

THE RUSSIAN CONNECTION: HOW RUSSIA BECAME A LEADER IN THE WORLD'S  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING MARKET

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis assesses how the history of the USSR and its collapse affected the human trafficking market. By conducting a historical analysis of the Soviet Union, key aspects of Soviet society were determined that allowed for the human trafficking market to establish and operate extremely lucratively; a focus on some of the established factors of human trafficking including corruption, law enforcement, the economy, organized crime, and the dissolution of the Soviet government. While this thesis highlights the historical factors of Russian human trafficking, this thesis does not determine why human trafficking exists beyond the surface exploitation that human trafficking consists of. This thesis also does not explore or explain why Russian human trafficking continues to exist for nearly twenty-five years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This thesis does conclude that the history of the Soviet Union is almost tailor made for the purposes of human trafficking, with the combination of organized crime, an economy that constantly struggled, a government that was full of corruption and focused on too many endeavors, and a population that faced starvations, a lack of material goods, and political persecution all contributed to Russia having a large supply (population) of victims to be potentially exploited.

I would like to thank and dedicate this work to my parents, who have given me support and opportunities that many are not given.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
EU	European Union
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KGB	Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security)
NKVD	People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
SFSR	Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
UAE	United Arab Emirates
USA	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

## INTRODUCTION

Known to be the third largest illegal global trade behind firearms and narcotics, human trafficking is a low risk, high reward endeavor for much of the organized crime underworld (Huda 2009). The short definition of human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, and exploitation of a human being. The practice of human trafficking is more profitable than other forms because the victims are seen as “expendable, reusable, and resellable cheap commodities” which differs compared to drugs, which can only be used once (Enck 2003).

The majority of human trafficking falls under the classification of transnational crime, committed by members of numerous organized crime syndicates. Although consistent, verified statistics of human trafficking, for victims or traffickers, are almost non-existent, the Russian mafia is considered to be largest perpetrator of human trafficking. While also being involved in nearly every other criminal trade, the presence of the Russian mafia is found in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and the United States. The Russian mafia’s involvement in human trafficking has been recorded as the “fourth wave of human trafficking” (Granville 2004) starting at the collapse of the USSR.

The research that this work will make the connection between the collapse of the USSR and the onset of human trafficking that followed. To begin, this research will first explain what human trafficking is and why it should be studied. It will then give a brief description of the history of the USSR and bring about a focus on some of the factors that are directly related to the human trafficking market. Human trafficking on a large scale, as this research is concerned with, is a function of organized crime, therefore a large focus will be given to the formation and functioning of the Russian mafia, including Russia’s prison system that has served as a



recruitment and refinement center for criminals, as well as other factors that influence trafficking, specifically corruption in the government and in businesses, a decrease in living standards, and the erosion of law enforcement, specifically the corruption of border guards. To conclude, future research recommendations will be given, highlighting the large gaps in knowledge and how this research can be applied to future research endeavors.

## **CHAPTER 1 – THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

A relatively new problem entered the mainstream consciousness in the early 1990s with a worldwide noticing and acknowledgment of human trafficking. Since the nature of human trafficking is extremely secretive, the available information and research on human trafficking is limited, leaving much room for progress in many areas of human trafficking. To start this research, an examination of what is known will be done, first by understanding the definition, and then realizing what is involved in human trafficking operations.

### Human Trafficking Defined

The history of human trafficking is also the history of trying to define it. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the “white slave trade” was the current experience of human trafficking. The white slave trade consisted of white, European women being taken to foreign lands to serve as prostitutes. In 1904 in Paris, the International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic was the first of numerous treaties on the issue of human trafficking. Critics, however, claim the white slave trade was a myth, and was used to push sex industry regulations and manage women’s sexuality (Doezema 2000). In the late twentieth century the fear of sexual exploitation of women reappeared in an international, industrialized setting, with the focus going from white European descent women to third world, non-western women but still portrayed the same: a young innocent girl seduced or forced into prostitution (Barry 1995; Jeffreys 1999; Richard 2000).

The modern understanding of human trafficking (which will be used for the rest of this research) comes from the *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, referred to as the Palermo Convention (2000), also known as the Palermo Protocol:

(a) "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;

(d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age (United Nations 2000).

However, even though the Palermo Protocol's definition is widely accepted, Salt and Hogarth (2000) have noted twenty-two definitions of the concept of human trafficking, reaffirming one of the problems plaguing the study of human trafficking. Definitions are often tailored to coincide with other laws, or a specific research effort.

Another reason why human trafficking has been difficult to define is the fact that there are numerous approaches that can be taken to understand and explain it. Derks (2000) identified six approaches that can be taken: trafficking for the purpose of prostitution, migration, labor, organized crime or crime in general, human rights, and trafficking in children. In addition, as more is being discovered about human trafficking, the organ trafficking has become a real topic of interest and not just the stuff of urban legends. Organ trafficking, an entire subtopic of human trafficking, shares many characteristics of human trafficking with its own three main characteristics: a person forced into giving or having an organ removed, a person voluntarily giving an organ but receiving less than adequate pay, or a person having an organ removed under false pretenses in order for the organ to be sold (Budiani-Saberi and Delmonico 2008). In a similar fashion, Bruckert and Parent (2002) noticed a pattern in the approaches that are taken to study human trafficking. When human trafficking is defined as a moral, criminal, migration, or public order problem, solutions that involve control or punishment are presented. When the problem is defined as a labor or human rights issue, solutions involving self-empowerment were given.

Trafficking is done for many reasons: prostitution, street begging, sweatshop labor, domestic work, marriage, adoption, agricultural work, armed conflict (typical of child soldiers), construction, and other forms of labor or services that can be exploited (Jones, Engstrom, Hilliard and Diaz 2007). Overall, human trafficking can be categorized into either sex trafficking or labor trafficking even though there is rampant sexual abuse among labor trafficking.

Sex trafficking, sometimes referred to as the “flesh trade” can take place when a woman who already is a prostitute is offered a chance to go somewhere else to earn more money, but is then kept in terrible conditions, forced to work for someone, and most of her earnings are withheld (Melrose and Barrett 2006). Other cases involve the deception of, usually a young woman, with the promise of work in another city or another country, but ends up in a situation of forced prostitution. The iconic sex trafficking scenario is what made up the white slave trade, which was a young girl either taken from her home or family and forced into sex slavery or prostitution, or is offered a job such as a maid, and finds herself being trafficked. It is thought that women are disproportionately victims of human trafficking because women are affected by poverty and discrimination throughout the world more than men (Huda 2009).

Labor traffickers work in the same manner as sex traffickers, offering potential victims with high-paying job opportunities, education opportunities, or travel opportunities, only to be lured into working in harsh, unsafe conditions for either little or no pay. Those holding the victims exert either physical or psychological control. Practices of debt bondage and confiscating passports and money are used to keep victims in a state of fear, making them believe that they have no choice but to continue to work (Polaris Project). Construction, agriculture and sweatshop labor are most common, but included in potential exploited areas include restaurants, family caretaking/nanny, maids, pornography, street begging, drug trafficking, and nude dancing in clubs.

## Supply and Demand

Since human trafficking is often referred to as the human trafficking market, it can be explained with the same economic terminology just like any other product; human trafficking can be defined in terms of supply and demand. Supply, when referred to in regards of human trafficking, can refer to either a country being a supplier of victims, traffickers and their ability to supply victims to those that demand them, or the potential supply of victims in a particular population. Demand similarly refers to a country demanding victims, traffickers or the businesses/crime organizations/individuals demanding the exploitations of victims, or the demand of the unknowing victims to be moved. When describing the human trafficking market, it is easy to join and easy to leave (referring to traffickers) and that it is a monopolistic competition because traffickers are able to specialize (Wheaton, Schauer, and Galli 2010).

The pricing of a victim is based on availability, characteristics, and supply (here, supply is defined as how many similar products are available to be purchased). Buyers have the goal of minimizing expenses, therefore they will not engage in trafficking if it is just as profitable to hire legal labor, however buyers cannot be too stringent in price because if a trafficker does not receive enough revenue to exceed costs, they will leave the market, forcing potential buyers to hire legal labor or leave the market themselves (ibid).

One of the most important concepts to understanding the human trafficking market is the classification of states as either a “push” or a “pull” state. A push state is one that has factors that motivate an individual to leave, and vice-versa, a pull state is one that has factors that entices an individual to travel or migrate to. Cho (2015) and Bales (2007) have worked to find the most comprehensive set of measures of categorizing a state’s role in human trafficking, with Cho’s

being the largest. The literature on migration is very similar to the literature on the victims of human trafficking; political strife, job opportunities, ease of travel into or out of a country, as well as social and cultural factors (Krishnakumar and Indumathi 2014). Mahmoud and Trebesch (2010) suggest that families with migrants are motivated to migrate as well, increasing the probability of being trafficked.

### Consequences of Human Trafficking

The results of human trafficking are often not mentioned but are extremely important to be acknowledged because it reinforces why human trafficking is a problem and brings about new ways to identify victims. In a study conducted among sex trafficking victims in Eastern Europe, over sixty percent reported ten or more physical symptoms, with nearly every body system affected including dermatologic, eyes/ears, cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, urogenital, neurologic and musculoskeletal (Zimmerman et al, 2008).

In addition, victims may suffer from depression, abortion services, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), HIV, tuberculosis, heat exposure, dehydration, and chemical exposure (Richards 2014).

An unmeasurable consequence of human trafficking is the movement of talent and capabilities that the victims have out their country and their own life. Countries lose potential innovation that victims possess as well as members of their labor force and individuals are unable to recognize their potential because of their exploitation.

The vast majority of human trafficking is done under the auspice of an organized crime syndication. Although there are cases of one or two individuals operating a trafficking system, as

was one case out of Miami, FL that consisted of two women prostituting a runaway teenager (NBC Miami), those behind the large scale, continuous operations of recruitment and moving victims within countries and to other countries are organized crime outfits. The Russian mafia (which will be discussed in greater detail later), the Italian mafia, Chinese Triads, and the Mexican Cartels have all been implicated with trafficking humans for numerous reasons, especially to traffic drugs, and prostitution.

Organized crime is drawn to engaging in human trafficking because of the large profits with little risk because of a lack of laws, and difficulty of finding traffickers and victims (Enck 2003), as well as the many intersections it has with drug trafficking (Shelley 2012). The recruitment, transportation, and exploitation are very much the same, even the practice of getting victims addicted to drugs, which makes them reliant on the drug dealers for their drug use and what little money victims are allowed to keep can be used to buy drugs (ibid).

The second economy, which will be detailed later, is operated largely by the numerous organized crime outfits referred to as the Russian mafia. The Russian Mafia is an umbrella characterization of organized crime that is thought to be committed by criminals whom are from Russia (Finckenauer and Waring 1998). It is explained by Finckenauer and Waring (1998) that the understanding of the Russian Mafia is inappropriate because “Russian” actually refers to a variety of Eurasian crime groups that have ties to either Russia or former Soviet republics. However, even though the Russian Mafia is not necessarily “Russian”, the level of intensity and membership of organized crime that operates under the agency of the Russian Mafia began during the time of the USSR which Russia was the leader of, and had many direct links to top government officials that lived in Moscow.



The modern Russian mafia has a preference to prostitution, but it is involved in nearly every criminal activity including money laundering, internet crimes, robbery, fraud, and drugs. There are as many as 6,000 different groups thought of as being the Russian mafia with more than 200 of them having an international reach (Finckenauer 2007).

### The Russian Connection

The decision to research Russia's involvement in the human trafficking market was made because there has not been adequate attention given to Russia's role in the human trafficking that occurs. The literature, which will be explored, has a clear consensus that the latest large scale human trafficking event originated out of Russia after the collapse of the USSR. However, the explanation for this has not been adequately researched. The literature makes the case that corruption, bad economic policies, poor populations, and marginalized sections of a population are all positive indicators of human trafficking, but these indicators are yet to be used to explain why Russian human trafficking has occurred. By examining the rampant corruption throughout the government, businesses, and between governments and businesses, failed economic policies that created weak economies, marginalizing women and children, and organized crime that is heavily involved in trafficking goods between borders and throughout a country with a repressive government, this research will attempt to fully explain why Russian human trafficking has operated on worldwide scale.

Other areas are full of human trafficking activity, such as Mexico, Israel, the Middle East and Asian countries, and there is an immense amount knowledge that can still be learned about those areas, but the lack of readily accessible knowledge makes those areas a difficult study. In

contrast, there is a vast amount of easily attainable information pertaining to Russia, the Soviet Union, and the collapse of the Soviet Union that can and will be utilized for this research endeavor.

Russia since the early 1990s has been a state effectively run by criminals with corruption and organized crime being staples of ordinary life. The fact that corruption is found in law enforcement, border guards, police, consular officials, diplomats, lawyers, security, and transport sectors is the reason why human trafficking is able to exist and why the efforts and laws in place to stop it have been hindered (Aronowitz 2009). In the large cities, such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, forced begging is prolific while in the rural areas forced labor for such things as transportation, trade, lumber, and seasonal farming is common. Prostitution is prevalent all throughout Russia and into neighboring countries (Mazur 2012). Gender, age, physical ability, and poverty are all factors that can contribute to ones' vulnerability to becoming a victim, and how they are victimized. Males are exploited as servants, yard workers, pornographic models, prostitutes, and laborers in agriculture and construction, but one estimate has only about two percent of all victims are male (Granville 2004).

While the human trafficking within Russia is a large scale crime being committed against its people with an extreme amount of complacency by those that should be actively working to stop it, Russia is key to the human trafficking routes involving Asia, Europe, North America, and the Middle East. Russian women are trafficked all throughout the world, largely for sexual exploitation. From Asia, illegal migration routes from Cambodia, China, and Thailand use Russia as either a destination or a transit point to richer countries. From the Middle East, it is common for victims from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,

Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan to use Russia as a destination because of regional proximity, 'visa-free' system of travel between the countries, and the increase in wealth Russia has compared to their home countries (Mazur 2012).

At the conclusion of this research, Russian human trafficking will be explained by exploring the history of the USSR and how the policies of Soviet Russia directly impacted Soviet Russia's society, allowing for the human trafficking market to not just operate, but to do so on such a scale that has only been measured three other times. It will do so by examining four key components of Soviet Russian society: corruption, the planned economy, organized crime, and stringent border control.

First, a brief history of the USSR will be given, chronicling the leaderships of Lenin, Stalin, the Cold War, and Gorbachev and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Then, organized crime and corruption will be highlighted, focusing on how they manifested in Soviet Russia and what caused each of them to form. In addition, the Soviet borders will be examined and how they were managed. To conclude, the various connections and intersections of corruption, bad economic policies, organized crime, and the collapse of the Soviet Union will be laid out, all of which have been identified to be contributing factors to human trafficking.

## **CHAPTER 2 – A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE USSR**

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was officially formed in January 1924 with the ratification of the first Soviet Constitution. It ratified the 1922 Treaty on the Creation of the USSR linking the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (SFSR), Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), Byelorussian SSR, and the Transcaucasian SFSR. Before the formation of the USSR, the Russian Empire had existed since 1721 and stretched over three continents (Europe, Asia, North America) until the February Revolution in 1917 that ended the Russian monarchy, and the end of World War I which ended the Russian Empire, as well as the German Empire, Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire.

The Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party gained control of the Russian government in 1917, and the Bolsheviks became the dominant political party (Britannica). The Bolsheviks were led by Vladimir Lenin who became the first head of the Soviet State; Lenin was a revolutionary and a communist who held Karl Marx's writings in the highest regard. Lenin's goal in his position of power was to "introduce a dictatorship of the proletariat: that is, direct rule by the armed workers and peasants which would eventually wither away into a con-coercive, classless, stateless, Communist society" (Resis). Lenin and the Bolshevik Party with Communism as their end goal, instituted socialist policies while still practicing a model of limited capitalism. Although Lenin died before the Soviet Union's official ratification, his goals and policies set forth by the Bolsheviks were continued to be implemented all the way up to the time of Gorbachev and the USSR's collapse.

## Marxism-Leninism

Karl Marx (1818-1883) was a sociologist, historian, and economist who saw the hardships of life stemming from a struggle between the social-classes. His two most influential published works were The Communist Manifesto and Das Kapital (Feur and McLellan 2016). The Communist Manifesto was written by Marx and Friedrich Engels, and has served as the most celebrated literature for the socialist movement. Summarizing their theories in their own words, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (Marx and Engels 2002). Das Kapital was Marx’s critique of capitalism, stating that those who owned the means of production (capital) were among the causes for poverty and the struggle between the classes. Marx’s overall theory was that among the key concepts within capitalism, profit is theft by means of exploiting labor. Those with the means of production are exploiting their labor force if they reap a profit, which further increases the gap between the societal class of business owners/land owners, and the workers class, promoting class struggle. The solution to the class struggle envisioned by Marx and Engels, was Communism, a utopian society that eliminated social classes, property ownership, inequality, religion, nations, and individuals are given free access to goods, services, and capital (Engels 1952).

Vladimir Lenin’s ideology, known as Leninism, is derived from his interpretation of Marx’s theories, socialist political and economic theories, and the practical application of using revolution to implement a Communist society by first creating a socialist society. Leninism was Russia’s application of Marxist theories until Joseph Stalin became leader of the Soviet Union. Key aspects of Leninism included the dictatorship of the proletariat, manifesting as “soviets” (worker’s councils) which lobbied for worker’s rights, socialism which was supposed to allow

self-government by councils, and the rejection of capitalism and religion, which Lenin saw as other means of imperialism (Ruth 2016).

### Joseph Stalin

The time of Joseph Stalin was one of violence, strong arming, war, famine, and terror. After Lenin died in 1924 there was a power struggle and Stalin, by means of eliminating opposition and suppressing criticism of Lenin came out on top. Stalin's time of Supreme leadership was one of a dictator that had no concern for criticism. Under his leadership, extreme measures were taken when it came to the economy, agriculture, politics, and war. Stalin's economic model was one of an exceedingly centralized command economy, with an emphasis on industrialization and collectivism. The effects it had on the agriculture sector disrupted food production so much that it caused a famine, and was even used as a political tool, referred to as the Holodomor (Extermination by hunger), which has been considered a genocide on the Ukrainian people from 1932-1933.

Politically, Stalin used his power to silence, intimidate, and even kill those who resisted, opposed, or were even considered to be a threat. Stalin imprisoned over half of the 2,000 delegates of the Soviet congress between 1934 and 1939, with those higher up in authority, the worse the chance of survival (Kenez 2006). The gulag system was a collection of labor camps that were typically found in the harshest of environments, and the numbers of camps and prisoners grew immensely during Stalin's time. Much like the concentration camps of Nazi Germany, the gulags were present during the entire time of the Soviet Union, and they constituted the main penal system for the Soviet Union; robbers, rapists, murders, and political

prisoners were sent to the gulag. Even those convicted of petty crimes such taking potatoes from the field after a harvest could get a person ten years, a joke about a Communist Party official could be punished by twenty-five years, and even being late to work three times could mean three years in a gulag (Center for History and New Media). The gulag system was a system of punishment by forced labor, “typically unskilled, manual, and economically inefficient.” Describing the gulag: “the combination of endemic violence, extreme climate, hard labor, meager food rations, and unsanitary conditions led to extremely high death rates” (ibid). There is no consensus on how many people died in the gulag, but one estimate has that from 1918-1953 over 50 million people passed through the system (Solzhenitsyn 2003).

Stalin’s purges also included public trials of individuals confessing to extraordinary crimes even though no evidence was ever brought against the accused (Kenez 2006). The accused were guilty for simply being accused. Most of the accused were sentenced to death, but were promised either their life or the lives of family members; but formal sentencing did not matter because almost everyone, no matter the sentence, was killed. Top leadership positions in politics, military, economics, or culture were exterminated (ibid).

In 1939, Stalin made a pact with Hitler and became de facto allies before the onset of World War II. Stalin’s reasoning was two front: Nazi Germany’s army was too close to Soviet borders, and Stalin anticipated that France and the British would keep their commitment to Poland and engage Germany in a war that would keep Nazi interests away from Soviet land. In a lopsided relationship, the Soviet Union began to export much more to Germany than it imported, with a 229 million Reichmark debt of Germany to the Soviets at the moment Germany decided to attack the USSR (ibid). In June 1941 Hitler thinking his forces could not be beaten decided to

attack the Soviet Union and was met with success for a bit of time. At the onset, Germany had superiority in weaponry, airplanes, and the ability to arm its troops, but by 1942-1943 the Soviet strategy of industrialization began to pull through and manufacture more tanks and airplanes than Germany. However, in a fashion that became too common in the Soviet Union, agriculture and animal husbandry were greatly impacted by the war effort, causing food to be in short supply and other goods unobtainable (ibid).

In 1945 after Soviet forces had marched their way into Germany, and into Berlin, Hitler committed suicide on April 30<sup>th</sup>, and German forces began to surrender. On May 9<sup>th</sup> the Soviet Union celebrated Victory in Europe. The devastation that was laid upon the Soviet Union was immense, with 26-27 million citizens dead; more than 8.5 million soldiers died in the battlefields, several million prisoners of war were killed in German camps, and millions more killed by enemy bombs, starvation, cold, mass execution by Germans, or killed in either Soviet concentration camps or places of exile (ibid).

### Cold War

After Stalin died from a stroke in 1953, for the next thirty-nine years' Soviet politics tried to recover from the actions that happened under his rule, as well as compete internationally in. Although the Soviet leadership was not interested in expanding its borders immediately after WWII, and wanted to focus on reimposing discipline and order in their current boundaries (ibid), from 1947-1991 the Soviet Union engaged in the Cold War with the United States of America.

Although improvements were made in the economy, in agriculture, in politics, and for the average Soviet citizen, the conditions that the Soviet citizens found themselves did not



dramatically improve because the focus of the Soviet government was on its military strength. The best minds that the Soviet Union had were employed in the military sector, and twenty-five percent of its GNP (Gross National Product) was spent on military research and development. The Soviet leadership was insecure, they wanted respect and treated as equals with America, but their ideology was their polar opposite. The United States of America based their economy on the free market and capitalism, compared to the USSR's planned, socialist economy; the USSR's communist ideology was antithetical to religion, compared to the USA's fundamental allowance of religious freedom.

### Gorbachev and the Collapse

The USSR had been on the same trajectory for the majority of its existence: socialism for the sake of communism, with the nation's might coming from military strength. What that meant however, was a relative good time for those in power, and bleak existence for everyone else. In an historical context, with the best of intentions and worst outcomes, the election of Gorbachev changed that trajectory. Elected in 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev recognized that change was needed if the USSR was going to not just survive but actually compete on a world stage. His two reformation projects *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* were necessary attempts to bring change but ultimately they were a part of the USSR's collapse. *Glasnost* was a campaign to bring about openness of the government and let the Soviet people have a voice in their governing. This period of time was extremely new to the Union as dissidents were no longer exiled, those in exile were offered a chance to come home, and an open conversation about the nature and extent of Stalinist oppression was allowed. For decades, especially the time under Stalin, there could be no

opposition and no criticism to what was done in the name of communism, and for the hardliners that had defended communism for so long felt wronged.

*Perestroika* (rebuilding or restructuring) was a change to the military, the economy, and to politics. The attention, time, and money spent on the military had brought about no greater security to the USSR while producing non-productive assets. Cuts had to be made in order to spend money elsewhere in the economy. Military policy was also in transition to a more democratic authority and away from generals and leaders within the military.

In politics, change was attempted with the proposing of term limits and an attempt by Gorbachev to operate a path of bipartisanship between the conservatives and liberals within the party. Those efforts taken were difficult, and eventually became impossible as the divide became too large. He (Gorbachev) made another attempt at a fundamental change to politics and decided to create a real legislature and the infrastructure to work against the Stalinist/conservative ideological bloc that was adamant in standing against any reforms.

The adjustments to the economy under Gorbachev were a failure; an attempt to combine the best of socialism and the efficiency of a market. The freeing of prices (the stepping away of a command economy with set prices) created a frenzy of inflation almost immediately. Because of the historic failure of production in the Soviet economy, citizens had abundant savings, but once the inflation hit, prices went higher drying up savings, while the issue of scarcity stayed the same. There were numerous commissions coming up with new economic plans to be enacted but Gorbachev could not make a decision and stay with it because of his attempts to “play down the middle.”

Gorbachev had goals of democratizing, but he had no intention of ever dismantling the Communist Party. In August 1991 a failed coup was attempted by the old guard as a protest against Gorbachev's efforts of reformation and democratization. The failure proved two things: there wasn't widespread support within the Soviet government, and those that wanted to go back to the old way had no authority (Kenez 2006). After the coup, the communist party was dissolved and many of the Republics decided their independence would be better than staying in the USSR.

After nearly seventy years of being a dominant force in world politics, the USSR formally ceased to function on December 26, 1991. However, the historic sufferings that the people suffered all throughout the USSR would not be alleviated in their immediate future. After the collapse, inflation rose, drying up the savings that much of the population had due to the lack of available goods. The economy needed time to diversify, and privatize, particularly in manufacturing. For example, most of the products had been made in a single factory, and after the collapse and the new borders had been drawn, that factory produced for another country (Kenez 2006). Since the reforms could not achieve their goals, factories continued to receive subsidies, and the rich found it better and safer to keep their money abroad in a time when investment money was in dire need (ibid).

## **CHAPTER 3 – ORGANIZED CRIME**

The failure of Soviet politics allowed not just for the human trafficking market to arise, it allowed for organized crime to become a dominant force in both the criminal underworld, and within the government. The failure of the planned economy brought about many of the defining characteristics of the USSR: organized crime, corruption, a failure in law enforcement, a breakdown in border security, and poor living standards. The unintended consequence of the failure of the planned economy and the results of it, was organized crime stepping in and becoming a key player in the second, shadow economy providing what the state government could not.

Organized crime throughout the USSR formed to meet a demand that was made by bad economic decision, which will be explored in this chapter. Organized crime gained membership and became more efficient because of the USSR's prison (Gulag) system that was used to punish the most hardened criminals, and to unfairly punish Soviet citizens making criminals out of normal people. Within the Gulag, prisoners learned from other prisoners on how to perfect their craft, and recruitment was done between the prisoners. Millions of Soviet citizens, rightfully or wrongfully imprisoned, were branded criminals and many of them returned to society as criminals. Although the Gulag was important in the spread of crime, it was just one part of many. The economy and politics were also key factors in the rise of organized crime and the spread of the Russian mafia.

## Politics/Economics

Planned economies are economies that have attempted to remove the “invisible hand” and pre-determine the quantity of production of a good, and the market price. This is done by the government, away from the market, by politicians, not producers, and influenced not by the consumer, but by politics. Although there are inefficiencies in the “free market” model, the “socialist/planned economy” model has its inefficiencies exponentially multiplied by the fact that market factors do not directly regulate the economy, but politicians and political choices do.

The governing body, in the case pertaining to this research the Communist Party, had four directives when it came to the economy: decision making, verification, implementation, and staffing (Gill 1994). The problem that exists for this economic model is that the key components of the decision making and staffing aspects are prone to corruption, *quid pro quo*, and in general the allowance of “crony capitalism.”

A planned economy, or command economy, was fundamental to the ideology and functioning of the Soviet Union. From the viewpoint of Vladimir Lenin who was greatly influenced by Karl Marx, the command economy was supposed to stop the exploitation that was imagined by the “proletariat” or the workers. The expectation of the planned economy was supposed to eliminate social classes, bring equality to the citizens, let citizens have all the resources they needed, and allow citizens who used to labor all day have more time for relaxation. However, those expectations were never met during the sixty-seven years of the Soviet Union’s existence.

The people of the Soviet Union were plagued with shortages of food and basic goods, largely due to the inefficiency of the planned economy. The workers had no incentive to work

well in their jobs due to a lack in upward mobility, and the knowledge that any shortcomings would be subsidized by the government. The corruption in the government manifested in two ways: the creation of a “Communist Party member” class and the use of withholding goods as a means of intimidation. In direct contradiction to the ideals of communism, the Communist Party members treated themselves to the best of the goods and services the Soviet Union had to offer. It was also not unheard of for the leadership to use the ability of goods as a political tool, as Stalin did in Ukraine during 1932-1933 known as the Holodomor. The Holodomor, translated to “extermination by hunger” was targeted at ethnic Ukrainians to stop an independence movement that was taking place.

The 1980s started rocky for the Soviet Union with a two percent fall in national income two years straight (1981-1982) (Khanin 1992). In 1980, of fifteen economic measures only one realized the planned quota (gasoline production at 435 billion cu. meters) while the other fourteen fell short (USSR Economic Handbook). In 1982, per capita GNP was about half of the United State’s (Hanson 1992). Retail sales went down, investment went down, and prices went up, signaling no growth for the Soviet economy.

A characteristic that appears in every planned economy is the presence of the second economy, sometimes called the black market. Soviet citizens had money to spend, but no products to spend it on. The second economy was the way people tried to make up for the state’s failure. Those with any amount of land grew extra crops for themselves and to sell, people rented their houses or rooms, those who provided services from the state sold their services on the side, and those who operated in the traditional black market sold their goods as well. The second

economy complements, hinders, and competes with the official planned economy (Sampson 1987).

Russia and the other member states of the USSR were each “individual islands of capitalism” that worked in spite of stifling bureaucracy. Unplanned, unregulated, unreported, privatized, and/or illegal activities constitutes the activity within a second economy, although it should be noted that in strict terms, the second economy itself is illegal (ibid). The estimations of a second economy are difficult because the activity is by definition done in secrecy, but the estimations that do exist reaffirm the large impact it has. Of the estimates that exist, it was estimated that between thirty and forty-two percent of the total agricultural output was done by personal plots, eighty to eighty-five percent of all gasoline went onto the black market, twenty-five percent of the fish market was poached, and twenty-five percent of all distilled alcohol was produced and distributed outside of the state sector (O'Hearn 1980).

A distinctive characteristic of the services provided in the second economy is that it is often much more than what would be through the state, often two to five times as much (Sampson 1987). This is quite damning to the integrity of the socialist, planned economy because not only does that mean the state is losing money, more money than normal is being spent on a product/service and that cost is being taken out the potential income for the state. In addition, because of the constraints put onto factories, and other state owned services, the hiring of private labor is common, especially for construction, agriculture, and forest clearing (ibid). Even the state had to rely on the second economy to provide the labor and resources needed, at an extreme mark up in costs.

## Organized Crime

Russia has a long history of organized crime, from Imperial Russia, throughout the time of the USSR, and still into the Post-Soviet era. Organized crime's magnitude only grew throughout the time of the USSR and is now a defining characteristic of Russian society. It has so many international ties that the United States' FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) has become an active member of the task force working against it. The FBI defines organized crime as: "Organized Crime is a self-perpetuating, structured and disciplined association of individuals or groups, combined together for the purpose of obtaining monetary or commercial gains or profits, wholly or in part by illegal means, while protecting their activities through a pattern of graft and corruption" (CSIS). In comparison, Russian law enforcement uses a much shorter, broader definition: "an organized community of criminals ranging in size from 50 to 1,000 persons, which is engaged in systematic criminal business and protects itself from the law with the help of corruption" (ibid). The difference in definitions comes from the nature of organized crime in Russia; it is so diverse that it is difficult to define it.

In 1994, there was an estimated 5,700 criminal groups comprised of 3 million members, in Russia alone (Enck 2003). The origins of membership come from four distinct lines of criminality: *Vory v zakone*, *nomenklatura*, ethnic and national groups, and criminal associations affiliated with a specialty (CSIS). The *Vory v zakone* (thieves-in-law) is made of common criminals with a strong history of recruitment and bonds forming in the Soviet-era gulag prison system, and continues in today's prison systems (ibid; Enck 2003).

The *nomenklatura* was made up of the corrupt Communist Party members, government officials, and business figures who comprised the power elite. This criminal group ran the



underground (second) economy taking bribes and making payoffs, essentially laying the structure of the second economy for the criminals and small-time business operators to operate within. “Bribes and payoffs at the elite level in the courts, security ministries, the military, and even among senior government advisers compromise legitimate government actions against Russian criminal networks (CSIS).

The third component of Russian organized crime is the many ethnic groups that are involved. The entity of “Russian organized crime” is often referred to as “Russian mafia” but it is not technically correct. Chechens, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Dagestanis, Georgians, and Ingush, as well as Russians make up the Russian mafia. They operate in Russia, Central Eurasia, Europe, Asia, and the United States of America. Unlike organized crime in the USA and Asia, the Russian mafia is not based out of ethnic ties but general criminal ties; from an organized crime conference in 1996, only 70 of 3,000 crime groups in Russia were categorized as ethnic based (ibid).

The fourth component of Russian organized crime or the Russian mafia is connection of criminals in particular geographical sector, a specific criminal activity, shared experiences, memberships, or a particular leader (ibid). This characteristic reinforces the fact that Russian organized crime is operated not on a strict, ethnic based ideology, but on a profit based, “ability to commit the crime” motive.

### Russian Mafia

Out of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian mafia emerged to be a local, national, and international player of crime, business, and politics. Although it would appear to be

a small number in comparison the size of territory it covers, in Russia alone there are between 3,000 and 4,000 gangs, several hundred gangs that have dealings throughout the former Soviet states, and into the West; total gang membership is estimated to be less than 100,000 (Handelman 2002). The Russian mafia has dealings/influence in nearly every sector of society, ranging from narcotics, banks, real estate, stock exchanges, stolen weapons from the Red Army during the collapse including nuclear weapons and material, to the rock music industry.

What makes the Russian mafia the entity to be truly concerned about is its connections to Russia itself. No criminal enterprise of the complexity, size, and influence that the Russian mafia has could ever be allowed to exist without the connections to the key government bureaucracy, and support from officials at every level (ibid). While the Russian mafia is interested in the profit margins of crimes, the various Russian government agents involved utilize their presence as a means of politics. For example, in 1992 Chechen mobsters attempted to fool private banks in Moscow and other cities by using promissory notes that allegedly came from four employees within the Russian State Bank who had received orders from the Finance Ministry's office (ibid). Although corruption is prevalent in certain areas more than others, especially in concerns of natural resources (oil, natural gas, metals, and minerals), some officials will sign any licenses, permits, regulations, or pieces of papers that are put in front of them, for the right price (CSIS).

Since this research is focused on human trafficking, it is a given that the Russian mafia is not just involved, it is heavily involved in the human trafficking market. To help understand how the Russian mafia is able to operate within the human trafficking market so well, their other activities will help explain. Perhaps the single activity that garnered attention to organized crime in Russia was the theft and smuggling of nuclear weapons after the collapse on 1991. In 1994

seventeen Russian generals and admirals stated that “nuclear migration” (smuggling of nuclear weapons) to the Middle East was “highly probable” and in 1997 Margret Thatcher, former British Prime Minister, said that nuclear materials and weapons had been smuggled out of Russia (CSIS).

The activities of organized crime in general can be separated in to economic crimes and violent crimes, although there is an overlap between the two. For the state of Russia, the economic crimes have been among the greatest struggles for the country’s recovery. An International Labor Organization (ILO) report stated, “there is enough evidence to assert with regrettable confidence that, on average, living standards have plummeted, that the economic slump has prolonged and is continuing, and that the consequences for poverty and economic inequality have been very severe.” According to various estimates between thirty and forty percent of Russia’s GDP is controlled by organized crime in the shadow economy (CSIS). Among the economic crimes engaged are capital flight (money laundering), investment “chill” (fear of having money taken by organized crime by foreign investors), bank fraud, and tax evasion (CSIS).

A characteristic of the Russian mafia that differs from other organized crime is the fact that they tend to launder their money into offshore accounts, meaning their money is kept outside of Russia. This has been such a problem for the Russian economy that one official has offered that it might be time to consider “amnesty for criminal money abroad and about its return to Russia” (CSIS).

The violent crimes that the Russian mafia engage in include the standard mafia type of activity such as extortion, bribery, murder, contract murder, contract arson, and the drug trade,

which often relies on violence to either receive payment, or keep drug dealing territory. Russian organized crime has always been violent with histories of shootouts in restaurants, assassinations of State representatives, journalists, and investigators.

### Human Trafficking

As previously stated, human trafficking consists of men and women being moved within or between countries to have their labor exploited. The forms of exploitation can be understood as either sexual labor or physical labor, with the general trend of women being siphoned into sexual labor and men into physical labor. For decades the primary countries providing women victims of human trafficking were Asian, such as Thailand and Philippines, until the collapse of the Soviet Union opened up a pool of millions of victims to be recruited. Former Soviet republics such as Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, and Russia have become major source countries with Ukraine and Russia having the most popular and valuable women in the sex industry markets (Hughes 2000).

The Russian mafia has been extremely active in the human trafficking market, for example the trafficking to Israel alone is an astonishing feat of organized crime. In 1989 800,000 Soviet Jews immigrated to Israel, during the time Ukrainian and Russian traffickers brought 10,000 women into Israel for the sex industry. Since 1989, the sex industry in Israel has grown to a US\$450 million a year market, dependent on trafficked Eastern European women. A woman can earn between US\$50,000 and \$100,000 a year for her pimp, making it very attractive for organized crime syndicates to continue their operations (Hughes 2000).

The Russian mafia's involvement includes recruitment, movement, control, and exploitation as well. Men, women, and children are recruited for numerous reasons and are recruited by either promising what is needed most (easily done with children), promising better opportunities, or coerced into being trafficked. One of the most common methods of recruitment is for an employment agency to be ran as a front, with the appearance of being a legitimate operation. Women (although not exclusive to women) who apply for a job through an agency are often made to sign a contract stating they will reimburse the agency for the expenses accrued for their travel including air fare, medical care, and the necessary documents needed for travel. Those who use the agencies are often from the more vulnerable populations, not having the legal knowledge to question the provisions that are in the contract and think that it is legally binding (Orlova 2004). Mail order bride agencies are another technique used to traffic women who are often better well off and are motivated to travel (Hughes 2000).

While the Russian mafia has been involved in supplying the human trafficking market, it has been increasing its presence in the demand part by being involved in the commercial sex work in large Russian cities. From a collaboration between the United Nations and the IOM, the majority of women "involved in commercial sex work in large cities are migrants from other states or from neighboring small towns and villages." In addition, virtually all commercial sex work in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Omsk, and Yekaterinburg is organized, i.e. prostitutes working for pimps who get protection from organized crime. Most of the cases involved can be assumed to fall within the category of human trafficking (UN/IOM 2005).

## CHAPTER 4 – CORRUPTION BECOMES LAW

*“We have become a mafia state on a world scale” Boris Yelstin cited in Handelman (1997)*

*“... the state has been hijacked by hit men, racketeers and extortionists, that its corrupted politicians have brazenly amassed huge fortunes in bribes, and that military men have shamelessly peddled weapons – from Kalashnikovs to nuclear missiles – for the right price” (Boris Yelstin in Kelly, Schatzberg, and Ryan 1995)*

Ironically, Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks who successfully overthrew the Tsarist regime created a new society that was shaped by the system they sought to get rid of. Lenin declared, “we shall not allow the police to be re-established” and months later established the Cheka, a more brutal law enforcement apparatus than any found under the Tsar’s rule, and the precursor to the NKVD and KGB. The legislature was just as corrupt, easily abused and manipulated, and economic policies caught between ideology and reality (Rawlinson 1997).

One of the defining characteristics that blotted the USSR’s ideology and existence was the corruption that facilitated much of the politics, economy, and daily life. Corruption involving favors for favors, bribery for connections, illegally buying official papers, and buying better quality of food, goods, and even toilet paper through different means than the state run stores were common. This chapter will examine the corruption that was rampant all through the USSR and how it is connected to human trafficking. Corruption among government officials on all levels, especially those in charge of migration, immigration, and travel documents, will be highlighted because of the strong and necessary connection to human trafficking.

### The Corruption of the USSR

Corruption was not just a common practice; it was the way of Soviet life. It was found in the cities, and the country, and from as high up as the Communist Party in Moscow, to simple “mom-and-pop” restaurants (Simis 1982). The practice of using authority as a means of private gain was antithetical to the establishing the Bolshevik movement, and the Communist Party whose ideals promised a society of equality and without private property.

Simis (1982) recounts his time with a Soviet elite whose family purchased their food from stores that were only available to the ruling elite, that provided a better quality of food. The families’ house was stocked with expensive furniture, paintings, crystal and china, and when asked, a family member said “There is nothing in this house that is ours... Break all the wineglasses you like – in fact, smash all the china! It will be immediately replaced.” The corruption that the Soviet elite enjoyed came from the government itself in three forms: a large paycheck, the existence of a special network that provided goods and services that catered only to them, and the connections to those in governing positions. One example of an immense salary was that of the Minister of Defense whose salary in 1979 was 2000 rubles a month, compared to the average monthly wage of 164 rubles (ibid). The elite also enjoyed corruption by ways of retaining their position, with all of its benefits, after being exposed to breaking the law. An example of this was Frol Kozlov and Nikolay Smirnov who worked together in the accepting of bribes for the appointment of prestigious positions, for protection, for promotions, and for halting criminal proceedings against underground businessmen. When Smirnov died, the evidence was in the open of Kozlov’s role, but Kozlov was able to retain his posts, privileges, and eventually

buried with full state honors while his only punishment was to be removed from active service under the guise of bad health (ibid).

### The Law

From Lenin to current day Russia, the law has not always meant what it should. Corruption has made law enforcement either nothing more than just an expense to live with (bribery) or a tool to be used against competitors. Stalin used the gulag system to purge any threats, real or imagined, including criminals and political competitors. The irony is that the gulag system put more criminals back into society than it took out, only without rehabilitation and with more connections within the criminal underworld. It is important to remember that the Russian mafia existed throughout the history of the USSR, but it was greatly stifled under Stalin's rule. A violation of the law was considered an economic crime, and economic crimes were punishable by death. That dissuaded a lot of people, but not everybody. The penalties were severe, but the potential rewards were enormous. As a result, some people were tempted despite the draconian penalties (Goldman 1996). For the police, making extra money or having the connections to better goods was an opportunity too good to pass on. An officer made approximately \$135 USD a month, making any extra money to be earned not just a temptation, but a necessity as well.

Russian law when it comes to human trafficking is nearly non-existent from what is known, and from what is unknown, the lack of laws and an unwillingness to enforce what laws there are, is the opposite of a deterrent: an incentive. The United States of America's Department of State in 2001 listed Russia as a Tier 3 state, meaning Russia was not fully complying with the



minimum standards or making significant efforts to bring Russian law into compliance with the standards set forth by the Trafficking Act (Enck 2003). The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, which has been reauthorized as recently as 2013, is the cornerstone of the United States of America's anti-trafficking legislation, which established measures to define, protect, and prosecute the various actors. Among the measures was the establishment of the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, which is a yearly report on the ranking and efforts that a country puts forth against human trafficking (Polaris Report).

Russian laws are inadequate to deal with human trafficking. In 2003, Russia had no legislation criminalizing the trafficking of adults, no laws specifically addressing the trafficking of women and children, but there were laws on the books pertaining to prostitution, and the trade of minors (Enck 2003). However, the enforcement of the laws is minimal at best. One account of three prostitutes being fined the equivalent of \$14 USD and allowed back onto the streets in the same time it took the arresting officers to check into their hotel shows the ineffectiveness of prostitution laws (ibid). On average, 20,000 police officers are terminated for "collusion with the mafia" (Enck 2003).

### A Loss of Borders

The Soviet Union lost its borders in two ways: by corruption and by collapse. The Soviet Union boasted the world's largest landmass, covering one-sixth of the world's land; at the collapse Russia held onto the title of largest country. The collapse brought about fifteen independent countries, with new borders between them and Russia.

The largest factor in the erosion of both Soviet Borders and Russian borders is the corruption that is found along the borders and in the cities. A physical border is always going to be present, but if there is no will or a deliberate decision to not enforce the migration laws, then there is no control of the borders. The corruption found among the border agents include simple bribing of border guards, the bribing of officials in charge of travel documents, and the faking of travel documents and visas made travel into and out of Russia perhaps the easiest part of a human traffickers' logistics.

Although the charges of corruption used to facilitate human trafficking is often put forward, there has been few academics to explore the factors and mechanics behind the use of corruption. Rusev (2013) in a comprehensive paper for the *DCAF Migration and the Security Sector Paper Series* titled Human Trafficking, Border Security and Related Corruption in the EU was among the first and most detailed research on the subject. Even though Rusev's work focuses on the EU (European Union) and this work focuses on Russia, the use of corruption is the same.

In the effort to combat human trafficking, the role of "border guard" is seen as a first responder, and because easy passage between borders is key for a smooth, profitable human trafficking operation, the border guard position is one that is highly susceptible to being corrupted. There are three categories of corruption – organized crime, "petty", and administrative corruption. Petty corruption consists of accepting small bribes to speed up procedures, or relax strict surveillance; administrative corruption involves "manipulating public procurement tenders, extracting kick-backs from service operators in the border area, and appointment or promotion of officers based on nepotism" (Rusev 2013). Border guards may also sell information, ignore

travel bans, provide false alibis, obstruct investigations, and provide schedules of border guard shifts.

### The KGB

The Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopanosti of the Soviet Union, also known as the KGB, was established in March 1954 with the designation to be a state security committee. The KGB was the most independent body within the Soviet government and was the world's largest spy and state security "machine," involved in all aspects of everyday life. The main duties of the KGB were to gather intelligence in other countries, conduct counterintelligence, maintain the secret police, the KGB military corps and the border guards, suppress internal resistance, and conduct electronic espionage (Cold War Museum). With authority to operate throughout the USSR and its 63,000 kilometer border zone, more than 500,000 people worked within the KGB, with thousands of agents abroad, and during its existence had an extensive web of informants (Zickel 1991).

In the 1970s the KGB border control was estimated to have 300,000 personnel, but in 1989 it was down almost a third to an estimated 230,000 members. Charged with repulsing armed incursions into Soviet territory; preventing illegal crossings of the border or the transport of weapons, explosives, contraband, or subversive literature across the border; monitoring the observance of established procedures at border crossing points; monitoring the observance by Soviet and foreign ships of navigation procedures in Soviet territorial waters; and assisting state agencies in the preservation of natural resources and the protection of the environment from pollution. Border guards were authorized to examine documents and possessions of persons

crossing the borders and to confiscate articles; to conduct inquiries in cases of violations of the state border; and to take such actions as arrest, search, and interrogation of individuals suspected of border violations (ibid).

The KGB's importance was immense because of the large role it played in everyday society. The KGB was not just a physical force that threatened, intimidated, and filled the gulag system with fellow Soviet systems, it was also an ideological force. The KGB's primary function within the USSR's borders was surveillance, ensuring loyalty to the regime and suppression of political dissent. On the border, the KGB was responsible for keeping subversive literature out, and to ensure citizens did not escape (ibid). Why is understanding the KGB and its final years so important to understanding the human trafficking that occurred during and after its final years? In theory the KGB would have been the first line of defense/action in the effort against human trafficking. In reality the KGB, while a major defender of the Soviet and Communist ideology, was also rampant with corruption. As previously noted, the nexus between the Soviet government and organized crime was widespread.

## CHAPTER 5 – COLLAPSE AND RISE

As December 25 1991 approached, the USSR had been living a double life for over sixty-five years. On the surface, projected to the world and specifically to the United States of America, was an image of a strong Communist Party in charge of the Soviet Union's military and economy; the USSR had a rightful place challenging the USA as a world superpower. Within Soviet borders however, the inevitable failure of Soviet ideology was just a matter of time. Corruption was found all throughout Soviet society, from the government in Moscow, to local governments, to businesses and mom-and-pop restaurants. The economy suffered rations and shortages, and the people suffered starvations and famines. Crime rose and organized crime became a part of Soviet life, working closely with high ranking government officials and local citizens to obtain goods the Soviet economy could and would not provide. The KGB was losing members, down 70,000 between the 1970s and 1989. The Soviet Union's borders were losing their integrity and as states within the Soviet Union began to vote for their independence, the borders were beginning to shrink.

The USSR's collapse had many ramifications, some felt and noticed immediately, others took years to recognize, and still some are being dealt with in modern Russia. The human trafficking presence in Russia is one of the ramifications of the collapse that had no influence based on the Soviet ideology. It occurred because of the numerous problems the Soviet Union faced during its existence, and once the collapse occurred, had no system to hold it back. This chapter will explain the dynamics of the Soviet collapse and the rise of human trafficking.

## The Collapse

One of the astonishing facts about the collapse was that for the numerous reasons for the collapse to occur, it was not predicted and was unexpected. While blame can be put on the military, the economy, the Communist Party, and the Cold War, without argument it can be pointed to Mikhail Gorbachev and his attempted reforms. In an unfortunate circumstance of irony, Gorbachev's reform programs, *perestroika* and *glasnost* instituted because Gorbachev recognized change was needed, played large parts of the collapse.

Gorbachev's decision to remove Dinmukhamed Konayev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, sowed the seeds of dissent throughout the satellite states. Konayev was an ethnic Kazakh, and he was replaced by Gennady Kolbin, an outsider from Russia. The people of Kazakhstan, and other states eventually following, decided that they had spent enough time being ordered around by Moscow (Kenez 2006). The Communist ideology, based on Marxism, espoused equality as a key component, but it was never realized within the Soviet Union, on a people level or on a state level. For the existence of the USSR, Russia was always in control with the other member states following behind. Gorbachev's decision to remove Konayev was the first move that brought about a rise in nationalism that began separating the USSR. While the collapse is often understood as the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the breaking up of the Soviet Union can be construed as the Soviet Union collapsing.

The coup in August 1991 did mark the end of the Soviet Union, and the Communist Party. While not sanctioned by the party, hardliners in the Communist Party took a stand against Gorbachev and his reforms and attempted a coup to oust him as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The coup was an attempt to bring power back to the

CPSU apparatus but its failure proved two things: the CPSU no longer had the authority it once had, and the reforms were unpopular (Gill 1994).

Within four months, the USSR went from a crisis in governing to no longer existing. A world superpower disappeared with no invading army and without a single shot being fired. For politics, it meant that the Communist ideology had lost stability. The Soviet Union offered support to Communist regimes in Asia and Latin America and while the Soviet Union had to lessen its support in the latter days of its existence, its collapse meant no support. For the military that so much money and research had been spent on, it no longer posed a threat in the region or against the USA.

#### The Rise (Putting It All Together)

Of the many results that occurred because of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fourth wave of human trafficking was one that took a few years to notice, and nearly ten years for any research to begin to understand the movement of women from Russia and Ukraine, to numerous Asian countries. Out of the ashes of a fallen empire rose the intricate human trafficking market that established itself and has yet to lose any ground. How did the human trafficking market establish itself within Soviet Russia and why has it been so successful? The answer to both of those questions is what the previous parts of this research have been about: Soviet history.

The existence of the Soviet Union was filled with the components necessary for not just human trafficking to occur, but for profitable, international human trafficking to occur. For any trafficking to occur there needs to be a supply and a demand, and the policies of the Soviet Union created a supply of potential victims and a supply of criminals to operate in the trafficking

business. The Soviet Union itself did not create a demand for human trafficking, but Soviet policies did nothing to curtail the demand that existed within the Soviet Union and throughout the world. What demand that was created for trafficking, ironically was from the people that would become its victims.

The Soviet economy failed to provide for its citizens, creating a population desperate for a better quality of life. Women and children, often affected the hardest in any downtrodden economy, were ripe to be preyed upon by traffickers, who offer better opportunities elsewhere. Even though the Soviet Union's policies guaranteed basic living goods for its citizens, the citizens lived in poverty, and all though the citizens had incomes, there were no goods to spend their money on. The promise of a better paying job, in a place that offered enough food, clothing, and a better quality of life enticed a large amount of the population that is known, and even more unknown about.

Corruption was the linchpin needed for human trafficking to expand to the extent it did. Government officials working with organized crime to obtain foreign goods, to provide papers needed for the moving of victims, and the acceptance of bribes to look the other way. Corruption greased the wheels of the trafficking operations, allowing for border access when there shouldn't have been, and set up the more direct trafficking routes, meaning quicker travel which translated to more profits.

Up until the collapse occurred, the groundwork was laid and operated at a fraction of its potential; it was the collapse that allowed the human trafficking market to reach its maximum potential. The results of the collapse included a bad economy getting worse, inflation, and a dramatic change in the borders and border control. Trade between Russia and other countries



started to happen; foreign goods, as well as information about other countries, were now open to be accessed by the citizens instead of just the elites. An opening of borders, explained by both the collapse and then globalization, made international human trafficking that much easier for the Russian mafia and other organized crime groups; less to no border guards to be bribed or worked around made it easier and more profitable.

All of this was laid at the feet of organized crime and the Russian mafia. Already being utilized to bring in illegal goods to be sold to the Soviet elite and among the vendors operating in the shadow economy, the Russian mafia was presented with a new business venture of moving people out of the country, or at the very least was able to offer the false hope of being able to move people out of the country and had the perceived ability to do so. The Russian mafia's ties to weapons trafficking and drug trafficking has been a great asset to their human trafficking efforts, especially the drug trafficking. Since it is often reported, and logically it makes sense, that drug use and forcing victims to become addicted to hard drugs is a way to keep victims in a state of servitude, the Russian mafia's connection to drugs has worked to their benefit. There is also evidence that Mexican cartels, whom are heavily involved in the illegal drug trade, use both human trafficking and human smuggling to move drugs; there is nothing to reject the idea that the Russian mafia does not also engage in a combination of drug/human trafficking (Shelley 2012).

One factor that may be unique to Russian human trafficking is Russia's geographic location. Since Russia's border is shared along Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, the distance to move trafficking victims is shorter compared to other large scale human trafficking operations. For example, the women who are trafficked into prostitution into Asian countries where there is

a large demand, is relatively a short one. Although there is a large Russian mafia presence in the United States of America, most of the demand for Russian women is in Asia and the Middle East, distinctly in Bahrain and Israel.

### Trafficking Routes

All of the information on human trafficking and Russia can be realized by the known trafficking routes that cut across the region and where the Russian mafia has a presence. Research by the IOM (International Organization for Migration) and other similar organizations have identified several key trafficking routes (Stoecker 2000). The Baltic route is reported to utilize porous borders with Lithuania among the most penetrable countries for those traveling from Belarus and Ukraine to Germany, Scandinavia, and United States. In 1995 nearly 10,000 South East Asian illegal immigrants were caught trying to cross into Ukraine from Poland.

Another route is the Georgian (also referred to as the Causasus) transit route which has expanded due to an open border policy with Turkey (UNICEF 2006). Women and children appear to be the majority moved through Georgia to Turkey, Greece, and other Mediterranean countries. The victims of this trafficking route are usually used for either labor or sexual exploitation. Another is the China-Siberia route which had also utilized an open border policy since 1992. Chinese laborers are willing to work jobs that Russians deem to be unacceptable, causing a growing problem of Chinese citizens with connections to criminal groups on Russian soil (ibid). According to Interpol sources, there is “considerable traffic from China via Moscow and Prague and on to Germany” (Stoecker 2000).

Israel is a noted destination for sex trafficking utilizing Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula (Van Reisen and Rijken 2015). The UAE and Bahrain are also noted destinations for sex trafficking and the victims coming from the southern regions of European Russia (UNICEF 2006). Israel has close ties to Russia and the Russian mafia because of the mass immigration that occurred between the two states.

Notable hotspots for trafficking include resorts in Europe and Asia, as well as armed conflict zones where military and peacekeeping forces are stationed (UNICEF 2006; Friesendorf 2009). The Balkans is a primary case for peacekeepers contributing to human trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Mapping the trafficking routes and measuring the volume of people trafficked on them has been a difficult task because of the secretive nature of the trafficking. There has been an increase in trying to understand and establish the trafficking routes by determining each country's place in the human trafficking market. The works of Cho (2015), Bales (2007) and the US State Department have made a great amount of progress in finding the particular measures that identify trafficking and the type of trafficking that is occurring. Identifying trafficking victims and trafficking routes are among the top priorities, along with providing support to the victims.

Since there is a lack of knowledge on trafficking routes, worldwide and not just about Russian and Eastern European trafficking, there is a great deal of progress to be made. One suggestion in researching Russian human trafficking, would be to compare what is known about the trafficking routes and businesses with known ties to the Russian mafia. Logically, victims would be moved to locations that are free from police scrutiny, and buildings that would either

be vacant or occupied with people who not bring attention to the area. Unfortunately, this type of information limits those who can do the research to local law enforcement and regional intelligence organizations.

### A Failure to Act

The largest problem concerning human trafficking coming out of and into Russia is the unwillingness to act against it from the Russian government. The relationship between the Russian government and the Russian mafia is too close to engage in meaningful attempts to hinder or stop the trafficking that occurs; the same can be stated for a host of illegal activities that are located within Russia's borders. It is the unfortunate circumstance that Gorbachev's reforms failed, because *glasnost* and *perestroika* were among the few programs to be tried that offered a change from the same corrupt bureaucratic system that had always been in place. After Soviet Russia became Russia, the problems the government faced were the same, but worse. The national indicators that are associated with human trafficking continued to worsen, even though a fundamental change was being attempted (Cho 2015; Bales 2007). Decentralization was being attempted, but the infrastructure was not in place to make the switch, causing shortages and government rationing again.

While it could be argued that Russia failed to act against human trafficking because the current attention being given to it was not present then, cannot be accepted for the current failures to act. From the US State Departments 2016 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, from 2009-2012 Russia was ranked as a 2WL which stands for "Tier 2 Watch List." The report uses four rankings: Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 2 Watch List, and Tier 3. Tier 1 estimates a country's government

fully meets the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's (TVPA) minimum standards. Tier 2 estimates that a country's government is making significant efforts to meet the TVPA's standards; Tier 2 Watch List includes three observations: the number of victims is significant or significantly increasing, a country fails to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat trafficking from the previous year, and that future improvements would be done over the following year. Tier 3 is the rank given to countries that do not fully meet the minimum standards of the TVPA and are not actively making significant efforts to meet the minimum standards. For the last four years, Russia has been downgraded to a Tier 3 ranking.

While the Russian government may have played an unknowing hand in the formation of the Russian/Slavic human trafficking market, since the early 1990s the world has experienced the ramifications of the human trafficking market and the exploitation of Russian citizens. Russia's government however does not appear to place human trafficking among its priorities or it refuses to acknowledge the problem it has. According to the US State Department's TIP report, Russia's refusal to improve its human trafficking condition may be because of its corruption: "... Russian officials suspected of allegedly facilitating trafficking in Russia, for instance by facilitating victim's entry into Russia... Employers sometimes bribe Russian officials to avoid enforcement of penalties." In addition, North Korea sends approximately 20,000 citizens to Russia annually to work in forced labor conditions.

Russia's unwillingness to act against the human trafficking that is occurring appears to be because it has an interest in acquiring labor by means of trafficking and a relationship with the criminal element responsible for the majority of the trafficking into and out of Russia. This revelation emphasizes how difficult it will be for any meaningful legislation to pass in the

Russian government and for the law enforcement to engage in meaningful activities such as surveillance, and raid operations. This scenario leaves outside individuals who happen to stumble upon human trafficking operation to take it upon themselves to engage in helping victims. While a little action is better than none, the only way Russia's human trafficking problem will be dealt with is by a fundamental shift in how Russia's government operates in terms of organized crime and its acquiring of labor.

## CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION

Throughout the world there is a want to exploit peoples labor in legal and illegal work settings. The demand for exploiting labor is met with vulnerable populations throughout the world seeking different, or better means of providing for themselves or their families. Human trafficking does just that: it moves individuals, often under threat or false pretenses, in order to exploit their labor. There is still much to learn about human trafficking, specifically about the traffickers themselves, but there is enough information available to understand what human trafficking is and how it can be dealt with.

Human trafficking, often thought of as the new slave trade, is found throughout the world, often preying upon those in difficult situations who are seeking a better life elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Human trafficking provides for pimps, brothels, strip clubs, sweatshops, agriculture fields, restaurants, construction, and family caretakers all throughout the world with certain countries being identified for particular means for human trafficking. For example, the Middle East contains Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, which are destination countries for sex trafficking victims. Wealthier families may take in foreign women as family caretakers, cooks, and maids and are subjected to both physical and sexual abuse.

There are basic concepts that explain why human trafficking occurs, as Cho (2015) refers to as the “four pillars of human trafficking: migration, crime, vulnerability, policy and institutional efforts.” Migration is a key component of the victim supply of human trafficking

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that human trafficking is thought of as the new slave trade because of the volume that occurs between countries, but slavery is still an issue that plagues countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

because while force is used to recruit and move victims, the majority of victims believe that their trafficker(s) are helping them move to a better work location. The majority of victims were simply trying to move somewhere else with the expectation of finding either higher paying work, or better work than what they are doing in their current situation. While there can be some discrepancies between the migration and vulnerability pillars, both indicate that a person's current location leaves an individual wanting to leave for a better life. Similarly, the crime and policy efforts pillars indicate that a country with high crime rates and a government that institutes either ineffective or no legal measures to counter trafficking are countries that are deeply involved in the actual trafficking.

### Russia and Human Trafficking

Human trafficking has been measured in "waves" with Russia being the fourth and latest measured wave of human trafficking. Compared to the other three waves (Thai and Filipino women, Dominicans and Colombians, Ghanaians and Nigerians) the fourth wave of Slavic women and children, which has manifested largely as a demand for Russian and Ukrainian women and children, has been the result of failed policies from a failed state. The fourth wave of human trafficking was first noticed after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and until now was only understood in terms of demand. This research explained why the connection between Russia and human trafficking exists, beyond the demand that exists throughout the world for Russian trafficking victims.

Russia's human trafficking problem can be traced back to the times of Imperial Russia which had the beginning of organized crime with the presences of bandits who were revered by



their community for standing against an unjust government of the Russian royal family. After World War I and the end of Imperial Russia began the time of Soviet Russia, the Soviet Union, and the USSR. During the nearly seventy-year lifespan of the USSR, an ideology was corrupted for personal gain because of the failures that ideology produced. Socialism for the sake of communism was implemented, with the state planning the economy. This produced many side effects including shortages, starvation, and the second Soviet economy, which ironically operated under the principles of capitalism, what the Communist ideologues wished to eradicate. Corruption and abuse of power came from the Communist Party and its leaders, especially under Stalin's rule, which was marked by World War II, paranoia, political and criminal purges, and famine.

Since the ideology of Soviet Russia never changed, neither did the circumstances. The economy only ever changed slightly but it never improved. Poverty became a characteristic of Soviet life while those in government and those connected to the government lived in comfort. For the rest of the Soviet population, in order to provide for themselves and their families they had to operate in the second economy, using whatever means they could to provide goods and services that the State could not. While the economy remained abysmal, the leaders focused attention elsewhere on the military. Competing against the United States of America in the Cold War, providing support to other Communist regimes throughout the world, and continually trying to establish legitimacy as the regional leader.

In 1985, with the election of Gorbachev, Soviet politics began to change. Gorbachev, realizing change was needed, instituted *glasnost* and *perestroika*, aimed to bring about clarity

and openness of the government to the people, and economic reforms bringing capitalism back into the official economy. Gorbachev's reforms were not met enthusiastically, with opposition from hardline members of the Communist Party attempting a coup in 1991. The failed coup signaled the end of the Soviet Union because there was no faith in the new leadership, and the old leadership commanded no authority. A few months after the coup, on December 25, 1991, the Communist Party that held power for nearly seventy years was disbanded, marking the end of the USSR. The collapse brought about changes that fueled organized crime, there was no check on any of the corruption that was occurring, and the loss of borders and border control allowed movement between countries to go unchecked.

Poverty, shortages of goods and food, corruption throughout the government on all levels and within businesses, persecution and purges, and a constant threat of war were all characteristics of the USSR and while attempts were made to fix them, none of the issues were resolved. After the collapse, many of the facilitating factors for the collapse continued to exist.

Although there is no definitive timeline of Russian human trafficking, it can be said that before the collapse human trafficking was occurring, at the collapse human trafficking began to increase in volume, and after the collapse human trafficking continued to expand and the Russian mafia was and has been able keep a stable supply of victims. Supply in victims rose during the Soviet era, and has stayed constant during and after the collapse. The supply of traffickers rose along with the supply of victims, using the hardships of the Soviet era and promises of a better life to deceive their victims in willfully becoming a part of their trafficking schemes. The demand for trafficking arose on three fronts: from the unknowing victims, the traffickers, and the

destination countries. People demanded a way out, which increased the demand of traffickers. Traffickers demanded more victims, and more locations for their victims to be supplied to. Finally, the locations that served as destination points for Russian mafia human trafficking operations, demanded new victims. For labor trafficking reasons, there is a constant demand for new labor because of the terrible conditions that the victims are subjected to and are rarely offered medical attention. For sex trafficking reasons, there is always a constant demand for new trafficking victims because there is a demand for variety by the “johns” or purchasers, there is a large profit to be made by even a single prostitute, it is easy to expand locations that a prostitute can work in, and trafficking victims are often resold multiple times to other pimps or gangs involved in prostitution.

### What is Needed

The focus of this research has been about the historical factors that brought about the fourth wave of human trafficking, originating out of Russia and the former USSR. There is still much to be understood about human trafficking in the past, present, and future. There are three areas of research that should be given attention in future research: trafficking routes, comparison of trafficking waves, and Mexico and human trafficking.

The current understanding of human trafficking routes consists largely of measuring specific indicators and determining if a country is a destination, supply, or transit country; research like the works of Cho (2015) and Bales (2007). The future research on trafficking routes should take a more specific approach and go from a focus on countries to a focus on cities. It is far too easy to say that a girl from Russia has been trafficked to the United States of America.

Mapping trafficking routes by cities would not just create a better understanding, it would help in understanding the logistics that the traffickers have put in place. At the same time, a more local mapping of routes may also help in understanding the traffickers, and the victims.

A current lacking in human trafficking research is a comprehensive knowledge of the four waves of trafficking. An overwhelming majority of focus has been given to what has been called the fourth wave (Russia and Ukraine human trafficking) because it is the latest wave to occur and be researched. It also is the wave that brought about the attention that human trafficking had and is currently receiving. Little is known about the other three waves other than that it was trafficking of women and their country of origin, as demonstrated in Stoecker (2000). Attention to the other three waves would be a great addition to the research. In addition, a comparison of the four waves would also be a great addition to the field. It would appear that a similarity between them is that they were noticed because of women victims, but there is much to learn about the reasoning behind the demand for those women.

The third suggestion for future research is to examine the human trafficking that is being conducted within Mexico, and between the United States of America and Mexico. With more research into the Mexico/USA trafficking flow, it could be determined what constitutes a wave of trafficking and if it has been met, routes taken, reasons, and deeper research into victims and traffickers. There are some facts that coincide with Russia's human trafficking that would make for a solid starting point of research. Just as Russia has succumbed to corruption and organized crime (Russian mafia), Mexico has succumbed to corruption and organized crime (Cartels). Mexico also faces a poverty problem that keeps the Cartel's memberships high, and people desiring to leave the country. At the same time, drug trafficking is a large component of the

Mexican cartel's activities, which is linked to both international trafficking and prostitution. Just as this research has been conducted on Russia's history and its role in supporting the fourth wave of human trafficking, the case can be made that Mexico's recent history with the rise of the Cartels can be directly linked to the next (fifth) wave of human trafficking.

At the end of the day, there is still so much information that is not known about human trafficking, and what is known needs to be checked and reinforced with more specific information. While this research focused on Russia, there is just as much work that needs to be done on other countries such as Mexico as previously stated, Israel, Ukraine, and the United States of America when it comes to understanding the supply, demand, and flow of human trafficking. Perhaps Russia's involvement in human trafficking is a special case that cannot be applied to other countries. Or perhaps a poor economy, a corrupt government, a breakdown of enforced borders, and a history of persecuted populations are important historical factors that can positively identify human trafficking within a country.

## **APPENDIX: MAP**



Figure 1 -Map of the USSR – 1981 (Vidiani.com accessed September 16, 2016)

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