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Transition to Production of Consumer Goods at the Enterprises of the Gorky Region in the Second Half of 1945–1946

Abstract

The process of conversion of the Soviet industry after World War II remains significant and attractive for research. This case-study of the Gorky region reviews the transition of enterprises to production of consumer goods in 1945-46 and identifies the most serious problems that hindered this process. These problems can be divided into two groups: resource problems (acute shortage of skilled workers, raw materials, equipment) and organizational problems (inefficient organization of production processes and labor relations). Attempts to solve them quickly and with purely administrative methods were unsuccessful. Manning of the enterprises, in particular, was closely connected with labor motivation and social infrastructure, for which the directors of the enterprises were directly responsible. In 1946, the majority of the Gorky region enterprises fell short of production targets for consumer goods, produced goods that were simple to manufacture instead of those prescribed by the plan and needed by the population, and often exceeded actual cost price per unit and established selling price. The specific line of products of each enterprise was determined in accordance with its profile. At a number of large enterprises of the heavy and defense industries (the Molotov automobile plant, the Krasnoye Sormovo plant, and others) there were special consumer goods departments, but other departments were also involved in the production. In small enterprises of the light industry sector, consumer goods were the main category of production. The research is an important contribution to the study of conversion and reconversion in the USSR in the second half of the 1940s. The case-study of the Gorky region, one of the largest industrial regions of the USSR, allows to reconstruct the complex process of restoring peaceful functions of the economy quite vividly.

Keywords

Industry, conversion, Gorky region, consumer goods, post-war society, historical sources.

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