

THE RELATIONSHIP OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL  
DEVELOPMENT WITH POLITICAL REPRESSION  
IN THE SOVIET UNION:  
A CASE STUDY  
1950-1990

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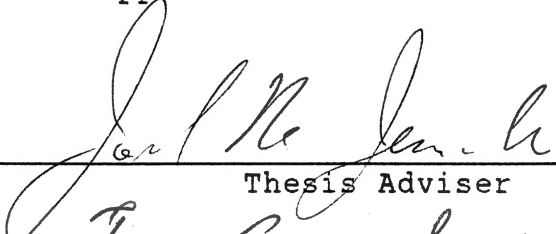
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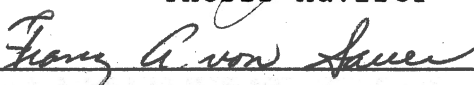
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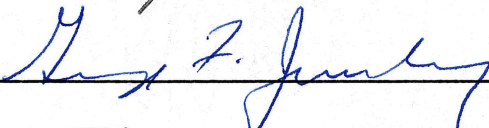
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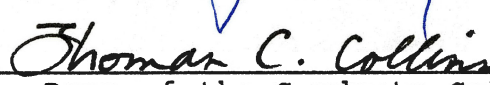
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*IN MEMORY OF A LOVELY YOUNG LADY*

*CATHEE LYNN BAKER*

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

For decades in the Soviet Union there existed a secret that Soviet officials wanted kept within their borders. Political repression of Soviet citizens at the hands of the state was not an image Soviet officials wanted to portray to the people of the world. Though their preference for secrecy was not altogether realized, there remained much that people outside of the Soviet government did not know. It is a well known fact that some Soviet citizens who chose to practice their "guaranteed" political rights--freedom of speech, conscience, and association--were subjected to arrest and imprisonment. What is not well known is *why* this occurred. Some analysts, who have studied human rights abuse and the role it plays in development strategy, have assumed that repression is an instrument of development--an avenue for maintaining power while forcing growth, especially economic growth. Others have argued that repression for development leads to economic decline in the end. What is agreed upon is that development and growth should be a goal. How to get there is another story. This study explores the development path of the Soviet Union applying the concepts of economic and political development

and their relationship with political rights. In the final analysis, a conclusion is drawn that the Soviet government's lack of respect for political rights may in some way be related to the decline in their economy.

#### Economic Development

Before the 1960s, the emphasis on economic development and growth around the world was significant. The success or failure of a government was often judged by the speed of economic growth it had secured with its policies. This growth was equated with growth in Gross National Product (GNP) and capital accumulation. Governments were to throw their interests and dollars into the economy and development would occur (Haberler, 15; de Vey Mestagh, 146; Baldwin, 64). By the 1960s, growth had become the overriding objective in "developed" and "less-developed" countries. This growth was to be achieved predominantly by industrial and technological development (Agazzi, 15). Years and years of economic research led economists to believe that increasing capital output, rates of investment and saving, and GNP subsequently led to development and a better way of life for a country's people (Singer, 3).

Soviet development strategists, since the nation's birth, were enthralled by progression just as economists were around the world. Accordingly, each Soviet leader had his own version of how to affect rapid growth--particularly in the economy. Lenin's War Communism laid the first



foundation of a centrally planned economy where the Soviet state owned the means of production. Although he loosened the constraints of the centrally controlled economic system in his later years with the New Economic Policy, the idea of central planning would come back to the forefront with Stalin's strategy for rapid economic growth (Braverman, 9).

During the 1930s the Stalinist system was put into place and was carried out through the 1940s. The design included a large percentage of Soviet GNP going to investment. This investment was concentrated in areas where each unit of capital brought a high return in added output-- primarily heavy industry with capital-intensive technologies and a military bias (ibid. 15; Montias, 58). Throughout this time the Soviet economy grew significantly with an annual growth rate of around 5.9 percent while the state continued its all-embracing role in economic activity (Millar 1990, 187).

Pre-1965 economic research, which included the theory that development would occur and sustain if states concentrated on growth in GNP, took a blow after many social problems continued to exist even in those countries that experienced significant economic growth. This occurrence was much to the economists' dismay as they had believed for years that once a country achieves relatively high levels of economic development, higher levels of economic development and improved living standards would follow. In addition,

there were economies that did not grow as expected (Singer, 3; Huntington and Nelson, 42).

The Soviet situation was an example of the above circumstance. At the conclusion of World War II the Soviet Union had been thrust into world politics and was considered a major force. The economy, however, was twenty percent smaller than it had been at the war's outset (Millar 1981, 50). Throughout the 1950s, investment was twenty-five percent of GNP with a continued emphasis on heavy industry. Nonetheless, the economic growth rates in the Soviet Union began a pattern of steady decline that continued for decades (Braverman, 15; See Appendix A for growth percentages in GNP).

Many analysts have contemplated the various reasons for the slow-down in Soviet economic growth. Some argued that the decline in per annum growth was due to maturity. The Soviet economy had become more complex and complexity may cause growth rates to drop and then become level (Millar 1981, 180). Others contended that the Stalinist model of fast paced, forced industrialization was the culprit, for the economy could not sustain such rapid growth over long periods of time (Cohn, 24). Some charged that the extreme centralization of the economy ignored individual initiative and, therefore, stagnation occurred (Heinz, 11). Still others maintained that the Soviet economic system was too inflexible and the growth strategy lacked reform that resembled capitalistic change (Guha, 104). While these

arguments are viable and worth consideration as reasons for the decline in Soviet economic growth, there remain still other explanations that require exposure. These other explanations may be found in political rather than economic form.

In the late 1960s there was a "vigorous denunciation of the growth-oriented development economics of the previous twenty-five years" (Arndt, 91). Social problems were growing worse even when economies were maintaining growth. Some economies were also ceasing to grow and began showing decline (ibid). The trend in development literature took a turn as the new emphasis became political development as well as economic development. Economists, as well as other social scientists, acknowledged the notion that governments should focus on political growth in order to maintain economic growth. Their studies have found "quite striking confirmation that a high level of political development tends to be a favorable pre-condition for more economic growth" (Singer, 5). In short, political conditions could play a decisive role in impeding or facilitating advances in economic growth (Baran, Buchanan, Benjamin, Hirschman, and Ward).

#### Political Development

Political development predominantly involves the development of an autonomous political infrastructure (Almond and Powell, 46). This involves the creation of

political institutions, "stable, valued, and recurring patterns of behavior," that are adaptable, independent and able to absorb the participation of society (Huntington, 266). The structure of these institutions can reduce or increase a state's ability to change and develop (Lipset, 103).

Political institutions take many forms. First, with respect to government system performance, institutional development involves administrative and legal development. An autonomous legal system based on the rule of law must be created (Pye, 33-45; Bill and Hardgrave, 67-68). Second, with respect to the population as a whole, development includes "a change from widespread subject status [citizens being subject to the decisions of government without having any voice or representation] to an increasing number of contributing citizens, with an accompanying spread of autonomous mass participation" (Pye, 13). The state, in turn, must develop the capacity to deal with the participation of its citizens, whether it is in the form of support or dissent, and allow this participation to play a role in official decisions (Huntington and Nelson, 3). Lastly, political development requires a wider acceptance of universalistic standards of law. These standards are generally a product of the international community as set forth by international organizations such as the United Nations. A developed political system should, therefore, include a wide acceptance of the standards that emanate from

accepted and respected bodies of international organization in which a nation-state claims membership (Pye 1965, 13; Pye 1966, 37; Claude).

Political Rights. When surveying the requirements of political development mentioned above, the notions of an autonomous legal system based on the rule of law, autonomous political participation, and acceptance of universalistic law lead to the concept of human rights--in particular political human rights. Many universal documents (and national constitutions) provide for these certain political rights that all citizens of a participating government in an international system shall enjoy and that governments shall not restrict. Among these are the freedom from arbitrary arrest, freedom to dissent, freedom of conscience, thought and assembly (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, articles 7,9,10 18,19 20). These political rights and their relationship with political development are the concern for this study as it will be demonstrated that Soviet officials have done little over the years to protect these rights. In not doing so the Soviet state did not meet the requirements of political development and, thereby, may have produced in part the decline in their economy.

When the notion of political rights was considered along with the concept of development there emerged two competing paradigms. First, early development literature exposed the fact that development requires significant growth and, because of this fact, justified the limiting of

political rights. The belief was that for development to succeed, political liberties must be repressed--even if temporarily (Meltzer, 60). Development and human rights were seen as competing concerns. Analysts then began to ask "Is repression necessary for rapid growth or development?" A new body of research emerged and the second pattern of thought was set forth with the idea that development requires the active participation of the people. The deprivation of political rights destroys and undermines growth strategy rather than furthering it (Howard, 469; Meltzer, 60) Therefore, guaranteeing political rights was viewed as necessary and preferable for "the ultimate purpose of development is to lay the basis for realizing human dignity" (Donnelly, 202).

As is well known, the Soviet state--which was a party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and whose own constitution provided for numerous political rights--often repressed its own citizens for simply expressing their guaranteed rights. It is the contention of this author that by doing so they may have undermined their own growth. Abuse of political human rights is not a sign of healthy, stable political development. As mentioned above, recent studies have contended that political development is a prerequisite and necessity for economic growth. Therefore, the decline in Soviet economic growth may have been a result of the Soviet government's human rights behavior, which will be exposed further below.

Scope of Study, Methodology, and Other Definitions. The scope of this study is the economic and political situation in the Soviet Union from 1950 to 1990, but includes qualitative data from Stalin's years in power (1930s and 1940s). It is to be presented as a case study in which economic development theory and political development theory were applied to Soviet economics and politics during these three decades. Soviet human rights data was used to indicate the level of political development that the Soviet government had achieved.

The sources used for this project consist of both primary and secondary sources. Soviet economic data on the fulfillment of their economic plans was used in conjunction with International Monetary Fund reports, United States government documents, and scholarly studies of the Soviet economy for data concerning Soviet growth. Secondary historical accounts provided the bulk of information on Soviet politics, although several speeches given by Soviet leaders were used as well. First hand and second hand accounts of human rights practices, primarily published by international human rights organizations and former political prisoners, were used as information for Soviet human rights behavior. The possibility of western bias, particularly in the economic data, may be noted. The studies used, however, are predominantly the most recent, most cited, and most respected studies on the Soviet

economy. The international human rights organizations from which political imprisonment data was taken should rarely be in question as these organizations are considered by most to be independent of any political influence from any one government.

Gross National Product has been used in this study to indicate and monitor economic growth in the Soviet Union as this is the most commonly accepted and accessible method. An obvious weakness with this method is that there is often difficulty in finding a consensus on Soviet economic figures. Soviet figures have been found by many analysts to be unreliable and are often adjusted in western studies to reflect more accurate levels. Those adjusted figures are used as data for this study.

This study has relied on the numbers of political imprisonments--those people that have been imprisoned solely for political activity--as an indicator of human rights practices as this is the method of most international human rights organizations and governments. As with economic figures, the numbers of political imprisonments have also been quite difficult to pinpoint as the occurrence of such imprisonments was considered by the Soviets to be a state secret. International organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, compile reports of political imprisonments around the world, but they sometimes have to rely on secondary sources and accounts. The problem



of complete accuracy, therefore, is an acknowledged weakness.

Other terms that may require some clarification, as they may be mentioned frequently throughout this study, include totalitarianism, Soviet government and party. In this study, as in many others, the Soviet system that existed during the specified time period is referred to as a totalitarian system. Most aspects of Soviet society were directed and monitored from the center. The center was composed of a unique relationship between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the Soviet government. Since the beginning of Soviet history, until its demise, the CPSU was the overriding force in Soviet society. Though the Soviet government existed, it was directed by the CPSU. For practical purposes, this study uses the term Soviet "government" when explaining human rights policy practices. The basic understanding should be that government policies originated in the party and passed from it to the government administration and then to the people.

The remainder of this project consists of three chapters that follow. Chapter two provides a review of the relevant literature concerning economic development, political development, and human rights and development. Chapter three reports the findings of the study pertaining to the Soviet Union. An overview of the Soviet economic system, including its growth and decline, is provided, as is an overview of Soviet politics. The relevant aspects of

political development are reviewed beginning with the existence of political rights in the Soviet Union, as exposed in a discussion of the Soviet Constitution. The judicial system and criminal codes are then discussed leading to the phenomena of political trials and political imprisonments as they occurred in the Soviet Union. The universal documents, to which the Soviet government was a party, are then revealed. The third chapter is concluded with a more detailed discussion of the Gorbachev era exposing some of the changes and reforms that took place during his time in power. The fourth and final chapter provides an analysis of the Soviet situation applying economic development and political development theory to draw the conclusions.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Economic Development

At the end of the 1940s, emphasis around the world was on development. Growth had become the overriding objective in the industrial countries of the West, as well as in the "less-developed" world and in the Communist countries of the East. Subsequently, the success or failure of governments was often judged by the rate of economic growth--increases in GNP, GNP per capita, and output per capita--they had secured, or failed to secure, by their economic policies. The assumption was that high levels of economic growth would lead to higher levels of economic growth. In turn, high levels of economic growth would lead to a better way of life for a country's people. They would enjoy, not only the basic necessities of life, but greater freedom and equality (Baeck, 37; Haberler, 15-17; Huntington and Nelson, 42). The most compelling case for economic growth, according to one author, is that "it gives man greater control over his environment, and thereby increases his freedom" (Arndt, 177). Economic growth would be beneficial, providing for a stable society, for both the country's government and its citizens.

In the early development literature, many goals were set forth that, if implemented through policy, were to pave the way to economic growth. The first was often reduced to the expansion of two factors: the size of the labor force and the productivity of each worker. Growth would be maximized when putting the maximum number of people to work and allocating resources in such a way that the outcome is the greatest possible increase in total and per capita output (Braverman, 17; Bruton, 19; Swianiewicz, 270; Galbraith, 6).

A second goal was that of selective growth. Resources and manpower should be focused in certain areas that will guarantee a high return on the investment--namely industry and technology. Industrial and technological development, therefore, became the center of most growth strategies as agriculturally based economies were seen as less efficient and "less-developed" (Agazzi, 19; Galbraith, 7).

The road to achieving long-term economic growth, according to some theorists, included the maintenance of price stability. In addition, there should be no recessions, imbalances, or fluctuations over the long run. Economic policy that strives for these long-term goals will maintain and enjoy steady growth over many years (Erdos, 105, 109, 110; Dobb, 8; Haberler, 16, 17).

One of the latest, and most often cited, pieces that sets forth economic policy goals for economic growth looks at growth as a process that occurs in five stages. The

first stage is that of a traditional society. At this level the economy suffers from low output per capita because of backward technology. As development strategy is implemented and takes hold a traditional society moves to the second stage termed "pre-conditions for take-off." At this point there should be a rise in capital accumulation. The accumulation of capital is vital, for without it growth is rarely possible. Once capital is accumulated, a society then moves to the third, or "the take-off" stage. This level should last nearly twenty years. Growth, during this stage, becomes institutionalized as a normal condition. The "drive to maturity" is the next level where modern technology spreads and "an economy demonstrates that it has the technological and entrepreneurial skill to produce not everything, but anything it chooses to produce" (Rostow, 68). This "drive" occurs in approximately forty years. During the fifth and final stage, the "age of high mass-consumption," there is a shift towards the production of durable consumers' goods and services. Food, shelter, and clothing are no longer main consumption objectives (ibid).

The ultimate key to the above five stages, and in many other studies as well, is capital accumulation. A nation must accumulate capital before any development or growth strategy of increasing GNP can take place (Baldwin, Braverman, Bruton, Galbraith, Haberler, and Rostow). In short, money was the answer to the development question.

After years and years of emphasis on increasing capital to increase GNP and output, purely economic factors, an emphasis on non-economic factors began to emerge. Extensive studies that explored the strategies and levels of economic growth in developing countries often found that the original hypothesis, concerning the move from capital accumulation to growth in GNP to a better way of life for a country's people, was not heavily supported. Experience showed that even if there was an increase in GNP and the material condition, there was not necessarily a guarantee of an improved human condition. The people living in developing areas did not necessarily enjoy a higher standard of living or greater freedom, which was the contention of early development research (de Vey Mestdagh, 146). In addition, some studies showed that this type of growth strategy did not necessarily provide for growth at all (Baeck, Banathy). Therefore, there began a "vigorous denunciation of the growth-oriented development economics of the previous twenty-five years" as economists attempted to understand these developments (Arndt, 91). In doing so, they became aware that other disciplines had a great deal to contribute to the problems of economic development--including political scientists (Singer, 3).

In the last decade, the concepts and goals of development have changed, not only in world scholarship, but in policy-making arenas. Many authors began to express the sentiment that political conditions could play a decisive

role in impeding or facilitating advances in economic growth. Their studies found that a high level of political development is quite favorable for economic growth and should be a goal for countries interested in further economic development. Once perceived as a mere technical problem of capital accumulation, economic development became looked upon as, first and foremost, a problem of political change (Baeck, Baran, Buchanan, Higgins, Girschman, Singer, Ward).

#### Political Development

As established above, the literature today seems to emphasize "a law of cumulative development" (Singer, 8). Development carries with it not only the idea of economic growth, but also of greater innovations in the political arena. The notion of political development is comprised of many factors, or indicators, that several theorists have exposed as the necessary elements that political systems, those whose decisions are binding on society, must develop (Easton, 112).

The most basic elements of political development are effectiveness and legitimacy. Effectiveness relates to the actual performance of the political system--the extent to which it satisfies the basic functions of government in the eyes of the members of society. Legitimacy involves the capacity of a political system to maintain its existence, or change when appropriate (Lipset 1959, 86). A government

should have the capacity to change in order to manage public affairs and cope with popular demands (Pye 1965, 13; Bill and Hardgrave, 78). If the people sense that their political system has the ability to absorb the developments in society and change accordingly, they will consider it to be legitimate (Almond and Verba 1963, 253).

It is the notion of capacity with which many theorists are most fundamentally concerned. A political system's problem solving capability may determine its success or failure, for development is the result of the system's change. If the system does not have the capacity to change, then it cannot develop--and it is development that provides for a more effective and legitimate system (Almond and Powell 1966, 34, 105)

The capacity for a political system to change is related to the one aspect of political development that is stressed most often--the creation of institutions. It is the shape of institutions in a political system that can reduce or increase the propensity to change (Coleman, 74-75; Huntington 1968, 5; Lipset 1959, 103). Political institutions, "stable, valued, and recurring patterns of behavior," take form in the developments of an autonomous legal system that adheres to a rule by law, an allowance of autonomous political participation, and an acceptance of universal standards of law (Huntington, 266; Pye 1966, 33-45). In other words, a major step in the development of



political systems is the emergence of an autonomous political infrastructure (Almond and Powell 1966, 29, 46).

An independent judiciary, according to theorists, is an essential institution. The other branches of government should not control the judiciary in any manner. It should be completely independent of any influence from the other areas of the political system (Bill and Hardgrave, 67-68). In addition, the written law of the land should be the only focus of the judicial system. Its decisions must be based on the rule of law and not applied in an arbitrary manner at either the judiciary's discretion or on command from another aspect of the government (Almond and Powell 1966, 29).

Autonomous political participation relates to a government's acceptance of political activity that comes from the people, not mobilized by the government, and is a fundamental "pattern of behavior" a political system must develop. Private citizens should be allowed to actively voice their opinions, beliefs, conscience, and create associations independently rather than having such participation directed by the government. The actions by the people should be considered an influence on political decision-making whether it be directed toward "changing decisions by current authorities, toward replacing or retaining those authorities, or toward changing or defending the existing organization of the political system and the rules of the political game" (Huntington and Nelson, 3-6). Any and all means of political participation by the people

should be considered an influence on the decisions and actions of the government and should be established norms in the political system (ibid. 6).

The third "pattern" or institution that must be demonstrated by the political system is the "acceptance of universalistic laws" (Pye 1965, 13). These laws may take the form of documents that have been drawn up, agreed upon, and signed by various nations around the world. A prime example would be the many documents that are produced in the United Nations. Nearly all nations of the world are members of this international organization and, therefore, they should each have a wide acceptance of the resolutions that are the result of such a "universalistic" body (Claude). In short, a developed nation-state that claims membership to an international organization should "operate effectively in [that] system of other nation-states...[by] making and upholding international commitments" (Pye 1966, 37).

Human Rights and Development. The requirements of political development--an independent legal system, autonomous political participation, and acceptance of universalistic law--have a unique relationship with the notion of political rights. These rights include, according to many international documents and national constitutions, the freedom from arbitrary law, the right to free speech, conscience, and association.

On the 10th of December, 1948, the United Nations set forth the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The preamble of this document states that "the inherent dignity and...the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." These inalienable rights include many that emphasize the very institutions that are a part of political development.

Concerning an autonomous judiciary, the UDHR, in articles 7,9, and 10, states that "all are equal before the law and are entitled...to the equal protection of the law. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest...or detention, [and] everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal" (UDHR, 8). Regarding autonomous political participation, articles 18, 19, 20, and 21 state that "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, freedom of opinion and expression. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association [and]...has the right to take part in the government of his country" (ibid. 11).

In addition to the UDHR, many other covenants on political rights have been established. In 1966, the "International Covenant on Human Rights" was constituted. In 1973, the "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" and, in 1975, the "Helsinki Final Act" were created, all reiterating the rights and freedoms set forth by the 1948 UDHR. All of these documents, being examples of

"universalistic laws," are themselves related to the concept of political development. Since they speak directly to the criteria described above, a political system should extend a wide acceptance to these human rights documents in order to be considered developed.

The relationship between political rights and development has been examined in many studies. The interest was on determining whether the governments of developing countries denied or guaranteed political rights to its citizens. The object was to determine which was most beneficial to a political system's growth. Political repression was found to be quite common in developing countries and, therefore, was often considered a necessary occurrence. More recently, researchers have asked themselves if the denial of these rights is necessary to develop. From this question a whole new pattern of thought emerged (Donnelly 1989, 10).

As was seen in the early economic development literature, the notion that economic growth would lead to great things for a country's well being created an obsession with development. A country's leaders, being caught up with the idea of economic progress, often chose to limit political rights to achieve growth. The belief was that repressing these rights was necessary to attain significant economic growth, but would only be necessary in the short run. As soon as the economy began to grow, and the political system became more stable, the repression could

end. In the meantime, the people would benefit from material gains brought about by a growing economy and would not be concerned about the denial of political rights (Meltzer, 35; Huntington and Nelson, 23). In short, political rights and development were seen as competing concerns (Donnelly 1984, 255).

For many years, developing countries participated in what has been called "the liberty tradeoff." Political leaders believed that the exercise of political rights by the citizens may upset or even destroy the best-laid development plan. Elections may be suspended because "elected officials are likely to support policies based on short-run political expediency rather than...insist on politically unpopular but economically essential sacrifices" (ibid. 257). The freedoms of speech, assembly, and association, when exercised, may create division, which the polity may not be able to endure. An elaborate and independent legal system may seem to be an "extravagant anachronism" (ibid.; also, Mitchell and McCormick, 478).

All of the above "tradeoffs" were widely held to be necessary evils, although temporary and self-correcting. Researchers began to question, however, just how long the desire for freedom and self-expression could be bought off, even assuming that growth could be sustained in a repressive environment. Creating the "capability to generate future growth and development is an important element of virtually all definitions of development" (Donnelly 1989, 194).

As many began to ask if repression was truly necessary, a new pattern of thought was realized in that the deprivation of political rights, not their exercise, destroys development (Donnelly 1989, 196; Meltzer, 35). The government's necessary role in economic management does not require a "full-scale abrogation" of political rights. In fact, there may be significant benefits to the exercise of these rights. As previously established, political institutions, which inherently respect rights, are necessary in order to develop politically. Political development is, in turn, a prerequisite for economic growth. The establishment, therefore, of institutions that provide for the guarantee of these political rights may be beneficial in meeting the goals of economic development (Donnelly 1984, 282; Donnelly 1989, 201; Howard 1983, 469; Mitchell and McCormick, 479).

The recent trend that has emerged in development literature in relation to human rights is quite compelling and well welcomed by the people of the world who have suffered at the hands of their government. It has been said that only if people as a whole feel that they can participate in their government--whether by voting, associating, or expressing their dissent--and not feel they are merely recipients of government decisions, can human resources be mobilized for development. After all, the "ultimate purpose of development is to lay the basis for realizing human dignity" (Donnelly 1989, 202). A nation's

development is not undertaken only for the governing body, but for the people. It should not, therefore, destroy or degrade them in the process (Pye 1965, 12; Ramphall 21, 22).

Conclusion. By reviewing the literature in the fields of economic development, political development, and human rights and development a relationship between the three was noticed. As a goal, economic growth may be realized after establishing certain aspects of political growth. The requirements for developing politically--creation of an independent judiciary, allowance of autonomous political participation, and acceptance of "universalistic laws"--inherently respect political human rights. In addition, studies have suggested that the guarantee of political rights is beneficial to development because of the feeling of security it provides for the people. In the final analysis, political leaders must realize that their goals of development may not be achieved without respecting and accepting the rights of the people.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SOVIET UNION

#### The Economy: An Overview

Soviet history is "replete with abrupt, traumatic changes in social and economic conditions" (Millar 1990, 186). Many events, such as World War I, the Revolution of 1917, the civil war, collectivization, industrialization, the purges, World War II, and reconstruction, demanded a considerable amount of sacrifice and caused important changes in the economy. Since Stalin's death, change has been rather gradual. The reforms undertaken by the leadership of Khrushchev, and then Brezhnev, however, were quite significant. By the time Gorbachev assumed power, he confronted an economy that was quite different from the one that either Khrushchev in 1953 or Brezhnev in 1964 had faced (ibid).

The developments of the 1930s, under the direction of Stalin, are critical for an understanding of the Soviet economy. The first was the implementation of economic planning whereby administrative and planning organs controlled and directed the economic life of the Soviet Union. Every economic decision was interconnected with a great many other decisions and involved a number of



"consequential effects" (Nove 1969, 66). Operational orders had to flow to enterprises, plans had to be devised for various sectors and coordinated with other sectors. Orders given about what to produce had to be backed by the necessary materials, and output plans had to be related to input plans (ibid).

The overall strategy of the central plan was to industrialize as quickly as possible. This goal was to be reached through steep rates of capital formation in order to satisfy the bias in favor of modern, capital-intensive technologies. Basically, industrialization was to be achieved through a highly centralized system. There was no room for failure as the Soviets sought quick results (Montias, 58; Nove 1959, 18).

The second development during Stalin's years of leadership was the abolition of the New Economic Policy through mass collectivization of private and peasant enterprise (Millar 1981, 21-2). This set forth the final occurrence, in relation to the goal of industrialization, that the state preferred the worker in industry over the worker in agriculture (ibid 29). In short, the stress during the 1930s was on heavy industrialization with an all-embracing role of the state in economic activity (Guha, 104).

Generally, the war and post-war years in the Soviet Union are often skipped because there is little known about them. It is known, however, that "the Soviet economy

suffered severe damage at the outset of the war, and a long and bitter contest had to be fought with less than pre-war economic capacity" (Millar 1981, 39). At the conclusion of World War II, the Soviet economy was almost twenty percent smaller than it had been at the war's beginning (Nove 1969, 71). By 1950, the Stalinist system of central planning and industrial management with pre-war priorities had been successfully reconstructed. The main difference was that military spending competed for resources with investment. The cost of "maintaining a competitive military establishment in the chilly climate of the Cold War meant a slower recovery" than would have otherwise been possible (Millar 1981, 51). By the end of the decade, however, the Soviets enjoyed a significant annual growth rate of 5.9 percent (See Appendix A).

After Stalin's death in 1953, change was implemented and accelerated. It should be acknowledged, however, that Stalin succeeded in overcoming economic backwardness and establishing the Soviet Union as a recognizably strong power. He left a legacy of victory in World War II, of priority for heavy industry, of a highly centralized system, and of one man rule (Hardt, 16; Millar 1981, 53).

In 1956 Khrushchev delivered his critique of Stalin at the Twentieth Party Congress, which led to the de-Stalinization process. Modifications were designed to provide a higher priority for agriculture, light industry, and residential construction in order to accommodate the

needs of consumers (Millar 1990, 186-7; Sharlet, 321). Khrushchev provided for thirty-six million hectares of virgin land to become available as an incentive for agricultural production. Other Stalinist programs, such as the agricultural procurement systems where output was planned and prices were fixed, were abolished. In addition, parallel rural and urban Communist party organs were established. All of these efforts were undertaken by Khrushchev in his drive to de-Stalinize the country and affect further growth (Nove 1969, 99, 211; Millar 1981, 55; Millar 1990, 253).

Growth rates during the early years of Khrushchev's leadership were significant, averaging close to six percent, and created a strong sense of optimism. The trend, however, began to decline in the early 1960s. As one specialist on the Soviet economy points out, referring to Khrushchev's shift in attention to agriculture, "the sectors into which resources were channeled were those of relatively lower productivity" (Millar 1990, 187). Although agricultural output grew at a healthy rate after 1958, it began to slacken. By the late 1960s, annual growth in Gross National Product had dropped and was averaging around 4.9 percent (Nove 1969, 39; Millar 1990, 187).

Nikita Khrushchev, overthrown in 1964, was replaced by Leonid Brezhnev. The Brezhnev years did not witness large-scale reform associated with further de-Stalinization. Brezhnev, along with his adviser Alexi Kosygin, "moved

quietly and cautiously forward, accelerating certain changes initiated under Khrushchev, slowing others, and reversing a few" (Millar 1981, 55). For the most part, they avoided system-wide institutional reform, but initiated a substantial increase in military spending, which became the hallmark of the Brezhnev years (Millar 1990, 253-4).

The reforms of the Khrushchev era collided with the new defense policy of the Brezhnev regime as there emerged a further slowdown in growth rates. According to some specialists, this slowdown was partly a result of other factors as well, such as poor weather conditions, which led to a poor response from the large agricultural investments of the Khrushchev years (Kaneda, 53; Millar 1990, 254). Nonetheless, annual growth rates plummeted throughout the 1970s from an average of 4.9 percent in 1970 to 2.5 percent in 1978. By 1980, the rate had come back up to .9 percent from a -.4 percent growth rate in 1979 (The World Fact Book; Millar 1990, The International Monetary Fund Studies; See also Appendix A).

Economic growth during the 1970s (or lack thereof) was inhibited in part by the fact that innovation by Soviet enterprises was slow and uncertain. Costs of raw materials were also on the rise because of the "increased cost of locating, recovering, and transporting resources from the sites that...[were] increasingly remote from traditional population centers" due to the fact that regions closer had been mined-out (Millar 1990, 190-91). In addition, the cost

of maintaining control in Eastern Europe was significantly large and growing. By the end of his career, Brezhnev decided to coast, leaving the difficult choices of the future to his successors (Butler, 61; Millar 1990, 197).

Andropov's brief term in office brought a spurt of reformist thinking. He pointed out that the old system of a centralized economy had become obsolete and was an obstacle to further economic development. His program for economic reconstruction, however, followed the same logic of his predecessor and nothing was gained (Kaneda, 83).

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev inherited an economy that was growing too slowly for his comfort. After so many years of stagnation it was time to elaborate new rules and implement major changes. Gorbachev's plans included a shift away from the priorities of Brezhnev, who he depicted as responsible for the country's long period of stagnation. Decentralization of the economy became the highest priority item on the agenda. (CSCE Report, 12; Heinz, 12; Rumer, 332).

The main program that Gorbachev initiated to reform the economy was termed *perestroika* (restructuring). *Perestroika* was supposed to generate new energy, higher rates of productivity, more innovation, and a more efficient economic system. Economic reforms were to establish a mixed economy with starkly reduced state planning, a robust private sector, and integration with the global market (Eklof, 13). In order to achieve such lofty goals, *perestroika* was to

work hand-in-hand with the policy of *glasnost*. *Glasnost* was designed "to restore the credibility of Soviet leadership" (Millar 1990, 269-70). This policy was created to enforce accountability of the government to the people and provide for significant political openness and change as well. *Glasnost*, then, was a means to achieve *perestroika*. It was a promise of political change--that Soviet leadership would be accountable for failures as well as successes, and that they would operate and make their decisions out in the open. In short, *Glasnost* was offered by the political leadership to the Soviet people as a token for their returned commitment to *perestroika*. It was also an acknowledgment of the notion that political development must be achieved in order to further economic growth. Gorbachev himself stated that "without *glasnost*, *perestroika*...[had] no chance of success" (Gorbachev 1987f, 251; Millar 1990, 270).

#### Soviet Politics: A Historical Overview

The notion of political change is evident in Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*. Even more, it is political change that is considered necessary for economic change--*glasnost* for *perestroika*. Gorbachev made it quite clear that it would be impossible to carry out restructuring without changing the methods of state operation (Gorbachev 1987f, 256). A brief understanding of Soviet politics is, therefore, a must and shall be followed by a detailed discussion of each aspect of political development--

political rights and participation, the judiciary, and universalistic law--as it was practiced in the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union, from 1917 until shortly before its demise in 1991, was a one-party state in which the Communist party directed all aspects of society. Extreme centralization was established most rigidly under the leadership of Josef Stalin. His regime combined systematic terror and massive use of force with a democratically phrased constitution. The political system, operating ostensibly through a hierarchy of soviets, was actually run by the party leadership. Main decisions, made by Stalin personally and approved by the Politburo, were passed to the people by lower party organs (MacKenzie and Curran, 639-644; Reshetar, 78).

Though this centralized system remained predominantly intact over the years, the leaders following Stalin sought to end the apparatus of terror. Nikita Khrushchev, who won the leadership after a short struggle for power, denounced Stalin's system of fear, relaxed some of the totalitarian controls, and sought to lighten up on strict centralization. His goal was to break from the past by stressing that state coercion was "withering away." He had much trouble, however, with opposition within the party, as many factions had been created, and he fell from power in 1964 (Lane, 112; MacKenzie and Curran, 765; Reshetar, 104).

After Khrushchev's departure from the political scene there came some significant changes in Soviet politics.

Under Leonid Brezhnev, the role of the party was further enhanced. It was to play an increasing role in "initiating major reforms, coordinating a complex socioeconomic framework and pushing forward a cautious and entrenched bureaucracy" (MacKenzie and Curran, 815). Not once did Brezhnev adopt a policy that decreased the power of the party, state, army, or police. In short, where Khrushchev had sought to lighten up on Soviet citizens, Brezhnev sought to keep and enhance central power (Lane, 120; Breslauer).

Gorbachev came to power in the same way as his predecessors did--by making his way up the party ladder and solidifying power inside the party organs. He moved rapidly to consolidate firm control over the party and state and swiftly promoted people from his own team to the Politburo. After doing so he set out to correct the many problems--both economic and political--from which the Soviet Union was suffering. According to Gorbachev his moves were to consist of: (1) including the people in the administration of the country; (2) strengthening legality and law and order so as "to rule out the possibility of the usurpation of power and abuses by the government,"; and (3) adhering to "guarantees of the protection of the constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens" (Gorbachev 1988a, 12).

Political Rights: The Constitution of the USSR. On October 7, 1977, a new constitution was drafted and set forth as the Fundamental Law of the USSR. Although the document provided



for the overwhelming role of the Communist party in Soviet society, it also provided for the individual many political rights, which were to be guaranteed and protected by the Soviet state. Article 34 stated that "citizens of the USSR are equal before the law" (Constitution of 1977, 27). The right to participate in the state was provided for by Article 49, which stated that "every citizen of the USSR has the right to submit proposals to state bodies and public organisations for improving their activity and to criticise shortcomings in their work" (ibid, 33). Article 50 provided for freedom of speech, of the press, and of assembly, meetings, street processions and demonstrations (ibid). The rights to associate in public organizations "that promote...[a citizen's] political activity and initiative" was guaranteed by Article 51 (ibid, 34). Finally, Article 57 provided each citizen the "right to protection by the courts" (ibid, 35).

These particular articles are singled out for attention because of their direct relationship to the historical suppression of dissent in the Soviet Union. since the communist revolution in 1917, the Soviet regime's attitude toward the political rights of Soviet citizens was dictated by the determination to retain power at all costs, to neutralize opponents, and to reshape society. Lenin began the trend when he institutionalized labor camps and authorized nonjudicial convictions of persons considered

dangerous to Soviet power (Department of State, Human Rights in the USSR, 1).

After the death of Lenin, Stalin continued the repression. He routinely used terror to destroy political opponents and quiet dissent. The prisons that housed people incarcerated for political activity were often sights for construction projects and prisoners were forced to labor. Under Khrushchev, indiscriminate terror ended and millions of political prisoners were released from labor camps and prisons. His own campaign against religion, however, led to a sharp decline in the number of churches and clergy. Systematic repression of Soviet citizens who chose to exercise their political rights continued under Brezhnev and Andropov, which diminished even further the ranks of activists as many were silenced (ibid).

When Gorbachev came to power there was no immediate change in the repression of previous years. In addition, he inherited legislative, judicial, and administrative weapons for combating dissent. A few years after Gorbachev assumed leadership, however, dramatic reforms were implemented that had a significant effect on the plight of political prisoners. By the end of his reign nearly all Soviet citizens that had been incarcerated for political activity were released (this will be discussed further below) and attempts were being made at judicial reform (Sharlet, 323).

The Judicial System and Criminal Codes. Historically, Communist party control was extended to the legal and judicial systems in the Soviet Union. According to Stalin's constitution of 1936 the Supreme Court of the USSR headed a judicial system including the supreme courts in the republic, regional, and people's courts. Lower courts were to be elected and higher ones were to be chosen by the corresponding soviet. Judges, however, were always subject to party policies (Lane, 12; MacKenzie and Curran, 642).

The Khrushchev era produced several statutes mandating the role of the courts, as well as the first codifications of criminal and civil law for more than four decades. Together, these statutes created a system of courts that paralleled the parliamentary system. In 1955, the Statute on Procuracy Supervision gave the Procuracy, a large, centralized judicial bureaucracy, the power to supervise the execution of justice. The Procuracy itself approved warrants for arrest, conducted the investigation of cases, and exercised broad supervisory rights over court procedures and decisions. The Procurator General, who was in charge of the administration of the legal apparatus, was elected by, and responsible to, the Supreme Soviet. He appointed procurators at the Republic level who, in turn, appointed regional, local, and district procurators (Lane, 195; Reshetar, 261).

The role of the courts, their manner of functioning, and their jurisdiction were laid down in the statute The Law

on Court Organization of the RSFSR, which came into effect in 1960. At the top was the Supreme Court of the USSR, then come the Supreme Courts of the Union Republics. The judges that sat on the Supreme Court were, just as the Procurator General, formally elected by, and responsible to, the Supreme Soviet. At the base of the system sat the People's Courts. A professional judge and two lay assessors were directly elected to serve in these courts by general meetings of industrial, office and professional workers (Lane, 200).

Individual procurators, under the supervision of the Procurator General, initiated proceedings against individuals or bodies. After an investigation the procurator prosecuted to the courts. The Procuracy's strong role was in assuring observance of the criminal codes (Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR, 8).

The RFSFR Criminal Code came into force in 1960, replacing criminal legislation that had been in existence since 1926. The Criminal Code specified:

minimum and maximum sentences for each offense contained in it. For some offenses sentences may be imposed which do not involve any form of imprisonment: for example, the imposition of a fine, deprivation of the right to hold a particular type of job or confiscation of property. Five types of punishment involve or may involve, depending on the manner of the execution of the sentence, imprisonment or restriction of physical liberty: these are exile, banishment, corrective work without imprisonment and obligatory induction to labor of people sentenced conditionally to imprisonment (Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR, 78).

So called "socially dangerous" acts were punishable as crimes according to the criminal codes. Article 70, known as the "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" article, stated that:

agitation or propaganda carried out with the purpose of subverting or weakening Soviet authority or in order to commit particular, especially dangerous crimes against the state, or the oral dissemination for the same purpose of deliberate fabrications which defame the Soviet political and social system, or the dissemination or manufacture or keeping for the same purpose, of literature of such content, shall be punishable by deprivation of freedom for a period of from six months to seven years, with or without additional exile for a term of two to five years (Syzmanski, 272-3).

Articles 190-1 of the Criminal Code were considered less severe. They stated that:

the systematic dissemination in oral form of deliberate fabrications which discredit the Soviet political and social system, or the manufacture or dissemination in written, printed or other form of works of such content, shall be punished by deprivation of freedom for a period of up to three years (ibid, 273).

In short, this article prohibited "circulating anti-Soviet slander" (Amnesty International Report 1990, 244).

The Soviet criminal code also permitted administrative jailing for periods of up to fifteen days. In practice, such incarcerations were used to punish demonstrators and political activists under the guise of "hooliganism" or "disturbing the peace" (Department of State, Country Report 1986, 1057).

Political Trials and Political Imprisonments. Political repression in the Soviet Union took many forms. The most common was arrest and imprisonment under articles 70 and 190-1 of the Criminal Code. It was characteristic of political imprisonment that virtually all political prisoners were arrested, tried, and sentenced under criminal law for simply expressing some sort of dissent, joining an unofficial organization, or giving someone a bible. There were few exceptions to the procedures of political trials, although some people were confined to psychiatric hospitals without a trial. Psychiatric commitment of Soviet citizens for political activity could occur without passing through the judicial process and was often an indefinite punishment (Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR, 65).

When accused of a political crime, a person in custody was "permitted to consult a lawyer only at the end of the preliminary investigation of his or her case. Thus, the accused is left without benefit of counsel throughout most of the pre-trial proceedings" (ibid, 71). In addition, most political prisoners were held incommunicado and, therefore, had difficulty obtaining a lawyer of their own choice. Usually the court would appoint counsel to the case. All practicing lawyers were members of the College of Advocates of their region or territory, which was supervised by the USSR Ministry of Justice. Nearly seventy percent of all lawyers were party members, as well. (USSR: Human Rights in Transition, 4).

Political trials were usually brief, lasting a week or so at most. Much of the time was taken up by the formal aspects of the case: the reading of the indictment; the final summing up of prosecution and defense; the "last word" of the defendant; and the reading of the court's judgement. Only a small amount of time was devoted to actual examination of the evidence and the issues. Supplementary witnesses that could bring in additional evidence were rarely allowed (Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR, 77; U.S. Department of State 1983b, 2).

After the case was presented the three-person bench would retire to formulate the verdict and determine the sentence. According to articles 314 and 315 of the Criminal Code, the court's judgement must "summarize the accusation and the evidence, declare the court's...[decision] as to the guilt of the defendant, and state the sentence of punishment" (Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR, 77-8). Normally, the judgement simply recited the original indictment omitting any reference to disputation raised by the defendant or defense counsel (ibid, 78).

The convicted person would normally receive a copy of the court's decision within three days of its being issued. The person could appeal the judgement to a higher court within seven days. If there was no appeal, the sentence legally began at the end of the seven day period and was moved from the investigation prison to the place of sentence within ten days. In the event of an appeal, the sentence

was temporarily suspended until the appeal was resolved. The court of appeal had to consider the request within ten to twenty days depending mostly on the level of the court. In the meantime, the convicted person was to remain in the investigation prison (USSR: Human Rights in a Time of Change, 8).

The court of appeal was to verify the "legality and well-founded nature" of the judgement of the first court. The appeals court could vacate the judgement, ask for a new trial or alter the lower court's decision (without increasing the punishment). The decisions of appeals courts were rarely in favor of political prisoners. After the appeal was considered, the convicted person's sentence came into effect immediately (ibid).

The numbers of political imprisonments in the Soviet Union varied over the years, and vary depending on the source, as Soviet leaders always considered this information to be a state secret. Estimates provided by international human rights organizations and the U.S. government reached as high as 10,000 political prisoners during the 1960s, '70s, and '80s--and this was considered by them to be a fairly moderate number. Organizations that listed and documented each political prisoner individually were able to identify approximately 300 to 900 political arrests and imprisonments each year during the '60s, '70s, and '80s. During the late '80s and into 1990 the number of imprisonments dropped significantly. By 1989 there were no



arrests being made for political reasons and approximately fifty remained in prison under political conviction (Amnesty International Report, Lubarsky, and Syzmanski; See also Appendix B).

Most people who were imprisoned for political activity in the Soviet Union during the three decades under review were incarcerated for self-expression, association, religion, or dissent from government policies. According to articles 70 and 190-1 of the Criminal Code, these activities were considered criminal despite the corresponding articles of the Constitution that granted and protected the rights to dissent, associate, believe and express according to one's own conscience (USSR: Human Rights in Transition, 1).

Universalistic Laws. In addition to the Constitution of 1977, the Soviet Union was a party to many international documents that provided for basic political rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was drafted by the United Nations in 1948, was signed by the Soviets in the 1970s. They also signed, in 1966, the International Covenant on Human Rights and, in 1973 and 1975, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Helsinki Final Act respectively. All of these documents reinforced the rights and freedoms that were provided for by the 1948 UDHR (Amnesty International Report 1978, 237-8).

In 1976, the first Helsinki monitoring group was set up in Moscow. Its original proclamation was signed by eleven

activists, including former political prisoner Anatoly Marchenko. By 1977, comparable groups were established in other Soviet republics. Sub-groups were set up as well to monitor political repression at the very local level. From the beginning, these groups were warned about their "anti-Soviet" activity (Amnesty International Report 1977, 277). By the end of 1977 the monitors came under attack and were often tried and imprisoned. Their trials were marked by the same lack of standards for a fair trial of previous political trials: denial of access to counsel; long periods of incommunicado pre-trial detention; and the court's refusal to call witnesses named by the defense (Amnesty International Report 1979, 145). In some respects, Helsinki monitors felt the brunt of political repression as they were acting in accordance with international agreements and were considered to be shining a bad light upon the Soviet Union (Sharlet, 323).

Gorbachev Era. During the first few years of the Gorbachev regime there was very little qualitative change in the proceedings of political trials. There was, however, a significant quantitative change in the numbers of political prisoners. Many political prisoners were released from prisons, camps, and psychiatric hospitals. In addition, unofficial groups and people who chose to express their dissent were shown more tolerance (CSCE Report, Reform and Human Rights, v).

Beginning in 1986, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union began to make statements regarding the rights of the Soviet citizens being "instrumental to the progress...[and] well-being of the Soviet society" (Rekunkov 1987, 24). The Minister of Foreign Affairs began to talk openly about the Soviet Union's humanitarian concerns. In February, 1987, several acts by Soviet officials resulted in the early release of many political prisoners. A total of 140 to 150 prisoners of conscience (those being detained solely for their political or religious belief or activity) were released by the end of March. Another announcement of amnesty was made in June, 1987 and seventeen political prisoners were subsequently released (USSR: Human Rights in Transition, 4).

In 1988, Soviet authorities released figures for people convicted under laws restricting political activity. The government had never previously acknowledged such restrictions, nor the imprisonments for them (Amnesty International Report 1989, 239) By November of the same year, 262 political prisoners had been released early and only four people were arrested concerning political activity--three of them were released without trial and one was acquitted. This was the first known acquittal in a political trial throughout Soviet history (USSR: Human Rights in a Time of Change, 5).

The most praised change that took place in 1988 was the new draft of criminal law released by the government in

December. The draft, "Fundamentals of Criminal Legislation," was to replace the articles pertaining to "anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation" and "anti-Soviet slander." In July of 1989 the draft was officially adopted and these two articles were abolished (Human Rights in Transition, 4-6).

The year 1989 proved to be an exceptional year for human rights in the Soviet Union, despite the fact that there were approximately 110 people still suspected of being political prisoners in the country (ibid, 5). The Soviet government continued to take steps toward the release of these prisoners. In March, the international human rights organization Amnesty International was invited into the Soviet Union to get first hand information about how human rights were being respected. For the first time, Soviet authorities were not afraid of opening their doors to outsiders on the subject of human rights. This had not been the case during the days of the Helsinki watch groups (Charedeyev 1989, 21). Throughout the entire year, forty-nine prisoners of conscience were released and arrests for political crimes had ceased (Knight 1988, 63).

Throughout 1990, there was dramatic growth in the exercise of political rights in the Soviet Union. A human rights conference was held in Leningrad where Soviet officials met and discussed the importance of adhering to international standards of political rights in order to enhance their reforms (Democracy and Human Rights in FBIS

1990, 66). Progress was made in the judicial system, mostly concerning the appeals process. New laws allowed for judicial review by anonymous collegial bodies. The new laws concerning the press and expression specifically mentioned the new appeals law as a way to provide for a more independent judgement if arrested for political reasons (Human Rights Watch 1990, 373). As to criminal law, the Fundamental Law on Criminal Procedures was passed in April of 1990 codifying the presumption of innocence, and creating a right to counsel from the moment criminal charges are brought, or within twenty-four hours of arrest. Defense counsel would be granted unlimited access to their clients and to the investigative file (ibid, 373-4).

In the same year, there was an opening in the political process with the establishment of open elections. In addition, new press laws abolished censorship and freedom of expression flourished as arrests for political activity had ceased (ibid).

With the economy in rapid decline, there came into being in many ways a more tolerant and permissive atmosphere that surrounded the political system during Gorbachev's rule. He admitted that the Soviet government "should implement a contemporary model of society, which would ensure for all its members civilized living standards and various opportunities to meet intellectual and cultural needs, freedom of choice and freedom of expression of opinions" (Gorbachev 1988b, 17). In the context of

political development, Gorbachev suggested a change in the relationship between man, society, and state. All of this stemmed from the need for perestroika to succeed. The human factor increasingly became the motivational force.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

Beginning in the late 1950s, the Soviet economy rapidly began to decline. Many studies have espoused various reasons for the decline in their economy, most relying on economic explanations. A review of economic development research exposed the notion that political development may have some effect on an economy, and may even be a prerequisite for growth. After further review of political development literature, certain requirements for such development were noticed. Developed political systems shared certain characteristics. Those most often stressed were the existence of an independent judiciary, the allowance of autonomous political participation, and the acceptance of universal standards of law. These three requirements for political development immediately evoke the notion of political human rights, which include the freedom from arbitrary arrest, the protection of the courts, and the freedom to dissent, associate, and participate in one's government.

The ultimate objective of this project was to determine how the Soviet government met the requirements of political development by exposing its human rights practices and using

them as an indicator of such development. The reasoning was that if the requirements of political development were not established and practiced in the Soviet Union, the actuality of not doing so may have had an effect upon the declining economy.

As established in the previous chapter, the Soviet economy began its decline in the 1950s. Though occasional growth spurts occurred during the 1980s, the rates were rather insignificant. By the late 1980s, growth rates were plummeting into the negatives. As each Soviet leader's version of how to effect growth in their economy was reviewed, it may be noticed that economic growth was greatest during the most repressive regime--that of Josef Stalin--and was the lowest during the least repressive regime--the latter years of Gorbachev. Despite Stalin's policies of systematic repression, terror, forced labor, and collectivization, he was successful in achieving significant rates of economic growth. Growth rates were plummeting into the negatives in the very last years of Gorbachev's regime when significant reforms were being implemented that were in favor of political rights. Could this, therefore, be evidence that more repression equals greater growth and less repression equals lesser growth? Not really.

First of all, Khrushchev released many more political prisoners and lightened up on political activity more so than Brezhnev did. Yet Khrushchev's regime enjoyed much higher rates of economic growth than did Brezhnev's. In



addition, during Gorbachev's first few years in power when he began to show interest in the political rights of Soviet citizens and initiated reforms that were favorable to them, economic growth rates were higher than they were during Brezhnev's last years in power when approximately eight hundred political arrests and imprisonments occurred. The amount or extent of repression, therefore, is not necessarily going to determine the level of economic growth or decline--point being that the contention throughout this paper was not that the actual numbers of political imprisonments may have determined the growth and decline of the Soviet economy, but the mere fact that political repression did occur is indicative of a system that did not meet the requirements of political development. It is this occurrence--not developing politically--that may have had an effect on Soviet economic decline.

#### Soviet Political Development The Judiciary

The structure of the court system that existed in the Soviet Union was illustrative of a non-independent judiciary. The 1960 Law on Court Organization of the RSFSR provided that the judges who would serve on the highest court of the land, the Supreme Court of the USSR, were to be elected by and responsible to the Supreme Soviet. In modern, developed societies there should exist a judiciary that is independent of all other branches of government in

order to avoid arbitrary application of the law. Judges are supposed to be responsible only to the rule of law and not to any government official. The highly centralized system that existed in the Soviet Union did not allow for judicial independence as judges were subject to influence and control by the central government. The Soviet government, therefore, failed to meet an important requirement of political development.

Further exposition of the above point may be found in the organization of the Procuracy and the legal profession. According to the 1955 Statute on Procuracy Supervision, the Procuracy had the power to supervise the execution of justice. The Procurator General, who was responsible for the appointment of lower level procurators, was also elected by and directly responsible to the Supreme Soviet. In addition, lawyers had to be a member of the College of Advocates, which was directed by a ministry of the central government. An overwhelming majority of all lawyers (seventy percent) were also Communist party members. Again there existed an overlap in the branches of government that allowed for judicial proceedings to possibly be controlled (even if indirectly) by the central power through its direction of the Procuracy and legal counsel.

#### Political Participation.

The numerous arrests, trials, and imprisonments of Soviet citizens who chose to exercise their constitutionally

guaranteed political rights is somewhat indicative of a political system that did not (or would not) allow and accept autonomous political participation. Most of those citizens who were arrested, tried, and imprisoned on political charges simply sought to participate in their society. Some may have held opinions on government policies that were antithetical to official viewpoints. Others may have sought to organize groups to try to effect change in various government policies. Several were detained for mere self-expression. Whatever the case may be, the fact that political arrests, trials, and imprisonments occurred in the Soviet Union is evidence that the Soviet government did not allow for autonomous political participation by its citizens, and again failed to meet an important requirement of political development.

Universalistic Laws. The abuse of political human rights in the Soviet Union was indicative of its government's lack of respect for and acceptance of universal standards of law. As previously established, the Soviet government was a party to many international human rights documents--The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The International Covenant on Human Rights, The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Helsinki Final Act--that provided for the basic political freedoms of dissent, association, expression, participation, and protection of the courts. These rights are enjoyed by most citizens of the developed

world. By repressing the rights of the people to exercise their guaranteed political freedoms, the Soviet government, once again, failed to meet an important requirement of political development as they did not uphold their commitment to political rights as established by the above documents.

Conclusion. Three essential requirements for political development were not met in the Soviet Union during most of the period under examination. Obviously, the Soviet government's lack of an independent judiciary, allowance of autonomous political participation, and acceptance of universalistic laws cannot fully explain their lack of economic growth, but it may have played some role. Gorbachev himself acknowledged that political reform was necessary for economic reform when he initiated his policies of glasnost and perestroika. By the time he came to power, however, many years of repression had already taken its toll on the economic system. It cannot be denied that political repression did occur in the Soviet Union, and that this repression could be considered a sign of a political system lacking in development. Political systems lacking in development may have adverse effects on economic growth. The reforms initiated by Gorbachev were a step in the right direction and may have worked eventually, but much time was needed in order to turn things around. The effects over many years of a political system that needed development

could not be wiped away in only a few. The time was not to be had.

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APPENDIX A

YEARLY GROWTH RATE IN SOVIET

GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT

1956-1990

GNP  
% of growth



Sources: The World Fact Book. Washington, DC: The Central Intelligence Agency, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990.  
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APPENDIX B

THE NUMBERS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

IN THE SOVIET UNION

1960-1990

<u>Year</u>	<u>Political Prisoners</u>
1960-74	670
1974-75	350
1975-76	300
1976-77	350
1978	300
1979	500
1980	500
1981	500
1982	800
1983	650
1984	710
1985	600
1986	620
1987	550
1988	300
1989	83
1990	54

Sources: Amnesty International Report. New York: Amnesty International USA, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990.

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