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CONTRIBUTION OF RUSSIAN FACTORY INSPECTORS TO SOCIAL HYGIENE AND PUBLIC HEALTH (THE 2ND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY)

One hundred years ago, in 1882, under the pressing of the working class and public movement in Russia a factory act had been passed to regulate child labour at factories and plants. According to this act for the first time in Russia factory inspection was created. From the beginning, between 1882-1886, this new establishment attracted a number of democratically minded people the nucleus of whom were physicians and teachers. Being appointed to supervise child labour conditions these inspectors of the so called first recruitment going beyond their direct duties had completed scientific investigations of labour and life conditions, physical state, morbidity and so on of not only children but also of the adult workers. Such expansion of the activities by some inspectors was not a mere chance. It was caused by the historical situation in Russia in the second half of the 19th century.

A mighty public movement of the sixties and seventies and then of the eighties, the rise of the working class movement promoted the attraction of public opinion to the socio-hygienic side of the so called working class question in Russia. Problems of the investigation and protection of workers health became widely discussed at congresses, in medical societies and especially on the pages of some medical magazines, first of all of the « Archive of forensic medicine and social hygiene ». This magazine played a very important role in this discussion mainly between 1865-1871 when it was edited by the progressive Russian physician S.P. Lovtsov.

It was in this period that a special section « On the sanitary condition of workers » appeared in the magazine, the famous article « On the working class' condition in the West Europe from the socio-hygienic point of view » was published, in which « The Capital » by K. Marx was cited. This surprising fact proved that progressive Russian physicians in their comprehension of the nature of the problems of the working class sanitary conditions more and more realized their connection with the capitalist mode of production.

Also in the « Archive » there were put forward problems on the sanitary supervision of factories and on the creation of the factory inspection in Russia. In particular, S.P. Lovtsov emphasized inspectors' independence of factory owners and considered physicians to be the best factory inspectors. He wrote about women and children factory labour, about the necessity of collecting full morbidity and mortality statistics, about the industrialization and its consequences for workers' health. He pointed out high level of traumatism among working children and antisanitarian state of workers' housing conditions.

Special programmes of scientific investigations of the labour conditions and
workers' health were also published in the «Archive» by S.P. Lovtsov and F.F. Erismann.

The 3rd volume of the «Handbook on hygiene» by F.F. Erismann titled «Professional hygiene, or hygiene of mental and physical labour» (1877) in which he many times cited Marx' «The Capital», contributed greatly to the development of socio-hygienic approach to the study of working class condition and its health problems. He deals with such problems as consequences of the economic condition of workers and of the growth of industry for their sanitary state; child mortality in industrial regions, working hours, women and children factory labour, workers' living conditions, their dietary and clothes.

The mentioned programmes, worked out by Lovtsov and Erismann, became the base of the well known scientific investigations of factories and plants of the Moscow province (gubernia) completed between 1879-1885 by a group of physicians headed by Erismann, including E.M. Dementjev and A.V. Pogozhev. At the same time the similar investigations were completed in the city of Moscow by P.A. Peskov. Soviet historians of medicine consider these investigations to be classic complex socio-hygienic studies, because their authors had analized the whole amount of factors characterising labour and living conditions of the Russian proletariat and demonstrated their consequences for its health.

In general the progressive activities of Lovtsov, Erismann and their colleagues influenced greatly the views of the Russian social minded physicians among whom there were future factory inspectors of the first recruitment. Thus, entering a new field of activity inspectors had a good training and social attitude of mind. This is especially true for the inspectors-physicians — P.A. Peskov (1835-1918), Vladimir factory district; V.V. Svjatlovsky (1850-1901), Kharkov and then Warsaw factory districts and I.I. Janzhul (1846-1914), Moscow factory district. The most characteristic side of their views was striving to find out dependence of workers' health on social and economic factors and to collect trustworthy material about their sanitary state.

The direct duties of the inspectors were: control the fulfilment of the directions about children's labour and their primary schools attendance; make records of evidence to prosecute factory owners guilty of violating the directions. Alle this was not an easy duty in the tzarist Russia. But the first inspectors did a lot, and above all they showed great enthusiasm and iniciative fulfilling their moral duties. As a result for the first time in Russia they had gathered very valuable material revealing the conditions and sanitary state of workers of many industrial provinces of the country.

The inspectors visited the biggest typical enterprises in each industry. A special attention they payed to the prevailing in Russia of groups of industries working up fibrous matter (fibrous flax, cotton, silk, wool, etc.). These industries widely used female and child labour the negative consequences of which on their health were evident. The reports of the inspectors contained accusatory material about very long working day, low salary, antisanitarian conditions at factories, of workers' houses, factory hospitals, worker's morbidity and its character, drawbacks of statistical data and so on. To improve the latter inspectors-physicians recommanded special cards including such points as: age, profession, residence, disease, prescribed treatment, trauma, its causes and circumstances and so on. They also insisted upon medical examination of workers before entering the factory or plant.

In fact the first factory inspectors worked according to the programme used by Erismann's group. They often compared their data with those of Erismann. The main method of the inspectors' work were personal surveys of factories and inquests of workers because they did not have a trustworthy official statistic data.

Following only their high feeling of duty and infinite striving to inspect as
many enterprises as possible and to collect as many data about workers as possible inspectors and their assistants spent a lot of time in driving and visited during one year nearly 5 000 factories and plants. The general factory inspector in his report for 1885 compared their work with the life of «a soldier on march».

It is impossible in one short report to show the remarkable work of the first Russian factory inspectors. So we will stay on the merits of only two of them — I.I. Janzhul and P.A. Peskov. Both of them were especially well prepared to inspectors' work by their previous life. Their work may be considered as an example of a good and honest activity of a factory inspector in the interests of workers.

Prof. I.I. Janzhul, famous Russian statistician and economist, was the inspector of the Moscow factory district from 1882 till 1887 and left his post having been convinced that in the tsarist Russia it was impossible to improve the conditions of workers. Already in his youth he was interested in statistical methods of investigations of social phenomena, then he was an author of works on female and child labour, on the factory inspection in England and Switzerland, etc. During the period of his work as a factory inspector he took an active part in commissions and meetings on working out and changing factory legislation. Janzhul's first report as a factory inspector was his book «Factory life of Moscow province» published in Petersbourgh in 1884. He considered the majority of problems of factory life from the point of view of its influence on workers' health. He revealed a disgusting picture of the infinite exploitation of workers, children included, high morbidity and traumatism and almost complete absence of medical care.

Janzhul's book appeared in the year when Erismann's investigations were still in process. So the book became a valuable addition to the Erismann's and his colleagues' publications. The book caused a lot of praising reviews in Russian and foreign languages, some abstracts from it were included into the English «Blue books» and Janzhul was awarded a medal by the Imperial geographic society of Russia.

Still better then I.I. Janzhul P.A. Peskov was prepared to the factory inspectors' activity. He was the author of the first course in Russia of medical geography and statistics, several years he worked as a zemstvo sanitary physician in the Moscow province, completed classic sanitary investigations of peasantry. As already mentioned, he investigated factories and plants of the city of Moscow in 1881. The results of this work were published in the magazine «Vrach» for 1881 and 1883 and also in separate issues titled «Sanitary investigation of factories working on fibrous matter in Moscow» (issues 1, 2, 1882, 1884). This work was successfully continued in the Vladimir factory district.

By his activity P.A. Peskov brilliantly proved Lovtsov's idea that the most useful in the supervision of factories would be inspectors-physicians. In his reports about two greatest industrial regions typical for Russia as Vladimir province and the city of Moscow were, Peskov demonstrated almost all factors characterizing worker's condition in industry and his home life, analyzed them from the point of view of their influence on the welfare, health and moral state of different age and professional groups of workers. As a result of his anthropometrical investigations Peskov proved negative influence of factory work in the tsarist Russia on physical development of workers and described a certain type of a factory worker being a tall person with a narrow breast. As Peskov put it «he resembles a plant deprived of light and space».

P.A. Peskov may be considered to be the first investigator of health of young workers in our country.

Many of Peskov's as well as Janzhul's conclusions were especially valuable
because both of them compared their data with those of F.F. Erismann and his colleagues. As a result they gave the true picture of different regions of the country, i.e. they discovered regularities characteristic of the majority of the Russian industrial centres.

Thus, the contribution of the progressive Russian factory inspectors, especially of medical profession, to social hygiene and public health consists in the realization of mass investigations of the condition and health of workers; in their discovery of a number of regularities showing the negative influence of the industrial labour and living conditions in the capitalist Russia on the health of workers and their families and especially of their children. Their great merit was working out the complex socio-hygienic approach to the investigation of these problems. By all this they greatly contributed to the construction of the foundation of not only social but also professional hygiene as a science in our country.

It is necessary to emphasize the clearly expressed social position of the advanced factory inspectors which helped them to consider most problems from the point of view of workers' interests. Basing on the analysis of their materials the inspectors put forward a number of important requirements dealing with the protection of workers' health and improvement of their conditions.

Political significance of the activities of the progressive factory inspectors is also very important. Their views and opinions, their publications influenced the advanced Russian public and made pressing on the government contributing to the working out of factory laws and public health measures. Besides, this accusatory material of the reports was used first by social-democrats and then by bolsheviks for the propaganda among workers.

Marx' well known words that the first English factory inspector G. Horner «did the English working class immortal services» are quite true to the progressive Russian factory inspectors in connection with the Russian working class.

The opinion of factory inspectors themselves and other advanced Russian medical men on the significance of their own work was expressed by F.F. Erismann in conclusion of his already mentioned «Handbook on hygiene» (3rd volume) «...as a result of the honest and systematic investigation of the sanitary conditions of workers and of their needs there cannot be any doubt that we will at least retain the necessary material for future generations to solve the most radical problem of social hygiene in Russia, and that already now working class condition may be considerably facilitated in many respects». 