
ARTICLES

International Industrialization Levels from 1750 to 1980

Paul Bairoch
University of Geneva

General Introduction

Very few attempts have been made to estimate levels of industrialization. One must first discard the very incomplete and rough estimates made by the early investigators of national accounting systems, since they rarely paid attention to the problem of the level of industrialization, which did not seem important at the time. The first relatively serious estimate was made by Mulhall (1896), and concentrated mainly on data for the year 1894 (although including partial data from the period 1820 to 1894). Subsequent estimates derived essentially from calculations of the indices of world (or regional) industrial production and are therefore based on national indices of production which inevitably gives rise to problems of weighting. The first of these estimates was apparently made by Dessirier (1928), but this covered only a small group of countries (the criteria on which the weighting was based were not clearly stated). Much more ambitious and carefully elaborated were the estimates of Wagenfuhr (1933) for 1928 and that of the League of Nations (1936) based on the period 1925-28. For more recent years, mention should