

Natural Resources and their Exploitation – the Example of the Vardar Banovina

Summary

Since the Vardar Banovina* possessed great mineral wealth, foreign investors were very keen to develop its mining industry. At the end of the 1930s, the Banovina boasted as much as 98% of the total Yugoslav production of chromium, 86% of the lead-zinc ore output, 61% of pyrite production, 50% of raw magnesite as well as 32% of the annual output of manganese. The systematic afforestation of bare Macedonian mountains, which began in the 1920s, continued in the 1930s with a great deal of optimism. Up to 1938, as much as one fifth of the afforestation budget of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was spent in the Banovina. A greater problem was the scope of the hydro-technical projects, which were more demanding and much more expensive, especially in the case of the drainage of Skopsko Polje and the regulation of the river Vardar. The hydro-technical projects completed in Vardar Banovina between 1930 and 1938 cost approximately 3.5 million dinars. Of this, 49% had been spent on land reclamation and improvement, 31% on water supplies and 20% on the regulation of the waterways. Completed melioration works in Vardar Banovina represented merely 0.16% of the national expenditure, while the initiated works amounted to 7.6%. Hydro-technical works in the Valley of the Vardar were also delayed due to the absence of an adequate electrical network, which in turn was partly caused by delays in passing the Electrification Bill. The poor state of the electricity network of the Vardar Banovina in 1939 is reflected in the fact that all of its electrical power plants were responsible for only 1.3% of the entire electricity output of Yugoslavia.

* The Vardar Banovina was one of the nine provinces (Banovinas) of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, established in 1929. It comprised the whole of today's Republic of Macedonia, some parts of Southern Serbia and Kosovo and Metohija.