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KAZAKH WATER RESOURCES NEED BETTER UTILIZATION

Kazakhstan has abundant water resources, including seas, lakes, rivers, springs, etc., but they have been insufficiently studied. The natural water reserves are unequally distributed over the vast territory of the Kazakh SSR. The northern and western parts of Kazakhstan have a larger number of lakes than the southern and eastern regions.

Artificial water reservoirs built in pre-Revolution years are extremely primitive and technically imperfect. During the last few years, the construction of water reservoirs has become more advanced. In southern and southeastern oblasts reservoirs were built for irrigation, and in northern, western and central oblasts they were built mostly for water supply.

According to statistical data of recent years, there were 1,470 artificial reservoirs in the republic, out of which number 703 had been recorded in a system of registration (pasportizatsiya). These reservoirs have an irrigation area of 870,000 hectares and supply water to 880,000 head of cattle. The 1948 figures show that 364 reservoirs were used for water supply, 282 for irrigation, 123 for pasture irrigation, 12 for hydroelectric power, 32 for fish culture, and 9 for raising waterfowl. These figures show that most of the water reservoirs are inadequately utilized.

In the interests of national economy it is necessary to improve and utilize fully the existing water reservoirs and speed up the construction of new ones. During the next Five-Year Plan, it will be necessary to build not less than 3,000 - 4,000 water reservoirs, for three basic purposes: reservoirs for industrial centers, cities and settlements; reservoirs for crop cultivation; and reservoirs for animal husbandry.

The northwestern and central oblasts of Kazakhstan have large rivers, which carry a considerable amount of water in spring when the snow melts. For instance, the Ural River with its tributaries has a yearly flow of 11,400,000,000 cubic meters, Uil, 250 million; Emba, 290 million; Temir, 180 million; Sagyz, 90 million; Turgay, 190 million; Tobol, 250 million; Ishim, 550 million; and Nura, 550 million.

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In addition, there are a number of smaller rivers in these oblasts, which can supply an additional 7,400,000,000 cubic meters of water. Therefore, the water resources of the Kazakh SSR are considerable. The only trouble is that the coefficient of utilization is inadequate. Of all registered artificial reservoirs, only 282 are meant for irrigation. The area under irrigation is very small, only 20,000 hectares.

A great deal of work has to be done to regulate the supply of water in the lower parts of the Syr-Dar'ya River, and in the basins of the Chirchik, Keles, Arys', Talas, Chu, Kaskelen, Ili, Irtysh, Ural, Tobol, Mura, Ishim, Khobda, Uil, Emba, and other rivers. It will also be necessary for the development of agricultural mechanization to build kolkhoz hydroelectric power plants, wind-driven electric installations, and steam-electric power plants operating on local fuel.

Most of the lakes in Kazakhstan contain salts: Glauber salt in East Kazakhstan and sulfates in the northern oblasts. Therefore they present a valuable source for the salt industry.

The water resources of Kazakhstan are insufficiently utilized for fish culture, in spite of the fact that there are unlimited possibilities in this connection. A special study has shown that 1,661 lakes and ponds with a total water surface of 8,103,000 hectares can be used for fish culture. It should be possible to obtain an additional 567,000 tons of fish per year, if this branch of fish industry were properly organized. The type of fish prevalent in Kazakhstan is carp. Carp ponds must be built in Taldy-Kurgan, Kzyl-Orda, and some of the northern oblasts.

Rivers, lakes, ponds, and adjoining meadows present favorable conditions for fowl breeding. It has been estimated that 217 million ducks could be raised in Kazakhstan.

Kazakh SSR also offers possibilities for muskrat raising. This valuable fur-bearing animal now inhabits the waters of 55 rayons. Muskrat-raising should be more widely developed and should become a profitable trade.

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