

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

20 August 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Richard Burt
Assistant Secretary of State-Designate
for European Affairs

THROUGH : Stanley Moskowitz
National Intelligence Officer
for USSR-Eastern Europe

FROM : R. M. Huffstutler
Director of Soviet Analysis

SUBJECT : Alleged Use of Forced Labor on Siberian Pipeline

1. The Soviets have frequently and sharply denied the allegation that they are using forced labor in construction of the Siberian gas export pipeline. The charge evidently was first publicized at the beginning of August by a human rights organization based in West Germany. We have evidence that common prisoners or parolees are used for pipeline construction, but there is no evidence that political prisoners are being used for such work.

2. Moscow's initial rebuttal, in a Finnish-language broadcast on 5 August claimed that all those working on the project were "free people." Subsequent Soviet public comment has contended that no prisoners of any sort are involved in any pipeline construction work. TASS on 18 August, for example, cited an article in the newspaper Sovetskaya Rossiya and reiterated that "not a single prisoner is working on the construction of the (Siberian) gas pipeline." Also on 18 August, an official of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's USA Division made a similar all-inclusive denial to the US Embassy Economic Counselor in Moscow. In an interview on 19 August with the Soviet Novosti News Agency, Boris Ye. Shcherbina, the head of the Ministry for Construction of Petroleum and Gas Industry Enterprises, stated unequivocally that "there is not a single prisoner either at the Siberia-Western Europe gas pipeline, or at any other project of the Ministry for that matter."

3.

Albina Yakoreva, reportedly a founding member of the dissident Soviet free trade union SMOT, claimed in an interview on 8 August with a French news agency that more than 90 percent of

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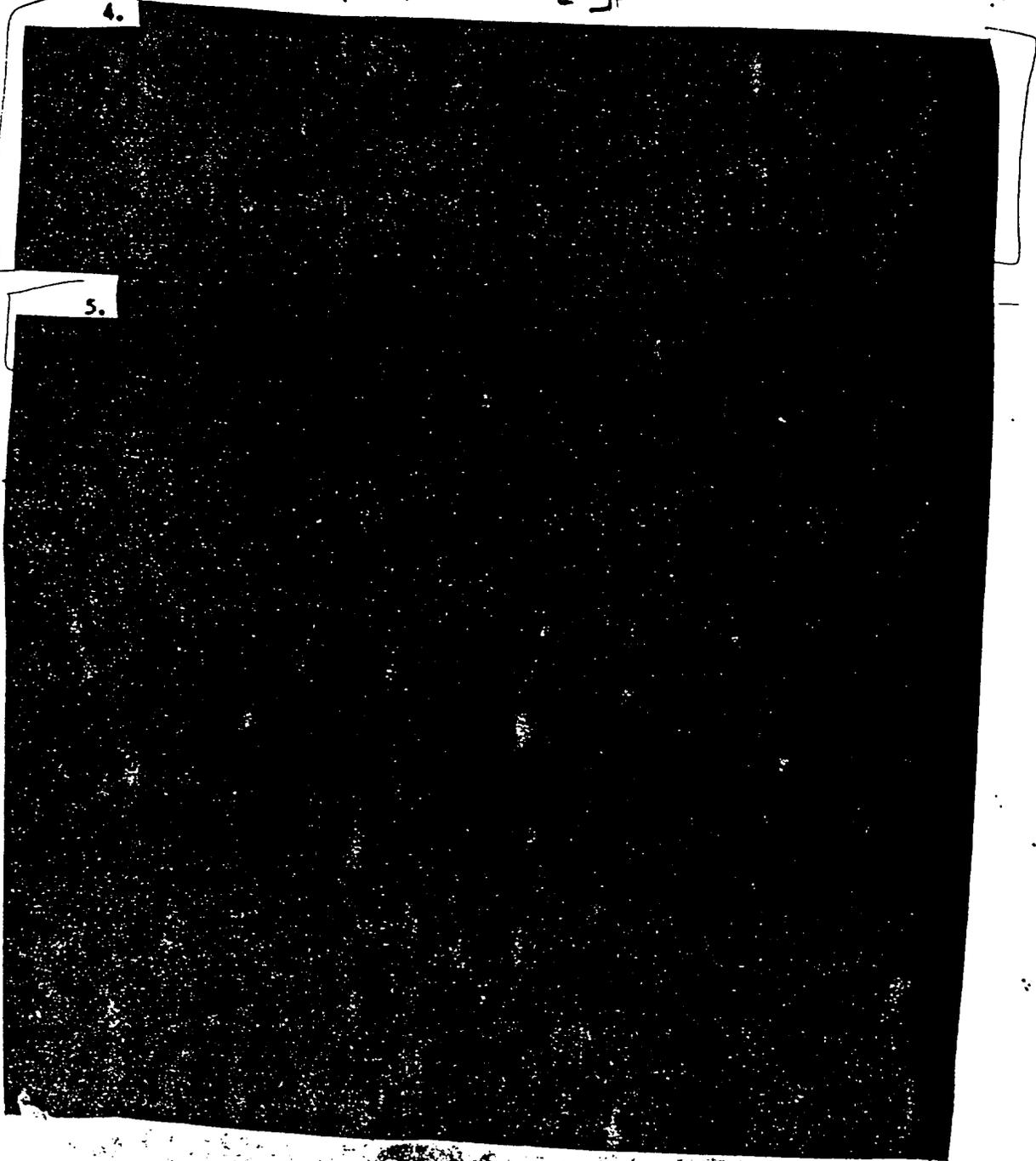
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the workers on the Siberian pipeline are prisoners, but she could not confirm that political prisoners are among them. [REDACTED]

4.



5.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

6. [REDACTED] we believe that because of their severe labor shortage, the Soviets may be using some of the two million people currently in forced labor camps, as well as parolees, to perform manual labor or service tasks on important pipeline construction projects. In denying Western accusations, Gas Construction Minister Shcherbina explained that prisoners could not work on pipeline construction precisely because it needs "highly skilled and experienced specialists." Some of the estimated 10,000 imprisoned political and religious dissidents may possess specialized skills needed on projects as sophisticated and complex as major pipeline construction, but we have no evidence that any are being used.

7. Moscow has made it clear that the Siberian export pipeline project has national priority, and that all human or material resources needed will be provided. Given that priority, and the large prisoner population, we believe Moscow can secure sufficient numbers of skilled and unskilled workers without resort to political prisoners. In addition, the West Europeans have traditionally been highly critical of the Soviets' treatment of their dissidents, and Moscow would be especially wary of using political prisoners on the Siberian export pipeline.

[REDACTED]
K. H. HUFFSTOTLER

[REDACTED]

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