



**Čo prinieslo sociálnej práci 100 rokov?  
Minulé a súčasné podoby sociálnej práce**

*8. ročník Košických dní sociálnej práce*

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# Leading experience in social work in Ukraine during the First World War

*Progresívne skúsenosti so sociálnou prácou na Ukrajine počas prvej svetovej vojny*

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## **Abstract:**

Social work is a relatively new phenomenon in the study of European history. Previously, it did not stand out as an independent direction in the activities of public authorities and military administration. Therefore, the organization of social assistance by the Ukrainians during the First World War (1914 – 1918) needs considerable attention in covering current issues of history, in particular, the history of global military conflicts of the twentieth century. The article describes the activities of the Ukrainian branch of the All-Russian Zemsky Union, the Committee of the South-Western Front of Assistance to Sick and Injured Soldiers of the All-Russian Union of Cities, the Red Cross Society of Ukraine, well-known Ukrainian philanthropists and other non-governmental organizations in the years of First World War towards social work with servicemen, veterans and civilians. The directions and results of the work of these institutions are considered. It is emphasized that this is an important area of concern for society to ensure the livelihoods of individual segments of the population in extreme conditions – military. The experience of such activity testified to the advantages of public initiative over the bureaucratic state apparatus.

**Key words:** First World War. All-Russian Zemsky Union. South-Western Front Committee. Red Cross Society. Public organization. Philanthropist. Charity. Social work. Refugees. Servicemen.

## **Abstrakt:**

Sociálna práca je relatívne nový fenomén v štúdiu problémov európskych dejín. Predtým sa nevyjadriť ako nezávislé smerovanie v činnosti orgánov verejnej moci a svetovej vlády. Preto si organizácia prvej pomoci Ukrajincov počas prvej svetovej vojny (1914 – 1918) vyžaduje značnú pozornosť pri riešení aktuálnych otázok dejín, najmä dejín vojenských konfliktov XX storočia. Článok popisuje činnosť ukrajinskej pobočky All-Russian Zemsky Union, Výboru juhozápadného frontu pomoci chorým a zraneným vojakom All-Russian Union of Cities, Červeného kríža Ukrajiny, známych Ukrajinskí filantropi a iné mimovládne organizácie v rokoch prvej svetovej vojny zamerané na sociálnu prácu s vojakmi, veteránmi a civilistami. Zvažujú sa pokyny a výsledky práce týchto inštitúcií. Zdôrazňuje sa, že ide o dôležitú oblasť záujmu spoločnosti, aby sa zabezpečilo živobytie jednotlivých častí obyvateľstva – vojenský personál – v extrémnych podmienkach. Skúsenosti s takouto činnosťou svedčia o výhodách verejnej iniciatívy oproti byrokratickému štátnemu aparátu.

**Kľúčové slová:** I. svetová vojna. All-Russian Zemsky Union. Výbor pre juhozápadný front. Spoločnosť Červeného kríža. Verejná organizácia. Patrón. Dobročinnosť. Sociálna práca. Utečenci. Vojenské.

Social work is a relatively new phenomenon in the study of European history. Previously, it did not stand out as an independent direction in the activities of public authorities and military administration. Therefore, the organization of social assistance by the Ukrainians during the First World War (1914 – 1918) needs considerable attention in covering current issues of history, in particular, the history of global military conflicts of the twentieth century.

Some aspects of social policy during the First World War were reflected in the works which dedicated to the fighting on Ukrainian lands during the war (Reient, & Yanyshyn, 2004) and the newest researches of the history of Ukrainian charity (Zahrebelna, & Koliada 2006; Donik 2005). Paying tribute to the scientists whose works were actually initiated in modern Ukrainian historiography a separate direction – the study of social work during the war, it is necessary to point out the absence of works that would fully cover the problems of organizing social care of

servicemen. The study of this problem lacks a systematic approach that requires a consistent disclosure of such aspects of social assistance as the role of individual agencies and institutions, community care centers and philanthropists. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to emphasize the organizational foundations of social work in the Dnieper during the World War.

The scale of the hostilities on the front lines of First World War necessitated the provision of urgent assistance to tens of thousands of servicemen, including many Ukrainians. Divided between different warring units, without their state, they were forced to fight against each other in the armed forces of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. During the war, in the Russian army was about 4,5 million Naddnippians, and in the Austro-Hungarian Empire there were more than 300,000 Halychans, Bukovynians, and Transcarpathians (First World War).

The conduct of active military and political actions led to certain changes in the military system of the Russian Empire. In mid-July 1914 the «Field Command Regulations» came into force. This act and «The Special Rules on Territorially declared Territories of War», defined the powers of the military authorities and their relations with state bodies in matters of organization of social assistance. In August 1915 special Council of the Defence is starting to work. It consisted of representatives of the State Council and the State Duma, senior royal officials, major oligarch industrialists. The special meeting was entitled to distribute and control state military orders, including the provision of social assistance to servicemen. However, the tsarist government could not do without widespread public support.

The inability to carry out effective social politic prompted the Russian authorities to transfer part of their military and economic functions to public organizations. The activities of a network of local communities, organizations and societies providing social assistance were one of the characteristic manifestations of wartime life. In particular, at the establishment of the State Bank in Sumy there was a society to assist the soldiers. A report of their activities in December 1914 shows that thanks to the care of the benefactors, over 39,000 items of linen and warm items, about 7,000 packages of gifts and almost 200 poods of various foodstuffs were sent (The First World War of 1914 – 1918 on the pages of documents of the State Archives of Sumy region).

Among the non-governmental organizations providing social assistance during the war, a significant role was played by All-Russian Zemsky Union of Assistance to Sick and Injured Soldiers, Committee of the South-West Front of Assistance to Sick and Injured Soldiers of the All-Russian Union of Cities, Society for Widespread Assistance to Soldiers and Their Families. The Ukrainian Organization – South-Western Committee, formed in January 1915 in Lviv (since June 1915 in Kyiv), consisted of the South-Western Regional Committee and the Provincial Committees of Kyiv Region, Volyn and Podillya. During the war, these organizations worked in the fields of military sanitation and supply of troops. According to a contemporary Kyiv researcher, Nina Zahrebelna, these organizations «significantly squeezed the state's position in the care of injured veterans and the civilian population, especially in the health sector, which, in the end, significantly increased public influence in the field of social care» (Zahrebelna 2004, p. 1).

As a result of the military defeats at the fronts in 1915, the Russian government became «softer» in relation to Ukrainians. Recognizing the main cause of the failure poor military training, the government agreed to public assistance from the Dnieper Ukrainians. Many Ukrainians joined the Committee of the South-Western Front of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, chaired in autumn 1915 by a well-known Ukrainian public figure, Baron Fedir Shteinhel (1870 – 1946). The Committee governing bodies were almost exclusively Ukrainian: Mykola Biliashivskyi, Dmytro Doroshenko, Andrii Nikovskyi, Fedir Matushevskyi, Volodymyr Leontovych, Ivan Kraskovskyi, and others (Hrabovskyi 2008, p. 129-133). The Committee conducted social work with servicemen and refugees, assisted with food, medicines, sanitary and epidemic measures; was engaged in the reconstruction of the frontal lane infrastructure, the establishment of cooperative and commercial establishments for the local population, the employment of refugees and others (Verkhovtseva 2004, p. 12). The Committee also made some contribution to the development of Ukrainian

education. In particular, during the war, hundreds of children's orphanages and Ukrainian-language public schools were opened at the expense of the Committee in Galicia and Bukovina, and financial assistance was provided to Ukrainian high schools in Ternopil, Chortkiv, Chernivtsi, etc. (Klymchuk 2012).

Large-scale social work during the war was launched by 82 Ukrainian provincial and district units, the Kyiv, Kharkiv and Katerynoslav province Committees of the Ukrainian branch of the All-Russian Zemsky Union and the All-Russian Union of Cities. In the autumn of 1914, a charity organization was formed the Committee for Assistance to the Soldiers in Mykolayiv, who left the hospitals (Huzenko 2000, p. 47). The most active social work was carried out in the Kharkiv province, where various public and private organizations, institutions and individuals provided charitable assistance to military personnel (Khaustova 2004, p. 73).

Local provincial and county Committees organized and equipped military hospitals, infirmary, dispensers, sanitary trains, providing them with everything needed. Hospitals were treated with all kinds of wounds, as well as infectious, tuberculous and mentally ill veterans, wounded, who needed balneological treatment. The largest number of military medical institutions operated under the Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Katerynoslav provincial Committees of the Air Force and the Kharkiv regional Committee. Thus, as of October 1, 1916, only the Air Force committees in the Ukrainian provinces held more than 47,000 hospital beds out of nearly 193,000 throughout the empire, or a fourth of them. Of these, almost a third (about 16,000) were housed in hospitals in Kharkiv province (Hospitals in Ukraine during the First World War). Charities provided social assistance to disabled warriors, in particular, to open handicraft workshops where they did simple manual labor (sew clothes and shoes for the army, make prostheses, etc.). Also, the Committee of the Southwest Front in the frontal areas of Galicia, Volyn, Podillya and Bukovina in 1914 – 1915 carried out a number of health measures. In particular, he provided first-aid surgery to the wounded soldiers, transported the wounded to hospital care, etc. (Zahrebelna 2003, p. 262-263).

Not surprisingly, it is the Ukrainian branch of the All-Russian Zemsky Union and the All-Russian Union of Cities that take over partly the functions of the state bodies in the direction of providing social assistance to military personnel, thus attesting the important role of public organizations in solving the most urgent problems caused by the extreme conditions of wartime.

A significant contribution to the field of social assistance during the First World War was made by the international humanitarian organization Red Cross. The powers of the Red Cross Society included: assistance to state bodies with clothing, medicines, food; arranging first aid points for the wounded; formation and maintenance of food, rest at railways and evacuation points; organization of social assistance for wounded and sick soldiers; material support of military hospitals, etc.

The lives of hundreds of thousands of wounded soldiers have been saved through blood transfusions donated from the rear and at the front. The Red Cross Society of Ukraine has prepared and sent to the front thousands of nurses, paramedics and sandwiches. They were close to the fighters, working in sanitary trains. Red Cross activists provided direct assistance to wounded and sick warriors in battlefields, transporting them to the rear or hospital. During the hostilities, the Sisters of Mercy worked where they were most needed – on the front lines (Titovska, 2014).

During the war, the structure of the Katerynoslav Branch of the Red Cross effectively operated, where a number of hospitals equipped with modern equipment operated, several mobile infirmary units were formed, professional medical personnel were trained and others. Significant help to the wounded was provided by the infirmary in Zhytomyr, which was organized by the efforts of the charity and public figure Nataliya Orzhevska (1859 – 1939) – chairman of the Volyn Provincial Committee of the Red Cross (Kovalchuk 2015).

At the initial stage of the war, 115 Sisters of Mercy communities were run by the Red Cross Society of Ukraine. According to various estimates, in 1916, 17 436 nurses were sent to the front, serving more than 2 thousand Red Cross field and rear establishments, 71 hospitals for 44 600 beds, stage and mobile infirmary, 11 sanitary trains, sanitary transports, food and dressings, disinfection

chambers, X-ray and surgical rapid response units, 2 floating hospitals in the Black Sea, 3 bacteriological laboratories, 6 field warehouses, etc. (Women in the World War First).

Thus, during the First World War, humanitarian organizations became an important component in addressing the social problems of servicemen. The experience of such activity testified to the advantages of public initiative over the bureaucratic state apparatus.

Some social assistance was provided by well-known Ukrainian philanthropists. First of all, one can note the family of Cossack-bourgeois nobility Tereshchenko, originally from the town of Glukhov in the Slobozhanshchina (now Sumy region), which occupied a leading position in sugar, gural, agricultural, cloth production and forestry (owned more than 200 thousand lands). Each year, their businesses produce over 20 million rubles. Developing Ukrainian industry in the Russian Empire, they did not forget about providing social assistance to the needy. In particular, during the war for charity, Tereshchenko's family spent almost 5 million rubles, mainly on the operation of charitable military infirmary (Issa 2014, pp. 12-16). For example, in Kyiv they kept six infirmary facilities for sick and wounded servicemen and two shelters for amputee soldiers. During the war, Myhaylo Tereshchenko (1886 – 1956; entrepreneur and political figure, member of the 4th State Duma of the Russian Empire) was first authorized by the Red Cross Society on the Southwestern Front, then assistant to the head of sanitary organizations on the same front. He was a member of the local Committees of the Ukrainian branch of the All-Russian Zemsky Union and the Committee of the South-Western Front of Assistance to Sick and Injured Soldiers of the All-Russian Union of Cities, from July 1915 until the February Revolution of 1917 headed the Military-Industrial Committee in Kyiv, headed the Kyiv Branch for the provision of disabled soldiers (Donik, 2004; Tereshchenko (genus); Tereshchenko Mykhailo Ivanovych).

Particular importance in the process of providing social assistance was given to the church (Lozynskyi 2017; Velykyi & Lozynskyi 2016). The tremendous psychological and physical strain in the battles required spiritual support for the entire personnel of the military units on the part of church representatives. The constant danger, the proximity of death, inadvertently transferred the thoughts of soldiers and officers to questions of eternity and the meaning of life. Only priests (military chaplains) could answer these and other questions (Klyucharev 1992, p. 42). They were directly with the soldiers in the trenches, at the front dressing room, providing moral and spiritual support to the wounded (Malysko 2011, p. 242). The priests provided much assistance in the care of the wounded in the military infirmary and the Red Cross hospitals.

Thus, social work during the First World War showed that this is an important area of concern for society to ensure the livelihood of a particular population in extreme conditions – military personnel. Significant role in its implementation was given to various humanitarian agencies and institutions, centers of public social assistance, individual patrons of the arts and clergy.

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