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Volume Title: Soviet Statistics of Physical Output of Industrial Commodities: Their Compilation and Quality

Volume Author/Editor: Gregory Grossman

Volume Publisher: Princeton University Press

Volume ISBN: 0313-32462-8

Volume URL: <http://www.nber.org/books/gros60-1>

Publication Date: 1960

Chapter Title: Front matter, Soviet Statistics of Physical Output of Industrial Commodities Their Compilation and Quality

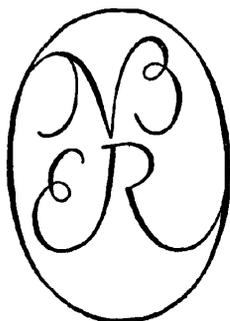
Chapter Author: Gregory Grossman

Chapter URL: <http://www.nber.org/chapters/c2449>

Chapter pages in book: (p. -16 - 0)

Soviet Statistics of
Physical Output
of Industrial Commodities
Their Compilation and Quality

GREGORY GROSSMAN
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



A STUDY BY THE
NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH

PUBLISHED BY
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY
1960

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L. C. CARD NO. 60-12236

Printed in the United States of America
by Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey

**SOVIET STATISTICS OF PHYSICAL OUTPUT
OF INDUSTRIAL COMMODITIES**

NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH
NUMBER 69, GENERAL SERIES

NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH

1960

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(Resolution adopted October 25, 1926 and revised February 6, 1933 and February 24, 1941)

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Foreword

THIS book inaugurates a series of publications on Soviet economic growth, presenting the results of a research effort initiated six years ago by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. As now planned, the series will consist of monographs covering industry, agriculture, and transportation, followed by a summary volume that will try to integrate the major findings for these and other sectors of the Soviet economy. The focus of the series will be on the economic performance of the Soviet Union as reflected in the statistical record.

It is fitting that the series be introduced by a discussion of the quality of some of those statistics: how they are collected, processed, and published. The Westerner needs this introduction because he cannot easily picture the peculiar conditions under which statistics are demanded and supplied in what Professor Grossman calls a "command economy." As Grossman stresses throughout his study, reliability of data is a problem not only to the outsider but also to the Soviet administrator himself, a problem continually emphasized in the Soviet literature. Everybody seems to have a stake in the figures, those who report them as well as those who process and use them. And the absence of a free and critical press, competitive scholarship, and rival political groups puts the official statistics, with their inevitable faults, beyond the pale of effective public scrutiny.

The result is a set of economic data that Soviet officials and foreign observers alike must treat with circumspection, depending on the uses to which they are to be put. In Grossman's closing words, "One question must always be uppermost in the investigator's mind: what are the figures trying to prove?"

While Professor Grossman's study is limited to industrial statistics—and here only to certain aspects—many observations and conclusions are widely applicable to Soviet economic data in general. Thus, this carefully documented study fills an important gap in the Western literature on the Soviet economy while also serving as a model to encourage further work of a similar kind. It is through such attention to the foundation that a sturdy structure gets built.

G. WARREN NUTTER
*Director, Study of Soviet
Economic Growth*

Charlottesville, Virginia



Preface

THIS study has benefited greatly from the cooperation of a number of persons and institutions. Robert M. Slusser, then associate director of the Research Program on the USSR (New York), kindly lent me the manuscripts of several studies prepared by émigré scholars under the auspices of the Program. Of these, Valentin Tsonev's "Falsification of Soviet Industrial Statistics" proved to be particularly useful, as did the opportunity to discuss the problem with Mr. Tsonev in person. My former colleague, Donald R. Hodgman, now of the University of Illinois, generously turned over some of his notes and working memoranda for my use. Benjamin Ward and Jeremiah Schneiderman assisted in the bibliographical search at the beginning of the study. Edgars Dunsdorfs (Melbourne), Andrew G. Frank (Michigan State), Marshall I. Goldman (Wellesley and Harvard), David Granick (Wisconsin), John P. Hardt (Corporation for Economic and Industrial Research), Donald R. Hodgman, Naum Jasny (Washington, D.C.), B. P. Martschenko (Toronto), G. Warren Nutter (Virginia; director of the National Bureau's Study of Soviet Economic Growth), and Raymond P. Powell (Yale) commented on all or parts of this essay at various stages of its preparation. Marie-Christine Culbert edited the manuscript in a most thorough and efficient manner. H. Irving Forman drew the charts. To all these persons go my thanks for their valuable help. To the National Bureau itself goes my full appreciation for initiating, sponsoring, and publishing the study. I am also thankful to the Bureau of Business and Economic Research of this university for typing assistance.

This essay follows the Library of Congress system of transliteration from the Russian, except for the omission of diacritical marks and ligatures. At the end of the volume there is a list of abbreviations of both Russian terms used in the text and Russian periodicals cited.

GREGORY GROSSMAN

Berkeley, California
November, 1959



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