

## Medical councils and doctors' societies in Saint Petersburg in the first half of the 19th century<sup>1</sup>

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The article discusses the history of medical management's institutionalization in Russia in the first half of the 19th century. On the basis of documents from the archives of the Medical Council of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and periodicals, the author traces the search for relevant organizational and self-organization models for Russian doctors. The views of government officials and the professional medical elite differed significantly. For government reformers, doctors were a group of officials called upon to instill social control and to provide medical assistance to the population. As such, they were treated as comparable to other similar classes of employees. At the same time, they possessed complex knowledge, which complicated the doctors' management. In this regard, the "medical mission" (later the department) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Police and the Ministry of Education were supplemented by the Medical Councils – advisory bodies consisting of "renowned doctors". Due to the concentration of highest state authorities, elite military units and higher medical schools in Saint Petersburg, the capital's doctors (mainly military surgeons and physicians in ordinary) became the administrators of the Russian medical class. German-speaking doctors, involved in public administration in their Russian service, created at the beginning of the 19th century a society of German doctors – a kind of elite professional club. A change in the ethnic composition of the medical community due to the development of medical education contributed in the 1830s to the emergence of health administrators and physicians in ordinary of Russian origin. Competition with German tutors and other social issues resulted in the creation of the Society of Russian Physicians, the goal of which was the unification of Russian doctors into a professional medical community.

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We know very little about the scientific societies and state bodies in which Petersburg doctors took part in the first half of the 19th century. As a result, we know little about those who made administrative decisions on with regard to assigning university graduates to medical

councils, military hospitals and the naval fleet to ensure sanitary and epidemiological standards in the empire, who was the medical arbitrator in court proceedings, and how the recruiting inspections and sanitation of the city was organized. As a result of this lack of knowledge, contradictions arise in contemporaries' work and in researchers' conclusions.

It is possible to find information in scientific literature about the process of ministerial reform in 1802. The 18th-century Medical College was abolished by at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the Medical Council [1] was established in its place. Medical commissions functioned in the military ministries and an Interim Medical Committee [2–8] operated

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under the aegis of the Ministry of Education in the 1840s. But neither state historians, nor historians of medicine can provide comprehensive answers about the nature and sequence of institutional changes in medical management, or about the authority, composition and interaction of these government bodies. Meanwhile, their employees developed proposals for the organization of social monitoring by doctors in the Russian Empire, managed by professional hierarchies, and special schools, and agreed on the medical criteria for evaluating medical knowledge. Consequently, they are likely to be those who turned the rather small service-class group of doctors of the 17th century [9–15] into a new and influential civil power [16–25].

Historians have not paid enough attention to the Saint Petersburg Society of German Doctors (1819–1914, 1923–1929) and to the Saint Petersburg Society of Russian Doctors (1833–1918). In the 19th century, a commemorative overview of these societies was released [26–28], but they were not even mentioned in the fundamental general monograph on the history of Russian non-governmental organizations. [29] On the subject of the Society of German Doctors (SGD), historians mainly wrote of Russian-German cultural relations, studying the work of German scientists [30–31]. Researchers of social movements and initiatives consider the N.I. Pirogov Society of Russian Doctors (1883) as the beginning of professional medical associations. Passing over the first half of the 19th century, its predecessor was called the Free Economic Society (FES, 1765–1918), which dealt with sanitation, hygiene, medical police and discussed the issues of child mortality and smallpox vaccination. Historians consider the Society for Competition in Medical and Physical Sciences at the University of Moscow (SCMPS) another forerunner. It was founded in 1804 and in 1845 was renamed the Physico-Medical Society [32].

From the point of view of their interests, it is possible to find some continuity in the service registry of their members. However, a comparison of the organization's principles, recruitment and the nature of its publications reveals more differences than similarities. FES and SCMPS were created either as enlightened clubs of government specialists, or as a structural part of a public institution (Imperial Moscow

University). Both societies emerged at the initiative of government officials and were supported by their patronage. Subsequently, they, along with medical faculties, became a platform for discussion of doctors' individual research experience and contributed to the advancement of Western knowledge in the field of Russian medicine. However, it did not make them *public* organizations.

Modern foreign literature devoted to Russian medics' post-reform movement describes them as seeing themselves as an independent social and professional force, and states that they were important for self-organization and advocated corporate goals before the state [16, 23, 33]. By studying the pre-reform period, a time of pre-medicalization in the Russian Empire, we try to determine: Were the associations of doctors that appeared at the time a model for the formation of public medicine? In other words, in studying doctors as a professional group, it is important to identify the transformation of their societies.

This interest leads this research beyond the history of public organizations and state bodies. Like many colleagues who have read the works of Michel Foucault, we consider the organization of state medicine in the Russian Empire as a form of social control. The French philosopher and his followers pointed out that under modern conditions, European governments regulated medical practice, outlawed charlatans, and collaborated with scientist physicians who possessed the authoritative, domineering and coercive language of science. Numerous publications on the social history of colonial medicine and the history of medicalization have confirmed and developed these theoretical premises. With regard to the study of Russian medicine in the first half of the 19th century, we have combined this approach with the work of sociologists on professions and methods created in the framework of the historical professionalization [34–35]. This synthesis allows us to analyze not only government interests in the field of medicine, but also doctors' ways of using their influence to modernize the state and society [36–40].

### Government councils

After the introduction in Russia of the ministerial system of state management and the abolition of the medical college, medical

affairs were divided between civil and military authorities. For dealing with these medical matters, medical expeditions headed by general staff doctors and their assistants – general staff medics – were created in August 1805 in the ministries of military ground forces and naval affairs. They consisted of not only doctors serving in the military, but also two medical-surgical academies. The medical department of the military ministry was headed by the surgeon-in-ordinary of the emperor – James Wylie, who was also president of the Medical-Surgical Academy that opened in Saint Petersburg.<sup>1</sup> On his initiative, medical inspectors were introduced for the army, navy and guard, which removed military doctors from under the control of collegial medical councils and removed their dependence on local authorities.<sup>2</sup>

The medical faculties for the newly established universities and obstetrics institute were transferred to the Ministry of Education and the Main School Board that was set up within it. The responsibilities of the Medical Board and the public charity orders were transferred to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, one of the three structures that received the title of Expedition of the State Medical Council, which was abbreviated to the Medical Expedition). A “medical council” of doctors “with excellent knowledge and general management”<sup>3</sup> was created in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, “for the business of improving the medical sphere and other related items.” Among them may have been doctors who lived in Saint Petersburg, as well as non-Petersburg specialists who participated in the work of the council in absentia. The latter,

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<sup>1</sup> James Wylie, known in Russia as Yakov V. Villie (1768–1854), was a military doctor, surgeon, president of the Saint Petersburg Medical-Surgical Academy (1808–1838), director of the medical department of the military ministry, surgeon-in-ordinary for Pavel I, Alexander I and Nicholas I. From 1806 he was the chief army medical inspector. He was the publisher of Russia’s first medical journal, *The Universal Journal of Medicine* (1811), and the *Military Medical Journal* (1823). Wylie was the initiator of a number of projects to modernize the governance of the Russian medicine. His projects to streamline the work of military hospitals and infirmaries, and clarification of regimental and battalion doctors’ duties, received worldwide recognition.

<sup>2</sup> Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire [First Collection] (CCL–1). No. 17,743.

<sup>3</sup> CCL–1 No. 21,105. P. 1102.

being on “state call” in Saint Petersburg, could attend the council meetings. Apart from them, those who could anticipate an invitation were “correspondents,” i.e. those who were scattered across the empire’s expanses – physicians who could participate in the discussions but could not vote. The council had a scientific secretary and two translators.

Board members elected a “dean” for three years.<sup>4</sup> The manager of the medical expedition attended the council meeting, but could not intervene in its running, influence its decisions or participate in its voting.<sup>5</sup> Almost all the officials of the abolished board (Dr. G.V. Ash, Professor G.I. Bazilevich, surgeons N.K. Karpinsky and Ya.O. Sapolovich, Dr. I.G. Ellizen, staff medics S.S. Andrievsky, I.I. Vien and I.K. Kamenetsky) joined the Medical Council of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (with the exception of G.I. Bazilevich who died in 1802, and the director of a medical instrument factory Ya.O. Sapolovich).

The advisory body’s jurisdiction included evaluating the research works of Russian physicians, reviewing them (an “analysis”), the popularization of medical discoveries and knowledge through journals and periodicals in Russian, judging difficult medical practice cases and awarding accolades and academic titles.<sup>6</sup> In practice, the council’s responsibilities were much wider: they were constantly expanded at the request of the minister. For example, in 1808 the advisers needed to create a table of medical and topographical information, which was supposed to be distributed to county and city doctors.<sup>7</sup> At each meeting, the scientific secretary made a report on current issues and each member of the council “presented their remarks for consideration.” Then there was a collective discussion.

When the council was founded, its members proposed Kochubey for the candidacy and further suggested that advisers co-opt reputable colleagues themselves. Professor F.K. Uden

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<sup>4</sup> The first deans of the Medical Council were former members of the Medical College – Dr. G.V. Ash (1805–1807) and E.K. Valerian (1809–1810).

<sup>5</sup> CCL–1 No. 21,105. P. 1111.

<sup>6</sup> CCL–1 No. 21,105. P. 1112.

<sup>7</sup> Russian State History Archive (RSHA). F. 1294. Op. 1 (XXXXIX). D. 33. P. 1-1 ob.

served as scientific secretary from 1802 until his death in 1823.<sup>8</sup>

During all these years his assistant was Dr. F. Ya. Svenke. The meetings were attended by the president of the Saint Petersburg Medical-Surgical Academy, as well as former members of the Medical Board: Dr. Vien<sup>9</sup>, Ash and F.T. Tikhorsky,<sup>10</sup> hospital doctors and surgical teachers G.P. Oreus<sup>11</sup> and Valerian.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Fyodor (Friedrich) Karlovich Uden (1754–1823) was a professor of pathology and therapy at the Saint Petersburg Medical-Surgical Academy. From 1792 to 1794, he published the first private medical periodical in Russia – Saint Petersburg Medical Vedomosti. Altogether 52 issues of the newspaper were produced. From 1799, Uden was an honorary member of the medical board and knew its activities well, and so he moved to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, together with the board.

<sup>9</sup> Ivan Ivanovich Vien (1747–1809) was the author of a textbook on anatomy for students of the Academy of Arts, and was renowned for his book "Dissertation on the Impact of Anatomy on Sculpture and Painting" (Saint Petersburg, 1789), which was as subsequently amended and reissued. He served as scientific secretary and honorary member of the medical board and participated in the fight against the plague in Ukraine. His experience in the treatment and autopsy of plague victims was summarized in the book "Loimology, or a Description of the Pestilence, its Essence, Incidence, Reasons for Trauma, and the Production of Seizures, With an Indication for a Form of Protection and Healing of This Affliction" (1786). He recommended vaccinations for combating the epidemic. He engaged artists to illustrate medical treatises.

<sup>10</sup> Foma Trofimovich Tikhorsky (1733–1814) was a doctor of medicine, hospital physician and member of the St. Petersburg Medical-Surgical Academy. He defended his thesis in Leiden. From 1779 to 1799, he was a member of the Medical Board. He retired in 1806.

<sup>11</sup> Gustav Maksimovich Oreus (1738–1811). He was a student at the university in Abo and at hospital schools. In 1769, he served as a general staff doctor in the second Russian army. In 1775, he was appointed city physician of Moscow. In 1782, he was elected a member of the Free Economic Society and Moscow Botanical Society. An operator (surgeon) at the Saint Petersburg Admiralty Hospital. In 1806, after retiring, Tikhorsky became a member of the Medical Council. From 1808, he was an indispensable member of the Saint Petersburg Medical-Surgical Academy.

<sup>12</sup> Egor Karpovich Valerian was a graduate of the Saint Petersburg Hospital School. In 1764, he defended his thesis in Königsberg. He was chief medical officer of the Orenburg field hospital, then the chief doctor of the Kronstadt and Saint Petersburg Admiralty Hospital in Saint Petersburg. He was the medical inspector of Saint Petersburg port and taught anatomy and surgery in hospital schools.

The situation changed in the early 1810s, amid rapidly expanding reforms. Then, the Ministry of Internal Affairs lost influence, while the newly appointed minister of education, A.K. Razumovsky, strengthened his political position, and another strong player appeared – the head of the newly established Ministry of the Police A.D. Balashov. In this situation, a departmental redistribution of powers began. Whole subdivisions started to be separated off from the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

According to a decree of August 17, 1810, the Medical Council was transferred to the Ministry of Education.<sup>13</sup> By this time it had fewer members and was passive: experienced administrators and academics had left due to old age (Vien, Tikhorsky, Ash). Razumovsky entrusted Uden with formulating new responsibilities for the councilors, based on the interests of the Ministry of Education. The scientific secretary directed the council to focus on the evaluation of medical works, likening it to the Main School Board. It was assumed that the councilors would examine: "1. All surveillance of admitted and continuing to be engaged doctors; 2. Reports of diseases that are epidemic or contagious and others; 3. As with the same diseases of cattle; 4. Testing of mineral waters; 5. Testing of victuals and drinks on sale; 6. Instructions and general dictates on the medical sections from 1809; 7. Papers on produce examinations; 8. Study of court medical reports with comments; 9. Triannual or annual lists of hospitals; 10. Mortality lists; 11. Lists of cowpox vaccinations; 12. Notice of all three sections."<sup>14</sup> Counsellors were instructed to approve university degrees, issue licenses for medical practice, recommend foreign experts to the government, and carry out censorship of medical books [4, p. 3]. Some of these powers duplicated the role of the police service, but in practice the Medical Council's greatly reduced efficacy was not enough.

Management of the medical board was transferred to the Ministry of Police. Taking on the third section of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Balashov renamed it his ministry's "Medical Department."<sup>15</sup> The minister decided to

<sup>13</sup> CCL–1 No. 24,326. P. 326.

<sup>14</sup> RSHA. F. 1294. Op. 1. Sv. 52. D. 64. P. 5.

<sup>15</sup> CCL–1 No. 24,686. P. 719.

set up in his administration something resembling the Ministry of Education's Medical Council, but the council consisted of fewer scientists and more administrators (director of the medical department, general staff doctors from military, naval and civil sections, two "eminent doctors" and a pharmacist). Council members were not employees of the police ministry. They were invited to meetings only in certain important cases.<sup>16</sup> As in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the council had a scientific secretary, translators (for foreign doctors) and clerks. Decisions were taken by vote. If the chairman of the department had no medical training, he could not vote.

The functions and appointment of the Ministry of Police's Medical Council differed from its predecessor in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and its counterpart in the Ministry of Education. The police council dealt with requests for pharmaceutical materials and instruments, investigative materials and conclusions of court medics, works on medical topography, educational writings, "instructions for health officials about the uniform treatment of common diseases peculiar to the climate", "the publication of the *Experimental Medicine* journal" and the analysis of mineral water composition.<sup>17</sup> Based on this list, Ministry of Police's medical board was conceived as an advisory and supervisory authority that provided management of the "medical estate" and the production of medicinal raw materials.

When, in 1817, the general staff doctor for the civil section gave a report to the government on the state of health management, he was critical of the current system: "The scientific section is separated from the administration; facilities for medical education, the testing of them and of pharmaceutical officials, as well as the production of scientists, is now dependent on the Ministry of Education. Military doctors, serving in the army and navy, military hospitals and pharmacies are subject to other leadership."<sup>18</sup>

In 1819, in connection with the abolition of the Ministry of Police, all medical affairs were returned to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The decree did not contain any clarifications or changes to the role of the Medical Council.

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<sup>16</sup> CCL-1 No. 24, 686. P. 722.

<sup>17</sup> CCL-1 No. 24, 686. P. 722.

<sup>18</sup> RSHA. F. 1294. Op. 3. D. 7. P. 2. ob.

However, the Medical Council functions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education and were narrowed to the management of medical academies and the midwives institute.

On May 30, 1822, after the division of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education into the General Directorate of Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions and the Ministry of Education, the Medical Council and its subordinate institutions were also placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.<sup>19</sup> The two medical councils merged into one. It became better staffed and authoritative: it consisted of a president, 12 active members and a large number of honorary members. After the death of Scientific Secretary Uden (1823), S.F. Gaevsky took over the post.<sup>20</sup> However, this did not improve the situation in "the medical section." Civilian doctors suffered not only due to small salaries and difficult working conditions, but also from a lack of professional autonomy, being dependent on local officials.

Since the new emperor's government developed a new concept of authority in all areas via "secret committees," in relation to medicine it was decided to create a "special temporary committee to reform civilian medical management."<sup>21</sup> In May 1828, it included the chief physician of the artillery hospital, a participant of the 1812 war, P.T. Kanelsky, the chief doctor of the Court Hospital Kh. Vitt, the vice president of the Saint Petersburg Military Medical Academy, Medical Council member S.A. Gromov<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> CCL-1 No. 29 057.

<sup>20</sup> Semyon Fedorovich Gaevsky (1778–1862) was a doctor of medicine and surgery. He defended his thesis at the University of Vienna. From 1807, he was a professor of therapy at the Saint Petersburg Medical-Surgical Academy. From 1811–1832, he was scientific secretary of the Medical Council at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, from 1819–1833, he was medic-in-ordinary, and in 1831 he was the general staff doctor for the civil section, from 1837–1842, he was director of the Medical Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and in 1843 – a permanent member of the Military Medical Scientific Committee.

<sup>21</sup> RSHA. F. 1294. Op. 5. D. 194. P. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Sergey Gromov (1774–1856) was the author of the first Russian textbook on forensic medicine, a graduate and professor of the Saint Petersburg Military Medical Academy. In 1819, he was elected its academic, and in 1834 – professor emeritus. He was elected vice-president of the Saint Petersburg Military Medical Academy, he was a member of the Medical Council and a member of the publishing committee for the *Universal Journal of Medical Science*.

Professor Gruba and a professor from the same academy, A.P. Nelyubin,<sup>23</sup> head of the second division of the medical department of the Ministry of Military, pharmacist S.I. Shvenson<sup>24</sup> and the head of the office of the medical department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Felkner.

Later Wylie asked Nicholas I to include two more experienced medical managers on the committee, to make it more efficient and accelerate the development of reform. After that, the vice-director of the medical department of the Ministry of the Military, Y.K. Kaidanov,<sup>25</sup> and the assistant general staff doctor for the fleet, A.I. Hassing, joined the committee.<sup>26</sup> Wylie supervised the work of the committee<sup>27</sup> and Kaidanov supervised in his absence.<sup>28</sup>

One of the committee's first meetings was to consider draft rules for the training of medical officials, which Wylie had prepared in 1810. The current state of Russian medicine was considered to be disorganized. Management was divided among the four ministries and came down to taking care of paperwork, staff and salaries. Each ministry had medical issues within its authority, was responsible for its "class" of patients – students or civilians, ground or naval troops. Departmental fragmentation made it impossible to effectively fight epidemics and to quickly

resolve issues concerning the preservation of the life and of the health of the population.

The situation for civilian doctors was worse than that of the military doctors. The provincial heads constantly exerted pressure on them to address issues without appropriate competence.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, the specific organizational nature of the medical profession, according to Wylie, was that "the carrying out of tasks that were the doctor's responsibility were not a matter for one person, but perhaps for only a few people in medical science with experience and knowledge."<sup>30</sup> It would seem that the first medical elite formulated the supra-departmental interests of their profession. This allowed for special criteria in assessing medical practice and a number of privileges for certain categories of doctors to be recognized by the government.<sup>31</sup> It seems that successful cooperation in the secret committee inspired military medics in Petersburg to take on new initiatives and created the desire for self-organization.

In 1834, the Military Medical Committee was established at the army's General Headquarters. At the opening of its first meeting, the army's chief medic, R.S. Chetyrkin, defined its purpose as follows: "To focus the experience... of many into one whole, so that practical guidance by private medical authorities, reported to young doctors, is made satisfactory and more general, and to finally collect the materials for the preparation over time of a complete military medicine in Russia."<sup>32</sup> There was a clear awareness of the need to bring together Russian doctors' knowledge, however the professional elite doubted the possibility of self-government. R.S. Chetyrkin repeatedly stressed that the Russian medical community ("Russian medicine"), was young and inexperienced, and therefore needed experienced government leadership. "Like young people, whose members have not become completely entrenched in power, we remain mere spectators to this battle of minds; and managed by a wise government, not allowing any innovation without

<sup>23</sup> Alexander Petrovich Nelyubin (1785–1858) was professor of pharmacology at the Saint Petersburg Medical and Surgical Academy. The author of a fundamental work in pharmacology (1827), on the government's orders, he explored the Caucasus, and the Polustrovsky and Starorussky mineral springs. From 1831 to 1841, he was the scientific secretary of the Medical Council, from 1831 to 1837 – deputy director of the Medical Department. From 1830 to 1832 he was involved in the fight against the cholera epidemic in Saint Petersburg.

<sup>24</sup> Samuil Ivanovich Shvenson. From 1830 to 1831, he served as vice-director of the medical department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

<sup>25</sup> Yakov Kuzmich Koidanov (Kaidanov) (1779–1855) was professor of epidemiology at the Saint Petersburg Medical Surgical Academy and a supporter of the theory of evolution. In 1828, he was appointed vice-director of the medical department of the Ministry of the Military and a member of the Medical Council of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Ivanovich (Karl Ewald Alexander) Hassing (1778–1844) was a doctor of medicine and surgery, from 1806, he carried out the duties of the general staff medic for the fleet, and from 1829 – general staff doctor for the fleet.

<sup>27</sup> Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire [Second Collection] (CCL–2). No. 2073. P. 601.

<sup>28</sup> RSHA. F. 1294. Op. 5. D. 194. P. 43, 46 ob.

<sup>29</sup> RSHA. F. 1294. Op. 5. D. 194. P. 98. ob.

<sup>30</sup> RSHA. F. 1294. Op. 5. D. 194. P. 97. ob.

<sup>31</sup> CCL–2 No. 2442. P. 1008; CCL–2. No. 3016. P. 519; CCL–2. No. 3694; CCL–2. No. 7118. P. 397–401; CCL–2. No. 7693. P. 2 RSHA F. 1294. Op. 5. D. 194. P. 98. ob. RSHA 86.

<sup>32</sup> Friend of Health. 1834. P. 316.

experienced authorization in its favor, preserving the spirit of moderation and prudent caution.”<sup>33</sup> It was assumed that the “wise” and “enlightened” government was capable of verifying medical theories and therapeutic experiments.

According to Count L.A. Perovsky, who was appointed minister of internal affairs, the management of medicine was unsatisfactory. (1842) He convinced senators that the Medical Board did not correspond to its public status and that it needed to be reformed. He saw the new council as “the highest state medical-academic, medical-legal and medical-police community.” It was supposed to be created from “1. Governmental or permanent members of medical management, appointed by the main departments; 2. Scientific or advisory members, elected to the council due to their personal dignity, experience and knowledge and will review all council affairs with an independent scientific point of view.”<sup>34</sup> The minister wanted all medicine-related laws and executive orders to be examined by the council, which would also have to approve the “status of scientific-medical societies.” The decree abolished the right of the council to bestow higher degrees to doctors without academic tests.<sup>35</sup>

The decree also abolished the rank of full members; only permanent and advisory members remained. In addition to them, the council was to have a medical inspector from the supervisory council and the board of trustees and a medical officer from the Ministry of Education. All council members had an equal vote. Each year they had to produce reports on specific areas of medicine.

The academic secretary was chosen from among the council’s advisory members, and was to receive compensation. “The chairman of the council shall be a representative of the whole of medical science,” said Perovsky. “and provide the government with a surety that all the conclusions of the council will be answerable to the rules of science and the state’s needs.”<sup>36</sup> In this regard, he should be elected from among physicians.

At the same time, on the initiative of S.S. Uvarov at the Ministry of Education,

the Interim Medical Committee was created (1841), which consisted of Saint Petersburg doctors M.A. Marcus (chairman), E.I. Rauch, I.T. Spassky, K.K. Seidlitz and N.I. Pirogov. The committee was created as an “expert body under the auspices of the Minister of Education to assess the individual proposals of university councils” [8, p. 22]. However, in March 1841, it became an “authorized intellectual main office for higher medical education reform, to engage in an initiative to develop the ideological foundations and regulatory framework for reform” [8, p. 22].

In 1842, the committee members, headed by Professor Seidlitz, developed the Faculty of Medicine section of the statute for St. Vladimir University. This example becomes a template for the development of the “Further provisions for the medical faculty of Moscow University,” introduced in 1845. In addition, the committee developed new rules for the certification of health officials.

Apparently, the Doctors Committee took on expert functions that set it apart from the former Advisory Council [8]. This was evident in members’ initiatives. Using the minister’s request concerning the fate of the Moscow Medical Surgical Academy, the committee announced its intention to review the foundation of all medical education in Russia. Thus, invited “into power”, the professionals took the task of organizing medical schools into their own hands.

### Doctors’ societies

Having been autonomous from state structures for a long time, a union representing Russian doctors was not so much impossible as it was unnecessary. “Where can medical subjects be found hidden in Russian literature – subjects concerning life and human health,” asked the publisher of the first private medical newspaper, pediatrician K.I. Grum-Grzhimailo “Our medical literature is like an orphan. Only the government genuinely cares about it. The medical class – on this occasion we can only say: Woe to anyone who tries to sacrifice health and wealth for our medical literature! All responses are a voice crying in the wilderness!”<sup>37</sup> Medics, burdened with concerns and official duties, did not seem to have the energy or time to discuss

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<sup>33</sup> Friend of Health. 1834. P. 316.

<sup>34</sup> CCL–2 No. 15, 202. P. 9.

<sup>35</sup> CCL–2 No. 15, 202. P. 9.

<sup>36</sup> CCL–2 No. 15, 202.

<sup>37</sup> Friend of Health. 1834. P. 44.

their own situation. Meanwhile, the scientific doctors who gathered in the capital wanted to build a professional community, similar to what they had seen among their English, French or German counterparts.

A general newspaper could unify doctors scattered over the vast territory of the empire – a publication that was interesting for fans of medicine, as well as young and experienced physicians; a publication for which any interested individual could write and which any interested individual could read. Publishing it from scratch was not easy, but Grum-Grzhimailo, who took up the task, had the support of the teachers of the Saint Petersburg Medical-Surgical Academy and members of government councils.

Academic teachers were constantly in contact with regimental and field doctors, received information from them on epidemic outbreaks, on the number of patients and fatalities, on the medical topographical features of where they served, and became acquainted with them during examinations and discussions of dissertation research submitted in order to receive academic titles [38]. Such close contact with colleagues across the country prompted professors to consider isolation and separation as a negative phenomenon.

Judging by some of the statements made, in the 1830s representatives of the medical community would have liked to have had contact with their metropolitan and scientific colleagues. After attending a meeting of the Society of Russian Doctors, Ivanchenko, a provincial medical board inspector, wrote in a letter to Grum-Grzhimailo: “Much time is still needed to reconcile the mood of doctors in provincial cities, although the latter stood at such a beneficial altar, erected to the glory of domestic medicine.”<sup>38</sup> Medical faculty graduates considered themselves representatives of “Russian medicine” not so much because of the privileges of service, but rather as a result of opposition to ignorant people, unlicensed healers and in some cases local authorities. This realization of these differences gave rise to an “enunciated” and “prescribed” sense of professional solidarity.

A practical example for unification and advocacy of Russian doctors’ interests was provided by German doctors’ organizations and

publications. Der Deutsche aerztliche Verein<sup>39</sup> was active from the beginning of the century in Saint Petersburg (1817), Moscow and Riga (1823). In 1819, the Saint Petersburg Society of German Doctors (SGD) consisted of 11 people, in the 1830s it grew to 19 people, and by the mid-century there were 25 influential doctors who had arrived from German principalities and the Baltic Sea region to serve in Russia [42]. During its 50th anniversary (1869) the society’s members jokingly referred to themselves as the “House of Peers.” Only the death of one of its members provided the opportunity for a new doctor to join the society. The Berlin Medical Historical Society (Medizin-Histoschen Gesellschaft zu Berlin), founded in 1810, served as a role model.

The almost aristocratic position and high income of the society’s members lent material support to the society. Every doctor provided the society’s coffers with rather large joining and annual fees, which provided for the possibility to publish materials and support colleagues’ work interests. The SGD director in Saint Petersburg was the founder of a surgical school, doctor of medicine and surgery, professor at Saint Petersburg Medical-Surgical Academy, I. F. Bush. Some of his students joined the society (professors Kh.Kh. Solomon and Zeidlitz, doctors Arendt and Volf), as well as eye clinic director Lerkhe. The members met every two weeks from September to May in order to exchange information in private about recent world discoveries in specializations, useful information about the mood of the court and to share experiences (the results of operations and clinical observations). The charter spoke of peer meetings without formalities and constraints.

The SGD did not have its own periodical because its members did not set themselves the task to popularize their knowledge among Russian doctors. Their works were published in the form of low-circulation scientific journals in German under the title “Mixed essays from the field of medicine” (“Vermischte Abhandlungen aus dem Gebiete der Heilkunde”). The SGD’s annual reports were published in German medical journals, as it was concerned about scientific reputation and the competitiveness of its members in medicine worldwide. For example, its 15th report was published in 1834

<sup>38</sup> Friend of Health. 1834. P. 353.

<sup>39</sup> The German doctor’s society.



in Hufeland's magazine. This was how Russian scientific doctors called the *Journal der practischen Arzeikunde und Wundarz* (Journal of Practical Medicine), published since 1775 by University of Berlin professor and renowned physician and writer C.W. Hufeland (1762–1836).

Founded in September 1833 in Saint Petersburg, the Society of Russian Doctors (SRD) was not taken seriously by its influential German colleagues at first. Its establishment was initiated by court medic E.I. Andreevsky and physician-in-ordinary S.F. Volsky.<sup>40</sup> He recalled: "I have undertaken the intention to found the Society of Russian Doctors, foreigners who are in Russian service, and many local doctors, especially Baronet Y.V. Wylie, watched with an unfavorable attitude to such an extent that the military doctors, so as not to lose their service, left the society; and Dr. Nagumovich<sup>41</sup> and physician-in-ordinary Mandt<sup>42</sup> abandoned in writing their promise to participate in the founding of the society" [41, p. 70]. It was not, of course, about ethnic contradictions, but about professional competition in gaining knowledge, experience and professional advancement for Russian medical school graduates.

In 1833, E.I. Andreevsky<sup>43</sup> was elected as first chairman of the SRD and A.N. Nikishin<sup>44</sup> was elected its secretary. In government circles, general-staff for the civil section and president of Ministry of Internal Affairs' Medical Department S.F. Gaevsky was the society's promoter.

<sup>40</sup> Semyon Fedorovich Volsky (?–1849) was physician-in-ordinary for the emperor and the president of the Society of Russian Doctors.

<sup>41</sup> Semyon Fedorovich Volsky (?–1849) was physician-in-ordinary for the emperor and the president of the Society of Russian Doctors.

<sup>42</sup> We are referring to the physician-in-ordinary and consultant to Nicholas I, M.V. von Mandt (1800–1858) – a person with a higher court medical title, professor of Saint Petersburg Medical-Surgical Academy.

<sup>43</sup> Efim Ivanovich Andreevsky (1788–1840) was a graduate of the Saint Petersburg Medical-Surgical Academy, from 1819 he was court physician and from 1837 he was a doctor of medicine and surgery, an honorary member of the Medical Council of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and doctor at the department and headquarters of the General Staff.

<sup>44</sup> At the time, Nikishin held the title of head doctor and the rank of court counselor. He was a corresponding member of the St. Petersburg Medical-Surgical Academy and is known for his scientific publications.

The first members of the SRD were surgeon-in-ordinary and chief doctor of the Artillery Hospital D.K. Tarasov, who in 1836 became the director of the military medical department, and I.T. Spassky – professor of the faculty of zoology and mineralogy at the Saint Petersburg Medical Surgical Academy.

In connection with the founding of the SRD, Grum-Grzhimailo wrote in the newspaper *Friend of Health*: "So, in Saint Petersburg, there are now two medical societies: one long-standing, consisting of German doctors, and another new one – consisting of Russian doctors!"<sup>45</sup> At that time, both societies were special elitist islands of knowledge and professionalism. Due to various reasons both were esoteric (one as a result of its own wishes and the other out of necessity). As in SCMPs' own time, the SGD positioned itself as a professional club, a community of the empire's senior medical officers, and the SRD was an exponent of the Russian Empire's medical class, a mouthpiece for the interests of Russian medicine. As such, the SRD painfully endured isolation and tried to overcome it. Its secretary, E.A. Smelsky, said as follows: "Only by the united work of our members and with constant diligence will our society deserve due appreciation and respect by our countrymen, especially since it is *not based on personal relations between members themselves*, but on one universal desire for study and research of medicine, as science is closely related to public welfare."<sup>46</sup>

Grum-Grzhimailo noted that many of the thousands of Russian "doctors, scattered over this most vast empire in the world ... do not know about these societies, and furthermore, most do not use aforesaid scientists' works."<sup>47</sup> His opinion is confirmed by a letter from provincial doctors, which reported that it was difficult to obtain professional literature and that there were no provisions for the exchange of experience and advice. These same difficulties were mentioned in a petition for examinations ("testing") to obtain a scientific degree. In these appeals there are descriptions of the empire's medical service conditions [39]. Having been sent out to service,

<sup>45</sup> *Friend of Health*. 1834. P. 324.

<sup>46</sup> *Journal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs* Ch. 1838. Ch. XXIX. No. 9. P. 375.

<sup>47</sup> *Friend of Health*. 1834. P. 324.

university graduates complained to professors that it was impossible to engage in science, read and write, to finish the dissertation research that they had started at university.

The SRD, having not been created on the initiative of a nobleman, cultivated the exchange of experience, knowledge and advocated the revision of Western medical theories. Speaking of SRD's work in the *Friend of Health* in 1834, Grum-Grzhimailo said: "Members offered for general discussion descriptions of diseases, the use of medicines, new essays, new discoveries, unusual events and more. How often, silently following a subject passed by word of mouth, do I notice that from new questions are born new ideas, new opinions ...If I misunderstand, if I doubt, then I propose questions and immediately cumulative experience and learning to answer me."<sup>48</sup>

The society did not announce its political position. Moreover, its members confirmed their selfless connection with their own enlightened government. The *Friend of Health's* publisher explained to its readers, "The form of the society's decisions is not what unites us, but a strong sense of gratitude to the government and noble competition in scientific sessions for the benefit of suffering humanity. We also sincerely want to be helpful to our fellow physicians."<sup>49</sup> With all these assurances there was a belief in enlightened power, with which it was necessary to cooperate so that the life of the empire could be improved.

To this end, members of the medical community, who had begun to consider themselves spokesmen for national interests, responsible not only for patients but also for the country as a whole, needed a generally comprehensible Russian language, at least within the educated stratum, for the discussion of the social problems of the empire. In connection with this, one step taken by the SRD was to compile a dictionary of medical terms. This required the revision of all the "scientific language" used in Russian medicine. As a result of being translated into Russian, semantic conventions were supposed to be entered into a medical dictionary with an explanation of the Greek and Latin terms and concepts from natural history. It was assumed

that its creation would become a common cause for the entire professional community.

The SRD secretary Nikitin wrote: "With Russian having many original medical works and translations, in reading them difficulties are encountered in terms of names and terms, which entered into medical science from time immemorial. A special dictionary should help in this instance. Going through all the items of Russian medical literature, we find two incomplete dictionaries (1785 and 1788) that are insufficient in our time."<sup>50</sup> The SRD members admitted, having studied the available literature in Russian and received expert advice from the Medical Surgical Academy, that they realized the paucity of Russian terminology. Only with several specializations can it be considered satisfactory (anatomy, physiology – thanks to academic P.A. Zagorsky, surgery – thanks to the efforts of I.F. Bush, and botany due to the efforts of professors Y.V. Petrov and I.I. Martynov).

Subsequently, the dictionary had become canonical for its description and discussion of medical problems among physicians and in communicating with officials.

Despite the hardships and isolation of the early years, the efforts of the SRD's members to expand its influence and attract the maximum number of doctors into the orbit of its interests were successful. In the space of 10 years, the SRD had become wide-scale. Even members of the SGD became honorary members, including Professor Bush. In 1843, the SRD elected not only its president, but also its vice-president. E.A. Smelsky, a Page Corps senior doctor, doctor of medicine and surgery, state councilor (in the same year he became active state councilor), was chosen as president. He was a member of the Military Medical Scientific Committee. The SRD members paid admission and annual fees, which allowed them to communicate with colleagues throughout the empire. At The SRD meetings, scientific reports and reviews of recent literature were heard. "Natural" (childhood memories from different social environments and local communities) and "acquired" (at university, during internships and at work) knowledge was offered to improve lives and preserve the empire's population. Grum-Grzhimailo wrote, "So these things will serve as

<sup>48</sup> *Friend of Health*. 1834. P. 354.

<sup>49</sup> *50 Friend of Health*. 1834. P. 355.

<sup>50</sup> *Friend of Health*. 1834. P. 371.

a means [for doctors], before the monarch and the Fatherland, to report on their activities and achievements, and to discover their zeal for the common good, and appreciatively repay what they owe the government.”<sup>51</sup> Literary activity was considered by the medical community as a way to assist the public authorities. Grum-Grzhimailo referred to British doctors’ experience. “Just think that in this vast empire, where a good education is taking gigantic strides towards excellence, where there are several thousand doctors bestowed with benefits provided by the government, there are only two medical periodicals.”<sup>52</sup>

Apparently, the authorities appreciated the loyalty of the higher professional medical circles. Thus, the private newspaper *Friend of Health* received government funding. In the early 1850s, the newspaper not only had a publisher, but also an editorial staff: an executive editor and special staff for producing thematic sections. The publication was no longer aimed at the general reader, but addressed its publications to a professional audience. Grum-Grzhimailo wrote: “The medical newspaper, entering the 20th year of its existence, and its second year under the management of the new editorial team, considers its first duty to testify its gratitude to all the gentlemen Russian doctors whose constant participation maintain and improve the only weekly medical publication.”<sup>53</sup>

During these years it was considered that the purpose of medical publications was not how to acquire Western knowledge and techniques, but to “contribute to the spread of mainly domestic scientific medical work.”<sup>54</sup> Apparently, one of the main objectives of the newspaper and the SRD was promoting the achievements of Russian medical science. In the mid-1830s, the further development of national science was associated with liberation from the cultural hegemony of the West. Grum-Grzhimailo urged his colleagues to “be filled with national dignity” and stop “slavishly submitting their works to the judgment of foreign reprisals and reverently accepting the arrogant reviews of the foreign Aristarkhov.”<sup>55</sup>

After 20 years, during the 1850s, the classics of Western medicine no longer served as the benchmark for the professional elite of Russian medicine. Grum-Grzhimailo wrote about the short scientific genealogy of Russian medicine as its advantage. The lack of a contradictory past allowed Russian medics to take an expert position. Grum-Grzhimailo wrote: “Using all the already prepared data, [we] sort and select from them the more positive, and act, therefore, eclectic-critically and are not carried away by any systems or personalities, nor conceited obstinacy, which is so harmful in its consequences. The direction that this takes our medicine is casuistic, that is, based on an assessment of the positive clinical experiences and observations, with all the possible benefits delivered by the natural sciences.”<sup>56</sup>

In this interpretation, the West is presented as a type of intellectual raw materials resource for Russia. The life of Russian medicine was seen by its creators as a kind of chemical laboratory, where “in the hands of the individual, educated clinicians, any case passes through the filter of the scientific fabric, leaving behind all its dirty old scholastic dust, and finding its way into the already prepared assay vessels where it is processed and tested with all possible reagents.”<sup>57</sup> This metaphor freed Russian medics from a replication complex.

### Conclusion

Publications in the newspaper *Friend of Health*, as well as the assertions of the SRD members, do not allow us to speak of Russian doctors’ strong self-identity as social or scientific figures or national experts. For many provincial doctors, the mood of professors and the capital’s publishers was exotic. The problem of access to professional knowledge and physical survival in difficult work conditions remained an urgent one. Nevertheless, the activities of the SRD and the publication of the *Friend of Health* newspaper pointed to movement by the medical community towards social interests and national ideology of medicine. The society and its publications may be regarded as a prototype of professional associations of this kind. In any case, they advocated the need for professional solidarity among Russian doctors.

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<sup>51</sup> *Friend of Health*. 1833. No. 3. P. 18.

<sup>52</sup> *Friend of Health*. 1834. P. 396.

<sup>53</sup> *Friend of Health*. 1852. No. 1. P. 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Friend of Health*. 1852. No. 1. P. 1.

<sup>55</sup> *Friend of Health*. 1835. No. 2. P. 11.

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<sup>56</sup> *Friend of Health*. 1852. No. 1. P. 1.

<sup>57</sup> *Friend of Health*. 1852. No. 1. P. 1.

The Russian medical community' identity that formed in the period that has been analyzed, autonomous from the government and with its own professional interests, first appeared in the texts of the 1850s. In these texts, doctors talked about themselves in the name of "the medical class, scattered over the vast space of Russia,"<sup>58</sup> while the government continued to treat them as "medical bureaucrats" or "health officials."<sup>59</sup>

Thus, the transformation of the medical class took place in Russia under conditions of laborious public service. Unlike in many Western countries, doctors in private practice in the Russian Empire lacked the authority and political influence required to play the role of experts. Organizing hospital services, military doctors had more experience in administration than those subordinated to provincial administration districts and provincial doctors. Perhaps that is why the heads of maritime and military hospitals were often government advisors.

Due to the fact that foreign doctors were recruited for Russian service in the 18th and in the first quarter of the 19th century, during the reign of Alexander I there was parity between German-speaking doctors and Russian-speaking doctors on the medical boards of civil ministries. The military medical committees were dominated by foreigners. Using the experience of their colleagues in Germany, the German-speaking professional elite of Petersburg united to form a club (the Society of German Doctors), which allowed for exchanging political and medical information and provided administrative support. Competition with it grew stronger, which by the 1830s inspired a generation of Russian colleagues and students to create a similar society (the SRD) and a private newspaper (Friend of Health). Supported by the government, they sought to bring together medical officials in the professional community, to become a kind of platform for the formation of medical ethics and to define their professional interests. Along with the universities, they accumulated provincial doctors' individual knowledge on the empire and transformed it into wider general scientific knowledge.

<sup>58</sup> Friend of Health. 1852. No. 1. P. 183.

<sup>59</sup> Medical and statistical news. 1843. P. 1.

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