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Information Potential of Documents of the All-Union Dzerzhinsky Thermotechnical Institute for Studying Industrialization in the Kuybyshev Region in the 1st to 3rd Five-Year Plans

Abstract

Since 1928 there was a discernible trend away from the New Economic Policy towards industrialization in the USSR. Newspapers propagandized widely in their coverage of the first three five-year plans. Interpretation of the facts and events was still and partisan in many respects. And yet studying mass sources along with archival documents may prove productive as it allows for greater objectivity in assessing the course of industrialization, its achievements and miscalculations. The article draws on comparative analysis of periodicals, proceedings of party congresses and conferences, as well as archival documents of the All-Union Dzerzhinsky Thermotechnical Institute, which worked in electrification in the 1930s, and addresses issues of industrialization in the Kuybyshev region. In the days of the Great Patriotic War, owing to its relative remoteness from the front and due to its being an important railroad junction, Kuybyshev became a convenient location for evacuation of numerous industrial enterprises. Thus Kuybyshev was transformed into a large industrial center, although in the pre-war period an energy crisis impeded its development. Local and national newspapers responded with “technical propaganda” linking economic development of the region with creation of powerful hydroelectric dams on the Volga and large-scale utilization of local fuel, oil shale. There were plans to create a network of thermoelectric plants on its basis. But implementation of these projects was fraught with many problems: the construction of dams on the Volga was expensive, using oil shale hinged upon the development of appropriate technology and equipment for its burning. The projects were supersaturated with ideology. While mobilization of

Written by Sharonin D.A.

Tuesday, 06 August 2024 00:00

resources by the state culminated in construction of the V.I. Lenin Volga Hydroelectric Station in 1957, "the great oil shale project" was objectively impracticable according to the papers of the All-Union Dzerzhinsky Thermotechnical Institute.



Keywords

Archival documents, printed media, industrialization, Kuybyshev region, energy crisis, electrification, thermoelectric plants.

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Tuesday, 06 August 2024 00:00

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Полностью материал публикуется в российском историко-архивоведческом журнале ВЕСТНИК АРХИВИСТА. Ознакомьтесь с условиями подписки [здесь](#) .