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Oil Scientist F. A. Trebin's Letter to L. P. Beria on the State of Oil Industry in Venezuela (1949)

Abstract

The article is accompanied by publication of the report of oil scientist Foma Andreevich Trebin written during his tenure as Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the USSR in Venezuela (1946–49) and addressed to the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR L.P. Beria. Appointment of F. A. Trebin to the post was connected to the "oil" factor,

which became more significant in the foreign policy of the USSR with growing rivalry with the United States and the beginning Cold War. The Soviet government considered it strategically necessary to achieve a leading position in the oil industry, so one of the important tasks of the Soviet foreign policy was to study the experience of large oil-producing countries; especially attractive in this regard was Latin American region and, in particular, Venezuela, zone of geopolitical presence of England and the USA. The document found in the fond of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) in the file "On organization of geological exploration for oil and ... on changes in the oil industry of Venezuela in the first half of 1949" reflects main features of this foreign policy period. In addition to the published letter, there has been found F. A. Trebin's report for 1948, based mostly on information taken from periodicals and thus of lesser information value than the letter. Dating identified documents allows the author to assess the delivery time of F. A. Trebin's reports to the secretariat of L. P. Beria. The reports are written in free form and differ in content: the 1948 document contains data on the export of Venezuelan oil and petroleum products to various countries, while the analytical report of 1949 is devoted to the changes in the Venezuelan oil industry in the first half of 1949. The documents differ in their informative value and style (of varying degrees of formality). After working with documents, the publisher concludes that the sources met the challenges of their time; they testify to well-established coordinating practices of the period. Thematically, the published source lies at the intersection of several topical problematic fields: history of science and technology in its "engineering" dimension and history of international relations in the period of intense competition between the USSR and "bourgeois" countries in the Latin American region in the late 1940s.

Keywords

Historical source, methods of historical research, F. A. Trebin, L.P. Beria, economic intelligence, oil, oil products, oil industry, Venezuela, Latin America.

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