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EXHIBITION – BREAD IN THE GREAT WAR

Author Dimitrije Vujadinovic

REPORT 2014

There is nothing in the world as human as bread.
Dostoevsky

INTRODUCTION

Without doubt bread is one of the most significant inventions of Man. It marks a



revolutionary turn in his evolution. From being a hunter-gatherer and living as a nomad, Man started working the land, building settlements and creating culture.

Bread is the only type of food connecting Man with basic principles of life and the transcendental.

Ritual bread follows us from birth to death, even after death. When in the ancient past our ancestors started making bread that was a result of long-lasting experience, patient work and will. As soon as they tasted it, people realized its importance to survival. Precisely because of its importance as basic food, bread has become a symbol of life, spirituality and a reflection of culture.

Bread has gained its unique position in

man's life because of its peculiarity. Bread's ingredients are the basis and symbols of a lasting life (seed, salt and water); then as food – “first course”; while the very making of dough and baking are seen as the creation of the world.

In the tradition of many peoples, bread creates the balance between Man and invisible forces endangering his life, and is also used as an object with magical powers to fulfil human wishes. The former is played out through giving bread as a gift, and the latter is based on the belief that bread can transfer certain qualities onto those who come in contact with it.

The exhibition *Bread in the Great War* consisted of 21 panels (designed by Aleksandar Pedovic) showing documentary photographs and personal accounts, and two LCD displays – one showing a documentary film about an English bakery on the front lines, and the other showing a slideshow of panels from the exhibition *Bread in the Great War* held in the *Musée du Compagnonnage*, France.

The author's (Dimitrije Vujadinovic) intent was not only to show the importance of bread as food but also to illustrate the miracle of bread as a treasury of collective memory and testament to ethical and symbolic values and downfalls of people during most difficult times such as war.

Soldiers and historians usually write war histories. However, military and history books do not tell it all.

While preparing the exhibition the author reviewed more than a thousand photographs and



authentic witness accounts – from the Military Museum in Belgrade to the Imperial War Museum in London. The topic of his research was – *Bread in the Great War*!

The topic of bread's significance in soldiers' diet as well as its symbolic place in everyday life during the Great War has been left on the margins.

“An army marches on its stomach,” claimed Napoleon. Though the importance of soldiers in trenches and on the frontlines is beyond dispute, the Great War wasn't won on the front. An important turn of events happened when the United States stopped sending wheat to the Central Powers, and opted to support the Allied Powers. Then US President W. Wilson

was quoted saying after the war that “it was a victory thanks to wheat.”

The Great War was the first war in which civilians were legitimate war targets. The war was not waged only with firearms on battlefields, but also by creating shortages of bread and food in cities far away from frontlines. The suffering of civilians were not any less than those of soldiers in trenches. In all cities of countries at war, from Wien, Paris, London and Berlin to Moscow and Prague, women used to queue for hours to get their rations – a modest piece of bread.

Examples of real courage were not only among soldiers. Women who stayed at home were just as brave and courageous. They are the ‘forgotten’ heroines who waited patiently in long lines to

get a piece of bread, worked the land, and looked after the children and households. Thanks to them homes were preserved. Homes to which the lucky ones, those who were not killed in battle, returned. Without women's sacrifice it is difficult to imagine how 'normal' life would have continued after the war.

One of the more important events during the Great War happened in Russia – the 1917 October Revolution. However, it is an obscure fact that the first protests were held in Petrograd and their initiators were women who stood in breadlines for as long as 60 hours a week. They took to the streets demanding peace, bread and freedom in spite being fired at by Tsar's soldiers. Workers joined these women later. These mass February protests in Petrograd got the name *Bread Uprisings*. They led to the fall of the Tsar and marked the beginning of the October Revolution.

The exhibition does not show the Great War neither in the context of military nor war fronts, battles, countries at war. It rather focuses on common topics that show equal suffering and cruelty endured by people of all countries at war. The exhibition shows that in any war both its winners and defeated are in fact all losers. In that sense, the exhibition aimed to send an important anti-war message.

A special place in the exhibition was given to the victims and suffering in Serbia, to their resolve and humanness. In Serbian tradition bread holds a unique place and accompanies one



through life both as food and an important symbol – from birth to death and even after death. This feeling of connectedness with bread was not forgotten even in terrible circumstances of war.

The quality of exhibition was greatly helped by and through cooperation with the **Museum der Brotkultur** (Mr. Andrea Fadani, Ph.D.) and the **Musee du Compagnonnage** (Mr. Laurent Bastard).

Exhibitions author kindly extends his gratitude to Mr Sima Matic, the Director of Zitovojvodina and owner of Tiski Cvet publishing house and Maji Marsenic, translator. Last but not least, the exhibition was even more successful thanks to the baker Mr Mirko Milin, who prepared Serbian soldier bread from the First World War – tain, for the visitors.

Special thanks to our sponsors:





EXHIBITION

The House of Djura Jaksic, Belgrade, 34 Skadarska Street

24 September – 08 October 2014

Exhibition's premier showing was held in Belgrade, in the gallery of the House of Djura Jaksic, from 24 September to 08 October. Visitors had an opportunity to try army bread – **tain** that was given to Serbian soldiers during the Great War. The bread was prepared after the original recipe by Mirko Mitin, a baker and owner of Tain bakery.

Galley

Gallery



The Opening

Wednesday 24 September 19:00h

Opening speakers: Dimitrije Vujadinovic, exhibition author, and professor Dragan Bulatovic, Ph.D., museologist.

Nikola Stankovic, actor, recited poems about bread and Aleksa Vasic, baritone, accompanied on the piano by Dario Humenjuk, performed a composition *Bread*, composed by D. Filipovic and D. Golemovic.

D. Vujadinović and D. Bulatović



Aleksa Vasic and Dario Humenjuk



Visitors



D. Vujadinovic and Mirko Mitin, baker



Round Table – Army Bread

Wednesday 01 October 2014, 18:00h

Professor Branko Tesanovic, Ph.D., Colonel Nedjeljko Jokic, Ph.D. and the author opened the round table discussion.

B. Tešanović and N. Jokić



Witness of history



Visitors



Tasting the bread – taina



Photographing for Media



Literary Night – War and Bread

Friday, 03 October 2014, 18:00h

Promotion of the new issue of magazine *Bukinja*, dedicated to the Great War.

Presentation of poetry with the theme of the Great War – poets: Rasa Popov, Adam Puslojic, Vladimir Stanisavljevic Sarkamenac, Jasna Djuza, Radomir Micunovic Sladjana Ristic; writer and editor of *Bukinja* Goran Vuckovi

Poets



A. Puslojic



A. Puslojic and V.S. Sarkamenac Visitors in free chat with poets



Round Table – Apotropaic Role of Bread

Monday, 06 October 2014, 18:00

Opening speeches by ethnologist Vesna Marjanovic, Ph.D., archeologist Dragan Jacanovic

Actor Nikola Stankovic performed a monodrama about soldier Aleksa Zdravkovic, written by Ivanka Dzunic.

N. Stanković



D. Jacanović



V. Marjanović



P.Plavsic, psychologist

D. Jacanovic, V. Marjanovic

„Bread" 6000 years old



Visitors

Author with bread - tain



19th Grain Milling Days

Vrdnik, 05/06 November 2014

The exhibition was showed in the hall in front of the conference room where the international gathering of grain millers and bakers companies working in Serbia took place. Delegates had the opportunity to explore existentialist and symbolic values of bread in the Great War.





Days of Bread in Pirot

Gallery of the Ponisavlje Museum

Pirot, 14 – 28 November 2014

The town of Pirot hosts annual holiday of bread - *Days of Bread*. This year the occasion commemorated First World War centenary. For this occasion and in cooperation with Ponisavlje museum, the exhibition *Bread in the Great War* was put on display in the gallery of the museum. Maja Panajotovic, museum's curator opened the exhibition.

M. Panajotovic opens exhibition

The setting of panels



The entrance to the gallery

The setting of panels



Bread in The Great War

Building of the Regional Government of the Autonomous Region of Vojvodina

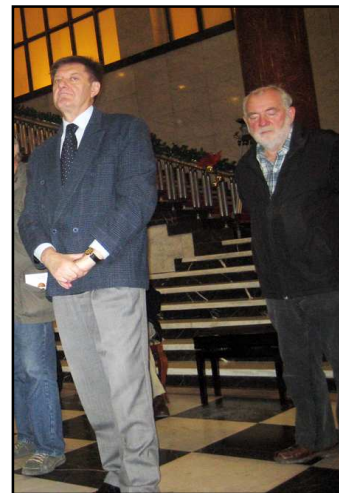
Novi Sad, 15 – 18 December 2014

To commemorate First World War centenary, the exhibition *Bread in the Great War* was displayed in the hall of the Building of the Regional Government of the Autonomous Region of Vojvodina. Miroslav Vasin, Vice-President of the Regional Government and Secretary for economy, employment and gender equality, opened the exhibition. Professor Djordje Psodorov, Ph.D., and the author addressed those present. Actor Miodrag Petrovic recited poems about bread.

The success and importance of the exhibition can be seen in the number of media reporting about the exhibition; daily newspapers Politika, Blic, Danas, 24 casa, Kurir; agencies SEEECULT, Beta; electronic media: RTS, RT Vojvodina, TV Kopernikus, TV Pirot, Radio Beograd 2, Radio 202, and many web portals.

M. Vasin opens exhibition

D. Kojić, director of City Library and S. Matić

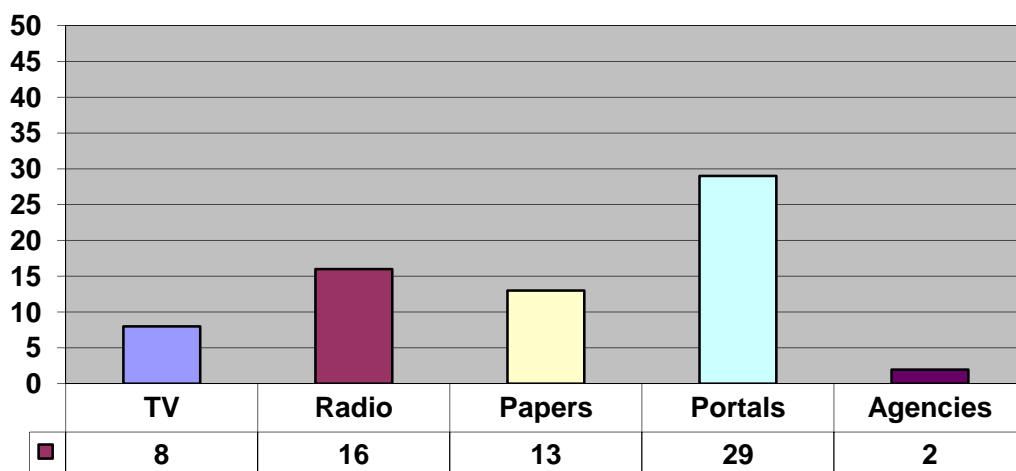


B. Ibrajter, publicist and R. Popov, writer Conversation with tasting bread - tain



MEDIA PRESENCE

The following media sources have been reporting on exhibitions: Politika, Blic, Vecernje novisti, SEECULT, Beta, RTV Vojvodina, RTS, RTV, TV Novosadska, Radio Novi Sad, Radio Beograd II, Radio 202, Sudio B, Naslovi.net...



Bread in The Great War - Radio Television of Serbia (RTS)

Biljana Bojkovic, editor RTS



D. Vujadinovic speak for RTS



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAGs3hXEd_s

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4V4JIJT0Z1M>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QAeVFW3L5A>

CONCLUSION

Judging by the number of visitors, respected speakers and media presence it can be concluded that the exhibition Bread in the Great War met the expectations of its organizer and author.

The exhibition will be on tour around Serbia throughout 2015.