

## **ESTONIAN INDUSTRIAL WORKERS' DEMANDS IN THE 1905 REVOLUTION**

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The article deals with the problems of industrial workers in the revolution of 1905, analyses the workers' economic, social and legal state in the beginning of the 20th century and demands that they presented to authorities and entrepreneurs for improving their quality of life. Also the workers' achievements on curtailing the working hours, raising the wages, improving the sanitary conditions at workplace and working environment and in providing medical care are being examined.

### **WORKERS' DEMANDS**

The second half of the 19th century witnessed a rapid industrialisation of the Russian empire, including the provinces of Estland and Livland, which was accompanied by the emergence of a new social class – industrial workers. Compared to the industrial countries of Western Europe, however, Russian economy remained at a poor level of development. One of the reasons for that was technological backwardness, which strongly influenced the working conditions as well as material and social welfare of the workers.

The workers' living and working conditions completely depended on the entrepreneurs' will until the 1880s, when the tsarist government, following the example of European industrial states, England and Germany in particular, but also yielding to the pressure of the Russian factory workers' strike movement, started to pay attention to the social sphere and shape the social policy. The first to be adopted in June 1882 was a law protecting child labour. This important factory law forbade the employment of children less than twelve years of age and limited the working hours of teenagers between twelve and fifteen to eight hours a day. The next law was on teenage workers' compulsory school attendance in 1884, and the law that prohibited night shifts for women and under-age workers in textile industry, in 1885. The law regulating the labour relations between workers and entrepreneurs was adopted in 1886. The factory act of 1897, which restricted the length of the working day in industrial enterprises to a maximum of eleven and half hours for

all adult (over fifteen years of age) workers on weekdays and to a maximum of ten hours on Saturday and made the overtime work legal came into force in 1898. The permitted norm of overtime per worker was set at 120 hours a year.

Considering the fact that no legal labour regulations existed before 1882, the enforcement of the above-mentioned laws can be viewed as a positive step towards improving the workers' labour conditions and giving factory workers a degree of protection. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, the working day in the industrial enterprises of tsarist Russia, including the provinces of Estland and Livland, was still 2–2.5 hours longer than the normative working day in the European industrial states of England, Germany and France. Work-related injuries were frequent due to exhaustion caused by long working hours, whereas enterprises paid very little attention to occupational health and safety. Unlike European countries, the social insurance system in tsarist Russia was introduced only in 1903, when factory workers were insured against occupational accidents. The occupational accident insurance law<sup>1</sup> guaranteed them free medical care and a small financial support for the period of temporary disability. The government, however, did not consider it possible and necessary to provide social guarantees against illness, unemployment and old age. In all these cases, families had to cope on their own. Since the wages were often too small to make ends meet, it was quite common that in addition to the head of family, also his wife and teenage children had to work.

To guarantee full use of the running machinery and labour discipline in factories, the entrepreneurs established strict rules, which workers had to follow. In the case of breaking rules, a worker was punished by fines deducted from his wage. The rude behaviour and arrogant attitude of foremen towards workers led to frequent conflicts, which mostly ended for workers with being sacked. Body searches performed on the workers at factory gates upon exit violated their human dignity. Like all the citizens of the autocratic Russian empire, workers lacked the elementary civil rights: freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of association, not to mention the right to strike.

Because of the undeveloped infrastructure, including the public transport system, most of the workers lived in overcrowded factory housing near the factory building. Besides the production facilities and dwellings, a factory complex commonly included a schoolhouse, bath, shops, market, pharmacy, hospital, church and other social buildings. It meant that not only working time, but the workers' everyday life was also connected to and dependent on the factory.

The need to change this situation was very clearly stressed at the 1895 congress of factory inspectors in St. Petersburg.<sup>2</sup> Proceeding from the fact that the workers' demands were predominantly of economic nature and aimed at the improvement

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<sup>1</sup> See Полное Собрание Законов (ПСЗ) Российской империи. Т. XXIII, 1903. СПб., 1905, Ст. 23060.

<sup>2</sup> The Factory Inspectorate was established in 1882 as a legal body to supervise adherence to factory legislation. Factory inspectors' tasks also included reaching an agreement in arguments between factory owners and workers.

of labour conditions and wages, the congress in its resolution supported the idea of granting workers the right to speak and hold meetings, as well as guaranteeing them immunity of place of residence and personal immunity so they could freely discuss their economic situation, find ways to improve their position and communicate their demands through legal channels.<sup>3</sup>

Since the tsarist government regarded the social sphere as secondary to economy, no legislative acts aimed at improving the workers' economic and legal conditions were adopted at the beginning of the 20th century. The workers' general discontent with labour and living conditions culminated in 1905. The demands submitted during the strike at St. Petersburg's Putilov metallurgy plant with 12,000 workers, which broke out on 3 January 1905, provided a model for the workers of other enterprises that gradually joined the strike.

Despite certain differences in mentality between the upper, middle and lower strata of workers in this period, they were united in common aspirations and goals: to achieve material well-being, the defence of their own dignity, their rights as human beings and workers, the right of free association.<sup>4</sup>

Economic demands prevailed among the workers' requirements: eight-hour working day, a rise in wages, elimination of overtime or higher payment rates for overtime; one rouble as the rate of minimum daily wage for a non-skilled worker, formation of a permanent commission including workers' representatives to endorse the piece-work rates and decide on the issues of workers' dismissal, immunity for strikers, and payment for the strike days. Besides seeking the improvement of the economic situation, the demands included the introduction of democratic liberties: freedom of speech, freedom to hold meetings, freedom of association, freedom to issue printed materials, and religious freedom, also the release of individuals imprisoned for political reasons – for participation in strikes or peasant unrest.<sup>5</sup>

All these demands were included in a petition. On 9 January 1905, thousands of workers set out to deliver the petition to the tsar who was expected to restore justice and offer protection against the arbitrariness of entrepreneurs and bureaucrats. The workers' peaceful demonstration was drowned in blood. As a result, changes took place in the consciousness and behaviour of workers, reflected in the mass protest movement.

Expressing their solidarity with the workers of St. Petersburg, industrial workers of Tallinn joined the strike movement on 12 January 1905, and presented to the Deputy Governor Giers the following demands to improve their quality of life<sup>6</sup>:

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<sup>3</sup> **Kir'ianov, I.** The mentality of the workers of Russia at the turn of the twentieth century. – In: *Workers and Intelligentsia in the Late Imperial Russia: Realities, Representations, Reflections*. Ed. R. E. Zelnik. University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, Calif., 1999, 81.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>5</sup> **Surh, G.** 1905 in St. Petersburg: Labour, Society and Revolution. Stanford University Press, Stanford, Calif., 1989, 180, 182.

<sup>6</sup> Eesti Ajaloohiiv (EAA), f 206, n 1, s 372, 18; Революция 1905–1907 гг. в Эстонии. Сборник документов и материалов. Эстонское Государственное Издательство, Таллин, 1955, 21–22, 25–31.

- Introduce eight-hour working day;
- Make overtime voluntary and double the pay for it;
- Lay down the minimum daily wages rate at 90 kopeks for men and 75 kopeks for women, and 1 rouble and 50 kopeks for skilled workers;
- Improve sanitary conditions in the workrooms;
- Establish a commission of representatives of workers and management to fix piece-work rates, and decide on the issues of workers' dismissals;
- Coordinate with workers the hiring and dismissal of foremen;
- End body searches at the factory gate upon leaving work;
- Abolish fines for being late to work and being absent from work;
- Pay benefits to workers at the expense of the enterprise: full wages in case of an occupational accident, 50–75% of the wages in case of illness<sup>7</sup>;
- Make medical care more easily available to workers;
- Introduce unemployment benefit;
- Grant immunity for strikers and payment for the strike days;
- Release political prisoners;
- Assemble a representative body of people (a legislative body) to be elected through general and direct elections;
- Declare freedom of speech, freedom to hold meetings, freedom to form unions, and security of person.

Strikes were accompanied with violence and marauding in town.<sup>8</sup> In order to normalise the situation, a meeting of factory owners was called to discuss the workers' demands and seek for solutions. The meeting reached a consensus that the strike of the Tallinn workers had to be treated as a political strike, i.e. strike for the support of the St. Petersburg workers, since the local conditions did not justify any such demands. As a result of the discussion, factory owners agreed to put an end to body searches at the factory gates upon exiting, and consult the workers' representatives while fixing the piecework rates. The rest of the demands were rejected on the ground that it was not within the competence of the company management, but rather the state authorities, to grant these demands.<sup>9</sup>

The next day, Governor of Estland Alexei Bellegarde met the workers' strike committee (about 100 persons), and promised that if the workers abandoned the political demands (freedom of press, freedom of hold meetings, immunity of person, election of a representative body of the people), he would agree to look into the demands of the workers of each individual factory, and guarantee that

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<sup>7</sup> According to the 3 June 1903 accident insurance law, benefits for temporary disability amounted to 1/2 of the wages, invalidity pension in case of total loss of capacity for work amounted to 75% of annual wages. Sickness insurance was not introduced until 1912.

<sup>8</sup> **Anvelt, J.** 1905. aasta revolutsioonilisest liikumisest Eestis. – In: 1905. aasta Eestis. Kirjeldused. Mälestused. Dokumendid. (EKP KK Ajalookomisjoni Toimetised, 1.) Külvaja, Leningrad, 1926, 33.

<sup>9</sup> Революция 1905–1907 гг. в Эстонии, 23–24; **Karjahärm, T., Pullat, R.** Eesti revolutsioonitules 1905–1907. Eesti Raamat, Tallinn, 1975, 49.

“every fair and legal demand of the workers shall be met without delay”.<sup>10</sup> He also advised the workers to elect workers’ elders according to the law on workers’ elders, because “via workers’ elders they will have the right and the chance to make their woes public”.<sup>11</sup>

Believing these promises, the workers of Tallinn gradually returned to work from 17 January onwards.<sup>12</sup> Also, the presence of additional military patrols on the streets and near the factories played its role in ending the strike.

However, since the promises remained unfulfilled, a new wave of strikes broke out in Tallinn in February, and this time it rapidly spread all over the Estonian area. In addition to Tallinn, workers went on strike in Tartu, Pärnu, Valga, Viljandi, Narva, Haapsalu. The principal demands of all the striking workers were shorter working days and higher wages, plus a number of local demands to improve labour and living conditions. The strike movement of Estonian workers was only part of the strike movement in the Russian empire, which broke out with new vigour in February-March and lasted, with ups and downs, throughout 1905. The official strike movement statistics show that in 1905 a total of 13,110 strikes took place in the 65 provinces of the Russian empire, with more than 2.7 million workers participating. In the industrial enterprises of the province of Estland, 137 strikes were counted, with 48,600 workers involved. In the neighbouring provinces of Livland and St. Petersburg, respectively 1,252 strikes with 268,600 participants and 1,861 strikes with 627,700 participants were registered.<sup>13</sup> Although at the beginning of the 20th century industrial workers, both in the whole of Russian empire and in the Estonian area, formed a relatively small part of the population, the workers were able to make their demands heard through the strike movement.<sup>14</sup>

The strikes did not just deliver a blow to the Russian economy with the missed work hours and damaged equipment, but also seriously jeopardised the social order, because in several regions of the empire, strikes grew into general unrest involving different social classes, and were accompanied by violence and looting.

At the start of 1905 the tsar, the government, local authorities, factory owners as well as the workers themselves were unable to foresee the course, scope and effect of the events that were to follow. The workers’ strike movement inspired by the 9 January Bloody Sunday acquired unprecedented scope and proved a decisive factor in the chain of events in 1905, forcing the tsar to issue the 17 October Manifesto, which declared the civil rights and the establishment of an elected legislature (Duma) and encouraging the entrepreneurs to improve the workers’ socio-economic conditions.

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<sup>10</sup> **Bellegarde, A. V.** *Minu mälestusi Eestimaa kubernerina. Eessõna kirjutanud Dr Phil O. Liiv.* Loodus, Tartu, 1937, 242, 244.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 243–244.

<sup>12</sup> Революция 1905–1907 гг. в Эстонии, 33.

<sup>13</sup> Статистика стачек рабочих на фабриках и заводах за 1905 год. Составил фабричный ревизор В. Е. Варзар. С.-Петербург, 1908, приложения, таблица 1-I, с. 2, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Of the 140 million population of Russia, only 14 million were hired workers, of these 3 million were factory workers. Estonia had only 40,000 factory workers out of the total population of 986,000.

## CURTAILING THE WORKING HOURS

Curtailing the working hours was one of the main economic demands presented by the workers who were discontent with the 11.5-hour working day established in most enterprises. Only a few industrial enterprises in metal, woodworking and paper industry had introduced 10–10.5-hour working days. The variation of working time depended on the progressiveness of the concrete factory owner, the profitability of the company's economic activities, but also on the fighting spirit of workers, their ability to achieve their demands.

Whereas in the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century the general demand of the workers was the curtailment of working time by 1–1.5 hours a day, the demand made by the Putilov plant of St. Petersburg, who went on strike on 3 January 1905, was very concrete, and influenced by Social Democrats – to introduce an eight-hour working day. Soon also the workers of various industrial regions of the Russian empire joined this demand. At the beginning of January, the Tallinn Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party distributed an Estonian-language leaflet in Tallinn and in Tartu, encouraging workers to go on strike and demand an eight-hour working day “just like our brothers in St. Petersburg”.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, following this appeal, Tallinn workers on 12 January in their collective petition addressed to the factory inspector, sought an eight-hour working day. Entrepreneurs rejected the request, claiming that legal regulation of working hours was not within their competence, and advised the workers to wait until a new law was worked out and enforced. Even though a government commission was immediately formed in St. Petersburg, and started drafting a new law on working hours<sup>16</sup> (it envisaged only a 10-hour working day), workers were not intimidated, and continued their struggle for a shorter working day. Unlike the other industrial workers of the Russian empire, Estonian factory workers did not repeat their 12 January demand for an eight-hour working day: their typical demand was to cut the working hours by one hour a day.

The question of cutting the working hours was solved individually by each enterprise. While the impetus mostly came from a strike, there were also companies where the problem was solved through negotiations or even on employers own initiative in order to prevent the strike and the financial and material loss. It was mostly small enterprises and workshops that opted for self-initiative. Thus the owners of 84 Tallinn metal workshops and smithies (blacksmiths, locksmiths, tinsmiths) unanimously decided at their 17 February 1905 meeting to reduce the working day in their workshops to ten hours.<sup>17</sup> As a result of negotiations held with workers' representatives, the ten-hour working day was introduced in most

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<sup>15</sup> EAA, f 206, n 1, s 148, l 10; **Moosberg, H.** 1905.–1907. a revolutsioon Eestis. Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, Tallinn, 1953, 39.

<sup>16</sup> Центральный Государственный Исторический Архив России (ЦГИАР), ф. 23, оп. 20, д. 6, л. 58.

<sup>17</sup> Postimees, 1905, Feb. 18.

industrial enterprises of Tartu: in the woodworking industries of L. Bandelier, A. Mohr and J. Kuusik, in the sawmill of J. Kahn, in the machine building works of F. Faure and in several other enterprises.<sup>18</sup>

For fear of a printing-shop workers' strike, nine-hour working day was introduced in several printing-shops of Tallinn (M. Martna, M. Sciffer) and Tartu (H. Laakmann, K. Mattiesen, A. Grenzstein, E. Bergmann, J. Tõnisson, etc.).<sup>19</sup> In September a collective agreement was concluded between printing-house owners and printers<sup>20</sup>, which introduced nine-hour working days in all printing-houses. On 13 November 1905, Tallinn dockworkers reached a collective agreement<sup>21</sup> with their employers on the wage increase and the introduction of nine-hour working day. Such collective agreements between employers and employees were exceptional in tsarist Russia at that time, and marked the beginning of a new stage in labour relations.

The strongest opposition to curtailing working hours came from the owners of big industrial enterprises who resorted to lockouts as a counter-measure to the strike. Thus on 17 February 1905 a lockout was declared at the A. M. Luther Company of Mechanical Woodworking in response to the workers' demand to shorten the working day to nine hours and end work an hour earlier on Saturdays, to dismiss engineers and supervisors who treated workers in an uncivil and unjust manner, and to pay for the strike days. The strike in the factory lasted for a month – until 16 March.<sup>22</sup> The workers of the Baltic Cotton Spinning and Weaving Mill in Tallinn experienced a similar situation, when they stopped work on 21 February and demanded that working day to be cut from 11.5 to 10 hours.<sup>23</sup> Also in May 1905 the managers of R. Mayer's chemical plant responded to the demands of the workers to shorten the working day by one hour and pay 50% more for overtime, with paying-off all workers.<sup>24</sup>

Under the pressure of continuing strikes and on economic considerations, all entrepreneurs were eventually forced to make concessions. The understanding that sooner or later they would have to cut the working hours anyway, as far as a relevant bill was being drafted in St. Petersburg, influenced the decision. Among the last enterprises to introduce shorter working hours was Estonia's largest industrial enterprise, the Narva Kreenholm Cotton Manufacture with its 5,500 workers. Finally, at the end of November, the company managers agreed to curtail the working day to 10.5-hours on weekdays and 8.5-hours on Saturday. Thus the working hours per week were shortened from 67.5 to 61. At the same time the workers' wages were raised by nearly 12%.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Eesti Riigiarhiivi Filiaal (ERAF), f 27, n 1, s 87, 186–87.

<sup>19</sup> Teataja, 1905, Feb. 23; Uudised, 1905, Feb. 25.

<sup>20</sup> EAA, f 206, n 1, s 100, 11–3.

<sup>21</sup> ЦГИАР, ф. 95, оп. 4, д. 830, л. 146.

<sup>22</sup> ERAF, f 27, n 1, s 87, 11; Uudised, 1905, March 16.

<sup>23</sup> Революция 1905–1907 гг. в Эстонии, 52; ERAF, f 27, n 1, s 87, 116.

<sup>24</sup> ERAF, f 27, n 1, s 87, 164–65.

<sup>25</sup> EAA, f 206, n 1, s 190, 1137.

By the end of 1905, working hours in Estonian industrial enterprises were cut by an average of one hour a day. Most factories and plants introduced a 10–10.5-hour working day, a few (the Dvigatel Rail-carriage Construction Works) introduced a nine-hour working day. Since work ended one hour earlier on Saturdays, the length of the working week was 59–61.5 hours, which was nearly 6–7 hours shorter than previously.<sup>26</sup>

However, no laws on shorter working days were passed, and all draft laws cutting the working hours remained just drafts. The 1913 “Code of industrial labour” still envisaged a maximum of 11.5 hours per day. It also maintained the overtime, which was divided into obligatory overtime due to the technical requirements of production, and voluntary overtime. The latter was limited to 120 hours a year per labourer. In fact, workers were willing to do overtime, since it gave them an opportunity to earn extra money: as a rule, overtime tariffs could be up to 50% higher than regular tariffs.

The shortening of working time was one of the most important achievements of the workers. Workers now had more time to spend with their families, visit relatives and friends, read books, engage in hobbies and self-education and participate in the movement of voluntary associations. Also entrepreneurs themselves benefited from a shorter working day. Since workers had more time for rest and self-education, also productivity of work increased, and absence from work because of exhaustion was reduced.

## INCREASE IN WAGES

A rise in wages occupied an equally important place among the workers’ demands as shorter working hours. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, a factory worker in the province of Estland earned an average of 266 roubles a year.<sup>27</sup> Although the wages in Estland were considerably higher than the average wages (207 roubles<sup>28</sup>) in tsarist Russia on the whole, they were not sufficient to support a family, particularly in case of illness or unemployment. Thus workers’ wives and older children had to earn extra money. The economic depression at the beginning of the 20th century led to a decline in industrial production as well as wages level. By 1904 the average annual wages of workers dropped by 4.1%, down to 255 roubles<sup>29</sup>. The decline in wages was also influenced by the transition of many enterprises from work at time rates to piecework. In a longer perspective

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<sup>26</sup> In February–March 1917, entrepreneurs cut the working day to 8 hours under the pressure of strike movement.

<sup>27</sup> Статистические сведения о фабриках и заводах, необложенным акцизом за 1900 год. СПб., 1903.

<sup>28</sup> **Кирьянов Ю. И.** Жизненный уровень рабочих России (конец XIX–начало XX в.). Наука, Москва, 1979, 104.

<sup>29</sup> Свод отчётов фабричных инспекторов за 1904 год. СПб., 1907, 172–173.



it was, of course, a positive shift, which gave workers the chance to test their abilities and earn higher income. Initially, however, workers who had hitherto worked for fixed daily wages only felt the effect of intensification of labour, which they were unable to keep up with, as well as a drop in income. That is why workers at the start of the 20th century presented applications to the factory board, asking to pay the wages to the extent of the former daily wages, in case the worker was unable to earn an equal sum at piecework rates. To a certain extent, low piecework rates were to blame. Therefore, besides demanding a rise in daily wages, workers also insisted that a commission including workers' representatives be formed to work out fairer piecework rates. In several enterprises (the Dvigatel Rail-carriage Construction Works, the F. Krull Machine Building Works, etc.) the workers' requests were met.

The economic environment improved by 1906: the period of distress in industry had been overcome, and further developments allowed management to comply with the workers' demands concerning the rise in wages. In 1906 an industrial worker in the province of Estonia earned an average of 267 roubles, which was 12 roubles or 4.7% higher than the average annual wages in 1904. By 1908 the annual wages increased by 16.9%, amounting to 298 roubles.<sup>30</sup> The next years witnessed a further rise. Together with the average wages, the sickness benefit paid to workers in case of occupational accidents increased as well.

True, part of the wages was often spent on fines. The fine system aimed at guaranteeing working discipline, was introduced in enterprises in accordance with the 1886 law. According to the law, the fines were imposed for delaying or missing work without reason; for sleeping, fighting, drinking alcohol, playing cards, producing low-quality products, breaking fire and labour safety regulations. Workers were also fined for breaking communal life rules in the factory housing. A maximum of 1/3 of the wages could be deducted for fines. The fine sums were pooled into a fund in each enterprise, and workers could apply for single benefits in case of temporary disability, birth of child, to cover funeral expenses, etc. Factory owners did not make any concessions concerning the fine system. They, too, had to pay fines in case they broke the labour legislation.

The rise in wages, which exceeded the rise in the prices of consumer goods and services, enabled workers to cope better, also spend money in their spare time and put aside a small amount for the "rainy day", for the periods of unemployment, illness, or old age, when there would be no income at all. Also it was now easier to support one's country relatives. This was a rather common phenomenon, as factory workers maintained close ties with rural areas: after all, they had only recently left the country themselves to work in factories in urban areas. On the other hand, it was the rural relatives who helped city workers cope by supplying them with foodstuffs.

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<sup>30</sup> Свод отчётов фабричных инспекторов за 1906 год. СПб., 1907, 93; Свод отчётов фабричных инспекторов за 1908 год. СПб., 1910, 143.

## INSTITUTION OF WORKERS' ELDERS

During the last decade of the 19th century, workers increasingly resorted to an extreme measure to realise their demands – by going on strike, which commonly caused major economic damage. The government being responsible for social stability in society, desired to reach a peaceful agreement between factory owners and workers on the issues of labour relations (working hours, wages, occupational safety, etc.) by establishing a new institution – workers' elders. The Act of 1903<sup>31</sup> designed by the government envisaged the election of workers' elders in industrial enterprises to represent the workers' interests and bargain with the employers. The task of a workers' elder was to mediate information between the employer and the workers, and hold negotiations to settle any labour disputes. Both factory owners as well as workers were rather distrustful of the law, although for different reasons. Factory owners thought the factory inspectors appointed to supervise labour laws were perfectly able to solve any problems in labour relations. Workers, on the other hand, sensed that they could not be equal negotiating partners with the employers, as they lacked the required skills and experience. The most important reason why workers did not hasten to elect leaders was their fear of dismissals.

The situation changed at the beginning of 1905, when the workers, encouraged by the Social Democrats' propaganda, began to demand elections of workers' elders in enterprises. Russian Social Democrats criticised workers for the lack of interest toward election of a representative body. They also saw a chance to raise the workers' political awareness through the institution of workers' elders.<sup>32</sup>

Considering the political situation at the start of 1905, entrepreneurs gave up their boycott against the law and opted for its implementation. Declaring the establishment of the institution of workers' elders in the factories of the province of Estland desirable, suitable and relevant to local conditions, the Commission for Factories and Mines of the Province of Estland gave its permission to arrange the elections.<sup>33</sup> In February-March 1905 workers' elders were elected in all big industrial enterprises of Estland: the Fr. Krull and the F. Wiegand Machine Building Works, the Dvigatel Rail-carriage Construction Works, the Baltic Cotton Spinning and Weaving Mill, the A. M. Luther Company of Mechanical Woodworking, the Tallinn Metal Works, the Zvezda Tin Factory, the Northern Paper and Pulp Mill, the Turgel Pulp Mill and others.<sup>34</sup>

The council formed of the workers' elders of various Tallinn industrial enterprises in May drafted the common economic demands of the workers and held negotiations with the entrepreneurs. The negotiations on cutting unemployment, held between the workers' elders of Tallinn factories and the Tallinn municipal government in October 1905, led the city government to take initiative and

<sup>31</sup> ПСЗ. Т. XXIII, 1903, Ст. 23122.

<sup>32</sup> **Lenin, V. I.** Reformide ajastu. – In: Teosed, 6. Jaanuar 1902–august 1903. Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, Tallinn, 1952, 467.

<sup>33</sup> ЦГИАР, ф. 23, оп. 24, д. 1224, л. 231.

<sup>34</sup> ЦГИАР, ф. 23, оп. 24, д. 1224, л. 231–237; EAA, f 208, n 1, s 6, l 1.

establish labour exchanges to help find employment. The first municipal labour agency started to operate only after two years, in 1907.<sup>35</sup> This laid the foundation to the legal organization of labour exchanges in 1917, when a decree to this effect was passed.

After the unrest of social classes had been suppressed and the authorities had regained control over the situation, the institution of workers' elders was suspended at the end of 1907 because "its actions in harmonizing the interests of employers and workers were inefficient and hazardous to public security".<sup>36</sup>

### IMPROVEMENT OF MEDICAL CARE

Compared to the other regions of the Russian empire, medical care for factory workers in the provinces of Estland and Livland was much better organised. Being acutely aware that a working capacity largely depends on workers' health, local entrepreneurs regarded their legal obligation – to provide workers with free medical aid – more responsibly and invested higher sums into this particular field than it was done elsewhere.

At the beginning of the 20th century, five enterprises with more than 500 workers – the Hiiu-Kärdla and Sindi Cloth Mills, the Kunda and Aseri Cement Factories, the Kreenholm Cotton Manufacture and the Waldhof Pulp Mill – had their own hospitals, which, in addition to the workers, also treated their family members and other local residents.<sup>37</sup> The Türi paper mill, the P. Kochnev sawmill in Narva, and the D. Zinovyev cast iron factory, which had transformed one of the rooms in the ambulatory into a four-bed hospital, also provided stationary treatment.<sup>38</sup> The rest of the factories and plants had contracts with the nearest municipal or county hospital for treating their workers. As a rule, big enterprises also employed a medical assistant to provide medical aid throughout the working day, and a doctor who visited the factory twice a month. Workers of smaller enterprises had to look for medical aid on their own, but the employer covered the treatment costs.

In 1905 workers were demanding better availability of medical care – opening new dispensaries and an increase in the number of doctors in industrial enterprises, and an extension of medical aid provided at the factory's expense to the workers' dependent family members. Workers were also complaining about doctors, who refused to make home visits, missed the consultation hours in the companies' medical consulting rooms, and treated their patients disrespectfully and carelessly.

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<sup>35</sup> See Городское хозяйство Ревеля 1905–1915. Ревель, 1916, часть III, 20. City governments of Riga and Helsinki opened labour exchanges for registration of job-seekers and vacancies in 1903.

<sup>36</sup> ЦГИАР, ф. 23, оп. 24, д. 1224, л. 279.

<sup>37</sup> EAA, f 206, n 1, s 290, l 22–28; Latvijas Valsts Vēstures Arhīvs, 104. f., 1. apr., 117. l., 72. lp.

<sup>38</sup> EAA, f 206, n 1, s 290, l 19–21.

In order to meet the workers' demands, several enterprises (the E. Johanson Paper Mill, the Volta Electromechanical Works, the R. Mayer Chemical Plant, the F. Wiegand and Fr. Krull Machine-Building Works, the Baltic Cotton Spinning and Weaving Mill, etc.) established dispensaries and hired more doctors and medical assistants.<sup>39</sup>

Better availability of medical care was particularly important in the Narva Kreenholm Cotton Manufacture and the Baltic Cotton Spinning and Weaving Mill in Tallinn, where most of the workers were women. Easier access to medical services, including assistance at childbirth, enabled women to take better care of their health. Workers of both enterprises had also managed to persuade the management to introduce a three-month maternity leave. No compensation was paid during the period, but mothers could keep their jobs. Young working mothers worked one hour less per day until the child's first birthday.<sup>40</sup> A 14-day paid maternity leave was enforced with the 1912 sickness insurance law, which was strongly influenced by the events of 1905. Nevertheless, there were a number of enterprises in Estonia (the Sindi and Kärđla Cloth Mills, The Kreenholm Manufacture, the A. M. Luther Company of Mechanical Woodworking, etc.), where on the initiative of the employer workers were paid a small sickness benefit and also old age pension to those who had worked in the company for at least 30–35 years.

### **IMPROVEMENT OF SANITARY CONDITIONS AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT**

During the 1905 strikes, workers in many factories and plants demanded an improvement of sanitary conditions and working environment. To meet these demands, ventilation and lighting was improved in the workrooms, also sanitary installations were modernised, and washrooms and locker rooms were furnished. Drinking water was made available in all factory departments, and several enterprises opened a special lunchroom where workers could eat packed lunches; also canteens were established that sold hot meals.

The lunchrooms mostly had multiple functions. Thus the canteen of the Volta Electromechanical Works was also used as a venue for workers' meetings and cultural undertakings. The canteen of the A. M. Luther woodworking company, which was built in 1905, also accommodated a kind of kindergarten. In the evenings the canteen was used for cultural events or by hobby groups such as the factory's 40-member brass band, choir and drama circle led by the factory supervisor Julius Rossfeldt. Drama and concert performances attracted the public, and soon the canteen earned a nickname "Luther's community centre".

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<sup>39</sup> EAA, f 206, n 1, s 290, 1 30, 32, 34, 35, 37.

<sup>40</sup> EAA, f 206, n 1, s 164, 1 17; s 157, 1 36.

## FORMATION OF TRADE UNIONS

A major concession from the part of the tsarist government was the 4 March 1906 temporary law<sup>41</sup>, which made the status of a trade union legal and also gave workers the opportunity to establish cultural and educational associations. In tsarist Russia, Estland and Livland included, the first trade unions of workers were founded in the summer of 1905. Trade union movement, which was aimed at improving the labourers' employment and living conditions and raising their educational and cultural levels, did not, however, attract a wider response. Even during the 1905 revolution, only a very small part of Russia's industrial workers – 7%, or 245,555 workers – had joined professional unions. These unions were small and weak. Of the 600 trade unions established, more than half (349) had less than 100 members. Strong trade unions with 1000–2000 members only numbered 22.<sup>42</sup>

In Estland, initially Tallinn became the centre of the trade unions movement. In the summer of 1907, eleven trade unions with nearly 2,500 members operated in Tallinn. The biggest, the metalworkers' trade union, had a membership of nearly 1,220 persons.<sup>43</sup> All in all, about 2,500–3,000 people were engaged in the trade union movement in Estland. One of the reasons for such a small number of trade union members was the fear of job loss, because factory owners did not look favourably upon trade union people, and whenever a need arose to dismiss workers, trade union members were the first to go. On the other hand, trade unions felt permanent discrimination from the government authorities as well. It was difficult to obtain police permission to hold annual meetings, conferences or even cultural undertakings. Often searches were conducted in trade union headquarters, along with the confiscation of literature. All this hampered the activities of trade unions. After the closing of the Tallinn factory workers' trade union for political reasons in 1910, the focus of trade union movement was shifted to Tartu, where more than 600 wage earners were engaged in the trade union movement.<sup>44</sup> The most active professional union to stand up for the material wellbeing of their members was the trade union of Tartu timber industry workers with 400 members.<sup>45</sup>

Because of weak consolidation of industrial workers early in the 20th century and due to political reasons (the authorities refused to register the statutes of workers' associations) no educational, cultural or other voluntary associations of workers were formed. At the same time they joined the already existing temperance and cultural-educational societies that displayed a tolerant attitude towards workers. The most popular temperance societies among the workers were *Valvaja* in Tallinn, *Karskuse Sõber* in Tartu, *Võitleja* in Narva, *Valgus* in Pärnu and cultural-educational society *Sõprus* in Sindi. Despite the fact that drinking alcohol was a rather widespread habit among workers, temperance societies

<sup>41</sup> Законодательные акты переходного времени. 1904–1906 гг. СПб., 1907, 420–438.

<sup>42</sup> **Cliff, T., Gluckstein, D.** Marxism and the Trade Union Struggle: Trade Unions in Russia and Britain, 31. [http://www.internationalist.org/pdfs/Marxism\\_TradeUnions.pdf](http://www.internationalist.org/pdfs/Marxism_TradeUnions.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> ЕАА, ф 1615, н 2, с 1, 14.

<sup>44</sup> ЦГИАР, ф. 23, оп. 29, д. 43, л. 71, 118, 136–137, 146–147, 182.

<sup>45</sup> Olevik, 1910, Dec. 22.

attracted workers mostly with cultural activities: parties, excursions, literary and musical evenings etc. The activity in societies enabled workers to have a taste of culture, develop and improve their intellectual abilities, but also gain experience in organisational work and develop their political outlook.

The entrepreneurs also increased their share for raising the workers' cultural level with investing in recreational facilities. New factory libraries were opened, musical instruments were purchased for workers' bands, also separate buildings or rooms were built or refurbished to function as venues of cultural events.

## CONCLUSION

The rapid growth of industry and increase in the industrialists' profits at the end of the 19th century did not lead to a general increase in investments into workers' working and living conditions. Workers expressed their discontent with the economic, social and legal situation in society through the strike movement, which had an explosive start in 1905. The scope of the protest movement and the accompanying violence and marauding jeopardised the social order and forced the tsarist government to declare civil rights to Russian citizens, including factory workers, and encouraged industrialists to make economic concessions.

The state of war established in the Baltic provinces in November-December 1905 due to the industrial workers' strike movement and the peasant unrest began to hamper the realisation of civil rights declared by October Manifesto. Workers' meetings were banned, the law on workers' elders was suspended in 1907, pressure on workers' trade unions increased until their closure in Tallinn in 1910; also the establishment and functioning of workers' cultural and educational associations were impeded.

All the more valuable were the workers' achievements in improving their socio-economic conditions. The shortening of working days in factories and plants by an average of one hour a day and 6–7 hours a week provided the workers with more spare time to spend with their families, take part in voluntary associations movement and engage in cultural self-education. The rise in wages that was achieved together with the shorter working hours, enabled the workers to not only spend money on self-education and cultural events, but also manage better economically as a whole. The improvement of occupational health and working environment and better access to medical care were also important from the workers' point of view.

## EESTI TÖÖSTUSTÖÖLISTE NÕUDMISED 1905. AASTA REVOLUTSIONIS

Maie PIHLAMÄGI

Tööstuse kiire kasv ja töösturite kasumite suurenemine 19. sajandi lõpul ei toonud kaasa investeringute suurendamist tööliste töö- ning palgatingimuste

parandamiseks. Kehtiv, 11,5-tunnine tööpäev oli liiga pikk ja tekitas üleväsimust ning tähelepanu nõrgenemist, mille tagajärjel toimusid sageli tööõnnetused. Pealegi pöörasid ettevõtjad vabrikutes ja tehastes tööohutusele ning töötervishoiule vähe tähelepanu. Tööliste töötasu oli väike ja ots otsaga kokkutulemiseks pidid lisaks perekonnapeale tööl käima pereema ning lapsedki. Eriti raske oli hakkama saada töötutel, vanuritel ja haigetel, sest puudusid sotsiaalsed garantiid. Tööstustöölised olid kindlustatud 1903. aasta seadusega vaid tööõnnetuste puhuks. Tööliste väikest palka vähendasid trahvid, mida määrati töödistsipliini rikkumise või ettevõtte sisekorraeskirjast üleastumise eest. Meistrite jäme ja üleolev suhtumine töölistesse põhjustas sageli konflikte, mis enamasti lõppesid tööliste vallandamisega. Nii nagu kogu Tsaari-Venemaa elanikkonnal puudusid ka töölistel tsiviilõigused: sõna-, trüki-, koosolekute ja ühinemisõigus, samuti õigus streikida.

Tööliste rahulolematuse majandusliku, sotsiaalse ja õigusliku seisundiga vallandus 1905. aasta algul võimsa streigiliikumisena, mis kestis tõusude ning mõõnadega kogu aasta. Streigiliikumisega ühinesid teised sotsiaalsed klassid, ja kohati kasvasid streigid üle rahutusteks, mis ohustasid ühiskonnakorda. Korra taastamiseks ja stabiilsuse saavutamiseks oli tsaar sunnitud järeleandmisi tegema ning 17. oktoobri manifestiga välja kuulutama poliitilised reformid ja deklareerima tsiviilõiguste andmist Venemaa elanikele, sealhulgas töölistele. Vabrikandid omakorda olid tööliste rahustamiseks sunnitud rakendama abinõusid nende töö- ja elutingimuste parandamiseks.

Kuigi 1905. aasta revolutsioonile järgnes karistamine ja mitmete kodanikuõiguste piiramine, ei suutnud ükski jõud võtta töölistelt nende majanduslikke võite. 1905. aasta streigivõitluse tulemusena lühenes tööpäev 10–10,5 tunnini, seega keskmiselt 1 tunni võrra päevas, nädalas aga 6–7 tunni võrra. Tööaja lühenemine andis töölistele paremad võimalused tööjõu taastamiseks, jättis rohkem vaba aega perekonnaga tegelemiseks, sugulaste ja tuttavate külastamiseks, lugemiseks, isetegevuseks, eneseharimiseks ning seltsiliikumises osalemiseks. Tööpäeva lühenemisega kaasnenud 10–15%-line palgatõus oli esmatarbekaupade hinnatõusust oluliselt suurem, võimaldades mitte üksnes paremini ots otsaga kokku tulla, vaid teha ka kulutusi vaba aja veetmiseks ja koguda väike tagavara “mustadeks päevadeks” (töötuse ning haiguse ajaks, vanaduspäevadeks), samuti toetada rahaliselt maal elavaid sugulasi. Vabrikutes ja tehastes paranesid töötervishoid ning olmetingimused. Arstiabi muutus kättesaadavamaks uute arstiabipunktide avamisega ja arstide arvu suurendamisega ning arstiabi laiendamisega tööliste ülalpeetavatele perekonnaliikmetele. Ettevõtjad suurendasid ka investeringuid tööliste vaba aja sisustamise üritustesse: avasid raamatukogusid ja täiendasid raamatufonde, ostsid töölisorkestritele pille ning ehitasid tööliste kultuuriüritusteks klubi-ruume.