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## How to Feed a City during the First World War – The Case of Zagreb

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This paper shows the importance of the work of individual charities in feeding the women and children of soldiers mobilized during the First World War, and the poorest ones among them in particular. Although the associations worked with the permission of the Royal Land Government and in cooperation with the City Government, the burden of catering to an ever-increasing number of users for the most part rested on a small number of individuals in a few associations during the first two years of the war. This was later reduced to a single charity and one man – Šandor A. Alexander and “Nourishment”.

**Key words:** First World War, Zagreb, nutrition, charities, Šandor A. Alexander

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**Kako prehraniti mesto med prvo svetovno vojno – primer Zagreba**

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Prispevek prikazuje, kako pomembno je delo posameznih dobrotelnih organizacij pri prehrani žena in otrok mobiliziranih vojakov med prvo svetovno vojno, še posebej tistih najrevnejših. Čeprav so zveze delovale z dovoljenjem deželne vlade in v sodelovanju z mestnim glavarstvom, je v prvih dveh letih vojne breme skrbi za naraščajoče število uporabnikov v največji meri slonelo na peščici posameznikov in združenj. Kasneje je pristalo na plečih enega samega moža ter dobrotelne organizacije – Šandor A. Alexander in Prehrana.

**Ključne besede:** prva svetovna vojna, Zagreb, prehrana, dobrotelne organizacije, Šandor A. Alexander.

On the eve of the First World War,<sup>1</sup> Zagreb had all the characteristics of a modern capital of one of the countries within the frame of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, including those of a local administrative, political, traffic, economic, and cultural hub.<sup>2</sup> The people of Zagreb particularly liked being compared to Vienna, which served as their model in all respects,<sup>3</sup> and somewhat less to Budapest, though today it's difficult to compare such a small city with these two metropolises.

According to the 1910 census, Zagreb was inhabited by 79,038 people, and its area was divided into six cadastral municipalities. Six of the neighbouring villages also belonged to the city's administrative area, but only 6.85% of the city's population was involved in agriculture. Precisely 33.88% of the inhabitants were involved in crafts and industry, while 10.89% worked in trade and banking. The large number of people employed in public services (14.02%) and traffic (8.35%) are a reflection of Zagreb's role as the traffic hub of the state.<sup>4</sup> According to the next census from 1921, Zagreb had 108,674 citizens, i. e. 37.07% more than in 1910. In addition, the City Government estimated in 1914 that there were around 86,000 people living in the city. It is also known that the city's population grew "significantly" due to an influx of refugees from the occupied areas, but there are no records on their exact number.<sup>5</sup> Some sources mention another population census from 1918, but the exact nature of this census remains unclear. According to it, the city was inhabited by 87,000 people, not including soldiers.<sup>6</sup> In any case, further research is needed to determine how many people were living in Zagreb during each year of the war, as permanent or temporary residents.

Three days after partial mobilization was declared, a call was issued to "patriotic fellow citizens", asking them to help provide for the families of mobilized soldiers who were left in poverty and distress after their "breadwinner" had left to serve in

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was created on the basis of a presentation held at the conference *The Great War: Regional Approaches and Global Contexts. International Conference on the Occasion of the First Centennial of the Beginning of World War One*, Sarajevo 18 – 21 June 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Grijak and Goldstein, „Na vratima 20. stoljeća“, 1: 352-407.; Kampuš and Karaman, *Tisućljetni Zagreb*, pp. 187-254; Bičanić, „Zagreb kao multifunkcionalni grad“, pp. 313-328; Kraus, *Dva stoljeća povijesti i kulture Židova*, pp. 12-268; Kolar, *Radni slojevi Zagreba*, p. 12; Banik-Schweitzer, „Der Prozess der Urbanisierung“, p. 188, pp. 208-211.

<sup>3</sup> Strecha, „O pitanju utjecaja bečkog središta“, pp. 79-88.

<sup>4</sup> Vranješ-Šoljan, *Stanovništvo gradova*, pp. 147-148; Kolar-Dimitrijević, „Struktura privredno“, p. 142.

<sup>5</sup> *Zagreb godine 1913-1918*, p. 116, p. 154, p. 158.

<sup>6</sup> Jurić, „Zagreb u Prvome svjetskom ratu“, p. 138.

the Army. By 1 August, 43,686 crowns had been gathered by the editorial board of *Narodne Novine* (Official Gazette), intended for the Royal Land Government in Zagreb, at that moment the only body responsible for making priority lists after local districts (*oblasts*) assessed the financial status of the person requesting assistance.<sup>7</sup> They quickly saw how slow such a system was, so that a provision on the “immediate” forming of local and county committees for providing for the families of mobilized soldiers was issued on 31 July. The “Central Land Committee for the Protection of Families of Mobilized Soldiers and War Dead from the Kingdoms of Croatia and Slavonia” was formed on 1 September 1914 by the permission of *ban* Ivan Baron Skerlec.<sup>8</sup> It was subordinate to the Wartime Assistance Offices in Vienna and Budapest.<sup>9</sup>

On 31 July 1914, *ban* Skerlec gave an order for a list of the families of mobilized soldiers to be made, with the goal of determining the number of families and the support which they were to receive. Since no instructions were given on how to implement the order, on 3 August the city authorities forwarded a notice to the families of mobilized soldiers, requiring them to report within 15 days. During the mobilization, the city administration was left without a sufficient number of officials for performing such a complex procedure in a relatively short time, and so it called upon the assistance of primary school teachers.<sup>10</sup>

On the same day the order to make the list was issued, the “Children’s Protection League” society, whose purpose was caring for neglected and “needy” children from the age of six up to working age, received approval to continue its work. The League was supposed to achieve its goals through field work done by its commissioners and other legal methods, among which the support of extant and founding of new children’s shelters are mentioned.<sup>11</sup> The war-related purpose of

<sup>7</sup> „Njegovo c. i kr. apoštolsko Veličanstvo...“, *Narodne novine* (further: *NN*), vol. 80, no. 169, special edition 26 July 1914; „Našim patriotičnim sugradjanima!“, *NN* 80, no. 175, 29 July 1914; „Za obitelji naših vojnika.“, *NN* 80, no. 176, 30 July 1914; „Darovi za obitelji naših vojnika.“, *Jutarnji list* (further: *JL*), vol. 3, no. 733, 31 July 1914; „Za obitelji naših vojnika.“, *NN* 80, no. 178, 1 August 1914; „Za svojtu mobilizovanih pričuvnika i za ‘Crveni križ’.“, *JL* 3, no. 738, 4 August 1914.

<sup>8</sup> Ivan Baron Skerlec de Lomnicza (1873–1951), lawyer. He graduated Law at Pécs and Budapest, after which he worked as a judicial trainee in the Presidency of the Hungarian Government. In 1911 he became a ministerial adviser, and in 1913 the acting Commissioner for Croatia and Slavonia. Once the situation became stable again and the commissariat was abolished, he served as the Croatian *ban* until his resignation in 1917 (Vujić, *HL*, 2: 528).

<sup>9</sup> Hrvatski državni arhiv (further: HDA), Predsjedništvo Zemaljske vlade (further: PrZV), vol. 6-22, box no. 5.429 Pr./1914.; HDA, PrZV, vol. 6-22, box no. 5.927 Pr./1914.; „Ratni pripomoćni ured.“, *NN* 80, no. 180, 14 August 1914; „Ratni pripomoćni ured.“, *JL* 3, no. 749, 15 August 1914; „Poziv.“, *NN* 80, no. 192, 19 August 1914; „Ratni pripomoćni ured.“, *JL* 3, no. 755, 20 August 1914; „Svim velikim županima.“, *NN* 80, no. 192, 19 August 1914; „Županije za obitelji vojnika.“, *JL* 3, no. 755, 20 August 1914; „Za obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika.“, *NN* 80, no. 206, 2 September 1914.

<sup>10</sup> *Zagreb 1913-1918*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>11</sup> HDA, Unutrašnji odjel Zemaljske vlade Serija pravila (further: UOZV SP), box no. 2.091/1912., Pravila društva „Liga za zaštitu djece“ u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji.

the League's work is obvious from a recommendation written by Janko Holjac,<sup>12</sup> which mentions that the society and City Government would provide care for the children of soldiers by securing shelter for them and assessing the financial and other status of each family in order to make sure the neediest get the most support.<sup>13</sup> Although the society is called the "League for the Protection of Children and the Families of Mobilized Soldiers" in source material, the regulations of the League from 1916 call the society by its old name, and the regulations themselves remain almost unchanged. The most notable changes were that care "for the families of soldiers fallen in combat" is mentioned among the goals of the society, and that the minimum age for the children it cared for was abolished.<sup>14</sup>

The "Humaneness Society", whose purpose was to provide financial or other forms of aid to impoverished citizens, especially widows and orphans, received permission to continue its work in early August.<sup>15</sup> From 1875, a soup kitchen operated within the frame of that society, offering good meals for cheap, and it was often visited by lower-wage workers and high school pupils.<sup>16</sup> The society's request for the soup kitchen to continue operating was granted on 4 August, after it pledged to provide food for 100 women (perhaps even more later) designated by the City Government every day the war lasted.<sup>17</sup> It remains unknown how many people ate at this kitchen, but the number of meals provided each year is known.<sup>18</sup> Their work was co-financed by the Land Government (3,000 crowns per year) and the City of Zagreb (2,000 crowns per year) during all the war years, but they were still losing a substantial amount of money.<sup>19</sup>

Eighty committee members of both sexes participated in the making of a list of the families of mobilized soldiers from 10 to 12 August. They made a census of around 4,000 "wretches" who needed assistance in the form of food and clothing and, as they encountered cases of utter poverty, they were allowed to offer mon-

<sup>12</sup> Janko Holjac (1865–1939), architect. Served as the mayor of Zagreb from 1910 until 1917. During his mandate, the city was modernized, the National and University Library was built, and a series of infrastructure works were performed. He was a member of the Croatian Parliament (*Sabor*), the president of the City Savings Bank in Zagreb, and a member of the Supervisory Council of the "Croatia" Insurance Association in Zagreb. (Vujić, *HL*, 1: 446)

<sup>13</sup> HDA, PrZV, vol. 6-22, box no. 4.232/1914., no. 4.651 Pr./1914., Preporuka gradskoga načelnika Holjca.

<sup>14</sup> *Pravila društva „Liga za zaštitu djece“*, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> HDA, Unutrašnji odjel Zemaljske vlade (further: UOZV), vol. 14-4, box no. 9.084/1875., *Pravila zagrebačkoga društva čovječnosti*.

<sup>16</sup> Kolar-Dimitrijević, *Prvo zagrebačko dobrotvorno društvo*, p. 28, p. 106.

<sup>17</sup> HDA, PrZV, vol. 6-22, k. no. 4.232/1914., no. 4.622 Pr./1914., Molba uprave društva od 1. svibnja.

<sup>18</sup> 195,593 meals were supplied in 1914 (53,096 were pupils' meals), with a total value of 17,531 crowns; in 1915, the number of meals was 195,174 (including 55,272 pupils'), with a total value of 18,013 crowns; in 1916, the number was only 130,758 meals (30,544 pupils') worth 16,513 crowns; in 1917, the number of meals amounted to 169,037 (27,231 pupils') worth 28,260 crowns; in 1918, 158,829 meals were handed out (32,227 pupils'), worth 38,572 crowns. (Kolar-Dimitrijević, *Prvo zagrebačko dobrotvorno društvo*, p. 110)

<sup>19</sup> Kolar-Dimitrijević, *Prvo zagrebačko dobrotvorno društvo*, p. 107; *Zagreb 1913-1918*, p. 91.

etary assistance in exceptional circumstances. They had 10,000 crowns at their disposal, which was provided to them by the Central Committee for the Care of Mobilized Soldiers' Families.<sup>20</sup> An appeal made by Mayor Holjac to *ban* Skerlec on 10 August, in which he begs him to allow the City Government to assign the entire funds collected for helping the families of soldiers to the neediest among them shows how badly the departure of a "breadwinner" could affect a family. The committee members of the League counted over 3,200 women and children who hadn't paid their monthly rent and needed immediate monetary assistance. The Land Government approved the advance payment of 10,000 crowns to the city from the gathered contributions.<sup>21</sup>

Near the end of the census-making process, an order arrived from the Department for Internal Affairs, according to which families were required to be noted on sheets printed specifically for that purpose, and the finished list was then to be copied into forms. When that was also finished, a new order arrived from the same Department, which instructed that the census should be made in accordance with the order and instructions of the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Finance issued on 15 August 1914, which determined who had the right to receive assistance, during which period, and how its exact amount is calculated. The instructions were detailed, and the procedure of calculation was extremely complicated. The census was to be made by early September, but this was only partially successful in Zagreb, because the first part of the census was sent in on 5 September, and it was finished by the end of the month and included a total of 2,200 soldiers' families.<sup>22</sup> From the beginning of the war and until 1916, the League provided for 3,726 families with a total of 10,493 members, but after those with state support are taken out, this leaves only 765 families with 2,118 members.<sup>23</sup>

Those who **had** the right to support included the lawful wife, children, grandchildren, parents, grandparents, and parents-in-law of the mobilized soldier. The condition was that the person in question was fully or at least partially dependent on the mobilized person. Those who **didn't have** the right to support included illegitimate wives i. e. the mothers of their illegitimate children, and families of soldiers who were still in active service. The state started paying support to families of soldiers killed in action only six months after the declaration of death, because

<sup>20</sup> „Liga za zaštitu djece...“, *NN* 80, no. 181, 5 August 1914; „Dozvoljeno djelovanje društva 'Liga za zaštitu djece'“, *JL* 3, no. 739, 5 August 1914; „Liga za zaštitu djece“, *Obzor* 55, no. 214, 5 August 1914; „Liga za zaštitu djece...“, *NN* 80, no. 183, 7 August 1914; „Liga za zapuštenu djecu“, *JL* 3, no. 741, 7 August 1914; „Liga za zapuštenu djecu“, *Obzor* 55, no. 215, 6 August 1914; „Liga za zaštitu djece“, *NN* 80, no. 187, 12 August 1914; „Potpore obiteljima mobiliziranih“, *JL* 3, no. 762, 25 August 1914; „Liga za zaštitu djece. (Izvanredna glavna skupština od 25. studenoga 1915.)“, *NN* 81, no. 291, 16 December 1915.

<sup>21</sup> HDA, PrZV, vol. 6-22, box no. 4.495 Pr./1914., no. 5.021 Pr./1914.

<sup>22</sup> *Zagreb 1913-1918*, p. 73.

<sup>23</sup> „Potpore obiteljima mobiliziranih“, *JL* 3, no. 762, 25 August 1914; „Popis obitelji mobilizovanih“, *NN* 80, no. 204, 31 August 1914; „Popis obitelji mobilizovanih“, *NN* 80, no. 205, 1 September 1914; „Liga za zaštitu djece. (Izvanredna glavna skupština od 25. studenoga 1915.)“, *NN* 81, no. 291, 16 December 1915; „Rad 'Lige' od početka rata“, *NN* 83, no. 119, 24 May 1917; *Zagreb 1913-1918.*, 72-73.

by that time the procedure for paying out his pension was supposed to be finished, though this often wasn't the case.<sup>24</sup> Such a broad circle of users was the result of antiquated legal provisions and the unpreparedness of the administration for such a broad mobilization as was introduced during the First World War. For now, it remains unknown whether all who had the right to support actually received it. Thus, the assistance of particular associations was invaluable at this time, and there were even more people who didn't have the right to receive support and were completely dependent on others' assistance.

During the making of the census of soldiers' families, it became obvious that the acquisition of food was a burning problem – it became necessary to find a way to feed an ever-increasing number of people, particularly children aged up to two. At first, individuals volunteered to provide or pay for food for a certain number of children, but later a popular action was launched. In late August, a warehouse of non-perishable food was established under the wing of the League, and food was allocated only to those approved by the City Government.<sup>25</sup> A sub-committee of the League was founded in early August, titled the "Citizens' Committee for Feeding the Poor Children of our Warriors". Already on 8 August, the Committee sent an appeal to the people of Zagreb, asking them to help the soldiers on the front by taking care of their "small children" like they were their own. Since there were thousands of children in need of assistance, citizens were pleaded to provide for at least one child. The appeal was particularly directed towards tavern keepers and coffee shop owners because it was believed that they could provide for a larger number of children.<sup>26</sup> The Central Land Committee initiated a similar action in early October 1916.<sup>27</sup>

Within four days of the appeal, 400 families were willing to provide for the children, but not the wives, of soldiers. The children were supposed to pick up their first meals on 15 August and bring with them proof of the League's permission. The number of families later grew to 700, and they were asked to allow the children to take their food home in case they couldn't eat it. Within around 10 days, the Committee provided food for 1,398 children and accommodation for around

<sup>24</sup> HDA, Zbirka Stampati, no. 6/55, 58.819/1914.; „Naredba. Na temelju zak. čl. XI. od god. 1882. ...“, *NV* 80, no. 190, 17 August 1914; „Potpora obiteljima vojnika.“, *JL* 3, no. 752, 18 August 1914; „Liga za zaštitu djece. (Izvanredna glavna skupština od 25. studenoga 1915.)“, *NV* 81, no. 291, 16 December 1915; „Skrb za porodice vojnika palih u ratu. (Pučko sveučilišno predavanje dra. Josipa Šilovića, držano 8. o. mj.)“, *NV* 82, no. 32-33, 10-11 February 1916.

<sup>25</sup> „Liga za zaštitu djece...“, *NV* 80, no. 187, 12 August 1914; „Za prehranu siromašnih obitelji vojnika.“, *NV* 80, no. 195, 22 August 1914; „Za prehranu siromašnih obitelji vojnika.“, *JL* 3, no. 759, 22 August 1914; „Za prehranu siromašnih obitelji vojnika.“, *NV* 80, no. 200, 27 August 1914; „Za prehranu siromašnih obitelji vojnika.“, *JL* 3, no. 765, 28 August 1914.

<sup>26</sup> „Za djecu vojnika.“, *NV* 80, no. 183, 7 August 1914; „Gradjanski odbor za prehranu siromašne djece naših ratnika.“, *JL* 3, no. 740, 6 August 1914; „Za vojničku djecu.“, *Obzor* 54, no. 216, 7 August 1914; „Pomozimo našim vojnicima i njihovim obiteljima!“, *NV* 80, no. 184, 8 August 1914; „Za prehranu siromašne djece ratnika.“, *JL* 3, no. 742, 8 August 1914; „Za djecu naših vojnika.“, *Obzor* 54, no. 217, 8 August 1914; „Skrb za našu djecu.“, *JL* 3, no. 766, 29 August 1914.

<sup>27</sup> „Dužnost svakoga kod kuće.“, *NV* 82, no. 227, 4 October 1916; „Skrb za obitelji palih ratnika.“, *JL* 5, no. 1636, 6 October 1916.

2,000 people. However, the project's bad sides soon became apparent. Some were forbidden to go pick up food by their mothers, while others simply failed to appear. Some people complained about the quality of the food they received, and there were cases where families didn't provide the food they had promised. The behaviour of individuals who didn't allow mothers with small children to take leftover food home was considered particularly barbaric. Because of all this, it was decided that only those families who themselves sought the League's help would receive food. Instead of the food being distributed among families, the decision to open a soup kitchen was made.<sup>28</sup>

In answer to the declaration of the Citizens' Committee for Nutrition, supply stations run by the Croatian Commercial Association "Merkur" (Mercury) were opened, catering to the children of shop assistants and attendants, while the Tavern Keepers' Union ran those who catered to all others. Both kitchens were financed through donations, and all food except meat was also bought with the help of donations, which made the preparation of meals very cheap in the beginning. In the second half of August, the Tavern Keepers' Union provided food for 130 people, even though its official capacity was 100, while "Merkur" provided for 70 instead of 50. However, this was nowhere near the demand, so the Committee sought appropriate space for new kitchens in various parts of the city, whose operating costs would be covered through the contributions of citizens who couldn't or wouldn't take into their homes the wives or children of soldiers, but were willing to make monetary contributions.<sup>29</sup>

The Society for the Feeding of the Poor School Youth of Zagreb began operating in 1891 and its only purpose was to provide food for poor schoolchildren during the winter months (November to March).<sup>30</sup> Its vice president was Šandor Aleksandar Alexander,<sup>31</sup> who in August 1914 became the head of the Administrative

<sup>28</sup> „Za djecu ratnika.“, *NN* 80, no. 187, 12 August 1914; „Prehrana djece vojnika.“, *JL* 3, no. 747, 13 August 1914; „Društvo za prehranu...“, *NN* 80, no. 189, 14 August 1914; „Za djecu ratnih obveznika.“, *JL* 3, no. 752, 18 August 1914; „Gradjanski odbor za prehranu djece naših ratnika.“, *Obzor* 54, no. 228, 19 August 1914; „Liga za zaštitu djece...“, *NN* 80, no. 199, 26 August 1914; „Liga za zaštitu djece.“, *JL* 3, no. 763, 26 August 1914; „Prehrana djece mobilizovanih vojnika.“, *JL* 3, no. 764, 27 August 1914; „Skrb za našu djecu.“, *JL* 3, no. 766, 29 August 1914.

<sup>29</sup> „Za djecu vojnika.“, *JL* 3, no. 743, 9 August 1914; „Za djecu vojnika!“, *NN* 80, no. 186, 11 August 1914; „Za djecu ratnika.“, *NN* 80, no. 187, 12 August 1914; „Društvo za prehranu...“, *NN* 80, no. 189, 14 August 1914; „Proslava kraljeva rođendana među djecom naših ratnika.“, *NN* 80, no. 192, 19 August 1914; „Skrb za našu djecu.“, *JL* 3, no. 766, 29 August 1914; „Gradjanska pekarna u Zagrebu.“, *NN* 80, no. 201, 28 August 1914; „Plemenito djelo Gradjanske pekarnice u Zagrebu.“, *JL* 3, no. 766, 29 August 1914; „Obskrbna stanica 'Merkur' za obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika.“, *NN* 80, no. 229, 23 September 1914.

<sup>30</sup> *Pravila društva za prehranu siromašne školske mladeži*, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Šandor Aleksandar Alexander (1866–1929), wholesaler. A member of the board of the Chamber of Trades and Crafts and the vice president of the "Trgovački dom" (approx. *Traders' Centre*) in Zagreb, president for life of the Croatian Commercial Association "Merkur", and honorary vice president of the Traders' Alliance of Croatia and Slavonia. He began his career in the office of Paromlin in Zagreb and later became a business partner in his father's wheat wholesale company. He was a board member of several banks and companies, and a member of almost 60 civil associations. He gained renown through his work and charity activities. He bore

Board and began preparations for opening a larger kitchen. The Society owned a small kitchen in the primary school in Draškovićeve Street until the school became a reserve military hospital.<sup>32</sup>

In an appeal to the *ban* asking permission for the Society to start its work, it was mentioned that the Society had decided to open a kitchen for feeding the families of “warriors” on the ground floor of the Art Pavilion within 10 days. Permission was granted on 27 August.<sup>33</sup> The Society pledged to feed 500 members of soldiers’ families at its own expense and another 500 for a minimum contribution of 12 crowns per month. It set aside 10,000 crowns for this purpose, while other expenses were to be covered through citizens’ contributions. The Children’s Protection League asked all members of the families of mobilized soldiers who were not yet receiving food to report by 5 September at the latest, warning them that only those possessing a League membership card would receive food. The opening ceremony of the kitchen was held on 7 September, and was attended by numerous dignitaries and even more numerous paupers who sought a free meal.<sup>34</sup>

On the first day, 658 people bearing permission from the League came to receive their meals. The following day there were 807, and by 13 September their number had grown to exactly 1,000. There was a constant influx of new people seeking food: illegitimate wives of soldiers, high school pupils, and other poor people, so that the Society was giving out over 3,500 meals per day by the end of September. Expenses outstripped the Society’s capacity to provide, so it sought the help of citizens, legal persons, and the Land Government. On 27 September, the *ban* approved 100 crowns per day to cover the expenses of feeding 250 high school pupils.<sup>35</sup> The City Government made a monthly payment of 6,000 crowns for 500 soldiers’ family members, but the money was paid retroactively.<sup>36</sup> Even though one could count on receiving that money, there always remained an element of uncertainty as to when it would be paid out. The amount of money provided remained the same until April 1918, when an appeal of the Society to increase the

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the title of royal adviser from 1909, and in 1917 he received the War Cross for Civil Merits 2<sup>nd</sup> Class. (Mirnik, „Obitelj Alexander“, pp. 105-106)

<sup>32</sup> Mayer, *Dobrotvorno društvo „Prehrana“*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>33</sup> HDA, PrZV, vol. 6-22, box no. 4.232/1914., unnumbered, Molba uprave društva od 25. kolovoza; HDA, PrZV, vol. 6-22, box no. 4.232/1914., no. 5.695 Pr./1914., Dozvola za rad.

<sup>34</sup> „Društvo za prehranu siromašne školske mladeži grada Zagreba.“, *Obzor* 54, no. 237, 28 August 1914; „Za prehranu siromašnih obitelji.“, *NN* 80, no. 206, 2 September 1914; „Za prehranu siromašnih obitelji.“, *JL* 3, no. 772, 2 September 1914; „Društvo za prehranu siromašne školske mladeži grada Zagreba.“, *NN* 80, no. 205, 1 September 1914; „Društvo za prehranu školske mladeži...“, *JL* 3, no. 771, 1 September 1914; „Društvo za prehranu siromašne školske mladeži.“, *NN* 80, no. 209, 5 September 1914; „Društvo za prehranu siromašne školske mladeži.“, *JL* 3, no. 778, 5 September 1914; „Otvorenje kuhinje za prehranu siromaha.“, *JL* 3, no. 781, 7 September 1914; „Otvorenje kuhinje za prehranu obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika.“, *Obzor* 54, no. 248, 8 September 1914; „Svečano otvorenje kuhinje za prehranu obitelji vojnika.“, *NN* 80, no. 214, 9 September 1914.

<sup>35</sup> Mayer, *Dobrotvorno društvo „Prehrana“*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>36</sup> Državni arhiv Zagreb (further: DAZ), Gradsko poglavarstvo Zagreb (further: GPZ), Opći spisi, no. 1.250 Prs./1914.



amount was approved. The Society had asked for a 100% increase, but the actual increase was to 10,000 crowns per month, starting 1 April 1918.<sup>37</sup> This time, the City Government took two months to reply to the letter.

Those responsible for the kitchen's success included Šandor A. Alexander, the teacher Lavoslava Teklić, and the secretary Ružica Šimatović.<sup>38</sup> Only three days after its opening, the Administrative Board concluded that another stove has to be installed to feed an additional 250 people. In order to encourage potential donors, an article on the donors who helped equip the new kitchen was published, as was a series of articles on the necessary amount of meals and funds. By the end of October 1914, a large stove which could provide 2,500 meals had been installed, which increased the total output to 5,000 meals per day.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, "Merkur" provided food for 204 meals per day for 77 people, while the Tavern Keepers' Union fed 130 people daily.<sup>40</sup> In January 1915, "Merkur" moved to a new location where it couldn't have a kitchen, and since the new renter demanded the removal of the kitchen, it seemed likely it would close. Although they had to pay rent, they arranged for a new kitchen of increased capacity, which could provide three meals for 110 soldiers' families per day, starting in 9 February. Until 1 February 1916, expenses were covered by the Citizens' Committee for Nourishment through citizens' contributions, and were then taken over by the Society.<sup>41</sup>

From its humble beginnings, the kitchen of the Society for Feeding School Youth grew to a much larger size after eight months. Since the Society's activities

<sup>37</sup> DAZ, GPZ, Opći spisi, no. 11.801 Prs./1918.

<sup>38</sup> „Svečano otvorenje kuhinje za prehranu obitelji vojnika.“, *NN* 80, no. 214, 9 September 1914.

<sup>39</sup> „Društvo za prehranu školske mladeži.“, *NN* 80, no. 220, 12 September 1914; „Društvo za prehranu siromašne školske mladeži.“, *JL* 3, no. 788, 12 September 1914; „Društvo za prehranu sirom. škol. djece u Zagrebu.“, *NN* 80, no. 231, 18 September 1914; „Društvo za prehranu siromašne školske mladeži u Zagrebu...“., *NN* 80, no. 233, 19 September 1914; „Društvo za prehranu siromašne školske mladeži...“., *JL* 3, no. 803, 20 September 1914; „Prehrana obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika...“., *NN* 80, no. 251, 29 September 1914; „Prehrana obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika...“., *JL* 3, no. 817, 29 September 1914; „Školska mladež za prehranu obitelji mobil. vojnika.“., *NN* 80, no. 276, 14 October 1914; „Trinajst hiljada kruna za prehranu obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika u Umjetničkom paviljonu...“., *NN* 80, no. 279, 17 October 1914; „13.000 kruna za prehranu obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika u Umjetničkom paviljonu...“., *JL* 3, no. 850, 17 October 1914; „Iz „Društva za prehranu siromašne školske mladeži“.“., *NN* 80, no. 290, 30 October 1914; „Proširenje djelokruga prehrane obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika u Umjetničkom paviljonu.“., *JL* 3, no. 876, 1 November 1914.

<sup>40</sup> „Obskrbna stanica „Merkur“ za obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika.“, *NN* 80, no. 229, 23 September 1914; „Iz opskrbe stanice Gostioničarskog saveza.“, *JL* 3, no. 902, 17 November 1914.

<sup>41</sup> „Velika nepritika i molba 'Merkurove' kuhinje.“, *NN* 81, no. 24, 30 January 1915; „Velika nepritika i molba 'Merkurove' kuhinje.“, *JL* 4, no. 1019, 31 January 1915; „Nepřitika 'Merkurova' kuhinje.“, *NN* 81., no. 26, 2 February 1915; „Nepřitika Merkurove kuhinje.“, *JL* 4, no. 1022, 3 February 1915; „'Merkurova opskrba kuhinja'.“, *NN* 81, no. 32, 9 February 1915; „'Merkurova' opskrba kuhinja.“, *JL* 4, no. 1030, 11 February 1915; „Obskrbna kuhinja 'Merkurova'.“, *JL* 4, no. 1072, 25 March 1915; „Velika nepritika i molba 'Merkurove' kuhinje.“, *NN* 81, no. 24, 30 January 1915; „Ratne dobrotorne institucije 'Merkura'.“, *NN* 81, no. 130, 7 June 1915; „Ratne dobrotorne institucije 'Merkura'.“, *JL* 4, no. 1148, 9 June 1915; „'Gradjanski odbor za prehranu siromašne djece naših ratnika'.“, *NN* 83, no. 27, 3 February 1917.

weren't linked to its officially approved regulations, it was agreed to let it merge with the "League for the Protection of Mobilized Soldiers' Families" into the "Society for Feeding the Poor Families of Mobilized Soldiers". The founding assembly was held on 15 May 1915, and Šandor A. Alexander was elected president, Dr Josip Šilović vice president,<sup>42</sup> Viktor Mayer secretary, and Lavoslava Teklić kitchen manager.<sup>43</sup>

In early December 1914, in addition to the other activities caused by the war, the Society returned to its basic activity – feeding the poor children from the primary schools. According to the estimate of the directorate of all 15 of Zagreb's primary schools, there were 629 such children. Apart from them, a further 400 children of mobilised soldiers received food in the Society's kitchen, which was just over the estimated number of 1000 poor children that the Society agreed to feed at the beginning of the war. A few days after the distribution of meals began, word spread that children from the city's periphery rarely come to receive food since it's too far from them, so some voices concluded that the children aren't truly hungry, which the Society's management vigorously denied. The problem was that certain schools didn't have attendants who'd come to distribute the food to the children, as it was the case before the war, so this problem needed to be resolved as soon as possible.<sup>44</sup> Despite this refutation, this merely confirmed that the children from the periphery indeed arrived less often, which was completely understandable when the poor availability of shoes among these children is taken into account.

On 13 December 1915, the Society again became involved in feeding poor primary school pupils, but now there were around 800 of them. Approximately another 800, or perhaps slightly more, were fed from 27 November 1916 in the Art Pavilion, but a difference compared to the year before was the introduction of breakfast for 500 primary schoolchildren. Schoolchildren sometimes became sick from hunger during class, so it was decided that they should be given "a little piece" of wheat bread and a cup of tea. Breakfast for children from the more distant parts of the city was sent to schools, and the teachers immediately informed the public of this beneficial effect. However, the delivery of food still presented a considerable problem, so, in mid-February 1917, Šandor A. Alexander appealed to the commander of the military district, who put seven soldiers at his disposal as food deliverymen for seven school districts. Thanks to this, the number of fed children grew to around 1000, which required some 250 litres of tea and 100 kg of

<sup>42</sup> Dr. Josip Šilović (1858–1939), lawyer. Attained his PhD in Law in Zagreb in 1884. Served with the Land Government from 1883 until 1893. Later he taught criminal law, legal procedure, and philosophy of law at the Faculty of Law of the Royal University of Francis Joseph I in Zagreb. He served as dean in several terms, and was the rector of the Zagreb University from 1898 until 1899. (Vujić, *HL*, 2: 518)

<sup>43</sup> Mayer, *Dobrotvorno društvo „Prehrana“*, 11.

<sup>44</sup> „Trideset hiljada krana.“, *NN*, vol. 80, no. 308, 20 November 1914; „Trideset hiljada krana...“, *JL*, vol. 3, no. 910, 21 November 1914; „Siromašnim obiteljima mobiliziranih vojnika...“, *NN*, vol. 80, no. 319, 3 December 1914; „Prehrana školske djece.“, *NN*, vol. 80, no. 327, 14 December 1914; „Prehrana školske djece.“, *JL*, vol. 3, no. 948, 15 December 1914; „Prehrana školske djece.“, *NN*, vol. 80, no. 328, 15 December 1914; „Prehrana školske djece.“, *JL*, vol. 3, no. 950, 16 December 1914.

bread per day. This practice was maintained at least till the end of March, though the precise length of its duration remains unknown.<sup>45</sup>

The Society didn't abandon its efforts to feed poor schoolchildren in 1917/18, except that now the goal was to deliver food to almost all schools, since the children were poorly dressed and shod, and the winter was quite severe. Feeding was to begin on 1 December but, apart from this announcement, I couldn't find any data that would confirm or disprove that it indeed took place.<sup>46</sup>

The Children's Protection League and the Society cared for the poorest strata of the City of Zagreb, but their definition of poverty is unknown, only one of many questions which remain unanswered in attempts to re-construct daily life in Zagreb during the First World War.<sup>47</sup>

The Provisional Department of the City Government was in charge of acquiring food for all others, through its shops in the city centre. In 1916 the Department became responsible for large-scale trading of food and its distribution among the citizens. Later, state centres for an increasing amount of food supplies were introduced, through which the government tried to distribute meagre amounts of food throughout the Monarchy. The originally set amounts were insufficient for feeding the population and rarely reached their destinations.<sup>48</sup> For example, around 65 tons of flour were needed to feed Zagreb each month, but the quotas were reduced and certain types of food became rare near the end of the war. Food whose distribution wasn't regulated by law could be freely traded and its price was formed on the free market.<sup>49</sup>

A poor harvest in autumn 1914 and troubles with the sowing in spring 1915 forced the military and civil authorities to enact a series of provisions, according to which landowners would be forced to extract the maximum possible food from their land. For this reason, in spring 1915, the City Government started converting

<sup>45</sup> „Društvo za prehranu siromašnih obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika.“, *NN*, vol. 81, no. 287, 11. December 1915; „Rad 'Prehrane'.“, *NN*, vol. 81, no. 298, 24 December 1915; „Društvo za prehranu siromašnih obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika'...“., *NN*, vol. 82, no. 267, 21 November 1916; „Zajutrak za školsku djecu u 'Prehrani'.“, *NN*, vol. 83, no. 11, 15 January 1917; „Zajutrak za siromašnu školsku djecu.“, *NN*, vol. 83, no. 24, 30 January 1917; „Zajutrak za školsku djecu u 'Prehrani'.“, *NN*, vol. 83, no. 37, 15 February 1917; „Za zajutrak školskoj mladeži u 'Prehrani'.“, *NN*, vol. 83, no. 43, 22 February 1917; „Dostava zajutarka siromašnoj školskoj djeci po vojnicima.“, *NN*, vol. 83, no. 44, 23 February 1917; „Zajutrak siromašnoj školskoj djeci u 'Prehrani'.“, *NN*, vol. 83, no. 57, 10 March 1917; „Treći ogromni štednjak u 'Prehrani' postavljen.“, *NN*, vol. 83, no. 75, 31 March 1917.

<sup>46</sup> „'Prehrana' za djecu zagrebačkih pučkih škola.“, *NN*, vol. 83, no. 271, 26 November 1917.

<sup>47</sup> An exhaustive bibliography can be found in: Geiger and Fabry, „Racionirana i zajamčena opskrba“, pp. 88-89, note 4. The paper contains examples of provision cards, most of which pertain to Zagreb (Geiger and Fabry, „Racionirana i zajamčena opskrba“, pp. 92-105). In the meantime, a series of exhibition catalogues on has been published on the occasion of the First World War centenary throughout Croatia, but they contain very little or no information about food-related topics. For Zagreb, see: Strukić, *Odjeci s bojišnice*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>48</sup> Burek, „Djelovanje poglavarstva grada Varaždina“, pp. 282-290; Kočevar, „Zrno do zrna palača“, pp. 16-35.; Barčot, *Prešućeni rat*, pp. 108-137, pp. 143-158.

<sup>49</sup> *Zagreb 1913-1918*, pp. 152-165.

city property to vegetable gardens. Small fields proved of little practical use, so the city's fields on the southern coast of the Sava River were expanded, covering former military training grounds and thickets. Potatoes and various vegetables were grown there, and sold at prices 25-50% lower than on the market. Up until 1918, there was no systematic plan for production or professional personnel, because it was thought the economy only made sense during wartime. However, a chronic shortage of milk led to the introduction of planned milk production.<sup>50</sup>

In 1914, the Provisional Department placed on the city market all kinds of meat (beef, veal, pork, fish, game), milk, vegetables (sauerkraut, potatoes, beans), eggs, barley porridge, rice, coffee, and sugar, but also wood, coal, and petroleum.<sup>51</sup> Next year there was a shortage of beef, but this was mitigated by larger amounts of pork and fish. In addition to the mentioned foodstuffs, they started selling oil, corn, and soap.<sup>52</sup> In 1916, the city authorities became aware that the allocated food was insufficient to feed the city, and arranged the transport of all sorts of foodstuffs with "provincial" producers and opened their own pork processing plant. They bought a forest in Slavonia in order to secure firewood and, next year, a crisis in the wood supply prompted them to buy another one.<sup>53</sup> In 1918, they had trouble acquiring anything of good quality, and used turnip, peas, pasta, oats, onions, and later even something called "oil cakes".<sup>54</sup> One of the Provisional Department's shops was located on Ban Jelačić Square, where the largest queues formed, especially when potatoes were being sold. Even though the shop opened at 6 in the morning, queues comprised of people of all ages began forming around midnight. Everyone sought to be at the head of the queue, and the wait proved futile for many.<sup>55</sup> Fights often broke out while food was being distributed,<sup>56</sup> and in the late war, food started to be openly sold at exorbitant prices on the black market.<sup>57</sup>

In June 1918, the Society organized the daily selling of fruit and vegetables at its stands on Ban Jelačić Square, and all interested institutions were required to register with the Society. Peas, cucumbers, kale, string beans, cherries, currants, and pears arrived in wagons from Srijem and were sold at lower prices than the ones set at the Zagreb market. Since even contemporaries estimated that 2/3 of

<sup>50</sup> *Zagreb 1913-1918*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>51</sup> *Zagreb 1913-1918*, pp. 152-153.

<sup>52</sup> *Zagreb 1913-1918*, pp. 154-157.

<sup>53</sup> *Zagreb 1913-1918*, pp. 158-162.

<sup>54</sup> *Zagreb 1913-1918*, pp. 162-165.

<sup>55</sup> Jurić, „Zagreb“, p. 128.

<sup>56</sup> „Baraka za prodaju brašna“, *Ilustrovani list* (further: *IL*) 2, no. 32, 7 August 1915; „Utorak i petak bez mesa u Zagrebu“, *IL* 2, no. 32, 7 August 1915; „Sa zagrebačkog bojišta“, *IL* 2, no. 37, 11 September 1915; „Jagma za solju u Zagrebu“, *IL* 3, no. 32, 5 August 1916; „Nekada i danas u Zagrebu“, *IL* 4, no. 20, 19 May 1917; „Planinarstvo u Zagrebu“, *IL* 4, no. 27, 7 September 1917; „Aprovizacija grada Zagreba drvima“, *IL* 4, no. 37, 15 September 1917; „Zagrebačke slike“, *IL* 4, no. 39, 29 September 1917; „Slike iz zagrebačkih ulica“, *IL* 4, no. 49, 8 December 1917.

<sup>57</sup> „Slike sa zagrebačkog trga“, *IL* 5, no. 20, 22 June 1918; „Ratno lihvarjenje u Zagrebu“, *IL* 5, no. 25, 27 July 1918; „Ulična aprovizacija“, *IL* 5, no. 28, 17 August 1918; „Slike iz Zagreba“, *IL* 5, no. 31, 7 September 1918.

the city's inhabitants couldn't afford the market prices for fruit and vegetables, the "scramble" for food within the Society's organization shouldn't come as a surprise. Next week, stands were erected on two other city squares.<sup>58</sup>

In mid-December 1914, the Society kitchen used around one ton of various sorts of vegetables (beans, potatoes, cabbage, kale, and turnips) and large amounts of wood and coal to make over 3,000 meals of stew. The monthly expenditure for this amounted to around 20,000 crowns, or around 600 crowns per day.<sup>59</sup> Expenses grew around Christmas and Easter because meals at that time also included meat and cakes. The Society had the right to buy bread made of 1/3 barley flour at a 30% discount, and were supplied with vegetables by the Provisional Department.<sup>60</sup> It is believed that it was this discount that allowed the Society to expand its activities at a time when other associations had difficulty covering their basic expenses.<sup>61</sup>

In summer 1915, food prices grew up to three times pre-war levels and the reasons for the Society's success became apparent. Namely, Šandor A. Alexander had made long-term contracts with food suppliers at the beginning of the war, and these obliged them to supply food at significantly lower prices. Once supplies were exhausted, he started an initiative to centralize the food supply for all wartime assistance institutions, claiming that this would save a lot of money. He took upon himself the acquisition of flour and baking of bread at prices significantly lower than the ones on the market, and concluded an agreement with the Citizens' Bakery for the privileged acquisition of bread for 30,000 people at their stores. This time, the census of soldiers' families, workers, and other poor people was made by the people themselves, and food stamps were introduced. These projects were realized during the second half of October 1915. The Society took over the supply station of the Tavern Keepers' Union, but the project of acquiring cheaper bread fell through after two weeks due to insufficient quantities of flour.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> „Prodaja ‘Hortusova‘ povrća i voća u korist ‘Prehrane’.“, *NV* 84, no. 141, 22 June 1918.

<sup>59</sup> In four months of its existence, the Society distributed around 300,000 meals, using 30,500 kg of bread, 115,000 kg of vegetables, around 60,000 pairs of sausages, 2,000 kg of fat, 1,400 kg of salt, 500 mtc of coal, and 22 fathoms of wood. Within 10 months, 35 tons of food, 50 fathoms of wood and 10 railcars of coal had been spent. („Potrošak za prehranu siromašnih obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika u Umjetničkom paviljonu.“, *NV* 81, no. 12, 16 January 1915; „Potrošak za prehranu siromašnih obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika u Umjetničkom paviljonu.“, *JL* 4, no. 1000, 17 January 1915; „Kolik je potrošak za milijun obroka jela s kruhom.“, *NV* 81, no. 148, 28 June 1915)

<sup>60</sup> „Do dvadeset hiljada kruna mjesečno...“, *NV* 80, no. 331, 18 December 1914; „Do dvadeset hiljada kruna mjesečno...“, *JL* 3, no. 956, 19 December 1914; „Prehrana siromašnih obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika u Umjetničkom paviljonu.“, *NV* 80, no. 334, 22 December 1914; „Prehrana siromašnih obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika u Umjetničkom paviljonu.“, *JL* 3, no. 962, 23 December 1914; „Do 26.000 Kr. iznosi izdatak za siečanj...“, *NV* 81, no. 24, 30 January 1915; „Do 26.000 K iznosi izdatak za mjesec siečanj...“, *JL* 4, no. 1019, 31 January 1915; „Društvo za prehranu siromašnih obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika u Umjetničkom paviljonu.“, *JL* 4, no. 1084, 7 April 1915.

<sup>61</sup> Kolar-Dimitrijević, *Prvo zagrebačko dobrotvorno društvo*, p. 42.

<sup>62</sup> „Kolik je potrošak za milijun obroka jela s kruhom.“, *NV* 81, no. 148, 28 June 1915; „Centralizacija dobava živežnih potrepština dobrotvornih ratnih institucija.“, *NV* 81, no. 214, 15 September 1915; „Centralizacija dobava živežnih potrepština dobrotvornih ratnih institucija.“, *JL* 4,

Prompted by the high prices and scarcity of food, in January 1917 the Imperial and Royal Nutrition Office in Vienna issued a regulation on the opening of new war kitchens, whose implementation was to be done by the political bodies of individual countries. Since the Society was the largest in Zagreb whose sole activity was feeding the population, Šandor A. Alexander started an initiative for founding a War Kitchen within its frame. Already in early February, a menu was published, listing the prices of meals, while anyone could acquire bread on their own or at maximum price, provided they were properly registered. Two or three different meals were offered each day (priced from 25 fillérs to 1 crown), and those who could apply included families with state support, lower-ranking clerks at public or private companies, those employed in crafts or trade, and industrial workers.<sup>63</sup> There had been talk of a similar project since the beginning of the war, and again in April 1916, but it seems they simply failed to come to fruition – until then.<sup>64</sup>

News of the War Kitchen's opening ignited polemics on the Society's method of operation, its lack of readiness for the implementation of such a complex project, its financing, and its methods of acquiring the necessary foodstuffs. A large number of complaints originated from the Tavern Keepers' Union, whose leaders believed that the War Kitchen should be decentralized and replaced with a system where tavern keepers distribute food in various parts of the city, while the Society would acquire the food and oversee its distribution. Since the Kitchen was directly linked to a charity, it was assumed that it was financed through citizens' contributions and charitable plays, which was considered bad because it meant that not all citizens had the right to use it. Šandor A. Alexander refuted this, revealing that the Society had always functioned as a company which buys food, while the above-mentioned contributions and plays were used only to fund emergency acquisitions.<sup>65</sup>

Despite everything, the opening of the Kitchen was announced for 11 February 1917, and all those who wished to receive food were asked to pay for eight days in advance. Over 100 families and an unknown number of individuals applied for

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no. 1250, 16 September 1915; „Društvo za prehranu siromašnih obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika...“, *NV* 81, no. 241, 8 October 1915; „Kruh 'Prehrane'“, *NV* 81, no. 243, 19 October 1915; „Društvo za prehranu siromašnih obitelji mobilizovanih vojnika...“, *NV* 81, no. 252, 29 October 1915; „Organizacija ratne prehrane.“, *JL* 6, no. 1762, 7 February 1917; „Organizacija ratne prehrane. Mišljenje i izjava kr. savjetnika Š. A. Alexandera.“, *JL* 6, no. 1764, 9 February 1917.

<sup>63</sup> „Ratna kuhinja i centralizacija svih zagrebačkih ratno-dobrotvornih kuhinja u 'Prehrani'“, *NV* 83, no. 22, 27 January 1917; „Ratne kuhinje.“, *NV* 83, no. 22, 27 January 1917; „Ratna kuhinja u Zagrebu. Centralizacija svih zagrebačkih ratno-dobrotvornih kuhinja u 'Prehrani'“, *JL* 6, no. 1752, 28 January 1917; M. P., „Ženski obzor.“, *JL* 6, no. 1754, 30 January 1917; „Cjenik jela ratne kuhinje u 'Prehrani'“, *NV* 83, no. 27, 3 February 1917; „Ratna kuhinja u 'Prehrani'“, *NV* 83, no. 28, 5 February 1917; „Ratna kuhinja u 'Prehrani'“, *NV* 83, no. 30, 7 February 1917; „Prodaja kiselog zelja u 'Prehrani'“, *NV* 83, no. 36, 14 February 1917.

<sup>64</sup> „Jeftinija prehrana.“, *JL* 5, no. 1457, 11 April 1916.

<sup>65</sup> „Organizacija ratne prehrane.“, *JL* 6, no. 1761, 6 February 1917; „Organizacija ratne prehrane.“, *JL* 6, no. 1762, 7 February 1917; „Organizacija prehrane i ratne kuhinje u Zagrebu.“, *JL* 6, no. 1763, 8 February 1917; „Organizacija ratne prehrane. Mišljenje i izjava kr. savjetnika Š. A. Alexandera.“, *JL* 6, no. 1764, 9 February 1917; „Ratna kuhinja u Zagrebu.“, *JL* 6, no. 1767, 12 February 1917; „Rad 'Prehrane'“, *NV* 83, no. 172, 28 July 1917.

the first day, and were offered tomato soup and dry sausages with *ričet* (barley porridge boiled with beans) for 1.25 crowns, without bread. Each meal could be bought separately, and one ration consisted of half a litre of stew. The number of users doubled already the very next day, but many were turned back because they had arrived without previous notice.<sup>66</sup> In order to supply all those interested, a large stove was acquired for cooking an additional 2,000 meals and installed by the end of March. In early March, the larger factories were asked for help in acquiring “mobile war kitchens”, while workers were notified that some factories are already getting food from the War Kitchen and invited to “take advantage of this blessing”. Most of the families which received food took it back home, while the dining hall in the Art Pavilion was mostly used by people employed by the government or private companies.<sup>67</sup>

The War Kitchen remained open until October 1919, when it moved out of the Art Pavilion at the behest of the City Government. This had been expected since back in April, when their great hall was taken away and given to the French military mission for quartering “colonial troops”. The hall was later returned, but the storage space was not, which led to “much of the food spoiling due to the damp and warmth of the kitchen”.<sup>68</sup> Work in poor conditions continued for only a short time, since the president of the “Humaneness” Society Guido Stern<sup>69</sup> suggested Šandor A. Alexander to take over the Soup Kitchen and the feeding of its users, while “Humaneness” would provide funding.<sup>70</sup>

In mid-June 1917, news arrived in Zagreb about Šandor A. Alexander being awarded a medal for his services in charity, but this fact had no effect on the work of the Society. However, when news that the largest house in the city had been bought were confirmed, this caused suspicion towards the Society’s work because its income was supposed to have served as the basis for a foundation for feeding the widows and orphans of fallen soldiers, disabled soldiers and their families, and all others who were left unfit for work due to the war.<sup>71</sup> Even though the amount

<sup>66</sup> „Ratna kuhinja u ‘Prehrani’“, *NN* 83, no. 31, 8 February 1917; „Ratna kuhinja u ‘Prehrani’“, *JL* 6, no. 1764, 9 February 1917; „Otvorenje ratne kuhinje u ‘Prehrani’“, *NN* 83, no. 33, 10 February 1917; „Otvorenje ‘Ratne kuhinje’ u ‘Prehrani’“, *JL* 6, no. 1766, 11 February 1917; „Otvorenje ratne kuhinje“, *NN* 83, no. 34, 12 February 1917; „Ratna kuhinja u ‘Prehrani’“, *NN* 83, no. 35, 13 February 1917; „Cijene jela u Ratnoj kuhinji u ‘Prehrani’“, *JL* 6, no. 1768, 13 February 1917.

<sup>67</sup> „Ratna kuhinja u ‘Prehrani’“, *NN* 83, no. 40, 19 February 1917; „Putujuća ratna kuhinja ‘Prehrane’“, *NN* 83, no. 50, 2 March 1917; „Putujuća ratna kuhinja ‘Prehrane’“, *JL* 6, no. 1786, 3 March 1917; „‘Prehrana’ i ‘Ratne kuhinje’“, *NN* 83, no. 60, 14 March 1917; „Treći ogromni štednjak u ‘Prehrani’ postavljen“, *NN* 83, no. 75, 31 March 1917; „Ban u umjetničkom paviljonu“, *JL* 6, no. 1816, 2 April 1917; „Rad ‘Prehrane’, ‘Ratne kuhinje’ i ‘Vojničkog doma’“, *NN* 83, no. 105, 7 May 1917.

<sup>68</sup> Mayer, *Dobrotvorno društvo „Prehrana“*, p. 15, pp. 21-22.

<sup>69</sup> Guido Stern (1867 – 1937) was the president of the „Humaneness“ Society from 1911 until 1920, and his family was one of its founders (Kolar-Dimitrijević, *Prvo zagrebačko dobrotvorno društvo*, p. 86).

<sup>70</sup> Mayer, *Dobrotvorno društvo „Prehrana“*, p. 22; Kolar-Dimitrijević, *Prvo zagrebačko dobrotvorno društvo*, p. 45.

<sup>71</sup> The „Foundation of Nourishment President and Founder Šandor A. Alexander” was

of 20,000,000 crowns was not disclosed, the Society was accused of illegal food trading and malfeasance with flour at the expense of the Provisional Department.<sup>72</sup> However, today it appears that the money was part of the income of the Zagreb Brewery, whose majority owner was Samuel David Alexander,<sup>73</sup> Šandor A. Alexander's brother.<sup>74</sup>

On 10 August 1917, the City Council established a Revision Committee, which was supposed to provide a report as soon as possible. The report was finished on 15 September, but the City Council acknowledged it only on 3 December. Despite this, the findings were published in the newspapers in order to remove suspicion from the Society and its president. The report shows that the Society was founded by Šandor A. Alexander in September 1914, who gave 60,000 crowns from his own pocket, so that the feeding of the population could start as soon as possible. Since citizens' contributions and the city and state subsidies could not cover the expenses, Alexander decided to engage in food trading at his own risk, with the potential profits being used for the benefit of the Society. By 14 September 1917, the society managed to achieve an income of 721,431 crowns, while expenditures reached 1,971,815 crowns. A deficit of 1,250,384 crowns was covered by selling tea, which had been acquired in large quantities at the beginning of the war, and by selling cabbage and turnips during the winter of 1916/17. In fact, the selling of these foodstuffs on the market resulted in a profit, since they were sold for a total of 2,443,626 crowns, which were used to buy the mentioned controversial house, securities and goods, cover claims, etc. The official report ends with a critical note on the "truly modest support" of the city for this endeavour, claiming it was supposed to use all available funds to help the Society rather than leaving it all to an individual who "is acquiring the funds necessary for that purpose through successful speculation".<sup>75</sup> Of course, the last part wasn't published in official organs.<sup>76</sup>

The entire revision report was composed of data offered to the auditors by Šandor A. Alexander, which allowed potential critics to continue to make com-

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established on 12 March 1918 and financed the soup kitchen until 1966, when it ceased to exist. A fond of the same name exists in the Croatian State Archives, but doesn't contain any relevant documents from the First World War period.

<sup>72</sup> „Odlikovanje Š. A. Alexandera.“, *NN* 83, no. 138, 18 June 1917; „Šandor A. Alexander.“, *JL* 6, no. 1892, 17 June 1917; „Prihod najveće kuće u gradu u korist 'Prehrane'.“, *NN* 83, no. 167, 23 July 1917; „Kukovićeve kuća.“, *JL* 6, no. 1932, 27 July 1917.

<sup>73</sup> Samuel David Alexander (1862–1943) graduated at the Business Academy in Graz, after which he worked in his father's company and led a subsidiary in Sisak. During the time of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, he owned breweries and malt factories in Sisak and Zagreb. He also owned a large number of shares of the Royal Leather Factory in Zagreb, and founded the first oil factory in Croatia. He was a board member of many banks and business associations, participated in the activities of singing and other associations, and became one of the founders of the Israeli holiday camp in Zagreb in 1914. (Mirnik, „Obitelj Alexander“, pp. 101-103)

<sup>74</sup> Kolar, „Zagrebačka pivovara“, pp. 36-37.

<sup>75</sup> DAZ, GPZ, Opći spisi Predsjedništvo, no. 1.696 Prs/1917.

<sup>76</sup> „Revizija 'Prehrane'.“, *NN* 83, no. 212, 17 September 1917; „U 'Prehrani' sve u najboljem redu!“, *JL* 6, no. 1984, 17 September 1917; „'Prehrana' pred gr. zastupstvom.“, *NN* 83, no. 278, 4 December 1917.



plaints. After publishing the report, criticism died down or at least wasn't as public. Through public polemics, we can see that fat was acquired from Hungary because it was unavailable in Croatia in 1917. From Bohemia they acquired 30 wagons of cabbage, but it was seized by the Army, and the same happened to the 10 wagons of potatoes stored in Slavonia. The Society bought cabbage and turnips en masse, grated and pickled them, and then sold them to hospitals at a certain profit. When these foodstuffs disappeared from the market, they publicly announced that they would start selling their supplies to the populace.<sup>77</sup>

After the mentioned controversy, there was talk in December 1917 about the need for changing the Society's business model and introducing new regulations. Even though the Land Government approved the regulations on 3 August, just before the Revision Committee was founded, the founding assembly was held on 18 December 1917, i. e. after the City Council received the report.<sup>78</sup> The Society was named "Nourishment" and its Administrative Board was for the most part composed of the same people who were active in its predecessor.<sup>79</sup> The Society's previous work was formulated into five official goals, which were to last throughout the war, but also while its effects continued to be felt. The feeding of poor members of the families of mobilized or killed soldiers, and of those who were left unfit for work due to the war, had priority. Next in line was the poor school youth, older and/or disabled people and other poor folk, the upkeep of the "Soldier's Home" (an establishment where soldiers can relax and socialise without getting involved with the civilian population), and providing food to poorer people at a discount.<sup>80</sup>

On 13 August 1918, King Charles IV gave Šandor A. Alexander a hereditary title of Hungarian nobility, with the adjective "of Sesvete" for his work in providing wartime relief, and this was received with approval among the general populace.<sup>81</sup> A ceremonial session of "Nourishment" was held one month later, and on this occasion Josip Šilović congratulated the Society members for providing food for the families for tens of thousands of soldiers as well as "countless peasants from the countryside", "many soldiers passing through Zagreb", disabled people, teachers-in-training, school youth, and "thousands upon thousands" of poor children from Dalmatia, Istria, and "Herzeg-Bosnia" during the four war years. This would never have been possible without Šandor A. Alexander, and it was said that "Nourishment" was Alexander.<sup>82</sup> Newspapers reported that it was precisely thanks to "Nourishment" that nobody died of hunger in Zagreb.<sup>83</sup> Even though the official reason for the

<sup>77</sup> DAZ, „Prehrana“, Podaci o radu 1917./1947., unnumbered, „Agrarmer Tagblatt“ from 8 September 1917.

<sup>78</sup> „Reorganizacija 'Prehrane'“, *JL* 6, no. 2067, 8 December 1917; „Glavna skupština društva 'Prehrane'...“, *NN* 83, no. 283, 11 December 1917.

<sup>79</sup> DAZ, „Prehrana“, knjiga Zapisnika godišnjih skupština, 1; Mayer, *Dobrotvorno društvo „Prehrana“*, p. 15.

<sup>80</sup> HDA, UOZV, (1915.-1917.), no. 55.649/1917., Pravila društva „Prehrana“ u Zagrebu.

<sup>81</sup> „Službeno.“, *NN* 84, no. 206, 10 September 1918; „Odlikovanje predsjednika 'Prehrane'“, *NN* 84, no. 207, 11 September 1918.

<sup>82</sup> DAZ, „Prehrana“, knjiga Zapisnika godišnjih skupština, pp. 15-16.

<sup>83</sup> „Svečana sjednica odbora 'Prehrane'“, *NN* 84, no. 210, 14 September 1918.

ennoblement was exclusively his charity work, it is hard to believe that it was the only one. It is far more likely that it was a reward for war loans (actually grants) totalling 1,000,000 gold crowns.<sup>84</sup>

## Conclusion

The initial confusion of the central authorities after the outbreak of the war and their slow response to the resulting problems made room for the local authorities and enterprising individuals. The basis of a relief system was established a few weeks after the mobilization and was in constant need of updating due to increasing demand, and the acquisition of food presented a burning problem. Even though it was difficult to acquire certain kinds of food, it seems food was always available on the market in Zagreb, albeit in minimal amounts and at maximum prices. The proximity of the Slavonian breadbasket and the rural surroundings of the city allowed for a constant influx of food to the markets, including the black market. The Provisional Department's shops offered the most basic food at lower-than-market prices and thus enabled the feeding of the poorer citizens. The poorest were catered to by the Society, and soup kitchens were opened for various types of users, primarily soldiers' wives and children. In addition, the Society sent meagre breakfasts to the poorest primary school pupils.

Food was in very short supply of food in late-war Zagreb, but it appears that there weren't any deaths from hunger, albeit a great many people fell into extreme poverty. It would have been even worse were it not for the efforts of Šandor A. Alexander, a man of great personal wealth who was supported by a very large and powerful family with strong business and private connections throughout Croatia and the Monarchy.

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<sup>84</sup> Mirnik, „Obitelj Alexander“, p. 107.

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## POVZETEK

### Kako prehraniti mesto med prvo svetovno vojno – primer Zagreba

Vijoleta Herman Kaurić

Na predvečer prve svetovne vojne je imel Zagreb vse attribute modernega glavnega mesta ene od dežel Avstro-Ogrske, vključujoč vse značilnosti lokalno-upravnega, političnega, prometnega, gospodarskega ter kulturnega središča. Po popisu prebivalstva leta 1910 je imel Zagreb 79.038 prebivalcev, v mestno upravo je bilo vključenih tudi šest sosednjih vasi, a le 6,85 % mestnega prebivalstva se je ukvarjalo s kmetovanjem. Glavne gospodarske panoge so obsegale obrt in industrijo, trgovino in bančništvo, visok odstotek prebivalstva je bil zaposlen v oskrbi in prometu. Natančno število ljudi, ki so živeli v mestu med prvo svetovno vojno, ostaja neznanka. Po oceni mestnega glavarstva je v mestu živelo približno 86.000 ljudi, gre za edini podatek za obdobje med uradnimi popisoma – drugi od obeh je bil leta 1921. Znano je tudi, da je mestno prebivalstvo “znatno” naraslo zaradi prihoda beguncev iz zasedenih območij, a njihovo natančno število ni zabeleženo.

Kmalu po razglasitvi splošne mobilizacije je postalo jasno, kako zelo so bile družine vpklicanih vojakov odvisne od svojih prehranjevalcev in koliko bi jih težko preživelo brez pomoči, ne glede na čas trajanja vojne. Osrednja oblast se je sprva slabo odzvala na nove okoliščine in le počasi reševala težave, ki jih je prinesla vojna, kar so kmalu zatem popravili lokalna oblast ter podjetni posamezniki. Sistem pomoči, ki ga je bilo zaradi vedno večjih potreb treba nenehno dopoljevati, so vzpostavili nekaj tednov po mobilizaciji in nabava hrane je bila pereč problem. Čeprav je bilo težko nabaviti določene vrste živil, se zdi, da je bila hrana na zagrebški tržnici vedno na razpolago, čeravno v minimalnih količinah ter z maksimalnimi cenami. Bližina slavonske žitnice in ruralna okolica mesta sta omogočali stalen pritek hrane na tržnice, tudi na črni trg. V trgovinah odseka za preskrbo so najbolj osnovna živila prodajali po cenah, ki so bile nižje od tržnih, s čimer so omogočili prehrano najrevnejših prebivalcev mesta, za katere je skrbelo društvo, ljudske kuhinje so bile namenjene različnim tipom uporabnikov, predvsem ženam in otrokom vojakov. Društvo je poskrbelo tudi za skromen zajtrk najrevnejših osnovnošolcev.

Proti koncu vojne je v mestu vladalo pomanjkanje živil, a zdi se, da nihče ni umrl zaradi lakote, čeprav je veliko ljudi utrpelo skrajno revščino. Položaj bi bil še slabši brez Šandorja A. Alexandra, izjemno premožnega moža s podporo velike in mogočne družine z razvejanimi poslovnimi in zasebnimi kontakti na Hrvaškem in v drugje po monarhiji.