

Radio Free Europe/Munich
Office of the Political Advisor
Background Information USSR

2 April 1959

SOVIET INDUSTRIAL WAGES

In the second part of his mammoth speech to the 12th Trade Union Congress in Moscow, V. V. Grishin, Chairman of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, observed that:

"In conjunction with the increase in the number of trade unionists and in the wages of workers and employees, the income of the trade unions' budget is steadily growing. In 1958 this income increased by 30% by comparison with 1954."¹

In the first part of the speech Grishin gave the figures for the rise in the number of unionists during the same period: these were 40,420,000 in 1954, and 52,870,000 in 1958.² Consequently the number of due-paying unionists in 1958 was 130.6% of the number in 1954.

Membership fees at all wage levels amount to 1% of wages and no progressive tariff exists (Spravochnik Profsoyuznovo Rabotnika, Moscow, 1949, p. 633). From this indirect evidence, it therefore appears that the monetary wages paid per worker have not increased at all since the 11th Congress in 1954. This demonstration of the virtual stagnation of cash wages in the USSR during the last five years naturally sheds no light on the level of real wages, which was discussed in Background Information, "Average Wages - Enough to Eat? (II)," March 3, 1959. However, for comparative purposes, it was recently reported that in the USA the average cash wage has increased by 57% in the last ten years while the price index has risen only 30%.³ Grishin's figures suggest that the whole of the extra money needed to finance the new minimum wage law introduced in January 1957⁴ has been found from the pockets of the average or better paid workers.

R.R.G.

¹Pravda, 23 March 1959.

²Pravda, 24 March 1959, Background Information, "The Trade Union Congress in Moscow", March 26, 1959.

³US News and World Report, March 1959, quoted by Radio Liberation Daily Bulletin, 31 March 1959.

⁴This law directly affected about 8,000,000 people.