



History

UDC 94(477.87)"1914/1918":338.1:351.74

DOI <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17816291>

Order and disorder in the home front: economic restrictions and police interventions in the city of Uzhhorod during the First World War

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Accepted: 14.10.2025 | Published: 30.11.2025

Abstract. *The study analyses the economic and social conditions of the city of Uzhhorod during the First World War as part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, with particular attention to local mechanisms of food supply, the rationing system, and requisitions. Drawing on archival sources and contemporary press materials, it explores the effects of the wartime economy and state intervention on everyday life. The aim of the article is to analyse how wartime economic management and government control transformed daily life and the population's survival strategies on the northeastern periphery of rural Hungary. The research methodology is based primarily on the analysis of archival sources held in the Berehove Branch of the State Archives of the Transcarpathian Region. It uses contemporary documents that have so far remained largely overlooked by researchers. The analysis includes the materials of the Lord Lieutenant (Fond 4) and the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Ung County (Fond 7), as well as the Mayor's Documents of the Self-Governing City of Uzhhorod (Fond 6). These archival materials are supplemented with a critical*



examination of contemporary newspapers (*Ung and Ungvári Közlöny* [Uzhhorod Gazette]) which make it possible to reconstruct economic and social processes. Press analysis is indispensable, as newspapers were the most significant medium of mass communication at the time. They provide essential information such as decrees, market-regulation measures, and the names of individuals against whom proceedings were initiated for economic violations. The research applies qualitative content analysis and a comparative approach, with particular attention to the connections between local and national regulations. **The novelty of the study** lies in the fact that it is the first to present in detail the home-front economic regulations of Uzhhorod and the local mechanisms of food-supply control. It reveals the roles of Police Chief István Berzeviczy and Mayor Mihály Fincziczky in implementing price-control and anti-profiteering measures, and it demonstrates the practical challenges of wartime economic administration. Using previously unknown sources, the research reconstructs the functioning of the rationing system in Uzhhorod, its abuses, and the population's strategies of adaptation. **Conclusions.** The mobilisation of the home front triggered not only economic but also social and moral crises. The example of Uzhhorod illustrates how wartime state administration became entrenched at the local level, generating tensions between law-enforcement authorities and the population. Economic hardship remained perceptible from the outbreak of the war until the Armistice of Villa Giusti on 3 November 1918. The Hungarian governments led by István Tisza and later by Sándor Wekerle between 1914 and 1918 attempted to address these difficulties first through market-restriction measures and later through the introduction of food-ration cards. The study concludes that everyday life on the home front unfolded in a continuous search for balance between centralised state control and community-based self-organisation, reflecting the peripheral characteristics of the Monarchy's wartime system. Economic hardships created an almost explosive social situation, culminating in the Aster Revolution on 31 October 1918.



Keywords: *First World War, home front, wartime economy, rationing system, Uzhhorod, Ung County, food supply, profiteering, István Berzeviczy, local administration, archival sources, police.*

Порядок і безлад у прифронтовому тилу: економічні обмеження та поліцейські втручання в Ужгороді під час Першої світової війни

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Анотація. *У статті проаналізовано економічні та соціальні умови міста Ужгорода в період Першої світової війни, коли він був частиною Австро-Угорської монархії, з особливою увагою до місцевих механізмів продовольчого забезпечення, системи нормування та реквізицій. Спираючись на архівні джерела та матеріали тогочасної преси, дослідження розглядає вплив воєнної економіки та державного втручання на повсякденне життя. Метою статті є з'ясувати, як воєнне економічне управління та державний контроль трансформували щоденне життя та стратегії виживання населення на північно-східній периферії сільської Угорщини. Методологія дослідження ґрунтується передусім на аналізі архівних матеріалів, що зберігаються у Берегівському відділенні Державного архіву Закарпатської області. Використано тогочасні документи, які досі здебільшого залишалися поза увагою дослідників. Проаналізовано матеріали жупана (Фонд 4), заступника жупана Унгського комітату (Фонд 7), а також документи мера самоврядного міста Ужгорода (Фонд 6). Архівні джерела доповнено критичним переглядом тогочасних газет (Ung та Ungvári Közlöny), що дає змогу реконструювати економічні та соціальні процеси. Аналіз преси є незамінним, адже газети були*



найважливішим засобом масової комунікації того часу: вони містять такі необхідні відомості, як розпорядження, заходи з регулювання ринку, а також імена осіб, проти яких було порушено справи за економічні порушення. У дослідженні застосовано якісний контент-аналіз і порівняльний підхід, з особливою увагою до зв'язків між місцевими та загальнодержавними заходами регулювання. **Новизна статті** полягає в тому, що вперше подано детальний аналіз економічних регуляцій Ужгорода в тилу та місцевих механізмів контролю над продовольчим забезпеченням. У ній висвітлено роль начальника поліції Іштвана Берзевіци та мера Міхая Фінціциккі у впровадженні заходів з контролю цін та боротьби зі спекуляцією, а також показано практичні виклики воєнної економічної адміністрації. На основі раніше невідомих джерел реконструйовано функціонування системи нормування в Ужгороді, її зловживання та стратегії адаптації населення. **Висновки.** Мобілізація тилу спричинила не лише економічну, але й соціальну та моральну кризу. Приклад Ужгорода демонструє, як воєнна державна адміністрація вкорінилася на місцевому рівні, породжуючи напруження між правоохоронними органами та населенням. Економічні труднощі відчувалися від початку війни й аж до підписання перемир'я у Вілла-Джусті 3 листопада 1918 року. Угорські уряди Іштвана Тіси та пізніше Шандора Векерле (1914–1918) намагалися подолати ці проблеми спочатку шляхом ринкових обмежень, а згодом — упровадженням продовольчих карточок. Дослідження доходить висновку, що повсякденне життя тилу розгорталося в умовах постійного пошуку балансу між централізованим державним контролем і громадською самоорганізацією, що відображало периферійний характер системи воєнного управління Монархії. Економічні труднощі створили майже вибухонебезпечну соціальну ситуацію, кульмінацією якої стала Астєрова революція 31 жовтня 1918 року.

***Ключові слова:** Перша світова війна, тил, воєнна економіка, система нормування, Ужгород, Унґський комітет, продовольче забезпечення, спекуляція, Іштван Берзевіци, місцева адміністрація, архівні джерела, поліція.*

Problem statement. During the First World War, the home front – particularly in the northeastern counties, including the city of Uzhhorod – underwent a profound economic and social crisis. The introduction of wartime economic measures, rationing, and price-fixing led to shortages, inflation, and widespread dissatisfaction, resulting in illegal economic activities such as food profiteering, unlicensed trade, and abuses of the rationing system. The key problem is that only a few historical analyses have so far examined how local-level economic violations were handled and how law enforcement intervened. The aim of this research is therefore to explore how the Uzhhorod police and the city council responded to these phenomena: how they sought to curb price-gouging, unlicensed vending, and excessive hoarding.

The investigation is based on previously unexplored archival sources, i.e., documents relating to Ung County held in the Berehove Branch of the State Archives of the Transcarpathian Region, which allow for the detailed reconstruction of the mechanisms of wartime economic crime and police intervention. A fundamental challenge of the archival work was to reconstruct the local wartime economic downturn from numerous small fragments. Research on police measures was somewhat easier: Police Captain István Berzeviczy (and later his successor, Pál Bóna) kept systematic and well-structured records of various official proceedings.

The study creates an opportunity to explore the economic history of the First World War in cities located in the territory of present-day Transcarpathia. Thus, the economic and social situation of our region during the war can be learned more widely.

Identifying Previously Unresolved Aspects of the Broader Problem. The study contextualizes and complements the broader historical and economic problem—the impact of the wartime economy and state intervention during World



War I on everyday life in the Monarchy—by providing a detailed presentation of the local conditions in Uzhhorod. The research highlights the issues of local-level implementation and the challenges of the wartime economy in a peripheral area, demonstrating how the peripheral characteristics of the Monarchy's wartime system were reflected in the local-level daily life, thereby broadening the understanding of how central economic management was realized. The study is the first to detail Uzhhorod's home-front economic regulations and the local mechanisms of food-supply control, filling a missing link in the understanding of centralized systems that were executed locally. Furthermore, by utilizing previously unknown sources, the research exposes the functioning of the Uzhhorod rationing system, its abuses, and the population's adaptation strategies, illustrating the practical difficulties of wartime administration. The study sheds light on the role of executive local officials, namely Police Chief István Berzeviczy and Mayor Mihály Fincziczky, in implementing price-control and anti-profiteering measures. This greatly contributes to understanding the tension between centralized measures and local power execution, an aspect often overlooked in national-level analyses. The work demonstrates how the local establishment of wartime state administration generated tensions between law-enforcement authorities and the population, indicating that the crisis extended beyond mere economic hardship. Finally, the study reveals that daily life unfolded in a continuous search for balance between centralized state control and community-based self-organization, showcasing the dual burden experienced on the wartime home front. Analyzing this dual strategy, the research concludes that the mobilization of the home front triggered not only an economic but also a social and moral crisis, illustrating the wartime erosion of social cohesion and morale that went beyond purely economic distress.

Analysis of sources and recent research. In recent years, new research has approached the northeastern front of the First World War – particularly the Carpathian operational zone – from fresh perspectives. One of the most recent publications on



the subject is by Friedrich von Friedeburg [1], who places the 1915 operations in the Carpathians and the Dniester region in a new context, focusing on front-line dynamics and the challenges faced by the Monarchy's military leadership. Among recent studies on the war in Ung County, the work of Oleksandr Havrosh [2] is of particular importance; he interprets the Carpathian front at the intersection of Ukrainian and Hungarian military narratives. Also dealing with military events are the works of Krisztián Papp [3] and Sándor Szurmay [4], who reconstruct the 1914–1915 Carpathian campaign and the functioning of military units in the region based on Hungarian sources. They analyse in detail the military operations and the decisive factors that enabled the Austro-Hungarian forces to push the Tsarist army back to the eastern slopes of the Carpathians. These events are further complemented by the study of Yuriy Fatula [5], who examined the history of the 66th Infantry Regiment stationed in Uzhhorod, an important unit actively involved in front-line combat during 1914–1915.

With regard to new interpretations of the war's economic impact, an important contribution is the monograph by Jari Eloranta, Eric Golson, Peter Hedberg, and Maria Cristina Moreira [6]. The authors discuss the militarisation of industrial production and the adaptation of wartime budgets. Roger L. Ransom [7] examines the global economic consequences of the war, including shortages of raw materials and food, as well as the rise of national debt. Together, these studies place the Monarchy's wartime economy in a broader European framework and show how the eastern front (including Uzhhorod) became a region characterised by supply crises, inflation, and social disintegration.

Focusing geographically on Uzhhorod, new works in local history and urban sociology have been published by Ludwig Philip [8] and Tetiana Literati [9]. Their works reconstruct the city's socio-economic structure and describe the transformation of industrial and cultural spaces before and during the war. They document changes in the multi-ethnic urban environment, the effects of the front's proximity, the influx

of refugees, and the consequences of the wartime economy, thus contributing to a reinterpretation of Uzhhorod's modernisation. At the county level, significant work has been carried out by László Braun [10], who analysed socio-economic relations in Ung County during the Dualist period.

In the field of research on Uzhhorod's municipal law-enforcement bodies, the studies of Róbert Varga [11, 12] shed light on the functioning of the Uzhhorod Police and the local units of the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie, their role in maintaining internal security during the war, and the challenges associated with preserving public order.

Purpose of the article. The aim of the study is to uncover and analyse the wartime economic processes affecting the home front in Uzhhorod between 1914 and 1918, with particular focus on food supply, price-gouging, profiteering, and the rationing system. Another objective is to present how the municipal administration and the Uzhhorod City Police attempted to maintain public order and manage the consequences of the wartime economy.

In preparing the study, the following research tasks were defined:

1. Exploration and organisation of archival materials: review the files of the Deputy Lord Lieutenant and the Lord Lieutenant of Ung County preserved in the Berehove Branch of the State Archives of the Transcarpathian Region, as well as documents of the Uzhhorod City Police from the wartime years, and identify sources relevant to food supply, price regulation, or law-enforcement intervention.
2. Critical analysis of sources: compare archival documents with contemporary press materials (*Ung* and *Ungvári Közlöny*) to uncover discrepancies between official communication and local realities.
3. Examination of illegal economic practices: identify and present cases indicating profiteering, price-gouging, unlicensed trade, or abuses of the rationing system, with special attention to examples from Uzhhorod.



4. Analysis of police measures: examine in detail how the police acted against economic offences and what methods were used to control markets, supervise prices, and protect public supply.
5. Assessment of social impacts: analyse how wartime restrictions and state interventions affected the living conditions of urban and rural populations and influenced the level of public trust.

Results of the research. The First World War was the first major military conflict in human history in which the belligerents mobilised virtually all their economic resources for the military effort. Supplying mass armies posed significant logistical and nutritional challenges for every government, as neither the Entente nor the Central Powers were prepared for the new, protracted type of warfare they were forced to wage [13]. As a result, for example, the German Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy were compelled to establish and operate wartime economic administrations in the midst of the conflict. Supply problems became evident in Berlin and Vienna as early as 1915–1916, when the Allies’ naval blockade disrupted maritime imports and exports. Essentially, the two states could conduct trade only with each other via land routes [14].

The governments in Berlin and Vienna had to devise an economic system capable of ensuring the quantity and quality of food needed by the units fighting at the front. In addition to supplying the army, they also had to guarantee that the home front had access to raw materials, food, and clothing necessary for everyday life. As a consequence, the state intervened radically in economic life and regulated market functioning. This structural transformation marked the beginning of wartime economic administration. In the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, adopting the German model was considered essential for constructing the war economy. At the same time, a particular characteristic emerged: in Austria the war economy was essentially directed by the military, whereas in Hungary this authority was entrusted to the government [15]



In Hungary, the second constituent state of the Dual Monarchy, various centres and committees were established from late 1914 onward whose main tasks included the procurement and distribution of raw materials, fuel, and foodstuffs. The most serious problem was the shortage of grain, as production indicators for 1914–1915 were unfavourable. All this prompted the country's leaders to introduce rationing: from spring 1915, white flour in Budapest could be purchased only with ration coupons, and from July 1915 the state introduced meatless days, when the population was forbidden to buy meat products [16].

The gravity of the situation is illustrated by the fact that in 1916 rationing had to be extended to all cereals produced and available in the country. Requisitions in agriculture became routine, obliging the rural population to sell surplus crops and livestock to the army at fixed prices [17]. Despite these measures, the country sank deeper into economic crisis, as the first half of 1916 brought further inflation and persistent shortages of foodstuffs [18]. To normalise public supply to some degree, Prime Minister István Tisza ordered the establishment of the Public Provision Office and Council. Through this new authority, the government intended to centrally organise and direct the distribution of essential foodstuffs and other necessities [19]. However, prices for goods were set by the county lord-lieutenant or, in towns with an organised council, by the mayor in accordance with existing laws and after consultation with an expert. The sources do not specify who was considered an expert. The law stipulated that the aim – unless otherwise justified – was to prevent disproportionate price increases in industrial goods and foodstuffs. Drastic price rises were feared to make goods inaccessible to the population and to encourage merchants to withhold supplies in the hope of profiteering [20]. Anyone violating the regulations could be sentenced to up to two months' detention and a fine of 600 crowns. The police and gendarmerie could also place a merchant's goods under official seal until the investigation was completed [21].



The outbreak of war and its subsequent unfavourable military developments also affected the economic situation of Uzhhorod. As the war progressed, state controls and measures aimed primarily at monitoring supply and demand in foodstuffs and luxury goods became increasingly visible. To supplement the limited archival sources, it is also important to examine articles published in the contemporary press. These allow insight into economic policy processes and restrictive measures that shaped the everyday life of the people of Uzhhorod and the entire county between 1914 and 1918 [22].

In the first months of the war, Uzhhorod experienced difficulties related to stockpiling food supplies. An article published on 7 September 1914 discussed the background to the drastic rise in food prices. The author drew attention to two main factors. First, virtually all the markets in Uzhhorod had been subordinated to the army's needs – meat, grain, flour, and vegetables were being purchased for military use. Second, Galician refugees fleeing the Russian invasion bought up the remaining available foodstuffs in large quantities, often above market price. This was not an isolated situation: numerous reports described attempts by refugees to circumvent existing regulations. According to police and gendarmerie records, price-raising refugees were an increasingly serious problem [23]. Returning to the newspaper article, the local population became the “victim” of these two factors, as prices of basic food items (flour, eggs, potatoes, corn, etc.) rapidly became unaffordable. The author cited the example that in August a hen's egg cost 4 pennies from rural sellers, while in early September the price had risen to 8–9 pennies [24].

After the publication of the article, market sellers and shopkeepers became the main targets of public anger. An article of 12 October 1914 discussed commercial “criminality.” Its author directly labelled food sellers, bakers, and butchers as profiteers. Such rhetoric in *Ung* contributed to conflicts between sellers and buyers. One such dispute occurred at the market on Széchenyi Square. Ilonka Horvát, who had arrived from Mali Heivtsi, wished to sell her home-raised hens. When a buyer

asked about the price, Ilonka replied that the “fatter ones” cost 30 crowns, and the “younger hens” 10 crowns. The buyer, Mrs. Kiss, was shocked by the “unjustifiably high” prices and complained loudly [25]. The quarrel escalated into mutual insults, drawing the attention of Deputy Captain Sándor Markovszky. After hearing both sides, he sided with the buyer and informed Ilonka that she was selling above the regulated price, which was not stated in the article. Enraged, Ilonka twisted the necks of her three hens and gave them to a nearby beggar woman, declaring that she would rather give them away than sell them “almost for free” [26].

In April 1915, the mayor of Uzhhorod issued an appeal in the weekly *Ung* calling upon the population to fight profiteering. He emphasised that it was unforgivable and unpatriotic for anyone to seek enrichment during wartime at the expense of others. Therefore, Mayor Mihály Fincziczky, in agreement with the Minister of the Interior, urged residents to report to Police Captain István Berzeviczy any individuals or companies engaged in food profiteering or price gouging. He stressed that such reports should not be considered shameful, but rather patriotic acts [27]. To publicise the campaign, the press occasionally published the names of those arrested and fined. On 21 November 1915, one of the county’s most widely read weeklies listed the following individuals: Mrs. Jankovics, Mrs. Perecsinszky, Mrs. Murgó, and József Haraszty [28]. Each was fined 20 crowns for violating the maximum prices in force [29].

On 17 October 1915, the police chief announced new restrictions. Under Decree No. 118368/1915 of the Royal Hungarian Minister of the Interior, buyers who purchased far more than they needed and sellers who sold goods above the official prices faced identical penalties. The police captain once again relied on the vigilance and civic responsibility of the population [30].

In 1915, the economic crisis in Hungary deepened further. In addition to maximum prices on flour and grain, the government expanded the list of regulated goods: sugar, potatoes, bacon, and pork were also subjected to price caps by

government decree [31]. This meant that even if local authorities had set price limits for meat or potatoes, the government decree fully overrode them. On 23 November 1915, a new prime ministerial decree was issued on the population's supply with essential goods and on abuses connected to price gouging [32]. According to the decree, every producer was obliged to report to local authorities what quantities of food they possessed beyond their own needs. Farmers who failed to comply were subject to fines or, in more severe cases, detention. It should also be emphasised that restrictions and state intervention extended not only to producers: every shop selling food or other essential goods was required to display the current national prices in a clearly visible and legible place. They were also obliged to display the maximum prices valid in the respective town or village [33].

These nationwide processes were also observable in Ung County. István Berzeviczy, the police chief of Uzhhorod, sent official notifications to the owners of grocery stores. In these notices, the police chief informed shopkeepers about the regulatory changes concerning the sale and stockpiling of goods. A good example is a call dated 23 September 1915, addressed to shop owner Sámuel Braun. The official notice stated that all shops in the city selling food were obliged to display valid prices in a clearly visible place [34]. Initially, this new measure introduced by the police chief applied only to flour, bread, and meat products. According to the justification, the measure was necessary because an increasing number of complaints about unequal prices had been submitted to the city police. Berzeviczy emphasised that the police would conduct inspections three days after the issuance of the official notice, and shop owners who failed to comply would be fined 100–200 crowns. To ensure that valid official prices were also enforced outside shops, the government decreed that rural public authorities could organise weekly or even daily markets [35]. Vendors arriving from the surrounding villages could sell their goods only at the approved prices. At the same time, the city council could also prohibit the sale of certain foodstuffs within the city limits, thereby exercising control over the quantity



of foodstuffs in circulation. The decree also authorised the head of the administration to personally procure essential foodstuffs if supplies ran out in his district, requiring only the permission of the Minister of the Interior [36].

In addition to economic hardships, new burdens were placed on shop owners in Uzhhorod. After the army's retreat from Galicia, Ung County had to prepare to meet the needs of the military. This meant that the city – and naturally the county as well – was required to provide equipment and foodstuffs for the army. Concerning this matter, an extraordinary city council meeting was convened in Uzhhorod on 15 January 1915. Police Chief Berzeviczy presented a plan he had drafted regarding the opening hours of shops. According to the proposal, shops located on Kossuth and Rákóczi Squares were required to remain open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. The measure also applied to shops on Nagyhíd, Kishíd, Kazinczy, and Rákóczi Streets [37]. Shops in these locations had to remain at the army's disposal even on weekends and public holidays. After a brief debate, the city council adopted the measures, which came into force on 20 January 1915.

On 19 January, the city police informed all affected owners by official letter of the new regulations. The notice specifically stated that shops could remain closed on weekends and holidays only if they obtained official permission. Otherwise, if they closed on their own initiative, the police were entitled to impose fines [38]. According to archival sources, the new city regulation provoked quiet indignation among merchants. They complained that the notice did not explain why the rules applied only to shops on the listed streets [39]. Seeking clarification, several owners – at an agreed time – went to the Uzhhorod police headquarters to ask the police chief personally. Berzeviczy explained that the designated areas were the busiest parts of the city: soldiers arriving by train frequented these streets and shopped in the stores located there. Thus, he considered it reasonable to extend the opening hours of the busiest shops rather than of all shops in the city. The owners did not agree with the explanation, but they had no choice but to accept it [40].



The new regulation greatly increased the number of petitions submitted to the Uzhhorod police headquarters. Between 20 January and 30 March, more than twenty shop owners submitted requests for exemption from the regulation. The reasons varied, but they had one point in common: all referred to hardships caused by the war. For example, in his request, Miksa Goldstein emphasised that he sold women's fabrics and that, since the outbreak of the war, customers no longer visited his shop – not even on weekdays [41]. Mrs. Reiderman wrote that after her husband's enlistment, their business had declined sharply, as he had managed supplies and accounting. After his departure, she faced continuous shortages and debts. Some shop owners requested exemption from weekend and holiday opening hours for religious reasons. In his petition, Ignác Justkovics [42] stated that he was of Jewish faith and that Saturday was an important day of rest. He added that most of his customers were also Jewish, so no one entered his shop on Saturdays [43]. From several petitions, it became clear that the overwhelming majority of shop owners (judging by their names) were likely of Jewish origin.

Due to the difficult situation at the police headquarters, Berzeviczy sought the assistance of the Lord Lieutenant of Ung County and the Mayor of Uzhhorod. At a meeting, he informed them that shop owners believed he had unilaterally introduced the new opening-hour regulations as a police decision. He asked the officials to use their personal authority to inform both owners and citizens that a collective decision had been reached on 15 January 1915, and that wartime interests required cooperation with the police. Following the meeting, the Lord Lieutenant and the Mayor issued a proclamation urging residents to cooperate with the army and law enforcement in view of wartime circumstances. They warned that those violating the regulations would face serious monetary or other penalties [44].

In Uzhhorod, dissatisfaction and the gradual deterioration of public morale were still palpable in 1916. Citizens were disturbed by rumours about the possible introduction of food rationing. To calm public sentiment, Police Chief Berzeviczy



published an informative article in the “City Affairs” section of the weekly *Ungvári Közlöny*. The article served a dual purpose: on the one hand, it stated that the city leadership saw no need to introduce rationing as of 16 January 1916; on the other, it hinted that the issue would be reconsidered in February [45]. Finally, citizens’ fears proved justified, and the city leadership did introduce rationing. Although the exact date is not known, several details reveal what the rationing mechanism may have looked like. Many aspects of the new system remain unclear and require further archival research. What is known is that residents in need of ration tickets had to report to the police headquarters and verify their address and the number of people in their household. Only after this could they receive their daily, weekly, or monthly tickets for bread, sugar, flour, or meat, which could be redeemed in shops designated by the authorities [46].

A substantial source base exists on abuses of the ration-card system, suggesting that it did not function perfectly. The violations fall into two categories: false reporting of household size, and problems related to changes of address. One perpetrator belonging to the first category was Mrs. Koscsu, who had previously reported that six people lived in her household. However, a police informer told Corporal Emil Munkácsy that the woman lived alone, had no children, and that her husband had died at the front. A brief investigation confirmed the accuracy of the information, so the police summoned Mrs. Koscsu for interrogation. Deputy Captain Sándor Markovszky confronted her with the facts and ordered her to confess. Seeing no alternative, Mrs. Koscsu admitted that she had registered her neighbours’ children and had sold the ration coupons received for them to other residents [47]. A similar offence led to a 20-crown fine for Mrs. Fenerman, although she did have children – however, they had been living with relatives in Onokivtsi for a year [48]. The district official of Onokivtsi confirmed that the Fenerman children had indeed lived in the village for nearly a year. With the necessary evidence in hand, Police Captain Pál

Bóna confronted Mrs. Fenerman with her false statement. She claimed that she had been unaware of her reporting obligations concerning her children [49].

The nationwide price ceilings introduced between 1915 and 1916 naturally affected the city of Uzhhorod as well. To inform the wider public, announcements and articles were published in the local press, focusing on official price regulations and on the penalties applicable to those who violated the laws and decrees. The press – at that time the most important channel of mass communication – served as the primary means of disseminating this information. Several articles in the newspapers *Ung* and *Ungvári Közlöny* adopted a somewhat propagandistic tone, suggesting to readers that the food-supply situation was under control and that any disruptions would be promptly resolved by the government and county leadership. A good example is the article titled “We have Bread and Flour”, published on 17 June 1915 in *Ungvári Közlöny*. Citing town hall sources, the author reported that enough flour had arrived in Uzhhorod to meet the population’s needs and that local bakers could thus produce adequate quantities of bread. The anonymous informant noted that the flour would likely be released for public sale on 18 or 19 June, though it would not be available in every shop. The article further stated that official prices had been fixed: one kilogram of bread cost 50 pennies, type-0 flour (containing no mixture) 88 pennies, and mixed flour 50 pennies [50].

While presenting an image of stability in the provision of basic necessities, the local press also sought to give a general picture of the markets operating in Uzhhorod. Most vendors came from rural areas and sold produce grown in their household plots. Occasionally, vendors disagreed with the official prices, which they considered too low [51]. The 21 February 1915 issue of *Ung* reported one such incident. At the town market, Márta Tóth from Dravtsi offered her chicken eggs for 24 pennies apiece. A customer informed her that, according to a city council decree, she could charge only 16 pennies. According to eyewitnesses, the peasant woman, purple with rage, threw



her goods to the ground and shouted loudly: “Here, take your cheap eggs!” She reproached the customer by saying: “But you do not sell your corn cheap either!”

The same issue also reported the case of Rozália Fekete, who chose to wring her geese’s necks and give them to a beggar rather than sell them at the official price. She had asked 5 crowns per kilogram, considerably higher than the regulated price. Believing she was attempting to profiteer, the potential buyer immediately called a policeman. Officer József Kovács, on duty at the market, explained that selling above the official price constituted a legal offence and could lead to arrest and a fine. This was likely what prompted Rozália Fekete’s drastic act of killing her animals and handing the carcasses to a beggar [52].

These cases clearly illustrate the moral dilemmas faced by the Uzhhorod police in enforcing price ceilings. On one hand, they had to comply with the municipal council’s decisions, which did not necessarily align with the economic interests of rural producers. On the other hand, they were required to arrest men and women already living in deprivation, who violated the law in an attempt to provide for their families.

The mayor and the police captain of Uzhhorod tightened regulations on traders who wished to bring grain, flour, and other goods into the town: they had to obtain prior official permission. This document recorded the trader’s name, business licence, and the quantity of goods being transported. Naturally, some attempted to circumvent the regulations – one such person was Mrs. Darányi of Mali Heivtsi, who transported fifteen sacks of bread-making flour to Uzhhorod on her wagon. As she lacked local knowledge, she asked Mrs. Lebkovics for directions. During their conversation it emerged that Mrs. Lebkovics was a shop owner and was willing to buy the flour. The only obstacle to a quick deal was that she was on her way to church. They agreed to meet at 2:00 p.m. in her shop on Kossuth Square. Mrs. Darányi arrived on time and instructed her son to watch the wagon. While negotiations were underway, her son Dávid was approached by police officer József Kovács, who was on duty [53]. As the



boy could not present the required documents, the officer ordered him to fetch his mother immediately, otherwise the wagon and its cargo would be placed under police seal. Frightened, the boy ran to find her. But Mrs. Lebkovics was likewise unable to present the necessary documents. She claimed that the 107 quintals of wheat she had brought came from her own land and that she had not stolen it; therefore, she owed no explanation about how much she intended to sell or to whom. According to the police report, the officer found her behaviour hostile and dismissive and, seeing no alternative, arrested her. She was taken to the police station, where a report was filed and proceedings were initiated. She was fined 100 crowns and sentenced to three days' detention [54].

A similar case involved Izidor Kronovich, who attempted to trade in Uzhhorod without the required permit. Patrolman János Hamuth was on duty on Széchenyi Square when he noticed several crates being unloaded from a wagon in front of Emil Rozenbaum's general store. During an identity check, the labourers could not produce documents verifying their identity or the origin of the leather goods on the wagon. Hamuth learned that the men were day labourers from Michalovce and had travelled with Izidor Kronovich. When asked where Kronovich was, they replied that he was inside making a deal [55]. Hamuth detained Kronovich, who also failed to produce any permit for trading in leather goods. During interrogation it emerged that Kronovich, aged 46, a Jew from Michalovce, claimed to have made the leather from his own calves, which had fallen ill and had to be slaughtered. He intended to send the raw hides to Mihály Csincsár of Michalovce for processing. However, he had visited Uzhhorod the previous month to sell grain and had met Rozenbaum, who told him about the leather shortage in the town. They agreed on a price of 12 crowns per kilogram. The police captain sent a telegram to Michalovce, which confirmed that Kronovich's identification papers were genuine and that he was registered as a grain trader with a valid licence [56].



After evaluating the evidence, he was convicted and fined 100 crowns. He claimed in his defence that he did not know the sale was prohibited due to wartime restrictions [57], nor that a special business licence was required to sell leather, and that he intended to sell it only because he had no use for it. The confiscated leather was sent to Budapest to the Hungarian Leather Procurement Company, which assessed the value of the 25 kilograms of leather weighed earlier. However, only 3 kilograms of the consignment actually arrived in Budapest [58].

Conclusions. The findings of the investigation highlight that during the First World War, the functioning of the home front in Uzhhorod unfolded within a contradictory system of state intervention, economic restrictions, and social adaptation. The introduction of wartime economic management, rationing, and price controls were, on the one hand, essential tools for survival, but on the other hand, they generated serious social tensions and moral dilemmas. The sources reveal that the local police and public administration sought to balance the maintenance of wartime order with the need for economic regulation, yet these measures often clashed with the everyday interests of the population. The spread of illegal economic activities (profiteering, unlicensed trading, and abuses of the rationing system) clearly shows that the central government's measures were only partially effective in addressing local problems. One important conclusion of the research is that the history of the wartime home front is not solely an economic or military issue; it also requires examining the behavioural patterns and moral resources of local society. Through a microhistorical approach, it becomes evident that a distinct form of coexistence emerged between state regulations and civilian survival strategies, which became a defining experience of the wartime years.

Several directions for further research arise. Comparative studies on the functioning of the home front in other Transcarpathian towns – such as Berehove, Mukachevo, or Vynohradiv – would help outline regional similarities and differences. Additionally, a detailed analysis of judicial cases would allow for a more precise

reconstruction of the structure of economic crimes and administrative practice. Another promising direction is comparison with other peripheral regions of the Monarchy (e.g., Galicia, Bukovina), which could offer new perspectives for understanding the East-Central European characteristics of wartime economic administration.

The research results of the study serve as a starting point for exploring the First World War economy of cities located in the territory of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Thus, a work filling a significant gap has certainly been produced.

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