



DIST: 25 AUGUST 82

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DOMESTIC COLLECTION DIVISION

THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE
REPORT CLASS

COUNTRY: USSR

SUBJECT: USE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS ON SOVIET CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS
(DOI: 1976)

REF:
SOURCE:

1. AS OF 1976, FORCED LABOR IN THE FORM OF POLITICAL PRISONERS
WAS ROUTINELY USED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MOST MAJOR CONSTRUCTION



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Approved for Release
Date

MAR 1997

[REDACTED]

PROJECTS THROUGHOUT THE USSR. SPECIFICALLY, ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SECOND TRANS SIBERIAN RAILROAD--BAM--WHICH AT TIMES OCCUPIED THE SERVICES OF 500,000 WORKERS AT ONE TIME, MORE THAN 50 PERCENT OF THE "CRIMINALS" WORKING ON THE PROJECT WERE "POLITICAL PRISONERS." (SOURCE COMMENT: THE USSR DOES NOT TERM ANYONE A "POLITICAL PRISONER," INSTEAD GROUPING ALL PRISONERS IN THE CATEGORY OF "CRIMINAL".) [REDACTED] COMMENT: FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS REPORT, THE TERM "POLITICAL PRISONER" WILL BE USED TO SIMPLIFY TERMINOLOGY.)

2. POLITICAL PRISONERS WORKING ON PROJECTS THROUGHOUT THE USSR IN THE EARLY AND MID-1970S DID THE MOST MONOTONOUS, MENIAL, AND PHYSICALLY DEMANDING WORK AT THE SITE. THOSE INDIVIDUALS CLASSIFIED AS "COMMON CRIMINALS" WERE, FOR THE MOST PART, THE "OVERSEERS" AND "CREW LEADERS" WHO ON A HIERARCHICAL SCALE OF FORCED LABOR WERE SUPERIOR TO POLITICAL CRIMINALS. THIS GROUP WOULD GENERALLY BE GRANTED THE CREDIT FOR "SUPERIOR" WORK OR ACHIEVEMENT ON PARTICULAR PROJECTS AND WERE FREE TO USE PHYSICAL FORCE, IF NECESSARY, ON OCCASION TO KEEP POLITICAL PRISONERS WORKING. POLITICAL PRISONERS WERE THUS GENERALLY REGARDED AS EXPENDABLE.

3. ALTHOUGH THE POLITICAL AND COMMON PRISONERS USUALLY SHARED THE SAME LIVING QUARTERS, COMMON CRIMINALS WERE GENERALLY PROVIDED WITH BETTER CONDITIONS IN THE FORM OF SLIGHTLY LARGER ROOMS, SOMETIMES ADDITIONAL FOOD ALLOTMENTS, AND OCCASIONALLY LONGER REST PERIODS WHILE IN THE LIVING QUARTERS. AT LEAST ON THE BAM PROJECT, MURDERERS AND RAPISTS WERE ROUTINELY AFFORDED BETTER LIVING CONDITIONS THAN WERE POLITICAL PRISONERS, AS WELL AS THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME TEAM AND CREW LEADERS. POLITICAL PRISONERS WERE GRANTED ABSOLUTELY NO COMPENSATION, MONETARY OR OTHERWISE, FOR THEIR SERVICES.

4. ALL PRISONERS, POLITICAL AND OTHER, WERE NOT PERMITTED TO LEAVE THE LIVING COMPOUND WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM NON-CRIMINAL CONSTRUCTION SUPERVISERS. POLITICAL AND COMMON CRIMINALS WERE, HOWEVER, MOBILE IN THE SENSE THAT THEY WERE ALLOWED TO TRAVEL FROM ONE CAMP TO ANOTHER IN CONJUNCTION WITH CONSTRUCTION NEEDS AND PLANS.

5. [REDACTED] COMMENT: SOURCE HAS NO DIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF THE TYPE OF SOVIET LABOR WHICH IS CURRENTLY BEING USED ON THE NEW SIBERIAN TO WESTERN EUROPE NATURAL GAS PIPELINE. HOWEVER, HE CANNOT BELIEVE THAT THE SITUATION AS TO WORKER MAKE-UP ON THIS PROJECT CAN IN ANY WAY BE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT WAS ON THOSE MAJOR CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS WITH WHICH HE IS FAMILIAR. AS A RESULT, SOURCE CLAIMS HE IS "ABSOLUTELY POSITIVE" THAT PAROLED COMMON PRISONERS, COMMON PRISONERS, AND POLITICAL PRISONERS ARE CURRENTLY BEING EMPLOYED ON THE GAS PIPELINE PROJECT.)

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]