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SOVIET CHEMICAL INDUSTRY REACHES PREWAR LEVEL

Prof Dr Peter-Heinz Seraphim

Current production figures of the Soviet chemical industry cannot be compared with prewar statistics since today's state plans include production norms of the Baltic States, eastern Poland, Carpathian Ukraine, northern Bucovina, and Bessarabic. Consequently, the increase in production shown in current plan fulfillments is not a real increase in the output of the prewar chemical enterprises, but rather an increase in capacity through the annexation of new plants. This fact is important, e.g., for the wood-chemical industry (Baltic republics, northeastern Poland), the production of shale oil (Estonia) and petroleum (eastern Galicia), for the superphosphate industry (Tallin, Riga), and for the manufacture of rubber goods.

It must further be noted that the Soviet plan figures compare either the planned quota of production, the maximum limit of capacity, or the future capacity with the hitherto existing production results. The basic year for the calculation also varies (1938 or 1945).

Moreover, the figures of the Five-Year Plan do not reveal the distribution of production over the individual years and prevent the calculation of the rate of growth. Sufficient details on production in absolute terms are completely lacking and have purposely been avoided. Only aggregate figures are given, but they do not indicate satisfactorily the actual production performance of the individual branches of the chemical industry. In addition, the fulfillment figures of the plan are published only in percent of the preceding year or of another basic year. Whenever chemical production concerns national defense or chemical warfare, a complete statistical black-out occurs.

However, it may safely be assumed that in 1948 the production of the chemical industry in the USSR reached the prewar (1938) level and may even have surpassed it. In 1938, the chemical industry employed about 280,000 men (4.3 percent of the labor force) and contributed 4.2 percent of the

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total gross production. Its significance would increase even more if one added the branches not belonging to chemistry, such as coal, wood and oil chemistry. Production for 1938 and 1948 can only be estimated, and even that only for several branches of the chemical industry, as follows (in 1,000 tons):

	<u>1938</u>	<u>1948</u>
Sulfuric acid	1,600	1,900
Soda ash	532	610
Caustic soda	88	125
Aniline colors	35	52 - 58
Plastics	14	24
Apatite	1,571	1,700
Asbestos	86	90
Synthetic rubber	53	79
Rubber boots (million pr)	84.6	92
Automobile tires (millions)	3.5	5.2
Automobile tubes (millions)	3.6	5.4

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