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PUBLIC HEALTH IN 1960

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OFFICE OF TECHNICAL SERVICES
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FOREWORD

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PUBLIC HEALTH IN 1960

[Following is a translation of an article by S. V. Kurashov, Minister of Public Health USSR, in Sovetskoye zdoravookhraneniye (Soviet Public Health), Vol. XIX, No 1, Moscow 1960, pages 3-8]

Recently the session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR completed its work. The session reviewed and confirmed a plan for the development of the national economy of the USSR for 1960, the USSR state budget for 1960, and the execution of the USSR state budget for 1958, and adopted laws concerning the budgetary rights of the USSR and the union republics and concerning the procedure of recalling deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

The session listened to and discussed a speech by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers USSR, Comrade N. S. Khrushchev, "The International Situation and the Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union." The session unanimously adopted a statement from the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to the parliamentarians of all countries of the work calling them to universal disarmament, the idea of which had been presented at the United Nations by the head of the Soviet government, N. S. Khrushchev.

In 1959, the Soviet Union had truly astonishing conditions for the development of industry and agriculture, and for raising the material and cultural level of the population. That year was also a remarkable one in that, as a result of the historic mission of the head of the Soviet government, N. S. Khrushchev, to the United States, favorable prerequisites were recreated for the lessening of international tension.

As is well known, our party, in decisions of the XX and XXI Congresses, posed the task of assuring that Soviet people have the highest standard of living in the world. This is provided for by the successes in the development of our economy by its high rates and by the considerable growth of national income; more resources will be expended to expand the production of producer goods and to satisfy the vital needs of the entire population.

The basic results of the development of the national economy of the USSR in 1959 attest to the fact that the first year of the seven-year plan saw the exceptional activity of the working masses. Under the guidance of the Communist Party and its Leninist Central Committee, the Soviet nation is successfully implementing the decisions of the XXI Congress.

As a result of the unselfish labor of Soviet people, all branches of industry, transport, and agriculture are developing rapidly. The unprecedented successes of Soviet science and technology are justification for calling 1959 the beginning of a new era in man's mastery of space.

The rapid development of the socialist economy and culture, and the victory of Soviet science and technology attest to the indisputable advantages of our socialist system. The international authority of the Soviet Union is growing and becoming stronger with every passing day. Our achievements are reinforcing the might of the socialist camp and are a most important condition for guaranteeing peace throughout the world.

The rates of industrial growth have considerably surpassed the average-yearly assignments stipulated by the seven-year plan. Industrial output has been overfulfilled by approximately 4%. A considerable amount of ferrous and nonferrous metal, coal, petroleum, electric power, and very important types of chemical output, machinery, equipment, building materials, and mass consumer goods have been produced in excess of the plan.

A most important positive result in the fulfillment of the 1959 plan is the overfulfillment of the assignments for growth of labor productivity and for lowering the net cost of industrial output.

As a result of the successes achieved in the development of industry and agriculture, there has been a constant rise in the material and cultural level of the Soviet nation.

The improvement of the welfare of the Soviet people found its expression in the increased consumption of food and manufactured commodities.

A tremendous program for housing construction is being successfully fulfilled, and a large number of schools, boarding schools, hospitals, clinics, kindergartens, and creches are being built.

In 1959, there was widespread construction of children's and therapeutic-and-preventive institutions financed by kolkhoz funds. This construction took on an especially broad scale in certain oblast's in the Russian Federation [RSFSR], Moldavia, and the Ukraine.

The improvement of the living conditions of the Soviet nation is attested to by the further growth in the birth rate and the drop in the children's mortality rate. In 1959 there was a considerable drop in the infectious-disease rate, primarily the rate of poliomyelitis, diphtheria, typhoid fever, malaria, brucellosis, and a number of other infectious diseases.

Despite the severe grippe epidemic of the spring of 1959, there is complete justification for assuming that the over-all mortality rate and the rate of natural increase in population will not be lower than in 1958.

The session approved in the plan for the national economy the completion of the change-over of white-collar and blue-collar workers to a 7-hour work day. It is difficult to overevaluate the importance of this measure for a person's life. It must be noted that this change-over will be carried out not only with no decrease in wages, but, on the contrary, with a further increase in wages for individual groups of workers.

In 1960 the process of standardizing wages in all branches of industry and construction will be completed, and then that work will begin on state farms and in transport. The real wages of blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, and peasants will increase an average of 5% (computed in terms of a single worker) as compared with 1940, the real income of

blue-collar workers and white-collar workers will more than double, and the income of collective-farm members will increase by almost 2.5 times. The amount of benefits paid to the population from the state budget and by enterprises will be almost 14% more in 1960 than in 1958, and will be 244 billion [thousand million] rubles.

The 1960 plan stipulates the construction of approximately 2,400,000 apartments. About 10 million persons will move into new, well-planned houses. In addition, collective-farm members will build approximately one million houses. This will be the largest amount of housing construction during the postwar years.

The 1960 plan also stipulates a considerable increase in commodity turnover. There will be increased production of commodities to satisfy the needs of the population. There will be an increase in the amount of meat products, milk, sugar, eggs, and fruit sold. The 1960 meat consumption, on the average per capita of population, will be 45 kilograms; milk and milk products (in terms of milk), 283 kilograms; eggs, 123; and fish, 11 kilograms. This means that meat consumption will increase 36% as compared with 1958; milk and milk products, 19%; eggs, 14%; and fish, 12%.

There will be a considerable increase in the volume of trade in mass consumer goods, include cloth, knit articles, and shoes. There will be an increase in the amount of household articles sold to the public -- refrigerators, washing machines, furniture, etc.

The number of public eating establishments will be increased, and the quality of the present ones will be improved. There will be an increase in the network of dining rooms and other institutions satisfying the everyday needs of the workers.

All this, taken together, will create considerably better objective conditions for protecting the health of the country's population and will facilitate the solution of the tasks confronting public-health agencies and institutions.

The 1959 plan proposed the addition of 81,500 hospital beds. However, as a result of the fact that the local party and soviet agencies set aside additional administrative and other areas, especially in Uzbekistan, the Ukraine, and the RSFSR, the public-health agencies were able to increase the plan by 6,500 beds. According to operational data, this plan for the development of hospital beds will be fulfilled, and by the end of the year there will be more than 1,620,000 hospital beds in the USSR.

At the same time it must be noted that the plan for the construction of therapeutic-and-preventive institutions and the medical industry was not fulfilled satisfactorily during the first 9 months of 1959. There is no doubt that certain ministries of public health in the union republics, and the councils of the national economy will take a number of additional steps to fulfill the construction plan. This will make it possible to increase the proportion of new beds activated at the expense of new construction.

About 25,000 physicians were graduated in 1959. By the end of the year, more than 380,000 physicians, not counting dentists, will be working in the USSR as a whole. The number of medical and pharmaceutical assistants graduated will be more than 68,000.

The expenditures for public health in 1960 have been fixed in the amount of 47 billion rubles, or 7% more than in 1959. The number of hospital beds will increase by 89,000, or 5.5%. By the end of the year that number will reach 1,709,000. The number of hospital beds per 10,000 persons will rise to 79.3, as compared with 76.3 in 1959.

However, the public's need for hospital help is not yet being satisfied to the full extent. Moreover, it must be noted that the distribution of hospital beds by union republics is far from even. For example, the number of beds in the Tadzhik SSR and the Belorussian SSR are below the national average.

Higher medical-training institutions will enroll 24,900 students, including 2,300 persons taking evening courses that permit them to retain their daytime jobs. The number of physicians graduated in the USSR as a whole will be 25,500.

The budget for 1960 has provided for an increase in the material expenditures involved in improving the operation of therapeutic-and-preventive institutions, the increasing of expenditures for nutrition in rural hospitals, the providing of more bedding and linens to urban and rural hospitals, and with improving the equipment of newly opened hospitals. Through the pharmacy network the public and the therapeutic institutions will receive, in addition, medicines and articles of sanitation and hygiene in the amount of approximately one-half billion rubles, or 5.1% more than in 1959.

The principal tasks confronting public health in 1960 can be summed up briefly as follows: the achievement of the further improvement in the operation of therapeutic-and-preventive institutions, the improving of the quality of medical assistance, the widespread introduction of advanced experience into the work of medical institutions, and the completion of the work to improve the medical service provided to the workers at industrial enterprises.

Special attention should be devoted in this plan to clinics, which are the link in public health that takes in the largest numbers of the population. A special conference at the Ministry of Public Health USSR will be devoted to this subject, but before that conference it is necessary to solve the vital needs of the clinics. Special attention should be shown to expanding the clinics. In places where it is not possible to build new, standardized accommodations, it will be necessary to carry out major remodeling of the old ones, in order to make it more convenient for the physicians and medical assistants to take care of the patients.

The worst bottleneck at a clinic is created by the shortage and turnover rate of medical cadres, which are considerably worse at clinics than at in-patient hospitals. On the initiative of the physicians of Rostov, assistant professors, docents, and professors have started to work at clinics. This is something new in the life of clinics. Skilled

specialists must be used chiefly to increase the skill of the physicians at the clinics. The patriotic movement started by the Rostov physicians is a graphic example of a communist attitude to labor, and attests to the high moral standards of Soviet physicians, and their unselfish service to their nation's needs. This new undertaking that has been taken up medical workers in other cities will have a positive influence very soon upon raising the level of therapeutic work in clinics.

Special attention must be devoted to the work of the clinical and diagnostics laboratories, and the x-ray and procedure offices at the clinics, which are the worse bottlenecks in the work of the clinics.

When speaking about clinics provided for the public, we must not forget outpatient medical aid and first aid. Clear-cut organization of this aid is of exceptional importance for the course of treatment; to a certain extent this is the factor by which the public evaluates the work of the public-health agencies in rendering medical aid.

Preliminary data do not permit us to make any final conclusions concerning changes that have occurred in rural public health. Unfortunately, the increase in the number of small in-patient hospitals in rural areas has been delayed, but it has not stopped completely. In 1960 the appropriations for nutrition in rural hospitals were increased. Hospitals will be better provided with medicines and will be somewhat better equipped. At the present time the question arises concerning the providing of all rayons with special medical transportation in order to provide for the evacuation of the patient from the medical-aid or medical station to the rayon hospital. It is natural that this task cannot be solved in a year, but planned work in this direction should be begun in 1960. The successful solution of this task will then bring up the question of the desirability of the existence of certain small rural hospitals, and the consolidation of rayon hospitals by the elimination of the former.

Recently the collegiate board of the Ministry of Public Health USSR noted and approved with great pleasure the patriotic undertaking of the medical workers of Uzbekistan, where, on the example of the advanced physicians, there has been a constantly increasing number of physicians sent from the city to work in rural areas. The importance of this movement for the improvement of the medical service provided to the rural population would be difficult to overevaluate.

During 1960 the public-health agencies and institutions must, as formerly, devote their special, and we might say primary, attention to protecting the health of children. The principal item here must be work to reduce the children's mortality rate from so-called infant's diseases, and the increased specialization in treating children up to one year of age. It is necessary to devote more attention to children of unwed mothers, and to provide them with better creche assistance.

The solution of these tasks holds the key to the further reduction of the children's mortality rate.

All the work to protect the health of children must proceed from the necessity of taking active steps to reduce or eliminate individual infectious diseases of children. In this regard a large amount of work

will have to be done in effecting a sharp reduction in the diphtheria rate. It cannot be said that nothing has been done in this regard. Certain achievements can be noted. During the first 9 months of 1959, the number of diphtheria cases was 26% less than the same period of 1958. At the same time, the level of the diphtheria rate in no way conforms to the present-day state of medical science or the organization of medical aid to the public. In trying to solve the problem of diphtheria, we must simultaneously try to solve the questions of whooping cough and the prevention of measles by means of the widespread use of gamma globulin in combined vaccines.

In the field of reducing the rate of children's infections, it is necessary to have an exceptionally clear-cut program for pediatric service in urban and rural areas. The success of this work must depend upon the pediatricians. One of the qualitative indicators characterizing the state of pediatric aid must be the reduction of the rate of children's infections.

A very important factor in the protection of children's health is the decree of the Central Committee of the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] and the Council of Ministers USSR, "Ways to Effect the Further Development of Preschool Children's Institutions, and to Improve the Education and Medical Service Provided to Children of Preschool Age."

The solution of a large social problem -- the elimination of certain infectious diseases on the territory of the USSR -- should have its concrete development in 1960. The task here will have to be solved in a differentiated way for each republic, oblast', and kray. At the present time we can satisfy the needs that therapeutic institutions have for poliomyelitis and brucellosis vaccine. We have at our disposal a definite number of means to wage an active struggle against helminthiasis among the population, etc.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Uzbek SSR has rendered a large amount of assistance to public-health agencies in combating infectious diseases in Uzbekistan. There are no doubts but that this undertaking will be taken up by other republics and oblast's and thus we shall create conditions precluding the possibility of the spread of infectious diseases in the USSR.

Research is being expanded in the field of grippe and adenoviruses. Further measures are necessary to develop a medical kit and to evaluate the effectiveness of action of vaccines and sera against these diseases, in order to create the objective prerequisites for a major combat against grippe and catarrh of the upper respiratory tracts.

In 1960 the therapeutic institutions will be considerably better provided with antibiotics, sulfanilamide preparations, and a number of new preparations that are now being produced by Soviet industry, although for certain medicines we will not yet be able to satisfy completely the demands of the public or the therapeutic-and-preventive institutions.

Great tasks confront the headquarters of our medical science -- the Academy of Medical Sciences USSR -- and the scientific-research institutes and departments of higher medical-training institutions in elaborating a number of the most vital questions linked with protecting the public's health. A number of new institutes will go into operation in 1960, particularly the Institute of Pediatrics, Academy of Medical Sciences USSR, and the Institute of Experimental Endocrinology; in addition, construction will be carried out on institutes of experimental oncology, radiobiology, etc. This will create the material basis for the still greater development of scientific research in the field of medicine.

The Academy of Medical Sciences USSR, by uniting and directing the work of the country's scientists, is applying efforts to solving the cardinal problems involved with the prevention and elimination of infectious diseases, particularly with problems of grippe, malignant neoplasms, the creation of new medicines, and the further development and improvement of methods of experimental and clinical research.

Our successes in the field of protecting the public health will depend upon the ability of public-health organizers to mobilize large numbers of the public to solve the tasks confronting us in 1960. It is necessary to develop medical education on a broad scale, using such powerful means as motion pictures, television, radio, and local newspapers, in order for the medical education to be linked as closely as possible with the basic problems on which public-health agencies are working. In addition, it will be necessary to have painstaking work to utilize the personnel of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent and to train them, and to utilize personnel at factory-and-plant committees in the struggle to protect the public health, and primarily the workers at industrial enterprises, in order for the problems of the protection of labor, safety conditions, and industrial sanitation to be resolved with the most active participation of the large numbers of the public.

The international authority of the Soviet system of public health is indisputable. At the same time we must not forget that the experience of other countries, primarily the socialist countries, must be utilized in our work. Therefore the improvement of the links between Soviet public-health figures with the countries in the socialist camp, and the utilization of the experience of foreign public health, are of primary importance.

The improvement of the international situation which has been noted in recent years is contributing to the development of closer international medical links not only with the countries of socialism, but also with the capitalist countries, and contributing to the broader exchange of medical literature, and this will undoubtedly create better opportunities for the solution of the most vital problems of the protection of the public health.