit often unsorted. However, documents can be found there which would offer the possibility of making a truly broad spectrum of research topics.

This archival material can be effectively supplemented by the periodicals kept in the National and University Library in Zagreb (*Nacionalna i sveučilišna knjižnica - NSK*), and these are even better preserved than the archival materials. Everything that was published in Zagreb or other major cities is well-preserved, but the smaller settlements in which periodicals were published only semi-regularly are in a much worse position in this regard. The NSK holds a significant number of the official printed materials of Austria-Hungary, such as law codes and regulations, the names of dignitaries, various official organs of societies and institutions, memorial books, etc.<sup>21</sup> Such publications contain valuable information on specific individuals, whose work was in some way crucial during the war, but who aren't even mentioned in today's encyclopaedias or lexicons. This is especially true of the women in charge of individual civil societies or humanitarian actions, who simply disappear from all available sources after the end of the war.

It was precisely the women who bore the burden of maintaining production in all spheres of the economy during the First World War.<sup>22</sup> A shortage of

<sup>20</sup> For information on the structure of the fonds, see: Vida Pavliček (ed.), *Pregleda arhivskih fondova i zbirki Republike Hrvatske*, 2 sv. (Zagreb: Hrvatski državni arhiv, 2006-2007); Branka Molnar (EIC), *Vodič kroz fondove i zbirke Državnog arhiva u Zagrebu*, 2 sv. (Zagreb: Državni arhiv, 2008-2010); Dubravka Čengić, *Gradsko poglavarstvo Zagreba 1850.-1945.: Inventar* (Zagreb: Državni arhiv u Zagrebu, 2003); Marko Landeka, Petar Elez i Stjepan Prutki, *Vodič kroz arhivsko gradivo Državnog arhiva u Vukovaru* (Vukovar: Državni arhiv, 2011); Josip Kolanović (ed.), *Vodič Državnog arhiva u Zadru*, 2 sv. (Zadar: Državni arhiv, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Despite the option of searching the online catalog of the National and University Library according to various criteria, a part of the publications can only be found by searching the scanned catalog papers arranged in alphabetic order and available at: <http://www.nsk.hr/digitalizirani-katalozi/> (accessed 4 November 2014).

<sup>22</sup> "Molba 'Društva Crvenog križa'", *Narodne novine* (further on: *NN*), 81 (1915), no. 53, 5 March 1915; "Molba 'Društva Crvenoga križa.'", *Jutarnji list* (further on: *JL*), 4 (1915), no. 1053, 6 March 1915; "Traže se ženske radnice.", *NN* 82 (1916), no. 83, 11 April 1916; "Zagrebački tramvaj i žene ratnika.", *JL* 6 (1917), no. 1756, 1 February 1917; "Potreba ženskog rada za postignuće materijalne neodvisnosti.", *NN* 84 (1918), no. 5, 7 January 1918; "Iz 'Pučke radione'", *NN* 84

male workers was apparent as early as during the second war year, especially during harvest time. The government tried to resolve this problem by sending schoolchildren to large farms and using prisoners of war for economic purposes. Although the senior year students of primary schools were physically fit enough for the job, they were unused to agricultural labour, especially those from urban areas. Enthusiasm soon waned in the face of hard physical labour, so that the results were substandard.<sup>23</sup> Prisoners of war proved much better labourers because most of them were of peasant origin, but they had to be kept under guard, which reduced the number of soldiers who could be sent to the front. In the later years of the war, that problem was resolved by assigning partially-disabled soldiers to guard them. Such soldiers were those whose wounds made them unfit for active service on the front lines, but were still capable of performing simpler military duties.<sup>24</sup>

Seeing that some of the crops would remain unharvested, the Ministry of War allowed people to go on vacation to agricultural landholdings, where they would perform economic activities. The same provision applied to sowing, since it had become obvious the war would last much longer than was first expected – the first estimate was only three weeks, which was then increased to no longer than three months, but ended up being over four years of bloody conflicts. It also became apparent that a huge amount of food (especially meat and flour) is needed for feeding the troops at the front, and that some must be set aside for the home front as well. The shortage of food was exacerbated by poor harvests during the war years and poor years in general, however it has to be said that Croatia and Slavonia fared far better than most other parts of Austria-Hungary in that regard.<sup>25</sup> The shortage of food was particularly strongly felt in the Austrian part of Austria-Hungary, especially in large cities such as Vienna, where the population literally starved to death.<sup>26</sup>

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(1918), no. 130, 10 June 1918; "Analfabetski tečajevi," *NN* 84 (1918), no. 211, 16 September 1918; "Analfabetski tečajevi u Zagrebu," *NN* 84 (1918), no. 221, 27 September 1918.

<sup>23</sup> "Bosansko-hercegovački evakuirci, naši skauti i žetve," *JL* 4 (1915), no. 1153, 13 June 1915; "Poziv na hrvatsku omladinu," *NN* 81 (1915), no. 156, 8 July 1915; "Hrvatska školska omladina i gospodarski rad," *JL* 4 (1915), no. 1179, 9 July 1915; "Naši skauti na poljskom radu," *NN* 81 (1915), no. 172, 27 July 1915; "Naši skauti na poljskom radu," *JL* 4 (1915), no. 1198, 28 July 1915; "Godišnji izvještaj o radu zagrebačkih skauta," *NN* 82 (1916), no. 19, 25 January 1916; "Godišnji izvještaj o radu zagrebačkih skauta," *JL* 5 (1916), no. 1381, 25 January 1916.

<sup>24</sup> "Prolaz ruskih zarobljenika kroz Zagreb," *NN* 81 (1915), no. 95, 26 April 1915; "Ruski zarobljenici u Zagreb," *NN* 81 (1915), no. 156, 8 July 1915; "Ratni zarobljenici i njihova uporaba u gospodarske svrhe," *NN* 81 (1915), no. 136, 14 June 1915; "Ruski zarobljenici i božićni blagdani," *NN* 81 (1915), no. 218, 20 September 1915; "Drva gradske aprovizacije," *JL* 5 (1916), no. 1515, 9 June 1916.

<sup>25</sup> Mira Kolar-Dimitrijević, "Doprinos Podravine prehrani Hrvatske u Prvom svjetskom ratu", *Podravina: Časopis za multidisciplinarna istraživanja* 10 (2011), no. 19: 97-118.

<sup>26</sup> Horst Haselsteiner, *Ogledi o modernizaciji u Srednjoj Europi* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1997), pp. 205-222.

Luckily, this did not happen in Croatia, and even less so in Slavonia, because the peasants had enough surplus food to sell at the markets. It is true that the people of Zagreb, at that time the most densely-populated city in the country, complained that the food was too expensive and difficult to acquire, but at least some food was always available on the market. Profiteers from Austria came to the Croatian lands, buying all they could regardless of price, for which they were called „grasshoppers“ in Slavonia.<sup>27</sup> It is interesting that „war cuisine“ recipes were published in the newspapers of the time. These were recipes for cooking more food using fewer ingredients, cooking tasty food without using fat or oil, and for multi-purpose usage of small quantities of meat. This was supposed to help people survive, since not all housewives knew or could adapt to the newly-created circumstances.<sup>28</sup>

The situation in Istria, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Dalmatia was radically different – those regions were severely affected by famine in 1917. In order to feed their families, mothers went to wealthier regions in order to acquire food, often bearing their starving children on their backs. Seeing the misery these people lived in, the League for the Protection of Children organized actions where hungry children were brought to Zagreb for short-term recovery, and then sent throughout Croatia and Slavonia, to be fed by families who were willing to take them in. Most of these were the children of fallen soldiers. Families voluntarily applied to the League, showing a willingness to take in a certain number of children dependant on their own material status. In this manner, over 12,000 children were saved from probable death before the end of the war.<sup>29</sup> In addition, children’s colonies took in urban children from poorer families during the summer holidays. Such “weakly” children were usually sent to large landholdings in eastern Slavonia in the company of their schoolteachers, where they enjoyed

<sup>27</sup> “Zagreb bez duhana,” *JL* 6 (1917), no. 1933, 28 July 1917; “Zagreb i stranci,” *NN* 83 (1917), no. 204, 6 September 1917; “Akcija protiv stranaca u Zagrebu,” *JL* 6 (1917), no. 1973, 6 September 1917; “Skakavci,” *JL* 6 (1917), no. 1972, 5 September 1917.

<sup>28</sup> This was the official explanation of the editorial board for why it offered an alluring monetary reward. The reader responses were published from 6 October 1916 and during the rest of the month, in a special column titled “Responses to our prize question for housewives.”, (*JL* 5 (1916), no. 1636, 6 October 1916) or as part of the column titled “Women’s horizon”, which covered a wide spectrum of topics related to women.

<sup>29</sup> In Croatia, this topic was researched exclusively by Mira Kolar-Dimitrijević in the works: “Zbrinjavanje istarske djece krajem I. svjetskog rata u sjevernoj Hrvatskoj”, *Pazinski memorijal: Zbornik Katedre Čakavskog sabora za povijest Istre (Zbornik radova)* 16 (1991), book XXII: 149-158; “Petrinjski i briga za istarsku djecu za vrijeme Prvog svjetskog rata”, *Petrinjski zbornik* 1 (1998), no. 1: 75-90; “Zbrinjavanje gladne istarske djece tijekom Prvoga svjetskog rata u Križevcima i okolici”, *Cris: Časopis Povijesnog društva Križevci* 8 (2006), no. 1: 14-25; “Briga Podravine za djecu ugroženu u Prvom svjetskom ratu”, *Podravina: Časopis za multidisciplinarna istraživanja* 5 (2006), no. 10: 130-157. A book by the same author, titled *Zbrinjavanje gladne djece u Hrvatskoj za Prvoga svjetskog rata* (Slavonski Brod: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2008) does not include everything covered in the previously-mentioned works.



the benefits of fresh air and a relative abundance of food. One of the people to take in many such children was Maria, Countess of Eltz, who took in children from the Croatian lands, Bohemia, and Germany at her estate.<sup>30</sup>

Town and city authorities were responsible for providing the citizens with the most basic living supplies at prices set by the state, sold in special ration shops.<sup>31</sup> Those who lacked the funds to buy food in Zagreb were assisted by the Society for the Feeding of the Poor Families of Mobilized Soldiers, later simply renamed “Nourishment”, which organized a soup kitchen in the Art Pavilion in Zagreb. The kitchen became operational soon after the outbreak of the war, and prepared some 2,000 meals per day during the first year of the war. That number was later doubled, but demand grew even quicker and expanding production further was impossible for technical reasons. The same kitchen prepared meals for soldiers who were recovering in Zagreb (the so-called Soldier’s Home) and breakfast for poor school pupils of Zagreb’s primary schools, so that they didn’t go to class hungry. The Zagrebian wholesaler Šandor A. Alexander was the main initiator of all actions taken within the frame of the Society, and his personal efforts and private funds certainly allowed it to operate much better than it would have otherwise.<sup>32</sup>

In Croatian historiography persists an opinion that the outbreak of the war and the ban on public gatherings as well as the ban on the operation of all societies brought social life to a complete stop, but this is not entirely true. Although all these measures really were introduced, along with many others which sought to regulate everyday life during the war, every society could appeal to ban Ivan Baron Skerlec<sup>33</sup> for permission to continue its work. The appeal had to contain very good reasons why the society believed it should continue its work, and the keyword here was charity work – every such society received permission. Since there was a truly large number of civil societies in Croatia, the ban soon transferred his authority in that sense to government commissioners (former *župans* i.e. county heads or prefects), who continued to give societies the permission to operate. At first permission was denied only for sport, singing, cultural, and professional societies, but they too received permission to continue their work in 1917.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, p. 253.

<sup>31</sup> *Zagreb godine 1913-1918.: Izvještaj Gradskog poglavarstva o sveopćoj upravi slobodnog i kralj. glavnoga grada Zagreba* (Zagreb: Knjigotiskara braća Kralj, 1927), pp. 152-177.

<sup>32</sup> V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, pp. 165-171, 205-219.

<sup>33</sup> Ivan Baron Skerlec de Lomnicza (Oroszló, Hungary, 1873 - Budapest, 1951.), Croatian ban from 1913 until 1917. He studied Law in Pécs and Budapest, and worked as a secretary in the Presidency of the Hungarian Government. In 1911 he became a minister’s adviser, while in 1913 he replaced Stjepan Cuvaj as commissioner for Croatia and Slavonia. With the normalization of politics and the abolishment of the Commissariat, he became the Croatian ban, and remained at that position until his resignation in 1917. (Antun Vujić *Hrvatski leksikon* (hereinafter: *HL*), 2 sv. (Zagreb, 1996.-1997.), 2: p. 528.

<sup>34</sup> Vijoleta Herman Kaurić, “Koliko je društava djelovalo u Zagrebu za vrijeme Prvoga svjetskoga rata?”, *Historijski zbornik* 62 (2009), no. 2: 434-443.

Apart from “Nourishment” and the Red Cross, the most important societies active not only in the Zagreb area, but also in the whole territory of Croatia and Slavonia, were the League for the Protection of Children, the Committee of Zagreb Ladies for Wartime Assistance, the Teachers’ Association Section “For Our Children”, the “Croatian Zita’s Home”, the Society of St. Vitus, the “Mercury” Trade Association, the Tavern Keepers’ Union, the Society for the Traffic of Foreigners, the War Godparenthood, the Association for the Preservation and Promotion of National and Folk Art, the Society for the Preservation of National Health, the Patronage for the Protection of Young Girls, and many others.<sup>35</sup>

Since the demand was great, there were also a large number of charitable manifestations organized for various purposes. Most common among them were various types of concerts performed by military orchestras, which played classical music by local and foreign authors as well as folk tunes. Charitable performances were held in the Croatian National Theatre, some of which were made under the influence of patriotic fervour and for the purpose of promoting such sentiment, such as Gjuro Prejac’s operetta “For King and Home”. Visual artists, especially those from the younger generation, first displayed their works in public at several exhibitions in 1916, collectively called the “Croatian Spring Salon”. Older artists, such as Oton Iveković,<sup>36</sup> soon followed their example, exhibiting their works in another gallery. Many exhibitions were organized during the war, but the most-visited of them all was the exhibition of Queen Zita’s coronation dresses held in December 1917, in the palace of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences.<sup>37</sup>

The birthdays of King Francis Joseph I, jointly organized by all charities, were celebrated with considerable success and tidy profit, which was used to help provide for wounded soldiers. Great public parties were held in Zagreb’s Zrinjevac, where the people could relax during the entire day listening to martial music, watching circus performances or school youths’ gymnastics, and buying food and drink which was otherwise in short supply (coffee, tea, white bread, champagne, meat goulash).

<sup>35</sup> V. Herman Kaurić, “Koliko je društava djelovalo u Zagrebu”, pp. 445-463.

<sup>36</sup> Oton Iveković (Klanjec, 17 April 1869 – Zagreb, 4 July 1939), painter. He learned painting in Zagreb under Hafner, F. Quiquerez and J. W. Klausen, whose paintings adorn the Zagreb cathedral. He continued his education in Vienna, Munich, and Karlsruhe. From 1894 he worked as a drawing teacher at the *Realna gimnazija* (secondary school) in Zagreb, from 1895 at the School of Crafts, and from 1908 at the Academy of Fine Arts. He was a board member of the Society of Fine Arts in Zagreb. He traveled throughout Europe and America and did mostly pedagogical work. After the First World War broke out, he visited the battlefields and painted scenes from the life of the army. Near the end of his life, he retreated to Veliki Tabor. His peacetime paintings are mostly inspired by national and historical topics, and he also produced sketches and watercolors from his journeys. He also worked as a writer and costume designer, painted churches and illustrated books. (*HL*, 1: 519)

<sup>37</sup> V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, pp. 344-370.

Such delicacies were the main prizes at lotteries and raffles, while special manifestations in the form of open air breakfasts accompanied by music were also organized.<sup>38</sup> The most common actions were related to the feeding of poor families of mobilized soldiers. Next were the efforts to solicit donations for assisting the soldiers at the front lines, for the wounded soldiers in Zagreb's hospitals, for founding a disabled people's home ("Zita's Home"), for providing assistance to the orphans of fallen soldiers, and for halting the spread of infectious diseases brought from the front lines (diphtheria, cholera, typhus, smallpox, venereal diseases) and also tuberculosis, which was beginning to afflict an increasing number of children.<sup>39</sup>

In order to raise as much money as possible, the societies issued various items such as pictures of the ruler, war symbols, badges, medals, plaques, post-cards, calendars, war markers, and similar items, which included sugar bags with the sign of the Red Cross. Basically, they produced anything that could be sold. These items were sold during charity manifestations or during special days (Flower Days<sup>40</sup>, Children's Day<sup>41</sup>, "Zita's Day"<sup>42</sup>, "Red Cross" Week<sup>43</sup>) organized for the benefit of individual societies.<sup>44</sup>

During the last years of the war, civil societies were preoccupied by actions for assisting the families of mobilized soldiers, mostly widows and orphans, but the first years of the conflict were marked by numerous actions for providing assistance to soldiers on the front lines and the wounded who were recovering in the rear. Having comprehended the realities of long-lasting trench warfare, the Ministry of War started seeking the aid of the citizens so as to better equip its army and soldiers not only with warm clothing, but also

<sup>38</sup> V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, pp. 266-273, 340-344, 371-377.

<sup>39</sup> V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, pp. 256-260.

<sup>40</sup> Flower Days were held two to three times per year and their revenue was given for the benefit of the Society for Nutrition. This was one of the few such shows which weren't held at a precisely defined date. For more information on these shows, see: V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, pp. 296-300.

<sup>41</sup> Children's Day was held on the first weekend of June, for the benefit of the Teachers' Association section "For our children", so that it could maintain its childcare and adoption institutions. For more information on the shows held on that day, see: V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, pp. 264-251.

<sup>42</sup> "Zita's Day" was celebrated on 9 May because the Women's Society „Croatian Zita's Home“ decided in April 1915 to declare their sponsor's (Grand Duchess Zita) birthday a special day, whose celebration included the collection of donations for founding a home for disabled Croatian soldiers. For more information on the commemoration of that day, see: V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, pp. 290-292.

<sup>43</sup> "Red Cross" Week was held a few days before and after 18 August, Francis Joseph I's birthday. In Croatia, it began to be commemorated in 1916 on the recommendation of the Committee for Promoting the Interests of "Red Cross" Hospitals, and was held at a slightly different date after the king's death, since the birthday of the new king, Charles IV, was on 17 August. For more information, see: V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, pp. 285-289.

<sup>44</sup> V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, pp. 325-340.

with war material. Various kinds of metal were collected for military purposes (copper, brass, zinc, iron, aluminium), and ever smaller objects were collected as the years went by. Even church bells and the copper roofs of public buildings weren't spared. Today, only the "Gold for Iron" action is known to the broader public, where the citizens gave their gold jewellery to help the war effort, and were given iron memorial rings in return. The military authorities requisitioned motor vehicles, horses and large dogs, who were used to transport light cargoes through rough terrain, or for medical purposes.<sup>45</sup>

As early as winter 1914, it became obvious that the soldiers had insufficient winter equipment, so an action for collecting wool and producing warm clothing (long underwear, joint protectors, gloves, various sorts of caps). While everyone participated in the collection of wool and sending it to the League for the Protection of Children, the task of producing new items was mostly left to women's societies and primary school students throughout the country. People of all ages participated in the production of war clothing for Croatian regiments, including even the smallest children from orphanages, who prepared the wool for knitting. Schoolchildren gathered blackberry leaves for making tea for soldiers and the wounded, gathered medicinal herbs and oak bark for tanning, and produced straw braids for protecting the soldiers in the trenches from damp.<sup>46</sup> Millions of cigarettes were also produced for the soldiers and periodically sent to the fronts, and their number depended on the amount of tobacco the organizers managed to buy from the donated funds. However, cigarettes and warm clothing were always sent each year as Christmas or Easter presents for the soldiers.<sup>47</sup>

During the year 1916, there was a shortage of cotton clothing, shirts and underwear among the soldiers. The shortage was caused by the great expenditure of cotton for producing bandages for the wounded and military clothing in general, since demand outstripped supply after it was forbidden to import colonial goods. Thus, the citizens were asked to provide assistance. The original calls for donating new cloth soon became desperate pleas for any scrap which could be theoretically converted into fabric. Experiments were made using cloth made from nettle, which soon became a reality. Similarly, cotton wool was produced from cellulose.<sup>48</sup>

Due to a large number of wounded, Red Cross auxiliary hospitals were founded throughout the country. After war broke out with Italy, Zagreb became a centre for providing care for the wounded soldiers from that front. In order to meet these needs, classes were cancelled in all schools, while schools and other public building were converted into hospitals. At times, wounded

<sup>45</sup> V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, pp. 79-88.

<sup>46</sup> V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, pp. 88-99.

<sup>47</sup> V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, pp. 102-109.

<sup>48</sup> V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, pp. 99-102.

soldiers filled every available larger space in Zagreb, including factory halls, and the situation was similar outside the city.<sup>49</sup> A lack of bandage material was a harsh reality, while sepsis-related deaths were commonplace; more soldiers died from the consequences of the wounding than from direct bullet or shrapnel hits. Medicine was much more primitive than today, since there were no antibiotics, anaesthetics, or DDT (until recently the only effective insecticide). X-rays were relatively new and only a few hospitals had the necessary apparatus to use them, while body fluid analysis was an even rarer privilege.<sup>50</sup>

The only thing the wounded didn't lack was dedicated medical care, since volunteer nurses dedicated themselves to providing wounded soldiers the best possible care. A lack of male workers forced hospital administrations to accept female nurses, but despite the chronic lack of workers women were not allowed to work in wards for mentally ill patients or those with venereal diseases. At the beginning of the war, respected Zagrebian physicians held two-week courses for volunteer nurses, but these were the lucky few, since others were forced to learn from experience. Women of all ages and social classes were among the applicants, and many were from noble families or the wealthy bourgeoisie. At the end of the course, the nurses could work anywhere, including the front if they wished. Women were never required to serve at the front, but a number of them applied as volunteers.<sup>51</sup> Regardless of where they served, many suffered psychological trauma caused by the horrors of war.

The participation of women in what were otherwise traditionally male jobs (postal workers, conductors, street cleaners, industrial workers, clerks) caused a heated debate among prominent experts about whether women were even capable of performing public duties. Before the war, only schoolteachers and nuns working as nurses of female patients were allowed to perform such jobs. The more traditionally-oriented learned people were categorically against female labour, claiming that women were spiritually too delicate and mentally incapable of performing male jobs. However, women performed above all expectations, which was admitted even during the war by Professor Miroslav pl. Čačković, one of the teachers at the nursing courses in Zagreb, who otherwise worked as the Chief Physician in the Merciful Brothers' Hospital. He published a scientific paper, where he admitted he had been completely surprised by the female capacity to quickly understand the basics of medical science and learn

<sup>49</sup> V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, pp. 138-145.

<sup>50</sup> For more information see: Vijoleta Herman Kaurić, "Sjećanja dr. Vatroslava Florschütza sa ratišta Prvog svjetskog rata", *Godišnjak Njemačke narodnosne zajednice – VDG Jahrbuch* (2008.): 35-50; Vijoleta Herman Kaurić, "Bolnice u Požeškoj županiji i sustav javne zdravstvene službe 1874.-1918.", *Scrinia Slavonica: Godišnjak Podružnice za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje Hrvatskog instituta za povijest* 3 (2003.): 247-280.

<sup>51</sup> V. Herman Kaurić, *Za naše junake...*, pp. 128-136.

basic bandaging techniques.<sup>52</sup> Thanks to the war, women left the family home and dependence on their husbands in greater numbers for the first time in history, regardless of whether they were forced to do physical labour to feed their families or did humanitarian work of their own volition. With the return of the men from the front lines, everything returned to the prewar state.

It remains unknown how many people from the territory of Croatia and Slavonia are among the 519,365 Austro-Hungarian war dead, or how many such people were among the 8.2 million soldiers mobilized into the Austro-Hungarian armed forces. It is believed that 9 out of every 100 people were mobilized, which would, according to the official census in 1910, mean that at least 756,000 people from Croatia and Slavonia served in the military during the war. In addition, it is believed that 20 out of every 1,000 people died or were killed, which would lead to an estimated 100,000 dead soldiers and a similar number of civilians who died during the war, mostly from various diseases. Finally, as the end of the war approached, the Spanish flu appeared in 1918, taking a heavy toll on the population.<sup>53</sup> It should be stressed that all of the above are only estimates, since a registry of the Croatian soldiers who died during the First World War has yet to be made; in fact, it seems there is little motivation for making one any time soon, except on a declaratory level. One hundred years after the end of the war, some of the descendants of these soldiers are looking for data on their grandfathers and great-grandfathers. Many of them don't even know with which military unit did their ancestors serve in, but family stories about their deaths at the Isonzo or in Russia have been preserved through the generations. Some have found yellowed photos of soldiers who they don't recognize, or their writings from the front, and now ask themselves whether more information about these people exists. For the majority of them, the answer will be negative, but I consider it worthwhile to try finding it.

The collapse of Austria-Hungary occurred during October 1918, when some of its constituent units declared their independence, based on the political doctrine of the U.S. president Woodrow Wilson about the right of a nation to self-determination. Croatia followed the example of the Poles and Czechs, when the National Council of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (i.e. the South Slavic peoples of Austria-Hungary) met in Zagreb on 5 October. The decision to sever all legal and political bonds with the Kingdom of Hungary and the Austrian Empire was proclaimed by the Croatian Sabor on 29 October 1918, as

<sup>52</sup> M[iroslav] pl. Čačković, "Žena kano dobrovoljna bolničarka", *Liječnički vijesnik* 37 (1915), no. 2: 33-38.

<sup>53</sup> *Vojna enciklopedija*, 11 sv. (Beograd: Vojnoizdavački zavod, 1970.-1975.), 1: 336; Mira Kolar Dimitrijević, "Utjecaj Prvoga svjetskoga rata na kretanje stanovništva i stočarstva na području Hrvatske i Slavonije", *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest* 24 (1991): 41; Vladimir Žerjavić, "Kretanje stanovništva i demografski gubici Republike Hrvatske u razdoblju 1900.-1991. godine", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 25 (1993), no. 2-3: 78-79; D. Čutura and L. Galić, "Veliki rat: pregled ratnih operacija", pp. 54-55.

was the founding of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs.<sup>54</sup> A couple of days later (30/31 October), the armistice came into effect on the Italian Front, while the war on the Western Front lasted until 11 November 1918, which is usually considered to mark the end of the war.<sup>55</sup>

The Paris Peace Conference began on 18 January 1919 at the Palace of Versailles, where separate peace talks were held with each defeated country. Thus, separate peace talks were made with Austria and Hungary, but not with Croatia, since the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs had declared its unification with the Kingdom of Serbia on 1 December 1918, thus establishing the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Despite this, it suffered territorial losses like all other defeated countries.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> For more information see: Zlatko Matijević, "Guske u magli. Djelovanje članova Središnjeg odbora Narodnog vijeća Slovenaca, Hrvata i Srba u Zagrebu (listopad 1918.-siječanj 1919.)", in: Zlatko Matijević (ed.), *Godina 1918. – prethodnice, zbivanja, posljedice: Zbornik radova s međunarodnoga znanstvenog skupa održanoga u Zagrebu 4. i 5. prosinca 2008.* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2010), pp. 105-128.

<sup>55</sup> Dinko Čutura and Lovro Galić, "Veliki rat: vojnopolitička situacija uoči rata", *Hrvatska revija* 4 (2004.), no. 2: 55-56.

<sup>56</sup> D. Čutura and L. Galić, "Veliki rat: pregled ratnih operacija", p. 54.

## **Erster Weltkrieg in Kroatien – mehr oder weniger bekannte Tatsachen**

### **Zusammenfassung**

Der Erste Weltkrieg in Kroatien ist ein wenig erforschtes Thema, das erst seit 1990-er Jahren, bzw. nach der Erlangung der staatlichen Unabhängigkeit Kroatiens intensiver und häufiger wissenschaftlich ergründet wurde. Diese Periode erforschen nur wenige Wissenschaftler in Kroatien, von denen allerdings nur vier ihre Magister - und Doktorarbeiten zu Themen, die direkt mit dem Krieg verbunden sind (Ante Bralić, Vijoleta Herman Kaurić, Dinko Čutura und Ivan Bulić), geschrieben haben. Bis heute gibt es in Kroatien kein einziges Forschungsprojekt über den Ersten Weltkrieg und als Folge radikaler Veränderungen politischer und gesellschaftlicher Umstände im Laufe des 20. Jahrhunderts ist die Erinnerung an diesen Krieg fast gänzlich verschwunden. Was in Kroatien zur Zeit des Ersten Weltkrieges geschah, wird nicht systematisch, sondern zeitweilig und hinsichtlich gelegentlicher Jubiläen erforscht. Trotzdem ist ein gewisser Fortschritt in dieser Hinsicht zu bemerken, was in immer zahlreicheren Artikeln zu diesem Thema zu sehen ist. Es ist bekannt, welche Einheiten der österreichisch-ungarischen Armee ihren Personalbestand aus dem Gebiet Kroatiens, Slawoniens und Dalmatiens ergänzten und auf welchen Kampfplätzen sie kämpften. Es ist aber noch immer nicht bekannt, wie viele Soldaten aus diesen Gebieten im Kampf ums Leben kamen. Während kroatische Soldaten in ganz Europa kämpften, übernahmen die Frauen Sorge um die Ernährung der Familie und erledigten eine Reihe von Arbeiten, die bis dann ausschließlich für Männer reserviert worden waren. Eine von diesen Arbeiten war die Pflege männlicher Kranken, welche während des Krieges wirklich zahlreich waren. Dabei wurden heftige Auseinandersetzungen darüber geführt, ob die Frauen überhaupt diese Arbeit verrichten dürfen. Jedoch, die Zahl der Verwundeten, um welche man sorgen musste, nötigte zur Toleranz sogar die bittersten Gegner dieser Idee. Der zweite große Kummer der Zivilbevölkerung war die Sorge um die Familien mobilisierter Soldaten, denn sehr bald, nachdem die Familienernährer in den Krieg gezogen worden waren, zeigte sich, dass viele von solchen Familien in ihrer Existenz bedroht waren. Ihnen zu Hilfe kamen dann verschiedene humanitäre Organisationen, von denen nur die Gesellschaft für die Ernährung der Familien mobilisierter Soldaten systematisch um Frauen und Kinder von Soldaten während des ganzen Krieges sorgte.

**Schlagwörter:** Kroatien, Erster Weltkrieg, Zagreb, humanitäre Organisationen