***WOMEN IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR***

The First World War was the first war of modern times, which had a great influence also on the civilian population in the hinterlands. Many civilians emigrated from the immediate vicinity of the front lines, and were stationed in the refugee camps in the hinterland. Slovenes, who lived on both sides of the Isonzo Front, have migrated to southern Italy or escaped in the more peaceful parts of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Many men went to the front, so women had to assume their role at home. Women replaced males in farming and in factories. Ladies of the upper class were involved in charity work and in collecting supplies for soldiers and refugees.  
Housewives had to adapt to the life in wartime. They became very resourceful in providing food. Often they were employed and with it, they tried making it easier to maintain a family. This new social role of women made them more socially active, led them to protest against the war and because of them having to be more independent, after the war women acquired more rights.

**1. Women in the hinterlands**

**1. 1. SUPPLIES**

The supplies of basic foods were very limited. Officially, a certain amount of basic food should had been available in the cities (with food war orders), but in practice, it was not. Sources testify about the restrictions of food supplies.

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| Vir:Muzej novejše zgodovine Ljubljana – razstava Ženske v zaledju soške fronte | Domoljub: slovenskemu ljudstvu v poduk in zabavo (01.07.1915), letnik 28, številka 26. URN:NBN:SI:doc-PIJGJP3K from <http://www.dlib.si> | Slovenski narod. Narodna tiskarna, 15.09.1917. <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:DOC-DU23DK4M> |

Marija Remec even wrote a cookbook to help housewives to prepare food economically during the war shortage of food.

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How women had a hard time (and how this made feel their husbands), can be seen in the letter of Ivan Zupan: »...How inconvenient, that you do not get support from the state, but I have regularly warned you, save, until there is still time, I do not send the money for spending it promptly. Take care that you can cope with it like others. This month I will try to send more because like a kor. I have more income. After the last fight, I'm well, two of my fingers are bandaged, otherwise we are holding well ... But do not write to me so desperate letters.« Ivan Zupan 19. 10. 1916

Vili Prinčič: Pregnani, Trst: Devin, 1996 (Trst : Graphart)

**1. 2. REPLACING MEN IN FACTORIES**

Since the men were at the front, women often replaced them in the factories and in other work. Their modest earnings helped maintain the families. The proportion of female employees increased also on the Slovenian territory, although not as much as in west Europe. Slovenian women were not employed in heavy industry, such as mining and iron and steel. War widows got some kind of pension from the sate, but it was very low. Due to the difficult conditions of work, many women felt health consequences after the war.

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| Slika 5: &Zcaron;enske v tovarni med prvo svetovno vojno |
| http://eucbeniki.sio.si/admin/documents/learning\_unit/2748/gospodarstvo-v-prvi-polovici-izvoz\_1412710146/index1.html |

**1. 3. NURSES**

Many women found employment or voluntary work as attendants and nurses. They worked primarily in hospitals in the background and not so much on the front lines. Angela Boškin, who after the war became the first Slovenian graduate nurse, gained a lot of experience working with the wounded during FirstWorld War.

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**1. 4. CHARITY WORK**

Women from higher social classes were very active in the Red Cross. They organized various charity events and were collecting food and clothing for the soldiers and civilians. Among them was the Countess Lucija Christalnigg, who was killed at the beginning of the war. Because she did not answer a soldier’s call to stop, he shot her. The husband of the deceased even praised the soldier for consistently executing his task (he did so despite the fact that the soldier killed his wife).

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| Edinost: glasilo slovenskega političnega društva tržaške okolice. Ivan Dolinar, 11.08.1914. <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:doc-L6F299D9> | Foto: Iz razstave 1915 - Ženske v zaledju soške fronte  <http://www.rtvslo.si/prva-svetovna-vojna/spomin-je-ziv/vojna-ni-potekala-le-na-bojiscih-za-prezivetje-so-jo-bojevale-tudi-zenske/367744> | | |
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| Foto: Fototeka Zgodovinskega arhiva Ljubljana | | Laibacher Zeitung. Ignaz Alois Edler v. Kleinmayr, 19.06.1915. <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:doc-OK92TFTT> |

**2. Women on the battlefields**

The inclusion of women in the military was a very rare phenomena. It was still considered unacceptable, improper for women to do it. The prevailing belief was that women should take care of home and family. However, some women acted as messengers of war. Some of them succeeded to be involved in fights, one even dressed as a man to be able to get on battlefields, as it is reported in the source.

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| Domoljub: slovenskemu ljudstvu v poduk in zabavo. M. Kolar, Ljubljana, 25.07.1918. <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:DOC-XZZJK926> | Tedenske slike. Dragotin Mohar, 07.03.1917. <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:DOC-ZA635VJH> |

**Study questions**

1. ***Read, observe, describe***

Observe the sources, read the texts and explain, which were the roles women assumed during the First World War

2. ***Analize and interprete***

In the form of an essay interpret the sources. What do the photos depict? What was the purpose of the publication of these photos? What do the newspaper articles report about? What insights about women, their role in the war and the hinterland you get out of the cited sources?

3. ***Synthesize***

Summarize what facts on women’s lives during the First World War have you learned about.