

Accident in an Engineering Works (1889)

Abstract

Mechanization in the era of industrialization not only accelerated and rationalized manufacturing processes but also created new hazards for the workers who operated machinery. In Germany, both the rise of Social Democracy, which represented workers' concerns, and Bismarck's introduction of a social insurance system, which included the legislation of accident insurance in 1884, helped raise public awareness of occupational safety. Thereafter, workers' well-founded desire to avoid injury increasingly dovetailed with the interests of factory owners, who had a stake in keeping their qualified workforce healthy, and of authorities, who wanted to minimize social costs resulting from invalidity. Published in the Leipzig *Illustrierte Zeitung*, this graphic scene was a promotion for the *Deutsche Allgemeine Ausstellung für Unfallverhütung* [German Exhibition for Accident Prevention] in Berlin. Elements of the scene would have been all too familiar to factory owners, workers, and their families – the men who care for their injured colleague, the agitated workers who stand nearby, the men who inspect the machinery responsible for the accident, and – most dramatic of all – the injured man's wife, who “accompanied by her child, had just arrived to bring her working husband some food, and now beholds him lying there lifeless on the ground, perhaps a cripple for life.” (German Historical Museum, *Bismarck: Preußen, Deutschland und Europa*. Berlin, 1990, p. 423). This engraving was executed by artist Johann Bahr (1859-1929), a former machine builder with plenty of relevant work experience to draw upon.

Source



Source: Johann Bahr, Unfall in einer Maschinenfabrik, drawing, 1889. *Illustrierte Zeitung* Nr. 2402, Leipzig 1889.

Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin,

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johann_Bahr_Unfall_in_einer_Maschinenfabrik_1889.jpg

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