

AT ISSUE

CHILDREN FOR ORGAN EXPORT?*

JANICE G. RAYMOND

Women's Studies Program, Bartlett 208, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003 USA

Much of the attention that has been directed to the international trafficking in women and children has focused on the sexual exploitation of both. Only recently has some notice been given to the international trafficking in women and children for reproductive and medical purposes.

I initially became aware of this reproductive trafficking in considering the international consequences of institutionalizing surrogacy in the west. This led to an investigation about "The International Traffic in Women: Women Used in Systems of Surrogacy and Reproduction" (Raymond, 1989a). As I began to study the international ramifications of surrogacy—what some prefer to call *intrauterine adoption*—it became clear to me that an established reproductive traffic in women and children already existed in developing countries. This was the international adoption trade. No longer could we say so glibly, especially in the context of offering an alternative to invasive and abusive new reproductive technologies, that persons who wanted a child, should adopt "unwanted" third world babies.

As with sexual trafficking, the flow of reproductive trafficking in women and children moves from the less developed to the more developed countries. Most of this trafficking is, in fact, directly linked to so-called development. However, as the Stoffelen Report recognizes, "It would be

more accurate to say that the movement involves the traffic of poor women toward rich men, in all directions" (Stoffelen, 1987, p. 4).

In the United States, foreign adoptees are arriving at the rate of one child every 48 minutes (Richard, 1987, p. A-18). Many of these children traditionally have come from Asian countries, such as Korea. However, within the last ten years Latin America has become a major supplier of adoptable children to the developed world, particularly to the United States. As in Korea, the exporting of children from Latin America to the U.S. has been going on for as long as the U.S. has been politically and militarily involved in the area.

A primary cause of this trafficking in women and children is the ravaging of countries by U.S. supported military and civilian governments. The creation of massive-scale refugee camps, in El Salvador, for example, is the tragic consequences of the country's U.S. backed civil war. Prostitution, unwanted and abandoned children, are the least talked about results of militarism. And along with war comes the war against women—rape. Unwanted pregnancies from rape by Guatemalan soldiers is one of the three major products of militaristic violence in the Guatemalan highlands (Simon, 1987, p. 173). Soldiers often are paid for bringing babies and orphans back to the barracks and passing them on to illegal adoption networks.

The outcrop of U.S. involvement in Central America—in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador—has traditionally been exportable products

*A modified version of this article was originally presented at the 4th Biennial Congress on the Fate and Hope of the Earth, Managua, Nicaragua, June 25, 1989.

such as coffee and fruit. Now, women and children have become the most recent cash crops, for sexual and reproductive purposes. In Guatemala, for example, the exporting of children has become the "primary nontraditional product" of the country. Guatemala produces more than 20 million dollars annually in profits from this "product." Taking the region as a whole, "Latin America ranks first in the sale of children to foreigners" (Santa Maria, 1987, p. 2).

Not all of these children are orphans. Nor do many pass through reputable adoption agencies. Many are so-called "black market" babies obtained by brokers—local lawyers, or other businessmen linked to the same kind of brokers in the north. A number of lawyers, for example, create their own procurement networks, hiring scouts who scavenge the villages, the refugee camps, cities, and hospitals for children. These middlemen persuade destitute women to give up their babies and pay what is often a pittance to mothers or parents in dire need of money, and guilt-ridden that they cannot provide, care for, and feed their children. In one refugee camp in El Salvador, women told visitors that strange men talked them into giving over some of their children. "He said he had a friend who would send them to a rich country and they would be better off (Simons, 1985).

The stigma of single women with out-of-wedlock children is another opportunity that brokers take advantage of. Independent of economic need, women who "get into trouble" often give over babies for adoption. Where religion or tradition deprives women of birth control and abortion, and where nothing is demanded of the father for his responsibility in producing a child, these children are ripe for export.

Increasingly, many children who end up on the legal and illegal adoption circuit are stolen from maternity wards in hospitals by doctors, nurses, or other personnel who tell mothers that their babies died in childbirth. Lawyers pay off hospital workers to bring them babies

often left behind in maternity wards. Birth certificates and other papers are falsified with government officials often taking part in the process (*Central America Report*, 1988, p. 359; Simons, 1985).

Kidnappings account for many of these "adoptable" children, not only from hospitals but from women's arms. Other children have been snatched from their beds by organized bands of kidnappers. Many children are picked from the streets and lumped into a category of "abandoned" children, a category that makes no distinctions between parental poverty and abandonment.

As the demand for babies in the north increases, brokers have resorted to paying teenage girls to get pregnant. In Honduras, for example, the girls are then kept under surveillance by the brokers to monitor their eating habits and prenatal care (Pastor, 1989, p. 19).

In Brazil, a country with much racial diversity, networks of brokers offer satisfaction for every type of child demanded—most of them light-skinned. Argentina is another country in which light-skinned babies are plentiful since 90% of the population is of European descent. Here, blond-haired, blue-eyed babies are in especially high demand (*Newsweek*, 1988, p. 44). In Brazil, "reproductive teams" contract with light-skinned women to bear children for foreign couples (Romito, 1986). This practice is not very different from surrogacy in the north, except that with the latter the contracting father uses his own seed and buys his own genetic child.

Other brokers facilitate the breeding of children by prostitutes. These children are then sold for prostitution and pornography in the north or in their own countries. Thus we have here the literal production/reproduction of prostitution by prostitutes. Quoting a conference of a UN Commission on Human Rights, Dutch Labor MP, Piet Stoffelen in a comprehensive report linking adoption, prostitution, pornography, and slavery to the traffic in children from developing countries to the U.S. and Europe, notes

that prostitutes most in demand are between the ages of 10 and 14. “. . . the prices for the different kinds of prostitution with children are much higher than with adult prostitutes (for instance five times the ‘adult price’)” (Stoffelen, 1987, p. 3). And, “Over the years, the prostitution of minors has become an industry, one from which many families make their entire living” (Stoffelen, 1987, p. 8). Most important to recognize, however, is that “Child prostitution is part of the overall structure [of organised prostitution], not an institution apart” (Stoffelen, 1987, p. 7). Dr. Atilio Alvarez, an Argentinian expert in issues of justice regarding children, also connects the illegal traffic in children to organ traffic, slave labor, and the traffic in women for prostitution (*La Razon*, 1986, p. 19).

The Stoffelen Report, prepared for the Council of Europe, claims that adoption rings and aid agencies operate as covers for this traffic in women and children. This is the model extolled by one surrogate broker in the United States who projects setting up a surrogate agency in Mexico (in Mexicali and Tijuana, fast-growing cities not far from the U.S. border). In a 1987 interview conducted by Gena Corea, John Stehura, President of the Bionetics Foundation, a fast-growing surrogacy and reproductive services business in the U.S., volunteered his plans for customized surrogacy in Mexico.

Offer a medical clinic. Have a doctor come in once a week. Do all these U.S. charity-type things but direct it towards pregnancy and surrogacy.

Corea: So if you had a clinic where you had a doctor come in once a week, people would begin to trust that facility? Is that it?

. . . It might look something like a Children Home Society which would be a non-profit type of adoption agency . . . Very much like the food programs, like the medical aid programs where U.S. medical doctors go there on weekends—that sort of thing—to help in poor neighborhoods.

So I would literally be mimicking something pretty much like that. (Corea, 1987)

In Stehura's words, “the proper presentation of surrogate parenting” in Mexico involves softening up the local women with free medical care in order to give them an incentive to undergo a surrogate pregnancy for a U.S. client. Then, “You could devastate them with money and things . . . It would save them 20 years of scratching.” He particularly wants to make his surrogacy appeal to women for whom “the family linkage has broken down”—those who can “appreciate their own independence” (Corea, 1987). His model is based on existing institutions that pose as charitable aid agencies, for example, for purposes of adoption, and that already have a preexisting system set up for a reproductive market in women and children.

It is not surprising that private aid agencies are involved in such trafficking. Aid and aid agencies have always been a cover for exploitative commercial or political purposes. For example, camps in Honduras for Nicaraguan refugees, set up by various private U.S. right-wing groups and by the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), have been consistently used as bases for generating men and children to fight for the contras. “‘Refugee assistance’ has become an important element of the U.S. war effort: the contras are responsible for generating the refugees, while U.S. money and experts, both private and public, work on the refugee populations in order to turn them into agents—willing or not . . .” (Robinson & Norsworthy, 1987, p. 134). In like manner, “officials of an agency offering relief in refugee camps in Bangladesh are in fact involved in trafficking in unaccompanied refugee children” (Stoffelen, 1987, p. 5). There are numerous examples of the exploitation of aid and aid agencies operating as a cover for both reproductive and sexual trafficking.

Thus far, I have focused on the *supply* factor. Ahilemah Jonet, a Malaysian lawyer doing work on the international legal aspects of the trafficking in children, has drawn attention to the *demand* factor. None of this supply of babies, she points out, could exist without the demand for children in the north. "Commentators propose reform in the law and procedure on adoption, or plead for a revised policy on intercountry adoption. They omit the examination of the source factor—the demand . . . Consequently, the adoptive parents—the consumers—escape—the blame as the innocent party" (Jonet, 1989, p. 1).

We hear much about the shortage of babies for the two million U.S. Americans who, at any given time, are looking to adopt. The shortage, however, is a shortage of white babies or, more accurately, a shortage of "perfect babies." "Perfect" means as close to white as possible. Thereby, would-be parents seek out light-skinned children from Asia and South and Central America. Jonet points out that this popularity of white babies is not confined to the west but is increasingly prevalent in third world countries. She cites her own country, Malaysia, as an example of a preference for light-complexioned Thai adoptees, preferably female, who are viewed as well-mannered, hard-working, and obedient (Jonet, 1989, pp. 6-14).

Adoptive parents also talk about international adoption as a noble thing—as rescuing children from poverty and misery. They envision themselves as making some dent in the problem of world poverty, a dent, however, "which does not require any major changes in lifestyle." Jonet views this as a romantic route, "a poor child of another race, from a far away place is an exotic souvenir to take home when one visits the country as a tourist" (Jonet, 1989, p. 17). For many adoptive parents, adopting a light-skinned child from a foreign country also eliminates the possibility of the natural parent(s) returning to claim the child.

Of course, many wanting to adopt

sincerely desire to be good parents. However, personal goodwill is not the only issue here. It is necessary to place the discussion of inter-country adoption in a social and political context, and to acknowledge that much more is at stake than a personal goal to parent. When white and light-skinned Latin babies are preferred at any price, adoption becomes part of the perpetuation of racism. When women of developing countries are forced into exporting children in increasing numbers for adoption because of poverty, war, political devastation, and the pressure to abandon that often comes from their location in the world as women with no resources, then adoption becomes part of the perpetuation of robbing women and cultures of children. And when prospective parents go the international adoption route with a studied ignorance and even avoidance of knowing how adoptive children are procured, then inter-country adoption becomes part of the overall reproductive trafficking in women and children.

A NEW REPRODUCTIVE TRAFFIC

A new version of the reproductive traffic in women and children is the alleged seizure and sale of children for organ export. Within the last five years, reports of disabled children from Latin America being used for organ extraction have surfaced in the indigenous and international press and have been investigated by human rights organizations.

Verifying the exporting of children for organ transplants has been extremely difficult. I have been working for several months to confirm these allegations, yet the task has been like piecing together a giant puzzle in which the pieces do not always fit.

The First Round of Information and Disinformation

One of the first newspaper reports of child organ trafficking from Central America appeared on January 2, 1987,

when *La Tribuna*, a Honduran newspaper published a story about the baby organ trade out of Honduras. The article quoted the Secretary General of the National Council on Social Welfare (JNCS), Leonardo Villeda Bermudez, who maintained that on December 22, 1986, 13 children were found by Honduran police in four different houses in San Pedro Sula awaiting export to the United States. Villeda Bermudez revealed that in these "fattening" houses the children, many of whom were disabled, were being well fed so that they would arrive at private North American laboratories "ready" for organ extraction. Further, in San Pedro Sula, the police had discovered several corpses of children who had already been mutilated.

One week later, President Jose Azcona Hoyo denied these allegations of baby organ trafficking. The President criticized the remarks of Villeda Bermudez as ill-founded, saying that he had based them only on the testimony of a social worker. In an article entitled "Ocurrio en el pasado?", translated as "Did it Happen in the Past?", the President was quoted to have said: "They learned that a few adopted children with physical defects could have been used" (*Tiempo*, 1987). Villeda Bermudez became the ex-Secretary General of the National Council of Social Welfare.

In February and March, 1987, the Guatemalan newspapers, *El Grafico* and *Prensa Libre* ran a series of articles on this alleged scandal in their own country. The articles revealed that the police had discovered a clandestine house in a residential neighborhood in Guatemala City where 14 newborns, ready for exportation, were found. One of the police, Baudilio Hichos Lopez, stated: "This trade has existed for a year. There were people who stole the babies, bought them from poor families, or discovered single mothers. They were going to give birth at the clandestine house. In the maternity ward set up there, there was no registration of any of the children born there." Hichos Lopez also stated that two

lawyers, later arrested, negotiated the legal documents to send the children to the United States and added: "We know that these babies are used as organ donors." Bought for \$250, they were resold for \$20,000 (*Prensa Libre*, Feb. 5, 1987).

Again in March, 1987, eight Guatemalans were arrested in three other houses, charged with "kidnapping and illegal trafficking in minors." In one of the houses, 11 children were found, along with ten photocopies of fake birth certificates and nine national identification cards. One of the persons who was detained in this case was Ofelia Rosal de Gama, the sister-in-law of the former military president of Guatemala, Mejia Victores (*Prensa Libre*, March 4, 1987). Rosal de Ga-ma was also married to the director of Immigration at the time of her detention.

As so often happens in Guatemala nothing more was heard of the case. *Prensa Libre*, noting that people were asking what had happened with the investigation, reported that an Immigration employee who was checking irregularities in passports granted to children being adopted abroad was assassinated on a local city bus (*Central America Report*, 1988, p. 359).

On April 21, 1987, the Nicaraguan newspaper, *Barricada*, ran a story about "The Trafficking of Children" in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. This article alleged that in addition to the "fattening houses," private individuals in both official and charitable institutions adopted children with mental or physical handicaps, posing as their benefactors, and then exported them for organ extraction (Santa Maria, 1987).

A major difficulty in verifying these allegations is that the medical procedure itself would seem to cause many problems in both material and economic terms. When the *International Children's Rights Monitor*, the publication of the Defense for Children International (DCI), consulted

medical sources about these reports, the latter posed many questions. Where would the actual operations take place? How could the murders of the “donors” be concealed? And, would the price of the organs not end up being higher than the standard price for organs? (*International Children’s Rights Monitor*, April 1, 1987, p. 16). Although one can certainly speculate about the answer to these questions, it is nevertheless difficult to get specific information on these very issues. And as a result, the Defense for Children International (as well as other international groups) took the position that it could not verify the allegations, that it was “in search of the truth,” but that it also found it necessary to publicize summary information on the child organ trafficking reports cited above.

In May 1987, the *International Children’s Rights Monitor* the (DCI) published an extremely cautious statement in conjunction with a summary of the allegations of child organ trafficking from Central America. It was immediately reproached by the U.S. Mission to the UN in Geneva. The U.S. Mission pointed out that a Soviet newspaper, *Izvestya*, which had interviewed a DCI staff member, had published unfounded facts out of rumors, giving an anti-American bias to the matter. For example, the article reported that “There is only one step from American arrogance and racist contempt for the Latin American peoples to total cannibalistic licence.” The U.S. maintained that all subsequent reports of child organ trafficking were based on this Soviet article.

The US demanded that DCI issue a denunciation of the article in *Izvestya*, demonstrating how DCI’s statements had been manipulated by the Soviets. It added that if DCI failed to make “a clear and unequivocal statement to that effect without delay, the organisation’s credibility would be seriously jeopardised . . . and the rumour would be echoed widely in the coming weeks and months in certain media throughout the world” (*International Children’s Rights Monitor*,

April 3, 1987, pp. 4–5).

While DCI agreed that *Izvestya* had indeed falsified its reporting of the interview, it decided initially not to publish a press release. Several months later, rumors began to circulate that DCI was manipulated by the Soviets and that U.S. authorities were questioning the independence of the organization. The Associated Press (US) and Associated Newspapers (UK) informed DCI that they were in possession of “damaging information” about DCI’s status.

Faced with this international brouhaha, DCI was forced into issuing a press release denying the *Izvestya* article and stating that it had no information “permitting it either to confirm or deny the rumors relating to the trafficking in organs.” While DCI dissociated itself from the disinformation in the *Izvestya* article, it concluded that it was not easy to say that this was “simply an exercise in disinformation designed to blacken the image of the United States” (*International Children’s Rights Monitor*, April 3, 1987, p. 5). DCI also noted, as have I in piecing together these various accounts, that many of the newspaper articles showed absolutely no anti-U.S. bias. Finally, DCI accused the U.S. representatives of resorting to the same kind of disinformation, thereby, obfuscating the search for truth.

The Second Round of Information and Disinformation

The allegations of child organ trafficking from Central America to the U.S. were not to go away. One year later, in 1988, reports again surfaced in the same Guatemalan newspapers (*El Grafico* and *Prensa Libre*) that seven babies had been rescued who were destined for organ transplants in the United States and Israel. The *El Grafico* story reported that security agents had captured two Israelis who were working with two Guatemalan lawyers, Jorge Rodolfo Rivera and Carlos Rene Gonzalez, who in turn had the services of a Guatemalan pediatrician, Joaquin Kackler. They paid women a sum

of 50 quetzales (\$20) to nurse and care for the babies. This business was discovered by personnel of the Guatemalan Narcotics and Intelligence Section (SIN). *El Grafico* also reported that official information revealed the people captured confessed that they exported children to Israel and the United States so that their organs could be sold for the sum of \$75,000 to families who needed transplants for their children (*El Grafico*, Jan. 24, 1988).

Three days later, *El Grafico* published the denial of the Israeli Embassy which claimed that *El Grafico* had published such a "monstrous accusation" based on "the irresponsible declarations of a functionary" whose opinion was based on "personal presumptions" and no follow-through investigation. The Embassy further declared that "It is impossible to think that in the Land of Israel the aberration and crime of 'butchering children' could be committed." It also stated that organ transplants are prohibited in Israel by law and that "The few cases of transplantations done in Israel were done under very strict conditions of control" (*El Grafico*, Jan 27, 1988).

El Grafico responded to this Embassy statement by confirming its story, based on the information it was given by the Director of Intelligence and Narcotics Service (SIN). It made clear that it was not singling out the State of Israel, nor the U.S., for these abuses, nor saying that it was the policy of these countries to allow such outrages to occur.

However, the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala claimed that *El Grafico* printed a "clarification" two days after it broke the original report. This "clarification" supposedly stated that the newspaper no longer believed the government functionary's statement. The then Minister of Health, Dr. Carlos Soto, replied to all inquiries about the story with a terse three liner declaring that the initial *El Grafico* article was not true. He mentioned nothing about later articles alleging the same. However, *El Grafico* stated in a phone interview with the Guatemalan Health Rights Project that the paper stood by its

original story and had not printed any retraction or apology (Guatemalan Health Rights Support Project Communique, 1988).

Reports of the trafficking in children for organ extraction, again refused to disappear. The Central American Human Rights Commission (CODEHUCA) charged that the baby organ trade was booming not just in Guatemala, but in El Salvador and Honduras. Eyes, kidneys, and other organs, the commission maintains, are sold for \$75,000 apiece in the United States. Reuters ran a story, which was picked up on the wire services by many prominent newspapers in the west, alleging that babies had been kidnapped in Brazil and then transported to Paraguay destined for organ banks in the U.S. It based this report on the testimony of Judge Angel Campos, who presides over the juvenile court in Asuncion. Seven Brazilian baby boys had been rescued from a Paraguayan transit house, along with five Brazilian women who were arrested on charges of kidnapping (*Daily Telegraph*, 1988).

In November 1988, the European Parliament in Belgium passed a resolution condemning the trafficking in children from Central America abroad and the sale of children for organ transplants. The resolution, initiated by a French communist member, Danielle de March, was based on investigations made by a French lawyer and a doctor, members of an international human rights federation, who came to Guatemala in August 1988 to investigate 26 cases of Guatemalan children allegedly sold in France. "Reaction in Guatemala was immediate and contradictory. While Guatemalan officials denied it was happening, they called for an investigation, and said it couldn't happen if the adoption laws were stricter" (*Central America Report*, 1988, pp. 358-359). Others called the charges an attempt to discredit the reputations of Guatemala and the U.S.

We have here two traditional governmental responses. As with sexual trafficking, governments often report *no*

problem with reproductive exploitation of women and children. Because it is illegal and would reflect badly on the image of a country, therefore, it does not exist. Admitting it existed would force an investigation and action. Newspapers that report abuses in this area are accused of sensationalism and “disinformation” and of not being able to verify their stories. Or they are accused of communist sympathies and of being dominated by “foreign-supported radical Marxists.” This has been the conventional response of the United States to the baby organ trade allegations, as we saw in 1987.

In the summer of 1988, U.S. Information Agency (U.S.I.A.) officials began to try and halt what they regarded as “a rash of unsubstantiated reports in the world press that Latin American slum children are being sold to provide organ transplants for wealthy U.S. buyers” (Goshko, 1988, p. A19). This story, reported in the *Washington Post*, was headlined: “U.S. Combats Soviet-Fostered Reports of Latin Youngsters Sold to Provide Organ Transplants.” Labelling the durability of such reports as partly due to the Soviet Union’s “disinformation propaganda apparatus,” Herbert Romerstein, chief advisor on disinformation activities to USIA, constructed an extensive chronology of events relating to the sale of children for organ extraction based on what he said were Soviet efforts to spread such a history. This chronology was sent to U.S. embassies and consulates throughout the world as a tool in refuting the organ export allegations.¹

In summary, Romerstein’s chronology is based on the following refutations. The story began, he says, in the Honduran newspaper, *La Tribuna* that quoted a senior government official, Leonardo Villeda Bermudez (see above). All charges of organ trafficking in both 1987 and 1988 can be traced back to this story. Romerstein contends that Villeda Bermudez immediately repudiated the story of organized trafficking in babies for body parts, saying he had made no

charges but had casually mentioned only “unconfirmed rumors” (Goshko, 1988, p. A19). Romerstein does not mention that Villeda Bermudez lost his position as Secretary General of the JNBS one week after these allegations were made. Or that he repudiated such allegations perhaps because he was forced to in the wake of the denial of the President of Honduras who said that such organ trafficking could never happen in Honduras.

Quoting Romerstein, the *Washington Post* reported that the Honduran story spread to Guatemalan newspapers—not that officials in Guatemala discovered the same trafficking going on in their own country. When I interviewed John Goshko who wrote the “disinformation” story for the *Washington Post*, I mentioned that the newspaper *El Grafico* which originally broke the story in Guatemala was published by Jorge Carpio Nicolle, a right-wing former presidential candidate. How then, I asked, could *El Grafico*’s story be construed as communist-inspired? Goshko responded that no matter what political party one belonged to, there was a “confluence of anti-American opinion in Central America.” He added that he “would take these newspaper reports with a grain of salt, because the Central American press is very unreliable” (Raymond, 1989b).

The Honduran story supposedly was then circulated in other news media, escalating the “rumors” in other parts of Central America and the Caribbean. *Pravda* entered the picture on April 5, 1987 when it published a dispatch from its Mexico City correspondent—a story that repeated the original Honduran story of Villeda Bermudez’s allegations but omitted his subsequent disclaimers.

Romerstein notes that in subsequent months, the story was picked up by other communist-controlled newspapers such as *Barricada* in Nicaragua¹ and *L’Humanite* in France, but sometimes too in mainstream

¹Romerstein, once an investigator for the now-defunct U.S. House of Representatives Internal Security Committee, has himself been accused of being a “red baiter” and a hard-line anticommunist.

newspapers. In the wake of prompt and official governmental denials in Honduras, Guatemala, the U.S., and Israel, the story died down until it was resurrected in August, 1987 by a Reuters news dispatch in which Judge Campos alleged organ trafficking from Brazil-Paraguay (see above). The *Washington Post* wrote that "The judge's remarks later proved to be unsubstantiated variations on the story that originated in Honduras," a claim that is difficult to square with the fact that the judge protested a quite different case of seven Brazilian children destined for organ transplants (Goshko, 1988, A20).

Indeed what Romerstein claims is all of a piece in Honduras, Guatemala, and Paraguay is hardly the same story. However, at the prompting of upset U.S. officials, Reuters ran another article revealing the "seamless garment" version of the child/organ trafficking "rumors" and saying that the judge's allegations were unsubstantiated. In the meantime, the first Reuters dispatch had travelled far and wide and was published in many western countries.

At this point, Romerstein claims that the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL)—what he refers to as a Soviet surrogate in Brussels—submitted a long, unsubstantiated report to the UN. Human Rights subcommission in Geneva recycling the same version of disinformation about the child/organ trafficking.

When the European Parliament passed its resolution in November, 1988 (see above), the U.S. State Department criticized it for basing the resolution on "false and misleading statements and a discredited report by a Soviet front organization." The State Department also noted that the resolution was introduced by a French communist and was approved without debate. It added that "the U.S. government has made an exhaustive investigation and concluded the charges are 'totally groundless'" (*Washington Post*, 1988, p. 28).

U.S. governmental officials continue to deny that babies and/or organs have been exported to this country from Central

America. They cite, once more, that the facts are unsubstantiated, and that allegations are no more than rumors and communist-inspired disinformation. Yet the "rumors" stubbornly persist, through two rounds of "disinformationicide"—the killing off of disinformation.

Why, for example, has there been no serious investigation of these 1987 and 1988 charges in Guatemala? It is well-established that countless numbers of children have been taken out of Central American countries for adoption in the U.S. and Europe, often illegally. As the Nicaraguan newspaper, *Barricada*, noted the sudden rise in price of children for export from \$3,000 previously to the current price of \$10,000 confirms that "traffickers in children have discovered an activity even more lucrative than adoption" (Santa Maria, 1987).

CONCLUSION

The child organ trafficking is a relatively new allegation of the trafficking in women and children internationally for medical research and experimentation. It would be a mistake, however, to view these allegations of child organ trafficking as a pattern distinct from the overall organized structure of the sexual and reproductive trafficking in women and children worldwide.

There can be no exploitation of children without a prior exploitation of women, from whence these children come. The situation of women and children is very much connected. That is a political fact. Both share in the same kinds of abuse through sex and, increasingly, both become commodities on the international reproductive market. Both are subject increasingly to medical experimentation. New reproductive arrangements, such as surrogacy, are increasing the traffic in women and children across national borders. Women are the breeders; children are the product bred. We have here the international harvesting of women and children.

Many U.S. Americans recognize the horrors of the child organ and illegal adoption trade. However, with the other side of their national brains, they would approve

of legislation legalizing and/or regulating surrogate contracts and not see any connection between the former and the latter. Surrogacy is the acceptable face of reproductive trafficking. However, there is little distinction between a domestic and an intercountry market in women and children. What we call surrogacy in the west is a variant on baby selling abroad. One is soft-core exploitation, the other hard-core. One is glossy, the other graphic. The only distinction is that the father buys his own genetic child and thereby confers legitimacy on surrogate arrangements because the child is recognized as "his."

The reproductive trafficking in women and children contains all the worst elements of human rights violations. It involves the purchase and sale of human beings, coercion, the uprooting of women and children often from their countries of origin and their culture, sometimes the torture of both, often the medical violation of both and, more often than we know, the death of both. The reproductive exploitation of women and children, along with the sexual exploitation of both, is an act of total denigration of human beings.

Children have many champions however. The list of children's organizations working to combat the child trafficking problem is legion. Many people are happy to defend children. Unfortunately, those who are often happy to defend children remain undisturbed at the similar abuses to adult women. It is therefore necessary to continue insisting that the exploitation of women is unalterably linked to the exploitation of children. The trafficking in children, for any purpose, is the end-result of the trafficking in women. And until we address the overall structure of this trafficking in women and children, nothing will change.

Acknowledgment—I would like to thank Oreli Rodriguez for her help in translating many of the articles from Central American newspapers.

REFERENCES

- Central America Report*. (1988). International charges of trafficking, **18**, 358–365.
- Corea, Gena. (1987). Interview with John Stehura. December.
- Daily Telegraph* (1988, April). Babies kidnapped for US organ banks.
- El Grafico*. (1988). A luz exportacion de ninos para 'destace'. January 24; also 1988.
- "Israel respetuoso de la vida." January 27.
- Goshko, John M. (1988). Nailing disinformation: The slum child tale. *Washington Post*. August 26: A19.
- Guatemalan Health Rights Support Project Communique. (1988). Resolution to Urgent Action of 2/23/88. April 22.
- International Children's Rights Monitor*. (1987). Adoption for Organ Transplants: In Search of the Truth. April 1: 16–17; also 1987. DCI and the Allegations of Trafficking in Organs. April 3: 4–5.
- Jonet, Ahilemeh. (1989). Trafficking in Children for Intercountry Adoptions: Causes and Rationality. Unpublished Paper Prepared for the 4th Biennial Congress on the Fate and Hope of the Earth. Managua, Nicaragua: June 5–9.
- La Razon*. (1986). Venta Mundial de ninos argentinos. October 6: 19.
- Adoption from abroad. (1988, June). *Newsweek*, 44–46.
- Pastor, Roxanna. (1989). The honduran baby market. *Sojourner: The Women's Forum*. May: 19.
- Prensa Libre*. (1987). Rescataron a catorce ninos. February 5: 55; also 1987. Otros 16 ninos rescatados. March 4: 39.
- Raymond, Janice G. (1989a). The international traffic in women: Women used in systems of surrogacy and reproduction. *Reproductive and Genetic Engineering* **2**(1), 51–57.
- Raymond, Janice G. (1989b). Interview with John Goshko, *Washington Post* Reporter. May 10.
- Richard, Randall. (1987). Reporter, photographer track Americans in search of children. *Providence Journal*, A-18.
- Robinson, William I. & Norsworthy, Kent. (1987). *David and Goliath: The U.S. War Against Nicaragua*. Monthly Review Press, New York.
- Romito, Angela. (1986). Stopping the Traffic of Children by Regulating Adoption. *O Globo*, September 7.
- Santa Maria, Isabel. (1987). Trafficking in Children: A Horrendous Crime. *Barricada*. April 21.
- Simon, Jean-Marie. (1987). *Guatemala: eternal spring, eternal tyranny*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc.
- Simons, Marlise. (1985). Abductions in Salvador Fill a Demand: Adoption. *New York Times*. December 17.
- Stoffelen, Piet, Rapporteur. (1987). Parliamentary Assembly Report On the Traffic in Children and Other Forms of Child Exploitation. Council of Europe. September 10: 1–16.
- Tiempo*. 1987. Ocurrio en el pasado? January 9.
- Washington Post*. 1988. U.S. Says Moscow Spread Lies About Baby-Organ Trafficking. October 21: 28.