

# SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE AZERBAIJAN OIL INDUSTRY AT THE END OF THE XIX CENTURY

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## Abstract

This article is about social issues in the Azerbaijan oil industry at the end of the XIX century when Azerbaijan was colony of Tsarist Russian Empire. Workers' wages and work hours, living and working condition, religious issues, education and health problems have been studied in this article.

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**Keywords:** Azerbaijan, oil industry, social issues

## Introduction

Azerbaijan's oil has a long history. People of this region used oil in ancient and middle ages. There are many notes about Azerbaijan's oil in travelers' notebooks of middle ages. Arabian historian Mohammed Bekran visited Absheron peninsula and wrote his book about extraction procedure of oil from wells in Balakhani region (1). Italian traveler Marco Polo wrote in XIV century that people of this region used oil for treatment purposes and sent it to adjacent countries (2).

In the XIX century oil extraction in Absheron peninsula enhanced and at the end of this century Baku oil industry developed rapidly. Beginning from 70s of the XIX century foreign oil industry company began to invest in Baku oil industry. People from other region of the Russian Empire, also from other countries came to Baku to work in the oil industry. At the last years of the XIX century Baku became one of the biggest oil industry cities of the world (3).

In 1897 107 oil industry firm functioned in Baku and these firms extracted 421.727.161 poods of oil in this year (4). Next year 485943348 poods of oil was extracted in Baku (5). In 1899 160 oil industry companies functioned in Baku city and these companies extracted 525.247.415 poods of oil in the oil mines of Baku city in this year (6).

## I.

The oil industry workers' work condition was unbearable in the oil mines and oil industry factories at the end of XIX century. Workers worked from 06:00 till 18:00 in the workshops. They have 2 hours free time to rest and to have dinner every day. In the result they worked for 10 hours every day in the workshops. In the workshops work days in a year were 360 days (7). Drilling and extracting works were organized in 2 shifted regime. Every shift was 12 hours. In every shift workers' had 2 free hours to rest and to eat. Drilling and extracting works were continued on Sundays, too (8).



*Oil mines in Baku in XIX century*

There was not labor protection in the oil mines and factories. There were 43 accidents in 1873-1886 years in Baku oil industry and in the result of these accidents 86 men were injured and 30 men were dead. The next years number of accidents was increased. In 1887-1897 years there were 309 accidents and in result 349 men were injured and 108 men were dead (9). But this is not reality. In the reality men injured were more. Owners tried to hide real number of accidents in their oil mines and factories.

Medical aid in the oil industry regions of Baku city was not enough. In the result of hard working and living conditions workers were ill. 1884 Baku oil industrialists established their organization "Baku oil industrialists' congress Council". From January 1889 this organization began to organize medical aid and opened hospitals and out-patient hospitals in the oil industry regions. In 1893 hospital of Baku oil industrialists' congress was opened in Balakhani region of Baku. This hospital had 40 beds. In next year hospital of Baku oil industrialists was opened in Black city region of Baku. There was out-patient hospital in the Black City region and serviced with donation of Nobel brothers company since 1898. From 1898 this hospital began to

service with funds of “Baku oil industrialists’ congress”. On January 1899 out-patient hospital of Baku oil industrialists’ congress began to function and on February of next year out-patient hospital was opened in Ramana region by Baku oil industrialists’ congress.

In 1900 Baku oil industrialists’ congress Council had these hospitals and out-patient hospitals: Balakhani mine hospital, Black city hospital, Balakhani out-patient hospital, Sabunchu out-patient hospital, Black city out-patient hospital, White city out-patient hospital, Bibiheybat out-patient hospital, Ramana out-patient hospital (10).

There wasn’t insurance system in oil industry of Baku and oil workers didn’t insured. In 1899 special commission for oil industry workers’ insurance issues was established in the XIII oil industrialists’ congress (11).



*Oil well drilling in XIX century in Baku*

Some of oil industry workers lived in barracks. The most part of these barracks hadn’t windows. Some of oil workers lived in mines. In summer months they slept on the land. Well-known Russian writer A.M.Gorki was in Baku mines two times and wrote: “Oil mines stayed in my remembrance as view of horrible hell painted well” (12).

Instead of this living and working conditions oil industry workers’ wages were very low. The wages for a month were as follows: mechanics – 70 rubles in minimum and 250 rubles in maximum; mechanics’ assistants – 50 rubles in minimum; 125 rubles in maximum; head masters of drilling - 125 rubles in minimum and 350 rubles in maximum; masters of drilling - 35 rubles in minimum and 200 rubles in maximum; drilling workers’ assistant - 28 rubles in minimum and 90 rubles in maximum; head workers – 30 in

minimum and 50 rubles in maximum; unskilled workers – 10 rubles in minimum and 30 rubles in maximum; guards – 15 rubles in minimum and 36 rubles in maximum; and etc. Wages were different among workers for their length of service and their nationality. Wages in oil mines of Baku were low than central regions of Tsarist Russian Empire and wages in mines of Tsarist Russian Empire were low than England and United States. At the end of XIX century oil mine workers' wages in Baku were 4,6 copeck for an hour, in Moscow province were 5,07 copeck for an hour, in England were 19,45 copeck for an hour and in United States were 25,60 copeck for an hour (13).

In 1893 costs of some of oil industry companies in Baku for workers' and employees' wages of oil mines were as follows: Nobel brothers Petroleum Production Company 396.640 rubles, Lianozov firm 38.460 rubles, Balakhani company 16.470 rubles, Zubalov firm 15.900 rubles, Caucasus company 15.030 rubles, Kolesnikov brothers company 8.300 rubles, Armavir company 5.500 rubles, Vartanov brothers firm 4.450 rubles, etc (14). In 1894 costs of some of oil industry companies in Baku for workers' and employees' wages of oil mines were as follows: Nobel brothers Petroleum Production Company 378.684 rubles, Lianozov firm 48.228 rubles, Zubalov firm 21.264 rubles, Caucasus company 17.472 rubles, Kolesnikov brothers company 9.648 rubles, Asadullayev firm 8.700 rubles, Armavir company 7.512 rubles, "Oil" company 5.196 rubles, Nabatov brothers firm 5.040 rubles, Araks company 4.992, Tumayev firm 3.060 rubles, etc (15).

At the end of XIX century as a result of fast develop of oil industry began stream of people belonging to different religions to Baku. "Baku oil industrialists Congress" organization paid financial funds for building worship houses for people. Baku oil industrialists confirmed to pay 2000 rubles for construction worship houses in costs estimate of 1899 in the XIII congress and 21.535 rubles in the costs estimate of 1900 in the XIV congress (16). Branobel company respected workers' traditions and various religions. Nobel ships took on names of various religious and philosophical personalities - Zoroaster, Mohammad, Buddha, Brahma, Socrates, Spinoza and Darwin. The logo of the Nobel Brothers' Petroleum Company depicted the Surakhani Fire-worshippers' Temple. Religious ceremonies took place within the Nobel Factory Compound. In religious holidays workers were free from work. Moslems had more religious holidays than Christians. On the days before holidays works finished an hour earlier than other days (17).

The oil mine and factories workers were uneducated. Special courses were organized for the workers in the West Europe at the end of XIX century. But there weren't these courses in Baku which were very important for workers. Only at beginning of XX century Baku branch of Russian

Emperor Technical Society opened technical courses for oil industry workers (18).

## Conclusion

Administrative organization of Tsarist government didn't care workers. Workers did not provided by houses. Insurance system wasn't created at the end of XIX century. Medical aid wasn't enough. In the results of accidents and fires workers were dead or disabled. Workers' living and working conditions were hard than central provinces of Tsarist Russian Empire.

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