

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD

POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

1985-1986

Raymond D. Gastil

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With an Essay by

Leonard R. Sussman



GREENWOOD PRESS

New York • Westport, Connecticut • London

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Freedom House, 20 West 40th Street, New York, New York 10018

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ISBN: 0-313-25398-6
ISSN: 0732-6610

First published in 1986

Greenwood Press, Inc.
88 Post Road West
Westport, Connecticut 06881

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Preface

Americans have many foreign policy interests. For most citizens our economic and security relations are foremost, and our foreign policy is directed primarily to securing these interests. However, in the long run the future of our country will only be secured in a free and democratic world. From this perspective achieving this world is both a vital interest of Americans and a vital interest of all peoples. To help us in understanding where we are in the struggle to achieve this world and to keep the relevance of this issue before the public, Freedom House has supported the Comparative Survey of Freedom since 1972.

This yearbook marks the thirteenth year of the Comparative Survey and is the seventh edition in the Freedom House series of annual publications. Previous yearbooks, in addition to focusing on the Comparative Survey, have emphasized different aspects of freedom and human rights. The first yearbook, the 1978 edition, examined basic theoretical issues of freedom and democracy and assessed the record of the Year of Human Rights. The second yearbook reported extensively on a conference devoted to the possibilities of expanding freedom in the Soviet Union. The 1980 yearbook considered international issues in press freedom, aspects of trade union freedom, the struggle for democracy in Iran, elections in Zimbabwe, and the relationship between human rights policy and morality. The 1981 yearbook contained essays and discussions from a Freedom House conference on the prospects for freedom in Muslim Central Asia. The 1982 yearbook emphasized a variety of approaches to economic freedom and its relation to political and civil freedom. The 1983-84 yearbook addressed the problems of corporatism, and the health of democracy in the third world. It also incorporated the papers and discussions of a conference held at Freedom House on supporting democracy in main-

land China and Taiwan. The 1984-85 yearbook came back to the themes of the definition of freedom, and the conditions for the development of freedom that were first addressed in the 1978 yearbook. It also looked at the particular problem of developing democracy in Central America.

In addition to the ratings and tables of the Comparative Survey, the extensive discussion of criteria and definitions at the beginning of the 1985-86 yearbook includes a checklist for political rights and civil liberties. This edition also presents a discussion of the continuing controversy over the role and regulations appropriate to the news media, a report on a conference held this summer on supporting liberalization in Eastern Europe, and discussions of policy questions relating to American support for democracy in the world.

We acknowledge, once again, the contribution made by the advisory panel for the Comparative Survey. The panel consists of: Robert J. Alexander, Richard W. Cottam, Herbert J. Ellison, Seymour Martin Lipset, Lucian W. Pye, Leslie Rubin, Giovanni Sartori, Robert Scalapino, and Paul Seabury. We also express our appreciation to those foundations whose grants have made the Survey and the publication of this yearbook possible. We are especially grateful for the continuing primary assistance provided to the Survey by the J. Howard Pew Freedom Trust. We thank the Earhart Foundation for its additional support. The Survey and all Freedom House activities are also assisted by the generous support of individual members of the organization as well as trade unions, corporations, and public foundations which contribute to our general budget. No financial support from any government--now or in the past--has been either solicited or accepted.

We also acknowledge the research and editorial assistance of Jeannette C. Gastil in producing this yearbook.

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Contents

MAPS AND TABLES vii

PREFACE ix

PART I. THE SURVEY IN 1985

Freedom in the Comparative Survey: Definitions and Criteria 3

Survey Ratings and Tables for 1985 31

PART II. CURRENT ISSUES

No Detente in International Communications 89
Leonard R. Sussman

PART III. STRENGHTHENING AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR LIBERALIZATION IN EASTERN EUROPE

Foreword 131

Conference Discussion, June 15, 1985 133

Conclusions and Recommendations 191

PART IV. ASPECTS OF THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

Aspects of an American Campaign for Democracy 199

Reflections Inspired by the June 15 Conference 231

Contents

PART V. COUNTRY SUMMARIES

Introduction 251

Summaries 256

PART VI. RELATED TERRITORY SUMMARIES 403

INDEX 425

Map

Map of Freedom 46

Tables

1. Independent Nations: Comparative Measures of Freedom 32

2. Related Territories: Comparative Measures of Freedom 38

3. Rating Countries by Political Rights 44

4. Rating Countries by Civil Liberties 45

5. Most Significant Changes: 1984 to 1985 52

6. Ratings of Countries Since 1973 59

7. National Elections and Referendums 73

8. Political-Economic Systems 80

9. News Media Control by Countries 100

PART I

The Survey in 1985

Freedom in the Comparative Survey: Definitions and Criteria

Freedom, like democracy, is a term with many meanings. Its meanings cover a variety of philosophical and social issues, many of which would carry us far beyond the discussion of political systems with which the Comparative Survey of Freedom has been principally concerned. Unfortunately, linguistic usage is such that the meanings of a word such as freedom infect one another, so that a "free society" may be taken to be a society with no rules at all, or a free man may be taken to be an individual with no obligations to society, or even another individual. It is this global sense of individual freedom that leads many Americans to scoff at the idea that theirs is a free society. Not primarily concerned with politics, most Americans apply the word "free" to their personal relationships, sensing correctly, but for our purposes irrelevantly, the necessity to work at a job, or to drive at a certain speed on the highway. To these individuals, "freedom" sounds like a wonderful goal, but hardly a goal that their society has achieved. Yet freedom, when addressed in a narrow political sense, is the basic value, goal, and, to a remarkable degree, attainment of successful democratic regimes.

Freedom as independence is important to the Survey, but this too is not a primary basis of judgment. When the primary issue for so many countries in the colonial era was to become free from a colonial or occupying power, "freedom" meant that a country had emerged from control by another state, much as the United States had achieved freedom in the 1780s. This sense of freedom was applied to the term "the free world" after World War II because the Soviet Union forced satellization on so many countries of Eastern Europe. By contrast those beyond this sphere were said to be free. In this sense Spain was part of the free world, but at the time only in its relative independence. Still, for a people to be ruled by leaders from among themselves rather than by

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foreign leaders is an aspect of political freedom--self-determination is a democratic right. But the fact, for example, that the dictators of Haiti have been Haitians has done little for the freedom or democratic rights of this oppressed people.

Since democratic freedoms and human rights are often considered together it has often been assumed that the Survey of Freedom is equivalent to a survey of human rights. However, in spite of the considerable overlap of the two, concern for democracy and concern for human rights are distinct. A free people can deny human rights to some of their number, and they can certainly deny human rights to others. Thus, the Japanese tendency to exclude foreigners, and to discriminate against those who come to Japan, is unfortunate but does little to affect its democracy. If people are beaten cruelly in the jails of Arkansas, this too is a violation of human rights, but the ill-treatment may both be passively approved by the people of the state and be of little consequence for those requirements for free speech and nonviolent pluralism necessary for the expression of political democracy.

One concern that many have felt with the human rights movement has been its tendency to proliferate as "rights" an ever-lengthening list of desirabilia, a list that mixes general principles of natural rights with the particular concerns of modern intellectuals. This weakens the proposition that there are basic natural rights that all peoples in all places and times should feel incumbent upon themselves and their societies. It also leads to an increasing opposition between expanding democratic freedoms (that is, the ability of a people to decide its own fate) and expanding human rights.

In the Survey, freedom or democracy is taken to mean "liberal democracy." It is surprising how many well-informed persons believe that since the "German Democratic Republic" also uses the term democracy in its label, we must include regimes of this type within our definition. It would be like saying that since the German fascists called their party "National Socialist," discussions of socialism must use definitions that would include the Nazis. Words can be appropriated to many uses, and no one can stop the appropriation, but when an extension of meaning adds little but confusion, and begins to call black white, then it should be rejected.

In rejecting the Marxist-Leninist or extreme leftist usage of the word democracy, as in "people's democracy," we do not mean to imply that there is not a range of acceptable meanings of "democracy" that must be taken into account in any survey of democratic freedoms. We have explicitly addressed in previous volumes of the Survey the question of how "economic freedom" might be defined.[1] Our conclusion was that a system was free primarily to the extent that the people were actually given a choice in determining the nature of the economic system. Therefore, a system that produces economic equality, if imposed, is much less democratic than a more unequal system, if freely chosen. Of course, questions must always be asked about the extent to which a system is freely chosen by any people. Economic measures such as land reform in a poor peasant economy may play a significant fact in improving the ability of people to take part in the political process fairly, and thereby choose the economic strategies that they desire.

The Comparative Survey was begun in the early 1970s as an attempt to give a more standardized and relativized picture of the situation of freedom in the world than could be provided by essays of individuals from different backgrounds that had formed, and in part still form, Freedom House's annual review of the condition of freedom in the world. My own experience had been that the world media and, therefore, informed opinion often misevaluated the level of freedom in countries with which Westerners had become particularly involved. In many countries oppressions were condemned as more severe than they were in comparative terms. On the other hand, the achievements of the postwar period in expanding freedom were often overlooked. Many small countries had quietly achieved and enjoyed democracy with relatively little media attention. The most oppressive states were those about which there was the least news in the media. Although these imbalances are still present, it is possible that some improvement in the presentation of the state of freedom in the world has resulted from the development of these Surveys.

The Comparative Survey of Freedom was hardly the first survey. There had been a number of other surveys. Bryce had listed the number of democracies in the world in about 1920.[2] An extensive cross-comparison of societies on social and cultural variables was published in the early sixties by Banks and Textor.[3] Based on an analysis of qualitative and quantitative data for all nations in

the period 1960-62, the authors ranked and categorized polities on a wide variety of indices. These included economic development, literacy, and degree of urbanization, as well as political and civil rights. Since the authors' purpose was ultimately to discover correlations among the variables, their indices were more specific than those used in the Comparative Survey. They were interested primarily in presenting detailed information on items such as the nature of the party system, the presence or absence of military intervention, the freedom of opposition groups to enter politics, or the freedom of the press.

The next major effort, by Robert Dahl and colleagues at Yale, was much closer in intent to the Comparative Survey.[4] In updating Banks and Textor's work they placed all significant states along a variety of scales relating to democracy. The resulting scales were then aggregated into scales representing the two fundamental dimensions of "polyarchy" according to Dahl: opportunities for political opposition and degree of popular participation in national elections. The resulting lists of polyarchies and near-polyarchies were very similar to our lists of free states. A similar rating of democratic systems was developed about the same time by Dankwart Rustow.[5] In both cases, and especially that of Rustow, there seemed to be an overemphasis on the formal characteristics of participation in elections and too little regard for the civil liberties that must complement elections if they are to be meaningful. Nevertheless, the resulting lists were very similar to those produced a few years later in the first Comparative Survey of Freedom.

A recent attempt to rank most, if not all, nations on a human rights scale by Charles Humana achieves similar results to my own.[6] This is particularly remarkable in that Humana's goals are quite different. Human rights for Humana covers a broader spectrum of issues, and the issues include both those generally acknowledged in international documents and those that Humana is particularly concerned about (such as military training, amounts spent on defense, and homosexual rights). His work again suggests the close connection of human rights and democracy or freedom, yet it tends to rank down poorer countries by bringing in a number of basic needs as "rights."

The essential difference between the Comparative Survey and the other attempts of the last generation has been its annual presen-

tation of the evidence and rankings, as opposed to what are essentially one-shot presentations. The latter often represent much more detailed study, but they suffer from the lack of experience with repeated judgments and changes over a period of years that has served to improve the Comparative Survey.

In many ways more comparable to the Survey are the annual reports on human rights to Congress of the State Department's Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs.[7] Presenting detailed information on the state of human rights in every country, the reports consider political and civil liberties as well as other issues. They are, of course, influenced by America's foreign policy concerns, but with this caveat they are remarkably informative. Improving in coverage and comparability are also the annual reports of Amnesty International.[8] Amnesty's concerns in the area are much narrower, but information on Amnesty's issues--execution, political imprisonment, and torture--often has a wider significance. Both of these efforts have now become basic sources of information for the Comparative Survey.

The purpose of the Comparative Survey, then, is to give a general picture of the state of political and civil freedoms in the world. By taking a consistent approach to the definition of freedom, distinctions and issues that are often overlooked are brought out. In particular, its comparative approach brings to the reader's attention the fact that the most publicized denials of political and civil liberties are seldom in the most oppressive states. These states, such as Albania and North Korea, simply do not allow relevant information to reach the world media. There may or may not be hundreds of thousands in jail for their beliefs in North Korea: few care because no one knows.

Besides giving a reference point for considering the performance of nations, by its existence the Survey stands for the importance of democracy and freedom to an often cynical world. Too often, Westerners believe that democracy is impossible outside of a few Western countries, and consign the rest of the world to perpetual despotism. The story of the struggle for democratic freedoms is a much more complicated one, and it needs to be told. In a sketchy manner the Survey records the advances and retreats of democracy, and alerts the world to trends that should be resisted and those that should be supported.

The Categories of the Survey

The two dimensions of the Survey--political rights and civil liberties--are combined summarily for each country as its "status of freedom." **Political rights** are rights to participate meaningfully in the political process. In a democracy this means the right of all adults to vote and compete for public office, and for elected representatives to have a decisive vote on public policies. **Civil liberties** are rights to free expression, to organize or demonstrate, as well as rights to a degree of autonomy such as is provided by freedom of religion, education, travel, and other personal rights. The **Status of Freedom** is used to differentiate those countries that are grouped toward the top, middle, or bottom of the political rights and civil liberties scales.

Political rights and civil liberties are rated on seven-point scales, with (7) the least free or least democratic and (1) the most free. With no exact exact definition for any point on these scales, they are constructed comparatively: countries are rated in relation other countries rather than against absolute standards. The purpose of the rating system is to give an idea of how the freedoms of one state compare with those of others. Different persons with different information, or even with the same information, might compare countries differently. But unless the results of such comparisons are wildly different, there should be no concern. For example, if the Survey rates a country a (3) on political rights, and another person, accepting the criteria of the Survey, rates it a (4), this is an acceptable discrepancy. If judgments of two persons should turn out to be more than one point off, however, then either the Survey's methods are faulty, or the information of one of the judges is faulty.

The generalized checklist for the Comparative Survey is outlined in the following table. Detailed discussion follows.

Checklist for Freedom Ratings

Political Rights

1. Chief authority recently elected by a meaningful process

2. Legislature recently elected by a meaningful process

Alternatives for 1. and 2.:

a. no choice and possibility of rejection
b. no choice but some possibility of rejection
c. choice possible only among government or single-party selected candidates
d. choice possible only among government-approved candidates
e. relatively open choices possible only in local elections
f. open choice possible within a restricted range
g. relatively open choices possible in all elections

3. Fair election laws, campaigning opportunity, polling and tabulation

4. Fair reflection of voter preference in distribution of power
--parliament, for example, has effective power

5. Multiple political parties
--only dominant party allowed effective opportunity
--open to rise and fall of competing parties

6. Recent Shifts in power through elections

7. Significant opposition vote

8. Free of military control

9. Free of foreign control

10. Major group or groups denied reasonable self-determination

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