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Office of the Policy Advisor  
Background Information USSR

9 December 1959

WORK IN THE AFTERNOON

In the long haul needed to "catch up with the United States", the USSR has for some time past taken an increasing interest in productivity, which at present is extraordinarily low for a powerful industrial state. While it would be incorrect to assume that the seven-hour day is being introduced primarily to raise productivity, an increase in output per man-hour should certainly be expected as one of the results.

This theme has been treated several times recently in the Soviet press, and Izvestia (4th December 1959) has hinted at it in an article mainly devoted to a defence of the workers' lunch-break. Izvestia's correspondent, after investigating a factory in Kiev, has discovered America by finding that "in the second half of the day, productivity usually declines." The truth of his hoary observation has been confirmed for him by the Institute of Hygiene and Occupational Sickness of the Ukrainian Ministry of Health. It appears that Professor M.V. Leinik, the head of the Labor Physiology Laboratory, has been able to measure the decline, and has found that often productivity may fall by almost one-third, which Leinik ascribes to "insufficient rest during the lunch break."

No doubt Professor Leinik is right but an even more important cause of reduction in productivity levels is the length of the work-day itself, as the Kremlin recognizes when advocating its plan to switch 30,000,000 workers over to a 40 1/2 hour week by the end of 1960.<sup>1</sup>

Izvestia also disapproves, probably for the first time, of lectures given to workers during the midday-break. The machine-shop of the reduction-gear plant in Kiev, for example, was recently given a medical pep-talk for four days running. Admittedly this was an exceptional case, but in the larger Kiev factories harangues by Agitprop and others during the noon hour are a frequent occurrence. The workers prefer them at lunch-time, because otherwise they are late getting home at night, and moreover the time-factor compels the orator to restrain his midday eloquence. But after work, they told Izvestia's reporter:

"the speakers start with Adam, and by the time they get to the point 20 minutes have passed. "

In the past the Kiev trade unions council has only interested itself in the noon break in order to ensure that no concealed overtime was practised then. Henceforth it will be required to mend its ways, and to look after the workers' interests at last - in the name of higher productivity.

r.r.g.

<sup>1</sup>V.V. Grishin, Izvestia, October 29th, 1959.