

Rockefeller Philanthropy and Health Education in Croatia

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During my visit to the Rockefeller Archive Center, I reviewed the materials that were available for my dissertation on "The Basis of Health Education in Croatia," which describes health promotion and education efforts in Croatia between the two world wars. During the period between 1919 and 1940, numerous medical and health establishments were built in the rural areas and countryside of Croatia. Other significant programs were designed to educate the Croatian people about the importance of hygiene and practicing a healthy lifestyle. The Rockefeller Foundation directly influenced these programs and provided strong financial support to them.

In 1926, the School of Public Health was established in Zagreb, and the majority of health education activities began to occur there. In 1927, the school moved to a modern new building that was constructed with financial assistance from the Rockefeller Foundation. By helping to establish the School of Public Health, the Rockefeller Foundation provided Croatia with its main opportunity to perform intensive work in the area of medical education. At this time, the most important person involved in health education was Dr. Andrija Stampar, Professor of Hygiene and Public Health and Health and the first president of precursor of the World Health Organization from 1946 to 1948. He became aware that for a health and hygiene education program to work for the majority of the population, it must be approached from two directions: (1) Education for specialized professionals, such as doctors, nurses, sanitary technicians, medical assistants

and medical students; and (2) Education for a wide range of the population through seminars, courses, film projections and other visuals, such as photographs.

Dr. Andrija Stampar began extensive programs to educate Croatia's population about health issues and to enact programs to improve sanitary conditions and medical care. These programs were enhanced through the cooperation of medical professionals from Europe and the United States. An auditorium was prepared for use as a lecture hall; however, before serious lectures and classes could begin, Dr. Stampar's group had to provide the people with some basic education, such as reading and writing. The success of the presentation of health and hygiene messages depended upon the ability of the audience from each specific area and their ability to clearly understand and accept the instruction. Different subjects were taught depending upon the audience, but the subjects generally included information about personal hygiene problems, proper hygiene in the home, disposal of used water and feces, drinking water safety, maintaining a healthy diet, prenatal and child care, and protection from illnesses such as intestinal infections, malaria, and sexually transmitted diseases. Considering the living conditions in the area at that time, disease prevention was an extremely important concern. Each of these subjects included short and long courses, and often included film projections or slides. Dr. Stampar's personnel also held various health exhibitions, presentations and experiments as a means to reach, educate and influence the population.

In Croatia, I analyzed documents in the Croatian archives, the Croatian School Museum, the School of Public Health, and the National Library in Zagreb. There were some posters, handouts, brochures and other items that were used in health education activities and exhibits during the period under study.

My research at the Rockefeller Archive Center presented a new view and new information on the subject. I reviewed the documents and correspondence on Rockefeller philanthropic activities in Croatia between the years 1920 and 1945. Relevant documents are in the records of the International Health Board, International Education Board, and Paris Field Office of the Rockefeller Foundation. I also had an opportunity to review the photo materials there, which clearly showed the health exhibits of the period. I could only make a partial review of the Rockefeller Foundation's officers' diaries because I was only in the United States for a short time. The administrators who kept diaries included F.F. Russel, G.K. Strode, S.M. Gunn and F.E. Crowel.

At this point in my study, I can acknowledge that the materials located in the Rockefeller Archive Center contain many important documents that will shed light upon previously unknown details that influenced the practice of health education in Croatia. They also provide a detailed and until now unknown view of Dr. Andrija Stampar's activities. To undertake his work in different areas of Croatia, he drew from his experiences while working for the Rockefeller Foundation in China and from teaching medical students at various well-known universities in the United States. His activities are described in detail in the materials at the Rockefeller Archive Center. These archives are not only full of information about the global influences on health and hygiene improvements in Croatia,

but they also contain very important evidence of Dr. Andrija Stampar's work and his ability to pass his experience and knowledge on to his colleagues in the United States.