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On Degree and Methods of Borrowing of Western Scientific and Technical Achievements in the
Oil Industry in the Days of Forced Industrialization: The 1930s

Abstract

The article addresses the issue of implementation of the forced industrialization in the USSR, a topic presently figuring among most controversial. In this regard, such its aspects as technical re-equipment of the oil industry, an industry that was of strategic importance, are of particular interest. The research is based on key principles of historical knowledge: historicism, systematicity, objectivity in order to determine the essence of scholarly disagreements on the degree of borrowing of scientific and technical achievements. The study is to consider the activities of the Military-Technical Bureau under the Council of People's Commissars (SNK) of the USSR in the 1930s. Declassified, but previously unintroduced into scientific use documents allow us to assess how technical documentation, procured by the Soviet intelligence agencies on the instructions of national leadership, was introduced into oil production. The study has proved that a significant number of documents and materials containing technical description of various samples, devices, technologies, and developments was thus obtained. This activity reached its peak in the early 1930s, when the course for import phase-out was clearly outlined due to scantiness of resources for forced industrialization. Most materials found their use in oil industry, the rest remained unused due to shortage of specialists, repression, accusations of sabotage, insufficient coordination of departments or their desire to continue purchasing imported equipment. It has been proved that by the end of the 1930s, oil industry used a significant degree of materials thus obtained. The conclusion is formulated that purchases of latest foreign technologies and equipment and materials obtained by the Soviet intelligence provided cost cuts. A variety of methods used to strengthen the oil industry, including introduction of Western developments, were among the factors that provided the USSR with its fuel resources on the eve of the Great Patriotic War.

Keywords

Historical sources, oil industry, industrialization, borrowing, industry science, intelligence agencies of the USSR.

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