

Scientific article

DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2026-3-942-959

For citation

Pass, A. A., Dida, V. M. (2026). Archival Documents of the Chelyabinsk Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks as a Source for Studying the Policy of Stimulating Cooperative Industry in 1946–1950, Herald of an Archivist, no. 3, pp. 942-959. DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2026-3-942-959

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Archival Documents of the Chelyabinsk Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party

of Bolsheviks as a Source for Studying the Policy of Stimulating Cooperative Industry in 1946–1950

Abstract

The article explores the informative potential of sources from the party archives of the United State Archives of the Chelyabinsk Region (OGACHO) on the role of industrial cooperation in improving the living conditions of residents of a major industrial center in the second half of the 1940s. Contemporary social scholars believe that complex, contradictory, and even paradoxical societal systems are more effective in terms of national economic growth and population support. This requires a careful study of the transition of the Soviet mobilization economy to civilian production after Victory Day. Available archival materials suggest the emergence of quasi-market mechanisms for managing small collective enterprises during the postwar period. Their practical application revitalized local trade in goods and services and significantly improved living conditions. Despite the interest of social scientists in this period, a large body of documentary evidence, deposited in regional repositories and devoted to these issues, remains unused. The study utilized an institutional method, elements of source study heuristics, and comparative analysis. The documents identified in the OGACHO consist of previously unpublished decisions of conferences, plenary sessions, and bureaus of the regional committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, as well as notes and reports from its specialized department, which oversaw the work of regional industrial cooperatives. They cover issues such as monitoring cooperatives' compliance with resolutions of union, republican, and regional government bodies, the ongoing activities of cooperatives, and the search for an optimal operating mode. The authors concluded that the selected materials are highly objective, consistently reflecting the line of the government and regulatory authorities. They support the thesis of a search for new methods and approaches to managing the non-state sector of the national economy after the end of the Great Patriotic War. Primary source texts convincingly demonstrate that the measures implemented galvanized collective entrepreneurship and strengthened its utilitarian and pragmatic motivations. At the same time, they reduced the susceptibility of cooperative enterprises to direct administration and created conditions for testing shadow reproduction schemes, aimed not so much at strengthening the economic position of a particular artel, but at finding opportunities for personal enrichment.

Keywords

Historical sources, industrial and consumer cooperation, regional archives, party bodies, cooperative industry of the 1946–1950s, conversion, production of goods and services for the population, command management methods, monetary motivation.

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Grant information

The study was conducted with financial support from the Russian Science Foundation and the Government of the Chelyabinsk Region, No. 25-28-20066, <https://rscf.ru/project/25-28-20066/>

The article was received in the editorial office on 24.06.2025, recommended for publication on 20.06.2026

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Полностью материал публикуется в российском историко-архивоведческом журнале ВЕСТНИК АРХИВИСТА. Ознакомьтесь с условиями подписки [здесь](#) .