

Vader, raadgever en beschermer : Petrus Regout en zijn arbeiders 1834-1870 : stijlen van werving, behoud en beheersing van arbeid in fabrieksregimes in de beginjaren van de Westeuropese Industriële Revolutie

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SUMMARY (SAMENVATTING IN HET ENGELS)

This dissertation is about problems of recruiting, maintaining, coordinating and disciplining labour in manufacturing industries - that is, labour management problems in a quasi-experimental setting: during the initial decades of the Industrial Revolution in Western Europe, when these problems, in this form and extent, were new, so that entrepreneurs hardly could fall back on well-tried recipes.

After an introduction on theoretical and methodological points of departure, chapter 2 offers a description (not an interpretation or explanation) of the case on which this study is built: the crystal, glass, and pottery factories of Petrus Regout in Maastricht, capital of the most southern province of the Netherlands.

Regout (1801 - 1878) was the first and for a long time the only big industrialist in the Netherlands. His parents ran an earthenware and glass retail business. Petrus entered the business at a very young age. He travelled extensively on business, especially in Wallonia, the French speaking part of the Netherlands where industrialization had begun on the Continent. However, the Belgian Revolution of 1831 put an end to Regout's trading activities. The Dutch authorities imposed a prohibition on imports from the territories in revolt. Especially for Maastricht, this proved to be a disastrous measure. In 1834, an exception on the prohibitions was granted, allowing imports of raw materials. Regout immediately decided to start polishing glass and crystal by himself. This 'make'-decision was the starting point for a series of industrial enterprises, started by Regout. Most of them proved to be very succesful.

But Petrus Regout never ceased to be a merchant. He can be considered a typical representative of 'piracy capitalism' (Thorstein Veblen). When in 1848, the year of political uprisings in many Western European countries, an international economic crisis broke out and sales stagnated, Regout speculated that the crisis would not last long and kept on producing. He was right. When the tide turned, he could sell all his stock against profitable prices. Regout had definitely made it.

When in 1878 the 'King of the Potters' died, his factories employed 2500 workers and took up 10 hectares. At that time, Dutch industrialization was still in its infancy.

However, as to his opinion on work, workers and organization, Regout was an outright conservative, and not the cynical liberal people held (and hold) him for. With regard to the 'social' aspects of entrepreneurship he took over the strongly hierarchical, if not feudal, value system of the

civilization in which he grew up. His life-long striving to adopt an aristocratic life-style (and his ardent wish to be recognized as such), fits in this pattern. At the end of his life a certain sentimental megalomania took possession of him. But all this does not alter the fact that Petrus Regout was a man with considerable 'entrepreneurial talents' (qualification of Joel Mokyr).

In order to situate this entrepreneur in his economic and social context, a description of the Industrial Revolution in England, France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands is given in chapter 3. It is argued that Regout fits in the English pattern (alert, not-risk-averse, the enterprise as a means to achieve a certain goal) as well as in the continental pattern (inert, risk-averse, the enterprise as a goal as such). Looking at the early Belgian and the retarded Dutch industrialization, Regout (as well as his employees) must be considered a thoroughbred Belgian (e.g. Walloon) industrial entrepreneur.

In chapter 4 a theoretical model on problems of recruitment, stabilization and control of the labour force in the factory system is set forth. Pioneering entrepreneurs can be placed on two dimensions (recruitment/stabilization, on the one hand, and control, on the other) as to the weight of the difficulties they have in resolving these problems. These difficulties depend among other things on market and institutional restrictions. However loose or tight these constraints may be, there is always a certain 'space' to execute a certain personal style (in this case - a style of labour management). This space not only offers opportunities, but also confronts (economic) actors with the necessity to use this space, to develop a style. Hence, the first thesis: 'In order to be successful on markets and in organizations one has to develop a style.'

In this chapter, two ideal-types of early industrial labour management styles are developed: the liberal style (emphasis on market and instrumental relations) and the paternalistic style (emphasis on enhancing authority and loyalty relations). Finally, a section is devoted to aspects of legitimation of these styles.

In chapter 5 the theoretical model is applied to the Regout enterprises. It is argued that evidence points in the direction of Regout employing mainly a paternalistic style, which seems to be congruent with the southward (again, Walloon) socio-economic orientation of his family and the town in which he grew up. As, however, the evidence is not free from a certain ambiguity, in the last three sections of this chapter I expand on three 'mini case studies', to narrow the focus and, in doing so, gain more 'thick knowledge' (Clifford Geertz) on the subject. The first two cases deal with Regout's 'Cité Ouvrière', a large, seven-storeyed tenement, where some 72 worker's families had to live. This company housing initiative - cursed as 'het menschenpakhuis' (or: the warehouse for people) - is situated in the context of similar initiatives (by entrepreneurs as well as

others) in the Low Lands. In the next section the symbolic - and therefore, legitimizing - aspects of this building are studied. Finally, Regout's publications concerning the 'social issue' are dealt with.

In the closing pages, the disputed reputation of the Regout family is discussed in the light of the theoretical and empirical perspective opened up in this dissertation. It is, rather provocatively, stated that Petrus Regout was a father for his workers, but not for his own children.