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Light Industry in the Urals in 1928–40: Regional Aspects of Early Industrial Modernization

Abstract

Providing the population with consumer goods is one of the state's main tasks. Therefore, in terms of welfare, development of light industry is a priority. Studying modernization of the light industry in the first half of the 20th century require a regional approach to identify common pattern and peculiarities of territories. The authors draws on previously unpublished archival documents (dating from 1928–40) from the State Archive of the Russian Federation to consider the development of light industry in the Urals during the pre-war five-year plan. The article uses general scientific method and such methods as comparative-historical, system-structural. With their help, it was possible to draw a historically objective picture of the development of light industry in the Urals in 1928–40. The authors focus their attention on the dynamics of production of essential goods in regions and republics of the Urals and identify the most rapidly developing industries. The article reviews the state of material and technical base of the enterprises; the process of reconstruction of the main industries and of equipment renewal. Most factories and plants received new equipment. During the first five-year plans the textile, footwear, and clothing industries were in the lead. However, the rate of production mechanization remained slow. The article introduces into scientific use statistical data on the expansion of light industry enterprises network during the first five-year plan. There were established sewing, saddlery, footwear, textile factories, workshops of individual tailoring. The number of light industry enterprises in the Urals grew from 91 industrial facilities in 1928 to 412 by 1940. The raw material base of light industry of the Urals was insufficient for the growing needs of production. Shortage of raw materials, dependence on numerous suppliers of raw materials, and their territorial remoteness complicated the work of industries, resulting in reduction of the enterprises' capacity. The results of the study can be used in writing of general works on the development of light industry during the pre-war five-year plans in Russia, and in the Urals in particular.

Keywords

Archival documents, sources, light industry, Ural, production, network of enterprises, early industrial modernization.

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