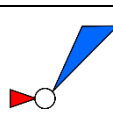


1783 CA2

bncdoc.id	A64
bncdoc.author	Pethybridge, Roger
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bncdoc.info	One step backwards, two steps forward. Sample containing about 42467 words from a book (domain: world affairs)
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<p><1783/c></p>  <p>Key:</p> <p><u>Footprint</u> <u>ConEn1</u> <u>Footprint</u> <u>ConEn2</u> <u>Footprint</u> <u>ConEn3</u></p>	<p>be called a bastion of the proletariat. The nearest useful census is for 1923, when the total population of Smolensk was only 63,669 of which a mere 15.1 per cent were workers. Like the population of all the cities of European Russia, it suffered a decline (from 72,559 in 1917 to 56,826 in 1920). This was far less dramatic than in a much larger city like Petrograd. At the turn of the century industrial production in Belorussia had been half that of the average for Russia as a whole. The area was thus unusually weighted towards agriculture, but it was only an exaggeration of the normal situation in all provincial regions. Throughout NEP Russia remained plunged in a largely preindustrial society, conditioned far more by its natural environment (of marshes, flax, large forests in Belorussia) than by its few industrial cities. By the end of 1923 only 12,323 persons were engaged in all of Soviet Belorussian industry, compared with 23,438 railway-workers. Belorussian industrial capacity had been split in half by the World War and its consequences. Western Belorussia still lay under Polish control, with its heavier concentrations of textile-workers. In 1922 10,000 textile-operatives in the Belostok region of Western Belorussia struck under the influence of the Polish Communist Party. Ironically, and not for the last time in history, the Communist-inspired proletariat had more clout outside the Soviet borders than within. Given Russia's high latitudinal position, her short farming season, low productivity, absence of markets, and scant incentives for yield improvement in the late Tsarist period and until the advent of NEP, the natural result was a strong peasant urge to supplement agricultural income by promysly (craft industries), one of which was the production and working up of flax for the kustarnyi industry. The latter was defined by Soviet terminology in the 1920s as all establishments producing goods for more than one household but employing thirty wage-earners or less; or if motive power was used, fifteen wage-earners or less. The accent on rural industry had actually increased heavily over the years prior to 1922. The chaotic transport situation did not harm it, since it had access to local raw materials and fuel. The clothing industry, including flax, had flourished because it supplied both the Tsarist and the Red Armies which trampled through Belorussia. There were also other reasons for the growing importance of small-scale industry during the Civil War and NEP. The famine of 1919-21 forced industrial workers back to the countryside, where they proceeded to apply their skills, encouraged by the local peasantry, thwarted by the lack of <u>industrial consumer goods</u> from the towns. The loss of the Polish and Baltic provinces, which had supplied the Russian market with</p> <p><u>a large quantity</u> of <u>consumer goods</u></p> <p>, also served to increase the dependence of the Soviet population on the kustari, particularly in the west. The 1897 census had listed 20,000 kustari for the six Belorussian provinces of that period. By the end of 1922 the number rose to 33,800 for Soviet Belorussia, a smaller area. This figure was 2.7 times higher than for employees in large-scale industry. Their volume of production was one and a half times greater, and they were engaged chiefly in clothing, woodwork, skins, and</p>
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	<p>agricultural repairs. During the war years 480 large and small-scale industrial enterprises had been knocked out in Belorussia. A further huge reduction of about 80 per cent in the labour force had taken place since the introduction of <i>khozraschet</i> at the start of NEP. Throughout Russia heavy industry suffered the most. Whereas the national monthly output of iron-ore had sunk from 45.87 million pudy in 1913 to 0.98 by September 1922, and cast-iron from 21.43 to 0.94, flax yarn had only sunk from 0.236 to 0.104. This set-back meant that flax prices went up steeply in 1922 to meet demand, and sowing increased sharply in the autumn, bringing quick prosperity to parts of Belorussia. Another consumer industry of prime importance to this area, paper, recovered very rapidly during 1922, in the effort to supply the hungry central bureaucracies and cultural institutions which had been sorely deprived. Yet until 1923 much pulp had to be imported from abroad in view of the atrocious transport situation in Belorussia and the chaotic state of the timber industry. Capital investment in Belorussian industry, centred on Smolensk, was only 485,000 roubles in 1922, but this was stepped up by 271 per cent in 1923. On average workers' pay in Belorussia had dropped by 1922 to 73.5 per cent of the 1913 level, but in 1923 it was to rise to 112.5 per cent. In the first half of 1921 nearly all workers and state employees had been paid almost entirely in kind but by June 1922 66 per cent came in the form of cash. The best-paid workers in Belorussia were in the bristle industry. Metal-workers, the vanguard of the 1917 proletarian revolution in Petrograd, here received two-thirds less than bristle-workers, and flax-workers, most of them unqualified and women, earned four-fifths less. Private firms paid up to 28 per cent of wages towards social insurance for their workers, whereas state concerns contributed between 15 and 19.5 per cent. By the end of 1922 many relatives of war casualties began to receive small social-welfare payments. Yet, in all Belorussia there were only 1,669 hospital beds. Such was the frail nature of the Belorussian working class, cut off from its metropolitan Russian brothers by a broad sea of peasants</p>
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