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MUNICH, 15 April 1971 (CAA). The following article by V. Kokushkin, Secretary of the Obkom of the CPSU Leningrad, appeared in the 22 January 1971 issue of Trud.

Early in the new year there appeared in the Leningrad press a letter in the section "To greet the XXIV Congress of the CPSU" whose authors were the shipbuilders of the shipyard named after Zhdanov. Its title was "Goods for the people are everyone's responsibility". Having carefully considered their capacities and capabilities, the collective which successfully engages in the construction of modern ships, determined to organise simultaneously a considerable increase in its production of consumer goods.

This enterprise has long been known as a producer of good quality furniture. It turns out cupboards, newspaper stands and consoles for television sets. But the shipbuilders are well aware of the fact that we still suffer from a shortage of good quality products, including furniture. Therefore they assumed an obligation to complete by March 21 the production plan for consumer goods over the first quarter, and to produce by the date of the opening of the Congress, in addition to that, consumer goods to the value of tens of thousands of Roubles.

The challenge of the Zhdanovites was immediately taken up by other Leningrad enterprises. The first to respond were the engineering workers of the Nevsky factory named after V.I. Lenin. They declared that they would turn out consumer goods to an extent 20 per cent greater than for the previous year...

The list of enterprises could be extended, but that is not the main point. The important thing is that today, in the big Leningrad enterprises, the workers appreciate more and more clearly that, along with their basic products - ships, turbines, cranes - it is necessary to increase the output of consumer and domestic goods, and that this is a duty not only for the workers in the Light industries, but also in all the other branches of industry.

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It is a very noteworthy fact that today, at 50 of the Leningrad enterprises which have not previously engaged in producing goods for the people, a start has been made in the production of such goods. And the number of enterprises adopting this line is going to increase.

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A decision of the Bureau of the Obkom of the party has noted that up to the present the amount of goods produced for the people is insufficient. In a number of the big enterprises the quantity of such goods produced represents only a very small percentage of the total output.

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One of the reasons for this is insufficient organisational work on the part of the planning commissions of the Oblast and Town Ispolkoms of the Soviets of Deputies of the Workers.

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Incidentally, the process of converting the plans into actual production is in a most unsatisfactory state. The process is often dragged out over such a long period that the goods are already out of date by the time they reach the consumer. This is a matter on which weighty words could be said by the Pavilion of samples of the Best Products of the Ministry of Trade of the USSR. But in order to do this, it must be more independent and have a wider operational field. We have a suggestion to make. It should be arranged that this Pavilion should be subordinated not only to the Ministry in Moscow but also to the Chief Department of Trade in Leningrad. At the same time the Leningrad Ispolkom should be empowered to confirm for a certain period, (say for two years) the technical conditions and the prices for new types of consumer goods. That would also be of considerable assistance in cutting down the time necessary to get them into production.

As is well known, the light industry is the main supplier of goods for the population. It is sufficiently widely represented in our city. If the reconstruction and renewal of technical equipment in its enterprises was taken up seriously, it would become possible to get a very considerable increase in the output of goods which are so badly needed. It has been calculated that, for example, if a "rejuvenation" of just the enterprises of the textile industry in the town was carried out, the output of textiles would increase by 70-80 million Roubles a year. Besides that, almost eight thousand workers would be freed to take up other work.

But we have to admit, with regret, that the Ministry of Light Industry of the USSR is in no hurry to solve this problem. In justice it must be said that the Ministry of Engineering for the Light and Foodstuffs Industries and domestic appliances is not in a position to solve it. The equipment supplied by this Ministry to the Leningrad Textile enterprises is often of poor quality. But its prices are high. Thus, the new spinning machines from the Penza factory cost three times as much as the old ones, although there is practically no difference in them.

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The planning and coordination of production of consumer goods stand in need of radical improvement. At the present time there are serious shortcomings in this work, which lead to serious miscalculations. It was in that way that the "problem" of the ordinary mincing machine arose. It is a well known fact that some 6 or 7 years ago so many of these simple but very necessary appliances were produced that their manufacture had to be stopped simultaneously at 50 factories throughout the country. Today it appears that the manufacture of mincing machines is to be resumed at 40 enterprises in the country. Is it possible that we will have a repetition of the old picture which we saw in the recent past, when the shop shelves groaned under the weight of masses of mincing machines, whilst the customers were not interested.

One of the reasons for shortages of goods in regular demand is the fact that some directors try above all to secure an increase in production figures in terms of Roubles, and are not interested in the individual production of articles making up the assortment. The assortment is subject to frequent revisions and there is a review of technological equipment, and, of course, of prices.

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The result is that, with a considerable increase in the volume of goods sold, there is no increase in the volume of certain articles as such.

I will give a characteristic example. At the Leningrad factory of artistic glassware, which comes under the Ministry of Building Materials Industry of the RSFSR, almost all the increase in the volume of production has been achieved in recent years through increased production of expensive articles and a reduction in the production of tumblers, salad bowls, wine glasses and other comparatively cheap articles, which are nevertheless badly needed by the consumer. Similar conditions prevail at the Leningrad combine named after Lomonosov, which produces chinaware.

There is no secret about the fact that we still suffer from a very poor assortment of enamelware. The shortage is particularly acute in small basins, saucepans, tea and coffee pots. This is entirely due to the small volume of the production of such goods. Here again we can see the effect of the practice of planning the production of kitchen utensils in terms of tonnage, which the Ministry of Local Industry of the RSFSR obstinately sticks to.

All this provides material for serious consideration on the part of the planning organs and the Ministries, since the right solution for these problems governs the degree to which our people will be provided with consumer goods in the necessary assortment and quantity.

It would seem that the coordination and free planning of the volume of goods to be produced for the population must be organised for all branches at a single planning centre, on a scale to cover the whole country. Naturally, the demands of the retail trade must be taken into strict consideration in this connexion.

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