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FOOD SUPPLY OF THE FRONTLINE CITIES OF THE VOLHYN GOVERNORATE IN 1914 – 1917

Abstract. *The purpose of the article is to analyze the state and the main factors that influenced the food supply of the frontline cities of the Volhyn Governorate in 1914 – 1917. The methodology of the research is based on the principles of historicism, the effectiveness of systematic and scientific using national (analysis, synthesis, scientific abstraction) and special-historical (historical-genetic, historical-typological, historical-systemic) methods. The Research Novelty. For the first time a comprehensive analysis of the food supply of the Western Volhyn's cities during the First World War is made; price fluctuations at the level of individual frontline cities are investigated; major pricing factors for staple foods are identified. The Conclusions. Most of the losses in the Russian Empire from the effects of the First World War were in the frontline areas, including five counties (Kremets, Dubno, Lutsk, Volodymyr-Volynskiy and Kovel) of the Volhyn Governorate. The severity of the situation associated with the devastating effects of hostilities has been compounded by the crisis in the region's economy. Mass mobilization of the able-bodied male population, large-scale requisitions and purchases for the needs of the army of livestock and grain resulted in a significant reduction in acreage and the profitability of farms in general.*

The inability of the Russian government to meet the army's food needs at the expense of remote regions has led to the food depletion of the frontline governorates. Population of the Volhyn Governorate frontal districts suffered most from the food crisis. The crisis was aggravated by such crisis phenomena of the Russian economy as militarization, lack of able-bodied population, inflation, devaluation of the Russian ruble, loss of purchasing power of the population, etc. Attempts of the Russian government to prevent crisis phenomena through the introduction of martial law, fixed prices for basic goods, monopolies for the sale of bread, the introduction of a card system of goods distribution, did not produce the desired results. Frontline cities have suffered from a semi-starvation.

Key words: World War I, food supply of the frontline cities, food prices, food crisis.

ПРОДОВОЛЬЧЕ ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ ПРИФРОНТОВИХ МІСТ ВОЛИНСЬКОЇ ГУБЕРНІЇ В 1914 – 1917 рр.

Анотація. Мета статті – проаналізувати стан та основні фактори, які впливали на продовольче забезпечення прифронтових міст Волинської губернії у 1914 – 1917 рр. **Методологія** дослідження ґрунтується на принципах історизму, об'єктивності системності і науковості із використанням загальнонаукових (аналіз, синтез, наукова абстракція) та спеціально-історичних (історико-генетичний, історико-типологічний, історико-системний) методів. **Наукова новизна.** Вперше комплексно проаналізовано стан продовольчого забезпечення міст Західної Волині у роки Першої світової війни; досліджено цінові коливання на рівні окремих прифронтових міст; визначено основні фактори ціноутворення на головні продукти харчування. **Висновки.** Найбільше збитків у Російській імперії від наслідків Першої світової війни зазнали прифронтові райони, серед яких п'ять повітів (Кременецький, Дубнівський, Луцький, Володимир-Волинський та Ковельський) Волинської губернії. Скрутність становища, пов'язаного із руйнівними наслідками воєнних дій, поглиблювалася кризою економіки регіону. Масова мобілізація до війська працездатного чоловічого населення, масштабні реквізиції та закупівлі для потреб армії худоби і збіжжя вплинули на значне скорочення посівних площ та рентабельності господарств загалом.

Неспроможність російського уряду забезпечити продовольчі потреби армії за рахунок віддалених від військових дій регіонів, призвела до продовольчого виснаження прифронтових губерній. Найбільше від продовольчого визиску постраждало населення прифронтових повітів Волинської губернії. Скрутність становища поглиблювалася такими кризовими явищами російської економіки, як мілітаризація, нестача працездатного населення, інфляція, девальвація російського рубля, втрата купівельної спроможності населення тощо. Спроби російського уряду запобігти кризовим явищам шляхом запровадження воєнного стану, фіксованих цін на основні товари, монополії на продаж хліба, введенням карткової системи розподілу товарів, бажаних результатів не дали. Прифронтові міста потерпали від напівголодного існування.

Ключові слова: Перша світова війна, продовольче забезпечення прифронтових міст, ціни на продукти харчування, продовольча криза.

The Problem Statement. The First World War led to mass destruction, an imbalance of the economy, the militarization of all spheres of social activity, and a decline in the standard of living of the population. In particularly acute forms, this was evident in the frontline governorates, among which was Volhyn. The article analyzes one aspect of the socio-economic crisis – the state of food supply of the frontline cities of the Volhyn Governorate, namely the county centers: Lutsk, Rivne, Dubno.

The Analysis of Sources and Recent Researches. Comprehensive research into the issue of food supply for the Russian Empire during the First World War was carried out by such researchers as I. Belov (Belov, 2014, pp. 59–68), B. Mironov (Mironov, 2017, pp. 463–480), M. Kondratev (Kondratev, 1991). Some aspects of this issue have been analyzed in a series of scientific studies by Oskin (Oskin, 2017, pp. 190–209; Oskin, 2015, pp. 164–171; Oskin, 2019, pp. 14–19). The works of O. Reient and O. Serdiuk (Reient, 2004), V. Molchanov

(Molchanov, 2014, pp. 92–102), S. Orlyk (Orlyk, 2014, pp. 114–133) are devoted to the problems of economy development of the Dnieper Ukraine during the First World War. Economic, social and military-political aspects of life of the cities of Western Volhyn and Podolia before and during the years of military conflict are covered in the complex researches of O. Pryshchepa (Pryshchepa, 2010) and O. Demianiuk (Demianiuk, 2011), T. Herasymov (Herasymov, 2016, pp. 37–39; Herasymov, 2016a, pp. 7–16).

The purpose of the article is to analyze the state and the main factors that influenced the food supply of the frontline cities of the Volhyn Governorate in 1914–1917.

The Statement of the Basic Material. The Volhyn Governorate in the pre-war period was divided into 12 counties. Their centers were small towns. In the early twentieth century, in Lutsk there were 20,232 inhabitants, in Rivne respectively – 34,319, Dubno – 15,694, Kovel – 21,789, Volodymyr-Volhynskyi – 12,555 (Goroda Rossii, 1906, pp. 93–95). Having the same administrative-territorial status, the district cities of Volhyn were different in level and character of development. In 1911, Volodymyr-Volynskyi budget was 39,243 rubles, Kremenets – 44,179 rubles, Dubno – 46,009 rubles, Kovel – 56,020 rubles, Lutsk – 64,117 rubles, Rivne – 80,036 rubles (Pryshchepa, 2010, p. 165). Subsequently, especially in times of war, the difference in the financial capacity of cities increased significantly. For example, in 1915 Dubno budget was 50,421 rubles, and Rivne – 265,000 rubles (SARR, fonds 165, description 1, case 29, pp. 2–5, 40–41; SARR, f. 616, d. 1, c. 2, pp. 1–7 verso, 10–10 verso). The budget increasing of the frontline cities was a positive phenomenon; however, it did not affect the state of the economy and the overall living standards of their residents. The war brought with it the militarization of the urban way, inflation, the rise in price of goods and services, the imbalance of trade, etc.

In the first months of the war, the military operations for the Russian army were quite successful on the front line near Volhyn. It succeeded in occupying Galicia and eliminating the threat of loss of the frontline governorates of the Southwestern region. However, in early 1915 the situation changed dramatically. In August – September 1915 the Western Volhyn was occupied by Austro-Hungarian and German troops. Part of the population, property and documentation of the Russian authorities had to be evacuated (SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 13, pp. 204–204 v, 259–259 v). The troops of the Fourth Union controlled Lutsk, Rivne, Dubno for nine months. In May – June 1916, the Russian army succeeded in reclaiming the front line 100–200 km wide and stabilizing the front line. The Russians regained control of Lutsk, Rivne and Dubno, but Kovel and Volodymyr-Volynskyi remained in control of the German and Austro-Hungarian troops.

During the First World War, the population of cities of the Western Volhyn constantly fluctuated. First of all, this was influenced by the evacuation of a part of the locals by the Russian authorities during the onset of enemy troops; the eviction of the local population by the Austro-Hungarian administration into the pre-war borders of Austria-Hungary; mobilization; refugees; de-evacuation; difficult socio-economic conditions; hostilities. The total number of residents of the frontline cities did not decrease significantly, but often on the contrary – it increased (SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 542, p. 263; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 14, pp. 9–9 v, 71–71 v; SARR, f. 165, d. 1, c. 28, pp. 44–45). The refugee and displacement of local civilians (primarily Jews forcibly evicted from the front line by Russian authorities) were offset by the temporary presence of military personnel there. Frontline cities served as a sort of transshipment base of the army. In February 1915, the Dubno city assembly officials reported that about 7,000 servicemen passed through the city every day (SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 13, pp. 219–219 v; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 14, pp. 10–10 v; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 12, pp. 18–20 v).

The militarization of the urban environment has led to transport and infrastructure problems, a shortage of all important goods and products. The crisis was exacerbated by the fact that despite the frontline status of the Volhyn Governorate, the government continued to purchase grain and meat here for the needs of the army, which were provided through local warehouses as a matter of priority. Favorable pricing contributed to this. The cost of meat established by the authorities of the frontline cities in the spring of 1915 was only 75% of the price at which purchases were made for the army (Belov, 2014, pp. 61–63; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 12, pp. 312–317). A significant increase in food demand and prices has led to a rise in the cost of living and deficit. As the Russian historian O. Oskin successfully noted, “the fighting of the first year of the war in the border area was depleting the frontline resources without affecting the main part of the country... In the campaign of 1915, the Russian army at the cost of virtually complete extermination was fed by the cattle of only the western governorates”. Due to the retreat of the Russian army, a large number of cattle together with the people was evacuated (partially requisitioned) in the first half of 1915. Moreover, despite the numerous requests by the governors of the frontline governorates and the decision of the central authorities to buy cattle throughout the empire, the needs of the army for meat continued to be met mainly at the expense of the frontline areas (Oskin, 2019, pp. 15–16). Volhyn lost the largest number of cattle and pigs among all other Ukrainian governorates. Only in 1915, because of the threat of occupation and the associated mass purchase of cattle, losses of cattle in Volhyn reached 450,000 heads (54% of the total livestock population). In addition, there was a significant reduction in acreage and yield (Oskin, 2019, pp. 15–18; Trudy..., 1924, p. 107; Reient, 2004, pp. 126–127; SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1617, p. 64).

In the front line governorates, grain purchases have also increased significantly. In 1916–1917, Volhyn Governorate purchased 2,053 thousand poods of grain. Massive purchases of grain, meat and other products in these areas significantly affected the market for products and their prices (Reient, 2004, pp. 137–140; Trudy..., 1924, p. 424; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 13, pp. 17–20, 25–29). Combined with the ban on the use of railways for the transportation of essential food and a number of other military circumstances, this led to an increase in food shortages in the Volhyn Governorate and a lack of attention to residents’ needs of the frontline regions.

The issue of commodity provision was extremely painful for the Western Volhyn cities at that time. Urban residents felt all the woes of wartime especially acute. Let’s consider the situation with the provision of local meat. Due to the mentioned mass purchases of cattle for the army’s needs in the governorate already in 1916, the meat was catastrophically lacking (SARR, f. 165, d. 1, c. 28, pp. 7–7v; SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1578, pp. 10–10v; Oskin, 2017, pp. 202–203). In accordance with the decisions of the Congress of representatives of Zemsky and public organizations for the purchase of cattle for the army (May 4–5, 1916), the provincial authorities tried to be flexible in this matter. All county and city agencies were encouraged to promote the idea of raising pigs and rabbits to the public. Governorate officials insisted that such practices should be implemented at all institutions (especially orphanages and hospitals) (Oskin, 2019, p. 16; SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1578, pp. 10–10v). In a situation of deficit, the authorities had to reduce the meat consumption. According to the estimates of the Ministry of Agriculture in 1916, the urban population’s meat consumption was about 31% of its pre-war level. This trend continued in the future (Oskin, 2019, p. 17; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 14, p. 71).

The constant companion of the deficit was the arbitrary rise in prices and speculation. The first examples of speculation were already present in the autumn of 1914. Their volumes and numbers increased significantly after the autumn of 1915 due to the deterioration

of the functioning of the railway connection (Herasymov, 2016a, pp. 8–9; Herasymov, 2016, p. 38). Police and city governments tried to control the sellers' compliance with prices, but since the first months of the war, speculation became a regular feature. The rise in prices of goods in one city inevitably led to higher prices in another one. The imposition of high fines and criminal liability could not prevent this. For raising fixed prices it was 3 months in prison or a fine of up to 3,000 rubles (SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 12, pp. 312–314 v, 362–362 v, 499; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 13, pp. 92–92 v). In January 1915, the Dubno ispravnik complained to the city government about “absolutely arbitrary prices for all, without exception, vital products”. Often, sellers resorted to conscious and unconscious sabotage. In the face of a steady increase in demand and difficulty in purchasing, certain types of goods were exported to cities where prices were higher or kept in warehouses until official appreciation (SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 13, p. 28).

An important factor in impoverishment was inflation. Before the war, the Russian ruble was one of the hardest currencies in the world. However, since the second half of 1914, inflationary processes in the country began to appear more and more. In 1915, the value of the Russian ruble was halved, and subsequently its decline accelerated (Reient, 2004, p. 164). During the war, prices for some basic necessities increased 30 times, as evidenced by the table and chart of the price ratio for products (see Table 1, Chart 1).

These statistics show that prices for staple food in frontline cities were rising relatively fast not only in the first six months of the war. However, in the first months of the war, prices for staple food in non-frontline areas fell. This was due to a significant reduction in agricultural exports. There was no such effect in the frontal regions (Orlyk, 2014, pp. 115–116). In the spring of 1915, as the front approached Volhyn, the spread of panic among the population, and the deficit of foodstuffs, their prices began to rise steadily. The highest level of inflation reached winter in 1916/1917 (see Chart 1).

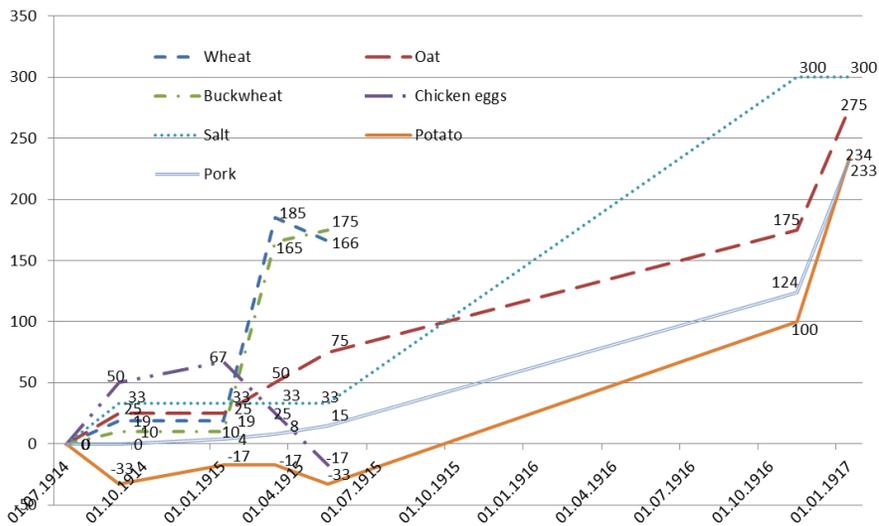


Chart 1. Price fluctuations in Lutsk in 1914–1917.

(SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1052, pp. 292, 314, 327, 391, 400; SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1298, pp. 201, 203, 239; SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1615, pp. 26–30, 57–61, 78–83v, 290–294v, 496–499; SAVR, f. 158, d. 1, c. 19, pp. 58–59).

Table 1

Prices for some major products in Lutsk, Dubno and Rivne in July 1914 – September 1915

Product Name and Weight / Quantity Unit	Ціна за періодами, в карбованцях													
	July-August 1914		September 1914		January-February 1915			March-April 1915			May 1915		July 1915	
	Lutsk	Dubno	Lutsk	Dubno	Lutsk	Rivne	Dubno	Lutsk	Rivne	Dubno	Lutsk	Dubno	Rivne	Dubno
Pood of winter rye	0,95	0,8-0,95	1,05	0,9-0,95	1,05	1,3	1-1,05	-	1,3	1,2-1,3	-	1,45-1,5	1,15	1-1,1
Pood of wheat	1,05	1-1,05	1,25	1,05-1,15	1,23	1,7	1,2-1,3	1,23	1,7	1,75-1,85	2,80	2,15-2,2	1,5	1-1,1
Pood of barley	0,80	0,8-0,9	0,80	-	0,80	1,1	0,85-0,9	-	1	1-1,05	-	1,1-1,15	1	0,9
Pood of oat	0,80	0,9-1,051	-	-	1	1,3	0,9-1	-	1,3	1,15-1,2	1,40	1,3-1,35	1,3	1
Pood of rye flour	-	1-1,4	-	1,05-1,5	-	1,4-2	1,25-1,85	-	1,55-2,2	1,4-2,15	-	1,75-2,45	1,3-1,9	1,4-2
Pood of wheat flour	-	1,6-2	-	1,75-2,5	-	2,5-3	2,08-2,25	-	2,6-3	2,7-3	-	3,15-3,45	2,3-2,7	2,55-2,85
Pood of millet cereal	-	-	-	-	-	1,6-2,4	1,9	-	2,7	2,2	-	2,7	1,6-2,6	2,6
10 chicken eggs	-	0,15	0,27	-	0,30	0,3	0,25	-	0,2	0,2	0,15	0,18	0,25	0,2
Pood of salt	-	0,5-0,6	0,80	0,02f.	0,80	0,5-0,6	0,7-0,9	-	0,6-0,7	0,7-0,9	0,80	0,7-0,9	0,6-0,7	0,95
Pood of potatoes	-	0,20	0,20	0,15	0,25	0,25	0,2	0,25	0,2	0,25	0,20	0,25	0,25	0,2
Pound of sugar	-	0,11	-	-	-	0,12	0,14	-	0,13	0,12	-	0,14	0,13	0,14
Pound of butter	-	0,3	-	0,35	-	0,4-0,6	0,4	-	0,35-0,55	0,45	-	0,4	0,4-0,6	0,4
Pound of beef	-	0,1-0,12	0,13	-	-	0,14-0,15	0,1-0,12	-	0,15-0,18	0,11-0,13	-	0,13-0,15	0,13-0,15	0,11-0,13
Pound of pork	-	9 p.	0,13	-	-	0,12-0,22	0,13-0,18	0,14	0,14-0,22	0,13-0,18	0,15	0,15-0,2	0,12-0,2	0,12-0,18

Source: created by the authors (SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1052, pp. 292, 314, 327, 391, 400; SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1298, pp. 201, 203, 239; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 12, pp. 312-317, 361-362, 379-379 v, 491-492 v, 497-499; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 13, pp. 37-38, 48-49, 174-176, 241-245; SARR, f. 165, d. 1, c. 28, pp. 22-23, 80-82, 147-149).

Another important factor in the commodity and food crisis in the cities of Western Volhyn was the loss of purchasing power of the population. After the return of the Russian authorities to Dubna, Lutsk, Rivne in June 1916, the authorities of the city government ascertained the complete insolvency of the inhabitants of the cities due to the considerable losses of the farms. Most of the city buildings were destroyed, burned or damaged. This, in turn, has led to an increase in debt and lack of money (SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 14, pp. 9–9v, 50, 102–102v, 138–138v, 160–160v).

With the decline in local agricultural efficiency, the constant requisition of food and livestock to support the army, the economic stability of the frontier governorates depended on the timely supply of essential goods in areas not covered by the fighting. However, the war demonstrated the inability of the railway, as the main mode of transport, to meet the needs of the economy and the army at the same time. Despite the official statistics that increased passenger and freight traffic in 1914–1916, there were serious problems with their timeliness, especially when it came to transporting goods to civilians. Most notably, this affected the delivery of goods and products to the frontline cities (Mironov, 2017, pp. 471–472, 474; Belov, 2014, pp. 192–195).

Important role in the system of supply of goods to the population in times of war was given to shops and markets. Through them, the central and local authorities tried to provide the citizens with the necessary goods, introducing various mechanisms for this purpose. Thus, in December 1916, to provide Lutsk kerosene, the city government identified eight places where it could be sold in limited quantities. The Dubno city government went down the same path with the only difference being that they decided to sell food and kerosene at a separate shop for which they started renting premises in the central part of the city (SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1583, p. 30; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 14, pp. 72–72v). In addition to shops, an important role in the sale of products was given to urban markets. For example, there were three markets in Lutsk. One of them (Pokrovskiy) functioned constantly, though it was quite small. Villagers from the surrounding villages usually traded a variety of agricultural, dairy and meat products from morning to afternoon (SAVR, f. 158, d. 1, c. 6, p. 99; SAVR, f. 158, d. 1, c. 19, pp. 99, 255–255v). In the food distribution system, various establishments engaged in the sale of hot drinks and lunches (dining, tea, and coffee) played a particular role. Due to the large number of officers and soldiers who made up the majority of the visitors and the introduction of the “dry law” at the end of 1914, their number increased sharply in January–March 1915. However, the clients of such establishments were mostly middle-income people. The overwhelming majority of urban residents could not afford to visit dining rooms and pubs (SARR, f. 165, d. 1, c. 28, pp. 7–16 v, 18–19, 37–39v; Molchanov, 2014, pp. 96–97).

In the current circumstances, it was not possible to stabilize and improve the situation with the commodity and food supply due to the lack of coordination of the central, provincial and local authorities’ actions. In the first months of the war, the Russian authorities shifted the economy to war rails, creating the necessary mechanisms for its manual regulation: the introduction of “firm” prices initially only for some, and eventually – for most food; it was forbidden to export a number of raw materials abroad; most industrial enterprises were reoriented to military needs. The result of the militarization of the country’s economy was that at the end of 1916, only 447 enterprises (19% of the total) were engaged in the production of goods for civilians (Belov, 2014, pp. 61–63).

The effectiveness of the small number of institutions aimed at improving the food situation in the frontline area was rather poor. Usually, such bodies were bureaucratic and had

poor coordination. Given the number of problems in the organization of food supply, the government delegated a number of powers in this field (Kondratev, 1991, pp. 167–177; Oskin, 2017, p. 195).

One of the first steps in preparing the country for war before its official start was the introduction of a martial law on July 26, 1914 in the Kyiv military district, which included Volhyn. Among the priority measures to stabilize the economic situation in the country there was the introduction of control over pricing. City managers have been obliged to prevent price increases in local markets. For this purpose, it was suggested to discuss and set allowable prices (“fees”) not only for bread and meat, but also for other staple foods. Price list of agreed prices was posted in prominent crowded places (SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 12, pp. 312–317; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 14, pp. 181–183).

At the beginning of April 1915, on the initiative of the Volhyn governor, city committees began to set up city committees, whose main task was to provide the population with food and monitor their prices (SARR, f. 165, d. 1, c. 28, pp. 75–75v). In 1914–1916, the governor and members of the provincial and city governments jointly set prices, and from 1917 it was made by members of the city self-government bodies and city merchants. Attempts to regulate prices through so-called “fees” – the maximum (sometimes the minimum) value of the goods were ineffective and inactive. Western Volhyn City Governments constantly received collective requests from sellers to increase the tax on basic products (SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1052, pp. 334, 392; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 12, pp. 361–362v, 379–379v; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 13, pp. 25–25v; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 14, pp. 142–142v). The arguments of the mills of Dubno, set out in a petition dated December 29, 1914, are indicative in this regard. In their view, large-scale government purchases of grain have led to a shortage (“nominal famine”) of wheat and rye in the city. A certain role in this was played by the prohibition of the district committee, which oversaw the delivery of grain from other regions, to local suppliers to buy it in other governorates of the empire (SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1052, pp. 292, 314, 327, 391, 400; SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1615, pp. 26–30, 57–61, 78–83v, 290–294v, 496–499; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 12, pp. 312–317, 380; SARR, f. 359, c. 13, pp. 17–20; Belov, 2014, pp. 62–63).

If at the beginning of the war the authorities were concerned with providing food only to the army, then since 1915 the situation gradually forced to pay increasing attention to civilians (Oskin, 2017, p. 190). On February 28, 1915, the governor of Volhyn recommended all state institutions to purchase the most important goods for the population on their own in order to alleviate the food shortage. He also offered to borrow from the City and Land Loan Offices, promising support in getting them (SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 13, pp. 83–85; SARR, f. 165, d. 1, c. 28, pp. 48–49). In the future, all city governments and meetings of the city commissioners of the governorate to handle the most pressing issues with food and goods used bank loans.

The Russian government resorted to direct assistance to the regions that were most affected by the effects of the war on goods and famine-scarce regions. The plan of the Ministry of Food Affairs provided such assistance to cities of the Volhyn Governorate. Since the beginning of the revolution in Russia, the situation with the centralized assistance of the necessary goods in the frontline areas has worsened. Most of this assistance was required by the Zhytomyr Governorate Center and the Western Volhyn County Centers, which had been at the center of protracted fighting between the Austro-Hungarian, German and Russian troops for several years (SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1694, pp. 83–83v).

The situation was complicated, and in November 1916 prices for most of the goods in the cities of Western Volhyn were no longer established. First of all, it was caused by great

difficulty in supplying flour and grain from other governorates. In Lutsk, as of November 1916, rye and wheat flour, some cereals and salt remained in the products of small quantities. A similar situation occurred in Dubno (SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1298, pp. 201, 203; SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 14, pp. 142–142v). In fact, cities were facing the threat of famine.

Another method of stabilizing the food market was the introduction of a state monopoly on grain sales. The state monopoly on bread was officially introduced on March 25, 1917 (SARR, f. 359, d. 1, c. 13, pp. 81–81v; Oskin, 2015, p. 166). All bread (grain and flour) was to be passed on to the food committees specially created for this purpose by the government, any trade in bread was forbidden. However, the monopolization of the market for products and goods, which had to stabilize the food situation in the country, had the opposite effect. In practice, the number of cases where peasants illegally removed grain from state control through winemaking, the “black market”, etc., increased (SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1617, pp. 105, 127; Oskin, 2015, pp. 165–167).

In the face of total deficit, bread monopoly and low purchasing power of the population, the Russian government in March 1917 introduced a card system for staple food. In its classical form, it was used in many countries during the First World War (SAVR, f. 3, d. 1, c. 1697, pp. 1–1v). The introduction of such extreme measures has not yielded the desired results. The war-torn Russian Empire in the winter of 1916/1917 found itself on the brink of economic collapse and social uprising, the direct consequence of which was the revolution and defeat of the war.

The Conclusions. Most of the losses in the Russian Empire from the effects of the First World War were in the frontline areas, including five counties (Kremets, Dubno, Lutsk, Volodymyr-Volynskyi and Kovel) of the Volhyn Governorate. The severity of the situation associated with the devastating effects of hostilities has been compounded by the crisis in the region’s economy. Mass mobilization of the able-bodied male population, large-scale requisitions and purchases for the needs of the army of livestock and grain resulted in a significant reduction in acreage and the profitability of farms in general.

The inability of the Russian government to meet the army’s food needs at the expense of remote regions has led to the food depletion of the frontline governorates. Population of the Volhyn Governorate frontal districts suffered most from the food crisis. The crisis was aggravated by such crisis phenomena of the Russian economy as militarization, lack of able-bodied population, inflation, devaluation of the Russian ruble, loss of purchasing power of the population, etc. Attempts of the Russian government to prevent crisis phenomena through the introduction of martial law, fixed prices for basic goods, monopolies for the sale of bread, the introduction of a card system of goods distribution, did not produce the desired results. Frontline cities have suffered from a semi-starvation.

A promising area of research for this topic is to compare the food supply of the frontline cities of Volhyn, Podilia and Minsk governorates during the First World War and to track the role of local economies in supplying the army with the necessary food and goods.

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