LIGHT INDUSTRIES OF THE U.S.S.R.

BY D. KHAZAN
LIGHT INDUSTRIES
OF THE U.S.S.R.

By D. KHAZAN
ORDER OF LENIN
ASSISTANT PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR
OF THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY
OF THE U.S.S.R.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE
MOSCOW 1939
Soviet light industry—the industries producing consumers' goods—may be regarded as including nine major branches: cotton, linen, woolens, silk, knit-goods, leather and footwear, fur, glass and clothing. All these industries were in the charge of the People's Commissariat of Light Industry until January 1939, when a special People's Commissariat was formed to direct the textile industry. These two commissariats control only the large, machine equipped enterprises, the rest being locally-controlled. The successful building of a modern heavy industry—the industries, that is,
which manufacture means of production—and the collectivization of agriculture have made it possible to reorganize light industry on up-to-date technical lines. Thus, in the two years 1936 and 1937 the textile industry was supplied with over 650,000,000 rubles’ worth of new machinery, all of which was made in the Soviet Union.

Huge sums have been invested in building new factories in the light industries and reconstructing existing ones: 1,347,000,000 rubles during the First Five-Year Plan period and 5,618,000,000 rubles during the Second Five-Year Plan period.

The guiding principle in capital development in the Soviet light industries is to bring the manufacturing plants in closer proximity to the sources of raw material and to the consuming districts—particularly to the smaller nationality regions of the U.S.S.R.

In tsarist times no industries existed in the border regions of Russia inhabited by the non-Russian nationalities, the government deliberately treating them as nothing...
Krasnaya Talka Textile Mill, Ivanovo
ing more than sources of raw material—as colonies intended to supply Russia proper with cereals, cotton and wool. Heavy industry was confined to the central districts of the country and to one or two other districts, such as the Donetz Basin and the Urals. The light industries—particularly textiles—were also limited to a few central provinces.

The Soviet Government, in pursuance of its policy of creating real equality for all the nations and nationalities comprised by the U.S.S.R., has provided for the rapid industrialization of the border regions. Nowadays the national republics not only produce cereals and cotton; they also have heavy and light industries.

During the period of the two Five-Year Plans important new textile districts have been created in Central Asia, Siberia and Transcaucasia. A huge textile mill has been built in Tashkent, a mixed woolen mill in Barnaul, a large shoe factory in Novosibirsk and a number of glass works in Byelorussia and the Donetz Basin. Large
textile mills have been built in Lenin­
akan, Tbilisi, Kirovobad, Ferghana and
elsewhere, and others are in course of con­
struction.

Soviet light industry is striding rapidly
ahead. Its gross output (calculated in
1926-27 prices) rose from 3,235,000,000
rubles in 1913 to 18,152,000,000 rubles in
1937—an increase of over 460 per cent.
The number of workers employed in the
light industries grew in the same period
from 794,900 to 1,887,000. Among the new
workers, engineers and technicians there
are tens of thousands of men and women
belonging to the non-Russian nationali­
ties of the U.S.S.R. to whom machine indus­
try was practically unknown in tsarist days.

Labor productivity is steadily rising.
Whereas in 1913 the value of the average
output per worker in light industry was
4,070 rubles, in 1937 it was 9,690 rubles,
this increase of over 130 per cent being
achieved even though the working day
has been reduced from ten or eleven hours
in tsarist times to seven hours today.
Cotton is the oldest and biggest of the light industries. In 1913 the total output of all the cotton mills in the country was 2,410,000,000 yds.; by 1938 it had risen to 3,787,000,000 yds. The cotton industry employs 583,200 workers, 67 per cent of whom are women.

The linen industry increased its output from 130,000,000 yds. in 1913 to 295,000,000 yds. in 1938.

In 1913 tsarist Russia produced 8,300,000 pairs of factory-made shoes; the output in the Soviet Union in 1938 was 189,500,000 pairs, or nearly 23 times as much. In 1938, three of the largest Soviet shoe factories—the Skorokhod Factory in Leningrad, the Paris Commune Factory in Moscow and the Mikoyan Factory in Rostov-on-Don—alone produced 39,400,000 pairs, or nearly five times the total output of all the shoe factories in tsarist Russia in 1913.

The output of factory-made knit-goods and of clothing has also increased immensely.

A big industry has been built up for the primary treatment of hemp and flax. The
production of cottonine and rayon has also made immense strides.

The output of leather substitutes has increased more than eighteen times during the last seven years (1931 to 1938). Natural rubber as a leather substitute is now entirely replaced by synthetic rubber. The Soviet Union formerly had no home supply of natural rubber, but it has made up this deficiency by building a big synthetic rubber industry, thus ensuring itself a sufficient supply of this important product. In addition, the cultivation of rubber-bearing plants is being developed on an extensive scale.

The rapid expansion of the sources of raw material for the light industries is strikingly shown in the case of cotton growing. In tsarist times cotton was grown only in the Central Asiatic part of Russia. Now it has been introduced in Kazakhstan, Transcaucasia, the Ukraine and other southern districts, including some parts of the R.S.F.S.R.—for instance, the Krasnodar Territory, the Crimean Republic, the Daghestan Republic and the Stalingrad Re-
gion. The gross cotton crop in the U.S.S.R. in 1938 was 2,690,000 tons, as against 740,000 tons in 1913. In the U.S.S.R. cotton is cultivated farther north than in any other country, the plantations reaching the 48th parallel. The Soviet textile industry is no longer dependent on imported raw material and uses exclusively home-grown cotton.

No middlemen stand between the cotton-growers, organized in their collective farms, and the industry, which is state owned: the crop is sold directly to the government.

Hundreds of cotton-growing collective farms each had an income of over a million rubles in 1938. In the Izbakent District, Uzbekistan, alone there are fifty of these millionaire collective farms; between them they netted 83,500,000 rubles for their cotton crop, of which 40,000,000 rubles consisted of government bonuses for deliveries over and above the plan and for extra grade cotton. Fifty cotton-growing collective farms in the Andizhan District, Uzbekistan, also netted incomes of over a million rubles each, as did forty collective farms in Ar-
Children’s Footwear Départment, Skorokhod Shoe Factory, Leningrad
menia. Notable is the Stalin Collective Farm in the Yangi-Kurgan District, Uzbekistan, which delivered 1.62 tons of Egyptian cotton from every acre of its plantation, receiving over 3,000,000 rubles in bonuses alone.

In the Voroshilov Collective Farm (Kasum-Izmailovo District, Azerbaijan), two teams, headed by Kurbanova and Nerimova, obtained a crop of 6.1 tons of cotton from every acre of land. Agja Alieva, a team leader in the Dimitrov Collective Farm, Kirovabad District, and a member of the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan Republic, picked 42.6 tons of cotton from an area of 7.4 acres. Her year's earnings were 10,000 rubles in cash, in addition to produce.

The technical re-equipment of the Soviet factories demanded workers of higher knowledge and qualifications. The Soviet Government established a minimum of technical knowledge required of all workers, varying with the different professions and trades, and set up an extensive system of educational and training courses to impart this
knowledge and professional skill. In 1937, 188,500 people employed in the light industries attended spare-time technical minimum courses conducted at the expense of the state, and in that year 301,000 workers passed the state technical examinations in their various trades and professions. In addition, the factories offer their workers extensive facilities for a higher technical training—schools for foremen, assistant foremen and Stakhanovites.

In tsarist Russia there were very few engineers in factories that now come under the category of light industries. Women engineers were entirely unknown. Today the situation is totally different. In 1937, four branches of light industry alone—cotton, linen, leather and shoe, and furs—employed 35,300 engineers, of whom 7,700 were women.

In 1937, in the cotton textile industry of the Ivanovo Region, two women were in charge of trusts, three were directors and twelve assistant directors of large mills, 12 were shop superintendents, 53 engineers,
193 junior engineers, and 110 forewomen. Most of these women had been ordinary workers and had been promoted as shock-workers and Stakhanovites.

The spread of the Stakhanov movement has led to a big increase in labor productivity. In the light industries this movement was initiated by two girls, weavers in the Nogin Mill in Vichuga—Evdokia Vinogradova and her namesake, Maria Vinogradova. These girls, having made a thorough study of the technical side of their jobs, were the first in the Soviet Union to operate 100 automatic looms at a time. A little later they each began to operate 140 looms, then 216, and in 1938 as many as 285 looms.

After the Vinogradovas had made their record, the Stakhanov movement spread far and wide in the light industries, where hundreds of men and women have been granted distinctions by the government for their Stakhanovite work. The Soviet people have shown their regard and esteem for their outstanding workers by electing many of them members of their highest legislative
bodies. Evdokia Vinogradova is a member of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. and Maria Vinogradova of the Supreme Soviet of the R.S.F.S.R. Claudia Sakharova, a Stakhanovite weaver, is the youngest member of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. She was only nineteen at the time of her election, and was assistant director of a mill with over 11,000 employees.

Another member of the supreme legislature of the U.S.S.R. is a weaver by the name of Gonobobleva, a woman of fifty, who before the Revolution was semi-literate. In 1936-37 she became an outstanding Stakhanovite by establishing a new record in labor productivity, operating 30 non-automatic looms simultaneously. Gonobobleva is now director of the Kirov Mill, Ivanovo.

Maijura Abdurakhmanova is an Uzbek. She is only twenty. She saw a machine for the first time in her life in 1934, at the training school of the Stalin Textile Mills, then in course of construction in Tashkent. In 1935 she began work as a spinner. Within a month she was already operating two ring
spinning machines at a time, a month later three, then four, and finally five. She has been elected to the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. and is now studying at the Industrial Academy, training to become a mill manager.

The initiators of the Stakhanov movement in the shoe industry were Smetanin, a worker in the Skorokhod Factory, Leningrad, Yashin, a worker in the Paris Commune Factory, Moscow, and Gomulko, a worker in a Kiev shoe factory.

Nikolai Smetanin, who not so long ago was a lasting machine operator in the Skorokhod Factory, having made a thorough study of his machine, began to last 2,200 pairs of shoes in his 7-hour shift, which was over three times the standard rate of 700 pairs per shift. Smetanin showed his ability not only in his trade, but also as an organizer and manager of production. He was soon appointed assistant director and then director of the Skorokhod Factory—the largest shoe factory in the country, which produces as much as 85,000 pairs daily. Now he is

18
Museum of the Krasny Gigant Glass Factory,
Penza Region
Assistant People's Commissar of Light Industry of the U.S.S.R. Smetanin is a member of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.

In 1938 the volume of state, cooperative and collective farm retail trade reached 162,973,500,000 rubles, as against 61,289,200,000 rubles in 1933. The sales of high-grade goods have increased considerably. The sales of cotton fabrics by the state and cooperative stores amounted to 5,500,000,000 rubles in 1937, as against 2,100,000,000 rubles in 1929—a 160 per cent increase; clothing sales totalled 6,600,000,000 rubles—a 90 per cent increase; knit-goods sales totalled 2,300,000,000 rubles—a 130 per cent increase; and sales of footwear, 4,100,000,000 rubles, an increase of 170 per cent.

This increase in the volume of trade is to be attributed to the rising standard of living of the population.

In the U.S.S.R. unemployment has been totally eliminated. The average number of employed persons per family has sharply increased, which means a corresponding
increase in the average family income. At the same time the average wages of workers in the cotton industry increased, between 1928 and 1938, by 309 per cent, in the linen industry by 373 per cent, in the wool industry by 260 per cent, in the silk industry by 261 per cent, in the knit-goods industry by 207 per cent, in the leather and shoe industry by 200 per cent and in the glassware industry by 288 per cent. The average monthly earnings of many shock workers and Stakhanovites are as much as 1,000 rubles and over.

To the real earnings of Soviet workers must be added the state expenditures for the education of their children, for the workers’ recreation and vacations, for cultural services, medical services, security in old age, and so on. These services rendered by the state free of charge amount on the average to about 22 per cent of the income of the worker’s family.

Mention should also be made of the social insurance funds, which are controlled by the trade unions. In 1938 insurance
benefits paid by the Moscow and Leningrad Cotton Workers’ Union amounted to 108,600,000 rubles. Of this sum 34,500,000 rubles were spent on payment of sick benefits; 28,300,000 rubles were paid to women employees in maternity benefits and 4,350,000 rubles for the acquisition of layettes and as nursing grants; 3,150,000 rubles were spent on extra-school services for workers’ children, 2,500,000 rubles on grants to parents, 5,850,000 rubles on the construction and upkeep of Young Pioneer camps and children’s sanatoria, 2,450,000 rubles on dietetic feeding, 10,440,000 rubles on rest homes, sanatoria and health resorts, 1,080,000 rubles on facilities for sports, mountain climbing, etc., and 5,300,000 rubles on invalid pensions.

In tsarist times the Russian peasants, because of their poverty, bought very little manufactured goods. Their clothes and linen were home spun on primitive looms and home made. Leather shoes were considered a luxury; most of the peasants wore bast shoes, wrapping their legs in strips of coarse
linen kept in place by string. Socks and stockings were practically unknown in the Russian village.

Nowadays the peasants have become collective farmers, and the majority of them dress in the town fashion. The younger people even dress smartly; country girls are buying good shoes, stockings and stylish dresses.

The rising standard of living of the people of the U.S.S.R. is creating a growing demand for manufactured goods, and, in spite of the big increase in the production of fabrics, footwear and knit-goods, the output does not yet cover the demand.

Under the Third Five-Year Plan, the output of various consumers’ goods is to be increased 50 to 100 per cent. The year 1942 will see an output of 5,341,000,000 yds. of cotton fabrics (42 per cent more than in 1937), and 235,000,000 pairs of leather shoes (43 per cent more than in 1937). The output of woolen cloth will be 67 per cent more than in 1937.

There will be a big increase in the output
of textile machinery. The mills will be equipped with the most up-to-date machinery, including continuous process machines, automatic looms, etc.

Further progress is envisaged in the Third Five-Year Plan with respect to bringing the light industries closer to the sources of raw material and fuel. A number of new textile mills will be started, including cotton mills in Barnaul, Novosibirsk and the Kuznetsk Basin, a spinning mill in Leninakan, the second section of the Tashkent Textile Mills, and cloth mills in Kiev and Semipalatinsk. A number of textile mills will be erected in Western Siberia and the Kazakh Republic. Numbers of knit-goods and hosey factories, silk mills, flax mills, tanneries and shoe factories will also be built throughout the country.

The Third Five-Year Plan will bring about a further rise in the standard of living of the people of the U.S.S.R. by more fully meeting the demand for all kinds of goods and produce and for wider material and cultural services.