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### **Activities of the Imperial Philanthropic Society at Its Early Stage of Formation (1802-1820)**

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#### **Abstract**

The article is devoted to establishment and work of Imperial Mercy Fund in the first years of its existence. This Fund was one of the hugest charity organization in Europe in 19th century. The paper attempts to trace the development of Russian public consciousness in the early 19th century in relation to poor people. Traditionally, the problem of the relationship between society and power, which are considered in the study, is relevant. Based on historical sources, the general nature of the Fund's activity at the beginning of its foundation is presented, the data on the funds allocated from the state treasury for the needs of the poor Russian population. There is the number of people who received assistance; the number of open houses of charity are exist in the article. The paper describes the creation of the Medical and Philanthropic Committee, its activities, sources of funding and effectiveness. Special attention is paid to the establishment of hospitals for the poor people – dispensaries, that provided assistance to people who have suffered an accident, the disabled, deaf and pregnant women. A list of doctors and their addresses to which the reception of poor patients was conducted. The committees (departments) of the Mercy Fund are listed, and their functions are described. The article particularly covers the structure of the Committee on education, whose tasks included the development of projects, translation of books, publication of newspapers and magazines promoting the idea of charity in Russia, maintaining relations with other Russian and foreign charity societies. Particular attention is paid to the description of the Institute of the Blind – Russia's first medical school for blind children (homeless or children from poor families), as well as the establishment of the House of Education for poor boys and orphans. The content of the curriculum, the structure of education, the amount of funding are described in the article.

**Keywords:** Charity, the Imperial Philanthropic Society, Houses of mercy, Alexander I.

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## Introduction

The government's provision of assistance to people in need in Russia begins with the adoption of Christianity, when princes were under the sound influence of religion and straightly adhered to the letters of the Bible. The works of mercy towards the sick and the poor was obligatory for the rulers of Ancient Russia, one can repetitively find in the annals the exhortations of the Old Russian princes to the next generations on the need of concern for and assistance to the poor. The beginning of the 19th century was a crucial period in the history of Russia, when the state was in dire need of opening medical institutions and orphanages: because of the Napoleonic army's attack on Russia, there were many wounded, homeless, orphans, widows, and beggars. By the beginning of the 19th century in the big cities there was not a single street wherever crowds of beggars roamed. The war in 1812, which seriously undermined the country's national economy, increased the number of them ineffably. According to police statistics, only in Moscow in the 60s there were up to 40 thousand beggars. In this regard, this period requires to be thoroughly studied, in regard to the organization of the Russian government of the aid to all categories of people in need. This paper attempts to trace the development of Russian public consciousness in early 19th century in relation to people in need. In addition, the relationship between society and government, which the paper also covers, remains traditionally relevant.

**Research Goal** is a comprehensive study of social support for adults and children in early 19th century. To achieve this goal, the following objectives were stated: 1) to identify the main categories of the population subject to charity by the government; 2) to analyze the legislation of the Russian Empire and the activities of officials in deciding on the charity of various categories of people in need; 3) to determine the features of the functioning of the Imperial philanthropic society, educational and medical institutions that are open to them and to characterize their activity.

**Theoretical and Methodological Framework.** The paper uses historical documents containing statistics data, texts of orders of the Emperor, as well as articles by modern historians dealing with this aspect.

## Formation of the Imperial Philanthropic Society and its Structure

The church had officially concerned for the poor by 1781, but in 1781 a decree according to which individuals were allowed to make donations for the construction of houses of mercy, hospitals and other types of assistance to the poor was issued. At the turn of the 18th-19th centuries, public assistance began to take shape of a certain system with its secular institutions, a special legislation regulating the activity of not only the orders of public assistance but also charities in society appeared. Expanding practices of charity leads to founding institutions of assistance to various categories of people in need: street children, disabled people, injured soldiers, the blind, the deaf, etc. Measures concerning the problems of social pathology, that is, prostitution, begging, and child neglect, are also planned. This layer of problems becomes an integral part of public assistance, which, in turn, expands the practical activity of helping and supporting for those in need.

On May 16, 1802, Emperor Alexander I ordered a special charity organization for rendering assistance to all the poor to be founded in St. Petersburg. Its rescript says: "It is necessary to look for the unfortunate in their very dwellings. To try to alleviate their fate with a kind word, treatment, salvation advice, at all costs is the true benefaction! The opportunity to do such a pious deed is proved by the experience of many enlightened nations, especially in Hamburg, where for about fifteen years, as the society of peace-loving and virtuous citizens, without any personal gain and retribution, performs, to the comfort of suffering humanity, this sacred duty to render help to your neighbor in the most valid and useful way" (Lykoshin, 1901, pp. 213-214).

The emperor appointed three members of this society, who were to unanimously choose the fourth, the four – the fifth, the five – the sixth, all the way to 17 people. They were obliged to submit to the emperor

their plan of the Society and to report on their work. The initial members of the Society were: Commerce Minister Count N.P. Rumyantsev, court counselor N.G. Shcherbakov, foreign merchant Van-der-Fleet. A. Vitovtov, a chamberlain of Alexander I, had invited five doctors to arrange medical institutions of the Society. The imperial philanthropic society put up in a special hall in the Mikhailovsky Castle, “members of the society wore a special uniform – a green tailcoat with a purple collar and a round hat” (Yegorysheva & Goncharova, 2009, p. 58). The Society adhered to the hierarchy: the Council controlled the public activities of the committees, it was forbidden to print reports, announcements or appeals for donations without its consent. All documents passed through the office of the emperor.

### **Establishment of the Medical-Philanthropic Committee and its Activities**

On May 18, 1802, by the Supreme Rescript A. A. Vitovtov was supposed to organize the Medical-Philanthropic Committee, which comprehended the ruler of the office, secretary, his assistant, and six clerical ministers. As I.V. Egorysheva and S.K. Goncharova write, “every year the sum of 100 thousand rubles was allocated from the state treasury to the society, of which a sum of 30 thousand was assigned to the medical-philanthropic committee” (Yegorysheva & Goncharova, 2016, p. 326). A sum of 5,400 rubles was annually allocated from the treasury to maintain the staff. Initially, an additional 1,500 rubles were given over and above that sum.

The society subsisted on state money and on private donation: Prince S.M. Golitsyn gave the society an estate with 1,300 serfs, capital usurer S.G. Ivanov contributed more than 500 thousand rubles. However, there was not enough money for the maintenance of society: “The Medical-philanthropic committee owes more than 26 thousand rubles to city pharmacists” (Yegorysheva & Goncharova, 2009, p. 59).

According to P.I. Lykoshin, for two years, the Medical-philanthropic committee had been engaged only in drawing up plans and proposals, which included: 1) establishment of home treatment for patients; 2) improvement of the condition of urban hospitals; 3) assistance needed for pregnant women, newborns and young children; 4) establishment of the office of the survey of caregivers; 5) rescue of the drowned; 6) distribution of vaccination; 7) improvement of prisons and houses of correction; 8) concern for welfare of the insane, etc. (Lykoshin, 1901, p. 215).

In 1816, the Medical-philanthropic committee administered three hospitals in St. Petersburg: Rozhdestvenskaya, on Vasilyevsky Island, and Eye Hospital. All reports of the Medical-philanthropic committee passed through the office of Alexander I. Well-known doctors were invited to work there: the prominent doctor of the Obukhovskoy Hospital was a distinguished adviser E.E. Ellizen, doctor of the Kalinka Hospital, stately adviser F.K. Uden (clinician and pathologist), stately adviser I.O. Timkovsky (an official of St. Petersburg physicist). Professor of the Medical-Surgical Academy, stately adviser I. Yu. Veltsin was appointed the president of the committee. In 1804, physicians who were personally acquainted with Alexander I joined the committee: general staff doctor for civil units A.A. Creighton, doctor-general for the fleet Ya. I. Leighton, Leib-medics Ya. V. Willie, K. K. Stof, I. F. Ryul, P. I. Linderstren. In addition to them, the following doctors worked in the committee: Kh. B. Bunge, F.Ya. Svenske, M. M. Bernd, I.Kh. Bode, O.O. Raineri, F.F. Serik, P.V. Usov, Ya. K. Sabatovsky, A.I. Neyman, A.A. Flegen, O. M. Statkovsky, I. I. Green, K.V. Simon and others. As I.V. Yegorysheva and S.K. Goncharova write: “Several dentists and obstetricians were hired” (2016, p. 58). According to the report for 1808, “outpatient care has been provided to 5113 poor patients, doctors have visited 2051 patients at home, 90 in-patients have been treated in the eye hospital, 84 of them - in the hospitals of the Christmas and St. Petersburg areas” (ibid). The most common diseases were: cold, fever, scurvy, febrility, rheumatism, venereal diseases.

On September 7, 1804, Alexander I issued a rescript, according to which it was ordered to establish;

- House charity for poor patients;
- Dispensaries;

- To provide respite care for casualties or disabled people;
- To start educating the deaf and dumb.

The emperor indicated in the same document that 24,000 rubles would be allocated annually. In November 1804, the Philanthropic committee appointed doctors for the poor in 11 areas of St. Petersburg (a doctor and an assistant in each part). The newspaper "St. Petersburg Gazette" notified which doctor would receive and at what address, as well as the gratuitous receipt of medical care and medicines. It was necessary to show "a documentary evidence about one's poverty from a spiritual parent or parish priest" (Supplement to the Saint-Petersburg Bulletin, 1804). It was said that doctors would visit patients at home, and those who were able to walk could visit the doctor from 8 to 10 in the morning. The table illustrates the names and addresses of the doctors, published in the Supplement to St. Petersburg Gazette №89 on Friday, November 4, 1804 (Ibid):

| City Quarters                          | Names of Doctors                 | Their Apartments   |
|--|----------------------------------|--|
| In the 1 <sup>st</sup> Adiralteiskaya  | Doctor Bode                      | At № 61 Moika Street the 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter in the house of Fokht   |
| In the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Admiralteiskaya | Physician Tsedergelm             | At № 72 New Side Street 3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter in the house of captain Saksmeir                                 |
| In the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Admiralteiskaya | Doctor Svenske                   | At № 115 Gorokhovaya Street 3d quarter in the house of merchant Larionov   |
| In the 4 <sup>th</sup> Admiralteiskaya | Headquarters Physician Usov      | In 8 <sup>th</sup> quarter in public house of Municipal Kalinkinskaya Hospital                                   |
| In Moskovskaya                         | Physician Altger                 | At № 11 Neva Avenue 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter in the house of State Councilor Dobrozhensky                         |
| In Karetnaya                           | Doctor Gingling                  | At № 10 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter in the house of merchant Timofeev  |
| In Rozhdestvenskaya                    | Headquarters Physician Ulazovsky | At № 43 Slonovaya Street 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter in the house of widow Ton                                       |
| In Liteinaya                           | Headquarters Physician Serik     | At № 299 Znamenskaya Street 4 <sup>th</sup> quarter in the house of Mashkov                                      |
| In Vyborgskaya                         | Doctor Peterson                  | At Vyborgskaya Side in Medicine and Surgery Academy  |
| In Peterburgskaya                      | Headquarters Physician Neiman    | At № 643 Pushkarevskaya Street 3d quarter  |
| In Vasilievskaya                       | Headquarters Physician Flegen    | It will be announced in the newspaper and by police before arriving by doctor Dal and doctor Flegen to the place |

#### **In 1805 the Philanthropic Society comprehended:**

- 1) "Benevolent Committee", the task of which was to establish contacts with foreign and home philanthropists;
- 2) "Scientific Committee", which was engaged in collecting and analyzing information about possible improvements in terms of charitable activities;
- 3) "Trusteeship Committee", the duties of which lied in "providing financial assistance to the truly poor and unhappy people".

It should be noted that during the regnal years of Alexander I, the Philanthropic Society had established six trusteeship committees in the cities of the Russian Empire, and by the end of the 19th century. The

company had the establishments in twenty-seven cities of Russia, spreading its assistance to 360 thousand people in need.

### **Foundation of the Institute for the Blind**

In 1807, the Institute for the blind was established, where there were brought up 15 blind children, for the maintenance of which 14,150 rubles a year were allocated, and since 1817 - 21,150 rubles. The foundation of the Institute belongs to Valentin Haüy (1743-1822) – a Frenchman from a poor family of a weaver. He received his first education in a monastery in France, later studied in Paris, spoke several foreign languages and knew how to decrypt documents. In France, he studied the methods of teaching the deaf-mute and the blind, opened the world's first educational institution for deaf-and-dumb children "Workshops of the Working Blind" in Paris in 1770.

In 1805, he sent a letter about his activities to Alexander I and asked for permission to enter Russia; the emperor became interested in the French teacher and invited V. Haüy to Russia. In September 1806, V. Haüy came to St. Petersburg, but Russian officials assured the French guest that there were no blind people in the country. V. Haüy devoted himself to the search for blind children and had found them to be in abundance, but the officials did not provide him with a schoolroom. The Frenchman rented an apartment at Bolshaya Millionnaya Street, Building 16, having taken (live-in) blind children from poor families to train them. Blind children were taught to music and church singing, reading by curved letters, blind children spared their time working: they printed educational and spiritual books and musical compositions using curved letters, performed handicraft work (wove baskets, chairs, made things from paper and cardboard, knitted, etc.). In June 1807, V. Haüy received a government building for educational purposes (an old house on the corner of Bolshoi Avenue and the 2nd line of Vasilyevsky Island) and decided to stay in Russia for the period longer than he agreed for. He founded a printing house through the Institute for the Blind. The first printed books for the blind were "The Russian Grammar in Brief", "The Gospel According to St. Matthew", "Short Catechism", "Russian Folk Tales", "Poems by G. R. Derzhavin", "Fables by I. A. Krylov". In April 1817, V. Haüy decided to leave Russia.

### **Formation of the Academic Committee**

In 1816 the Academic Committee as a part of the Imperial Philanthropic Society was organized. It dealt with various projects, inventions, book translations, edition of the magazine related to charity; was engaged in promoting the activities of the society, spreading information about it through newspapers and magazines in order to supplement the number of voluntary donations for those purposes. The committee kept in touch with other charities, both Russian and foreign.

### **Assistance to Orphaned Girls**

In February 1817, the Council decided to help orphaned girls. It was decided to place them to foster respectable homes, and to assign 10 rubles a month from the Council's fund to foster parents. The girls were taught only how to manage the household and they were not to be removed (including education) from the class to which they belonged. When a girl was fostered out, the family was allocated 100 rubles at a time, then 75 rubles annually for support for a child until it was 8 years old, 100 rubles - for children aged from 8 to 11, 125 – from 11 to 13. At the end of the payment period, the pupils were obliged to work and support themselves at the expense of the income that they received from the sale of the things (lace, embroidery, scarves, etc.) made by themselves. By 1819 in St. Petersburg, there had been 4 founding homes (families) for upbringing orphaned girls; in total, there were about 100 girls living in foster families.

### **Founding Home for Educating Poor Boys**

In September, 1817, the Council of Philanthropic Society decided to establish a founding home for upbringing poor boys, “especially orphans, and to give shelter to the elderly people and to the maimed males without distinction as to their ranks and their profession of Christianity” (1898, p. 1). The institution was initially called “the House of Education and Assistance for the Poor”, and in 1819 it was renamed as “Founding Home for Educating Poor Children”. The provision approved on November 19, 1819, stated the purpose of the educational institution: “To save helpless children from threatening idle life and corruption of manners by forming Christians from them who please God and citizens who are useful to the Fatherland” (Ibid).

The council decided to buy a stone house for the institution, the purchase was entrusted to a commission specially formed for the purpose by P.A. Galakhov (a full state councilor, member of the commission of religious schools, holder of the Order of St. Vladimir of the 2nd degree), N.N. Leontiev, A.S. Sturdza (the son of a Moldovan descendant, at the invitation of Prince A.N. Golitsyn, participated in the preparation of educational projects, programs, instructions, textbooks; the author of works on philosophy, theology and history in French). The same commission was engaged in drawing up general rules for school. The commission bought a three-storey house of ship master D.A. Massalsky (Actual State Councilor) for 100 thousand rubles in St. Petersburg at Kryukov Canal, 15. In 1818-1819, the house was reconstructed as an educational institution (by architects V.P. Stasov and K.A. Ton), an outbuilding was also attached to the house. The total amount of construction costs amounted to 105 thousand rubles. Currently, this building houses St. Petersburg secondary school № 232.

The board of the school initially included: a director, two assistants and a manager of a household. The first director was appointed State Councilor Ivan Andreyevich Petrov, assistants - an official of grade 8 P.V. Kukolnik and M.S. Piletsky-Urbanovich (a secret informant of the imperial security department, a warden of the educational and moral department of the Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum, later – the director of the Institute for the Blind, one of the followers of the sectarian E. F. Tatarinova, the author of the famous book “About Eunuchs”, forbidden in Russia). The official information about M. S. Piletsky-Urbanovich was the following: “He began his career as a sub-clerk, subsequently took the place of an auditor in the Kostroma Musketeer Regiment, and in 1812 he was appointed tutor at the newly founded Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum, from where he went to the House for Upbringing Poor Children” (The 75th Anniversary of the Gymnasium of the Imperial Philanthropic Society (Report of the Imperial Philanthropic Society), 1898, p. 3).

Director of the Founding Home of Upbringing I.A. Petrov was a nobleman, received a good education thanks to his wealthy father; he entered the civil service at the age of 12. In 1816, he was appointed Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Poor, and on April 10 – Director of the House for the education of poor children. Pedagogical views and civic position by I.A. Petrov can be judged from his manuscript “The Light of Religion and the Darkness of Reason”, which he donated to the library of the House for education.

For the first admission to the House for Educating Poor Children 100 boys aged 6-10 years of different nationalities, estates and religions were enrolled, however, priority was given to children of civilian and military Orthodox officials (this trend continued for 75 years). In February 1820, the caretakers gathered the children in the Parenting House, gave the pupils clothes and shoes and distributed them according to their age in two classes.

On March 10, 1820 in the reconstructed building at number fifteen Kryukov Canal there was hold the grand opening of the first classes of the House of Upbringing for Poor Children. On this occasion, Prince A.N. Golitsyn (Minister of Spiritual Affairs and Public Education), his Eminence Metropolitan Michael, all members of the Council of the Society got together there. In the first days of work, the teachers themselves were the assistants to the director. Since March 20, 1820, the lessons had been conducted by three outside teachers, and classes in moral education and supervision of the pupils – by assistant director M.S. Piletsky-

Urbanovich. Second Assistant Director – P.V. Kukolnik left the service in the House of Upbringing in March 1820, after which the director found it possible for one assistant to manage the House (The 75th anniversary of the gymnasium of the Imperial Philanthropic Society (The Report of the Imperial Philanthropic Society), 1898, p. 3).

The sum of 35,695 rubles 50 kopecks was allocated to maintain the house. The training was provided in two classes: Russian grammar, the first four rules of arithmetic and penmanship were taught in the lower class; the further grammar course, the courses of penmanship and arithmetic were advanced in the upper class – the second one. The very teacher of the two classes wrote the programs on the Law of God and Sacred History; ten lessons for each class were allocated for this subject. Pupils studied for 8 hours every day: the first lesson - from 8 to 10 in the morning, the second - from 10 to 12 days, the third - from 14 to 16, the fourth (homework and revision of the old material) - from 18 to 20 hours.

In the presence of the director the pupils passed “tests” – the exams on the studied topics every month, and an annual exam was held at the end of the year. Two years after the opening of the House of Education, the students of the upper class passed the final exam in the presence of the tutor of the St. Petersburg school district, D.P. Runich (the son of Senator P.S. Runich, he had close ties with famous Freemasons of Russia, accomplished their mission; he initiated the trial of several professors at St. Petersburg University whom he accused of antimonarchic sentiments).

Later, Latin, French, German, geometry, algebra to quadratic equations, a shortened course of general history and geography, and drawing were added into the program of the House of Education. In this regard, it was decided to open the third class. The sum of 12,445 rubles 64 kopecks was allocated to maintain the first class, the total costs including teachers’ salaries aggregated to 48,411 rubles 14 kopecks together. Thus, the training had comprised three classes and lasted for six years. The best graduates subsequently entered the Provincial Gymnasium, others were enrolled in the civil service or taught to various crafts. Later in 1822, they decided the boys to be trained to admit to the St. Petersburg Provincial Gymnasium, in connection with which new subjects had been introduced: reading Slavic, singing and drawing, geography and history, mathematics, Latin, German, French, Russian and Latin literature. Subjects were distributed for six years, training in each class suggested 2 years (only three classes).

Running a few steps forward, it should be said that at the end of December 1824 there was the first graduates. The examining committee included members of the Council N.A. Zinoviev and P.A. Galakhov, tutor of the St. Petersburg school district D.I. Runich, director of the House of Education, inspector of the provincial gymnasium F.I. Middendorf (the teacher and secret adviser), 3 teachers of the House of Upbringing. “Of the 44 students who went in for examinations, the 27 of them entered in the 4th grade of the gymnasium at public expense, and the 13 of them were appointed by scribes (copyists) to the public service to the Senate, the Synod, ministries and other offices” (The 75th anniversary of the gymnasium of the Imperial Philanthropic Society (Imperial Philanthropic Society), 1898, p. 5).

On September 12, in 1816 the Almshouse for the minor poor (boys) was founded to train and educate orphans or very poor parents. Here they were taught to the Law of God, the basics of reading, writing, arithmetic, on reaching the age of 12-13 years, the boys were taught to “a craft” – typography, bookbinding, engraving, tailoring. The tutors of this house contributed approximately 50 rubles to maintain every year. It is known that this house of charity was patronized by the railway department, as the children of railway workers were among the pupils. The construction of the orphanage was led by the architect of the 1st district of communications, E.A. Pirogov, the construction art was taught by the lieutenant of the Corps of Engineering Communications, A. Lishin.

## Conclusion

Therefore, for the first two decades of its existence (from 1802 to 1820), the Imperial Philanthropic Society had organized a relatively small number of houses of mercy, which were only in St. Petersburg, despite the fact that the need for such institutions throughout Russia was rather high, especially after 1812. Abundant documents confirm that huge amounts of money were regularly allocated from the state treasury for the work of the Philanthropic society; private persons also made benefactions. Later, similar charitable institutions were opened in Kazan (1816), Moscow and Voronezh (1818), Ufa (1819) and other cities.

The humanity of social relations, one of the manifestations of which is charity, which is expressed in various forms of assistance to needy members of society, is determined not only by the level of social production and its wealth, but also by the level of public consciousness and the culture of society. The aesthetic tastes of society are not only a product of social relations, but they themselves largely determine these social relations. That is why the rise of charity in Russia at the turn of the 18th-19th centuries is associated not only with the development of social productive forces and the strengthening of the material base of society, but also with the new ideas aroused in the public consciousness under the influence of European enlightenment.

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