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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DOMESTIC COLLECTION DIVISION

THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT FINALLY EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE
REPORT CLASS [REDACTED]

COUNTRY: USSR
SUBJECT: USE OF CRIMINAL LABOR ON SOVIET PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION
(OOI: 1930'S TO 1977)
REF: [REDACTED]
SOURCE: [REDACTED]

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SUMMARY: AS OF THE MID-1970S WORKERS FROM PRISON CAMPS WERE SUPPLYING UNSKILLED LABOR ON GAS AND OIL PIPELINE PROJECTS IN THE USSR. SPECIFICALLY, PRISON CAMP LABOR WAS USED FOR PRELIMINARY WORK SUCH AS CLEARING FORESTS AND PREPARING ROADS AT THE GAS COMPRESSOR STATION AT BOGORODCHANI. SUCH WORKERS RECEIVED NO WAGES AND USUALLY WERE HOUSED IN TENT COMMUNITIES.

END SUMMARY

1. DURING THE PERIOD COVERING ROUGHLY 1960-1967 THE AVAILABILITY OF LABOR AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT WAS MORE THAN ADEQUATE TO COVER CONSTRUCTION ON OIL AND GAS PIPELINES IN THE USSR. AS OF THE LATE 1970'S, HOWEVER, FUNDING AND SKILLED LABOR BECAME INCREASINGLY SCARCE. PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION WORK IN PARTICULAR GREW MORE LABOR INTENSIVE. DATING BACK TO THE YEARS OF THE 1930'S THROUGH 1950'S YOUNG PEOPLE HAD A VERY ENTHUSIASTIC ATTITUDE ABOUT SIGNING UP FOR DUTY ON OIL AND GAS PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS; DURING THE 1970'S IT BECAME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO RECRUIT INDIVIDUALS TO WORK UNDER ADVERSE CLIMATIC AND LIVING CONDITIONS.

[REDACTED]

2. CRIMINAL PRISONERS OFTEN WERE USED AS UNSKILLED LABORERS IN THE 1970'S TO CLEAR AWAY FORESTS, DRAIN SWAMPS, AND TO FASHION ROADWAYS FOR LAYING PIPELINES. THAT WORK ALSO WAS DONE IN SOME AREAS BY MILITARY CONSTRUCTION BATTALIONS. PEOPLE FROM THE ASIAN REPUBLICS SUCH AS KAZAKHSTAN FREQUENTLY COMPRISED THE WORK FORCE. THE CRIMINAL FORCE CREWS WERE USED FOR LAND CLEARING WORK IN THE UKRAINE PRIOR TO THE WORK ON THE YAMAL GAS PIPELINE PROJECT. WHEN THE CLEARING WORK WAS COMPLETED, THE CRIMINAL WORK CREWS WERE REMOVED FROM THE WORK SITES BEFORE THE SKILLED LABORERS AND KOMSOMOL CONSTRUCTION GROUPS ARRIVED. EVERY EFFORT WAS MADE NOT TO INFORM THE LATTER GROUPS THAT CRIMINAL LABOR HAD BEEN USED ON THE PROJECT.

3. AS OF THE MID-1970'S BOTH POLITICAL AND CRIMINAL PRISONERS WERE TASKED WITH PRELIMINARY CLEARING WORK AT PIPELINE SITES. THOSE WORKERS EARNED NO WAGES. THE WORKERS DESIGNATED AS "KHIMIYA" DID, HOWEVER, EARN WAGES FOR UNSKILLED LABOR ON PIPELINE PROJECTS. [REDACTED] COMMENT: SOURCE INDICATED THAT THE TERM KHIMIYA REFERRED TO THOSE INDIVIDUAL WHO HAD SERVED PRISON TERMS BUT WHO WERE DENIED THEIR CHOICE OF RELOCATION SITE IN THE USSR. SUCH INDIVIDUALS WERE PLACED INSTEAD ON VARIOUS WORK PROJECTS.]

4. IN THE LATE 1970'S WORKERS WHO HELD UNSKILLED JOBS ON PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS EARNED ABOUT 300 RUBLES PER MONTH. THOSE WHO HELD SKILLED JOBS SUCH AS PIPE WELDING EARNED 600-700 RUBLES PER MONTH. THE ADDITIONAL PAY WAS REFERRED TO AS "CLIMATIC" OR "HARDSHIP ALLOWANCES."

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5. THERE WERE FOUR CATEGORIES OF CRIMINAL CAMPS IN THE USSR. THE CAMP OF GENERAL REGIME (LAGER' OBSHCHEGO REZHIMA) WAS FOR INDIVIDUALS SENTENCED FOR LIGHT OFFENSES WITH TERMS OF UP TO SEVEN YEARS. THE CAMP OF INTENSIFIED REGIME (LAGER' USILENNOGO REZHIMA) WAS FOR FIRST OFFENDERS OF SERIOUS CRIMES. THE CAMP OF STRICT OR SEVERE REGIME (LAGER' STROGOGO REZHIMA) WAS FOR CRIMINALS SENTENCED FOR MURDER, RAPE, AND OTHER SERIOUS CRIMES. THE CAMP OF SPECIAL REGIME (LAGER' OSOBOGO REZHIMA) WAS FOR REPEAT OFFENDERS; INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE CONSIDERED TO BE ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS TO SOCIETY. A CAMP DESIGNATED AS "USILENNOGO REZHIMA" WAS LOCATED NEAR KOLOMYYA AND PRISONERS AT THAT CAMP WERE USED AS UNSKILLED LABORERS ON THE UZHGOROD SECTION OF THE ORENBURG PIPELINE. A CAMP DESIGNATED AS "STROGOGO REZHIMA" AT SOKI RYANY NEAR CHERNOVTSY ALSO SUPPLIED UNSKILLED LABOR TO THE PIPELINE PROJECT. WORKERS AT THE LATTER CAMP NORMALLY DID MINING AND QUARRY WORK.

6. ONLY CRIMINAL CAMPS WERE LOCATED IN THE AREA OF IVANO-FRANKOVSK. CAMPS FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS USUALLY WERE LOCATED IN THE LESS POPULATED EASTERN REGIONS OF THE USSR IN ORDER TO DECREASE THE POSSIBILITY OF CONTACT WITH OTHER SOVIEI CITIZENS. SUCH CAMPS WERE LOCATED IN CONSTRUCTION SITES ALONG THE URENGOY SECTION OF THE PIPELINE AND WERE BELIEVED TO HAVE SUPPLIED UNSKILLED LABOR FOR THE PROJECT.

7. IN 1975 OR 1976 THE IVANO-FRANKOVSK DEPARTMENT OF THE MOSCOW SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR DRILLING EQUIPMENT PROVIDED BORING EQUIPMENT AND ACCEPTED CONTRACT WORK ASSIGNMENTS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE GAS COMPRESSOR STATION AT BOGORODCHANI, OUTSIDE OF IVANO-FRANKOVSK. CRIMINAL CAMPS LOCATED IN THE AREA SUPPLIED THE UNSKILLED LABOR FOR THAT PROJECT. UNITS FROM THE MVD FORCES ATTACHED TO IVANO-FRANKOVSK GUARDED THE CRIMINAL LABORERS.

[REDACTED]

8. THE SOVIETS GENERALLY WERE NOT INTERESTED IN INVESTING THE LABOR AND CAPITAL REQUIRED TO ERECT TEMPORARY HOUSING AT CONSTRUCTION SITES FOR COMPRESSOR STATIONS. IF THE CONSTRUCTION SITES WERE RELATIVELY CLOSE TO A CITY OR VILLAGE, SKILLED LABOR RECEIVED HOUSING WITHIN THE CITY. IF THE SITES WERE AT A GOOD DISTANCE FROM CONSTRUCTION SITES, THE WORKERS LIVED IN TENTS. THE CRIMINAL LABOR FORCE WAS PLACED IN TENT COMMUNITIES REGARDLESS OF THE LOCATION OF CONSTRUCTION SITES IN ORDER TO SEGREGATE THOSE WORKERS FROM THE LOCAL POPULACE.

9. COMMENT: BASED ON HIS PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN WORK AT VARIOUS OIL AND GAS DRILLING SITES, SOURCE IS OF THE OPINION THAT THE SOVIETS DEFINITELY ARE CAPABLE OF COMPLETING THE YAMAL PIPELINE WITH OR WITHOUT THE ASSISTANCE OF WESTERN TECHNOLOGY. THE ABSENCE OF THAT TECHNOLOGY, LIKELY WOULD DELAY COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT BY SEVERAL YEARS AND WOULD DRAW CAPITAL AND LABOR RESOURCES FROM OTHER SECTORS OF THE SOVIET ECONOMY.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]