

less than six years in the case of the Tobolsk complex and in seven years in the case of the Surgut complex. From an economic point of view, these time frames are quite normal.

In addressing the meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee on behalf of the government, V.A. Durasov, First Deputy Chairman of the USSR State Planning Commission [Gosplan], put forward very weighty arguments in favor of developing the petrochemical industry in Western Siberia. What is needed to increase the pace of housing construction and social facilities, and to fill the market with consumer products - clothing, footwear, television sets, video tape recorders, automobiles and detergents - is to achieve accelerated development of a polymer chemistry. A single ton of light hydrocarbons from casing-head gas can be processed to produce 15,000 to 20,000 rubles worth of various consumer goods. The country, however, is capable of processing 4 to 6 million tons of this raw material each year, which would result in tens of billion of rubles worth of goods being produced.

For the moment, the USSR lags significantly behind a number of other countries in terms of the level of chemicalization of the national economy. Compared to the USA, for example, we produce 6 times less plastic, 3.5 times less man-made fibers, and almost 4 times less synthetic detergents. And it is no accident that we must import approximately 2.6 billion rubles worth of chemical products every year, including 600 million rubles worth of plastics. We burn our valuable petroleum raw material in flares and purchase products made from this same raw material. What is especially distressing is that our current imports of chemical goods alone require us to sell 40 million tons of oil abroad each year. Is this not absurd?