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“The Life Grew So Difficult”: Reaction of the Leningrad Citizens to Postwar Loan Campaigns in the Party Organizations Summaries of Information

Abstract

The article draws on the AUCP (b) obkoms summaries of information on conducting loan campaigns to analyze the attitude of Soviet citizens to state financial policy. Since access to personal information is restricted, thus making it difficult to study social aspects of state policy, the author has turned to the summaries documents and thus introduced them into scientific use. The object of the study is government loans during the forth five-year plan (1946-1950) and subscription to these in Leningrad. Obkom summaries contain both statistical data and information on the population’s response to the subscription. The analysis shows that people

understood of its goals, which translated into their positive responses. Negative assessments sprang mainly from domestic problems, not from overt criticism of the state. The facts are conveyed in a peculiar way. Summaries were in many ways a means of confirming the agitators' and propagandists' success at the grassroots level, and therefore the positive attitudes towards loans prevailed. Negative reactions were describes as “isolated cases” to work case by case. An expression “hard to live” permeates the analyzed materials, though only rarely these “hardships” were real. The phrase explained people’s reluctance to participate in the subscription. Using these documents in historical research is essential to understanding the management of information in the party organizations. The combination of positive and negative reactions in the reports makes it possible to study the public opinion of the postwar Soviet people in depth. The data obtained from the reports fills out the history of postwar loan campaigns with factual material and add to social, political history, and history of the everyday life in the postwar USSR.

Keywords

Historical sources, forth five-year plan (1946-1950), population’s reaction, postwar Leningrad, state loans, social history, financial policy, Soviet everyday life.

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