

# From Russia without Love: The “Fourth Wave” of Global Human Trafficking

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*Torgovlya Liud'mi: Sotsiokriminologicheskii Analiz*, Center for the Study of Transnational Organized Crime and Corruption (TraCCC) (American University). Moscow: Akademia, 2002. 221 pp.

*Migrant Trafficking and Human Smuggling in Europe: A Review of the Evidence with Case Studies from Hungary, Poland, and Ukraine*, International Organization for Migration (IOM). New York: United Nations Publications, 2000. 416 pp. \$35.00 paperback.

*Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*, Kevin Bales. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. 298 pp. \$16.95 paperback.

*Global Human Smuggling: Comparative Perspectives*, David Kyle and Rey Koslowski, ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. 374 pp. \$18.95 paperback.

*War's Dirty Secret: Rape, Prostitution, and Other Crimes Against Women*, Anne Llewellyn Barstow, ed. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2000. 224 pp. \$20.00 paperback.

**T**he roaring of the Boeing's engine matched twenty-six-year-old Lena Nakhimovskaya's barely suppressed excitement. So many months of preparation compressed into this one moment! It just proved that if you worked hard enough, you could get whatever you wanted. As the wheels finally hit the runway of Berlin's Schönefeld airport, she heard a silken feminine voice speaking rapid German. The jet airliner came to a stop, and Lena gathered up her belongings: the dog-eared hardback *Istoriya Berlina* too thick to fit in her purse and a long “To Do” list. Its first item: “Ask Sergei to pay for German lessons.”

A few minutes later she walked beside Sergei as they entered the terminal. She had met him shortly after answering the ad for a job in Berlin as housekeeper

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*and nanny. Friendly and outgoing when he coaxed her to sign the contract (verbovka), he had barely spoken a word during the whole journey from Samara. Strange.*

*A tall man approached them. He wore a green T-shirt with German words on it and sleeves too tight for biceps as thick as thighs. He and Sergei conversed in low tones for about twenty minutes.*

*Eager for action, she finally burst out, "Hi. Please allow me to introduce myself. I am Lena Nakhimovskaya. Let's go tour the city now!"*

*The man looked at Sergei with a twinkle in his eye. Licking his upper lip, he ran his eyes slowly up and down her body. "First I'll take a tour of you," he said with a strong German accent.*

*Sergei finally spoke to her, twisting her arm. "I'll give the orders around here, devushka."*

*Thunder clapped overhead as rain drops began to patter against the windows. Lena jerked away to rummage in her purse. Her voice rose hysterically. "Where is my passport?" Both men just stared at her with pity. "You can't be serious. . . ." her voice trailed off.*

The above scenario, albeit fictional, is unfortunately typical. In 1997 alone, 175,000 young women from Russia, the former Soviet Union, and Eastern and Central Europe were actually tricked and "sold" as commodities in the sex markets of the developed countries in Europe and the Americas.<sup>1</sup> Every year, at least 1 million women and children are taken from their homes and sold into slavery.<sup>2</sup> The United Nations' International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that as many as 4 million people worldwide are smuggled across borders each year, resulting in illicit profits amounting to \$7 billion annually.<sup>3</sup> In addition to women from the former communist bloc, tens of thousands of other women from countries such as the Philippines, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Ghana, and Nigeria are trafficked abroad each year and forced into prostitution to pay off their debts for transportation and housing.<sup>4</sup> Given the extent and duration of the problem of global human trafficking and, more specifically, forced prostitution, astonishingly few people fully understand it. In Article 3 of the "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons" that supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000), human trafficking is defined as,

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power or position of vulnerability or 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.<sup>5</sup>

Forms of exploitation include: prostitution, forced labor or services, slavery, and servitude. Five recently published books inform readers of the causes and consequences of this global phenomenon, and of the recent attempts to curtail human trafficking. *Torgovlya Liud'mi* (American University's TraCCC), *Migrant Trafficking and Human Smuggling in Europe* (IOM), *Disposable People* (Bales), and

*Global Human Smuggling* (Kyle and Koslowski) examine trafficking in diverse geographical regions, while *War's Dirty Secret* (Barstow) examines rape as a weapon of armed conflict and the United Nations' role in defining war crimes against women.

In *Torgovlya Liud'mi: Sotsiokriminologicheskii Analiz*, nine U.S., Russian, and Ukrainian scholars present the results of ground-breaking research on human trafficking conducted in 2000 and sponsored by American University's Center for the Study of Transnational Crime and Corruption (TraCCC) in Washington, DC. Although the essays complement each other and provide useful data, four essays in particular will be discussed here. In the first essay, Sally Stoecker (American University) describes the growth in the trafficking of Slavic women as a post-Soviet phenomenon, the "social price of economic reforms" (15). She discusses the ways that young women are lured into illegal employment overseas, links to organized crime, key transitional routes across borders, current U.S. and Russian legislation to counter human trafficking, and recommendations for attacking the problem more effectively. According to Stoecker, four key factors have led to the phenomenon she dubs the "commercialization of the individual" [*tovarizatsiei lichnosti*] in the twenty-first century: the globalization of the economy and increase in labor migration, the growth of the service economy in developed countries, the rise in unemployment among women, and the nearly "uncontrollable movement of human capital via the internet" (11). In a later essay, Elena Tyuryukanova (Institute of Socioeconomic Problems of the Population, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow) adds other, related factors, such as the growing polarization of the world into poor and rich countries, stimulating migration from the former to the latter. Whereas the total number of legal migrants worldwide was 75 million in 1965, today that figure ranges between 120 million and 200 million people, according to UN estimates (139). Still another factor is the inability of national governments to manage the huge masses of migrants, thus causing the whole sphere of migration relations to become criminalized (137).

Since the loosening of governmental control in the early 1990s and growing economic disparity between cities and the countryside, the Chinese also have engaged in human trafficking (165). However, key differences exist between Chinese and Russian practices, as Louise Shelly (American University, director of TraCCC) points out. The Chinese invest the profits from the lucrative trafficking business back into their national economy, but Russians typically launder the proceeds and invest them in offshore bank accounts (166). Whereas the People's Republic of China (PRC) could afford, generally speaking, a freeze or decline in the national birthrate, traffickers from the Russian Federation greatly exacerbate the already steep decline in the Russian birthrate by transporting young women of reproductive age overseas. Like other forms of Russian organized crime, the sex traffic has nothing to do with patriotism and everything to do with human greed and lust.

As Anna Repetskaya (Baikal State University) points out in her essay, males—usually boys and teenagers—are also exploited as male servants, yard workers,

pornographic models, and prostitutes. However, this is rare; only about 2 percent of all victims are male, she claims (70). Women are easier to exploit, given their higher rate of unemployment, physical weakness, and lower status in society (71). Using diagrams and statistics, Repetskaya illustrates the various stages of a young woman's exploitation, from her initial geographic location (usually an impoverished or war-ravaged country) to the "contract" [*verbovka*] she signs that promises her travel documents, transportation, and room and board in return for overseas employment, to the later confiscation of these documents once in the foreign country, and, finally, to her forced labor as a striptease dancer or prostitute to pay off her debts.

Repetskaya exposes other, more grisly, forms of exploitation as well. To eliminate the red tape of foreign adoption procedures, a woman may be impregnated against her will and transported to a Western country to give birth. Now a citizen of the new country, the child is then sold for adoption; the traffickers pocket the profits. Police authorities exposed one such underground network in Hungary that had been operating for three years (83).

In other cases, a woman might sign a contract promising to donate her organs—kidneys, liver, corneas of her eyes, etc.—at a discount (3 percent off the regular price) in return for employment overseas (82). Interestingly, Repetskaya explains that some women can even be exploited for their intellectual and creative skills, although this is less common (81).

It is encouraging to see the expert use of social science methods by Russian researchers themselves, after so many years of academic isolation imposed by the cold war. In addition to outlining the reasons for the increase in female migration mentioned above, in her essay, Tyuryukanova provides the results of several opinion polls conducted in the former USSR. When asked about their chances of finding employment overseas not related to the sex industry, 49 percent of women from various cities in the Russian Federation opined that it would be "difficult, but possible if one searches actively enough" (148). When asked what kinds of work they would choose, an absolute majority chose work as nannies, maids, and models; only 4 percent said they would choose "intimate services" or *intimnye uslugi* (146).

The key mission of the contributors to *Torgovlya Liud'mi* is to inform and provide recommendations; a mission they ably accomplish. Given the importance of recognizing this growing phenomenon, the inquisitive reader might seek answers to broader questions. What is the relationship between self-esteem and the type of employment chosen? Why is exploitation of a person's intelligence and creative abilities rare? More analysis of the statistical findings and their cultural and psychological implications would enhance the book. The above polls seem to indicate that most young women from the Russian Federation have high enough self-esteem not to submit voluntarily to prostitution, and certainly not in exploitative conditions. It follows that such women must be tricked and forced into prostitution. Tragically, it is often the most courageous and enterprising women who apply for better work opportunities overseas. Once tricked into prostitution, a woman of high self-esteem and intelligence conceivably could use

deception to free herself (although it would be very difficult, given the punishment she faces if she tries to break away). One would think that exploitation of a person's intelligence is rare simply, because of the tight correlation between intelligence and self-esteem. The tragedy lies, therefore, in the nature of prostitution itself—the most degrading, intrinsically self-esteem-lowering work imaginable, in which one's intelligence becomes irrelevant; a mentally deranged person can perform the job equally well. Hence, women with initially high self-esteem, who would normally never choose prostitution as a job, suffer the most shame and self-loathing after being forced into it. Then they become internally crippled and unable to resist being forced into the life of a prostitute. As Joan of Arc is reputed to have said, "All battles are won or lost in the mind."

Another recent publication, *Migrant Trafficking and Human Smuggling in Europe*, aims to "assess the current state of knowledge" about how all forms of human trafficking (not just sex-related) operate in three countries: Poland, Hungary, and the Ukraine. The

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study is based on interviews of 108 trafficked migrants and 50 officials from a variety of agencies concerned with trafficking (IOM 200, 333). Because of its porous eastern border and geostrategic position in the center of Europe, Ukraine is one of the main transit points for illegal migrants. According to border guard data, Afghanistan (24 percent) is the most significant source of migrants, followed by Iraq (14 percent), India (13 percent), and Sri Lanka (9 percent)—not because of any special ties between these countries and Ukraine, but because of the latter's location (349). In contrast to the authors of *Torgovlya Liud'mi*, the authors of *Migrant Trafficking* (personnel in IOM) attribute the rise in illegal migration and trafficking less to global economic trends and more to tangible factors, such as the lack of effective visa policies, immigration controls, increased difficulty of entry into Western countries, expanded market for services that facilitate irregular migration, and lack of clear Ukrainian legislation to deter and combat trafficking activities (332, 344).

*Migrant Trafficking* is not truly comparative. Although each case study is constructed uniformly, complete with identical subheadings, the book lacks a concluding chapter to analyze all three cases. The beginning chapters contain summaries of trafficking in general but not comparisons across the three case studies.

Although the lifting of the Iron Curtain in 1989 precipitated trafficking from the former communist bloc countries, sex tourism and trafficking from Africa and Southeast Asia has flourished since the 1960s. For example, nearly every night in Thailand, pimps from brothels will take a virginal girl as young as eleven or twelve years old, by gunpoint, torture, or drug injection, to a hotel room rented

for the occasion and beat her until she allows a Chinese or Thai man to deflower her. Believing that sex with a virgin will reawaken sexual virility and prolong life, wealthy Chinese and Sino-Thais (as well as Chinese sex tourists from Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong) willingly pay between five thousand and fifty thousand baht (two hundred to two thousand dollars) for the opportunity. Other Thai men do not think a girl's virginity provides yang (or coolness) to quench and slow the yin (or heat) of the aging process, but they still prefer virgins, fearing HIV infection and assuming that virgins cannot carry the virus. If a customer demands a virgin and the brothel happens to be short of one, the pimp will send thugs to the villages to kidnap one.

In *Disposable People*, Kevin Bales writes forcefully and eloquently, arousing indignation in the reader with his vignettes of individuals struggling to cope with their lives of entrapment. The book contains seven chapters describing the trafficking and forced prostitution and labor in Thailand, Mauritania, Brazil, Pakistan, and India. The first chapter contrasts the "old" slavery of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the "new" slavery of today. Bales argues that the old slavery was characterized by legal ownership of slaves, high purchase cost, low profit, shortage of potential slaves, long-term relationships, and the importance of ethnic differences. By contrast, the new slavery is characterized by the absence of legal ownership, low purchase cost, high profit, surplus of potential slaves, short-term relationships, and the unimportance of ethnic differences (15). Some of the factors critical in the shift from the old to new slavery include the surge in the global population since World War II (from about 2 billion people to more than 5.7 billion) and the rapid social and economic change that has taken place in all countries, especially in those areas where slavery is most prevalent today—Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Africa, and Arab countries (12). As any economist would predict, the value of a commodity decreases as its quantity increases; human lives are no exception. Bales estimates that about 27 million "disposable" slaves exist in the world today. When they become ill and cannot work, they are replaced quickly with younger, healthier slaves.

Contrary to widespread beliefs, Bales argues that modernization has not made the poor richer but, in fact, has shattered the traditional family and the small-scale subsistence farming that supported them. He writes: "The forced shift from subsistence to cash-crop agriculture, the loss of common land, and government policies that suppress farm income in favor of cheap food for the cities have all helped to bankrupt millions of peasants and drive them from their land—sometimes into slavery" (13).

The second chapter, describing the sex industry in Thailand, is perhaps one of the most moving. Bales enables the reader to step into the sandals of fifteen-year-old Siri, who awakens every day at noon with sore genitals, having serviced fifteen men the night before. During her interview with the author in December 1996, she explained that she typically goes through three to four boxes of condoms each month; there are one hundred condoms in each box. Thanks to the vigorous birth control campaigner Mechai Veravaidya, the Thai government distributes condoms gratis to all brothels; in fact, the word *mechai*

is now the Thai word for condom. Nevertheless, some brothels do not require their use. Even in Thai brothels where condoms are sold or required, girls cannot always force men to use them. Thailand now has the highest rate of HIV infection in the world. Although the Thai government officially admits to 800,000 cases, Veravaidya estimates that, in fact, by 2001 about 4.3 million people were infected with HIV (60). Prostitutes and drug users in Thailand now have infection rates as high as 90 percent in some areas. Since it costs the brothel so little to buy the girls from their parents—a brothel recovers the cost of buying a girl (100,000 baht) within two or three months—it makes no financial sense to pay the medical bills for sick and dying girls over the long term. Since the working life of a girl in debt bondage is only two to five years, it is more cost-effective to discard her when she contracts HIV and replace her with someone fresh (58). When the young girls return from the brothels to their villages to die of AIDS, they are sometimes hounded out of the village. Tragically, the group with the greatest increase in HIV infection today are the wives exposed through their husbands' visits with prostitutes. The infection rate is over 60 percent in some rural villages with heavy trafficking of girls.

Bales shows the reader the long-term effects of prostitution on the young women. Even if Thai prostitutes do not die of AIDS, they are too emotionally scarred to have normal lives outside the brothels. After their loss of virginity through rape, the young girls typically go into shock. Like other victims of torture suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, Bales explains, "they often go numb, paralyzed in their minds if not in their bodies" (58). Shattered and betrayed by the trauma, they often completely blank out the memory of what happened to them. After this first attack, the girl has little resistance left, but the violence never ends. According to Bales, "violence and terror are the final arbiters of all questions. There is no argument, no appeal. . . . The girls must do anything the pimp wants if they are to avoid being beaten" (58). One of the girls told Bales that when she was caught trying to escape, the pimp and two assistants whipped her repeatedly with a coat hanger in front of all the girls in the brothel. Afterward she was locked in a room for three days and nights with no food or water. When she was released, she was immediately put to work.

According to Bales, rehabilitation workers report that in reaction to the abuse from fifteen men a day, the girls exhibit lethargy, confusion, aggression, self-loathing, depression, self-abuse, hallucinations, suicide attempts, and full-blown psychoses. The rehabilitation workers also report that the girls suffer from emotional instability, are unable to trust or form relationships, are unable to learn and develop normally, and are unable to readjust to the world outside the brothel (59). Psychological counseling is hard to obtain in Thailand, a country where the cultural pressure is strong to keep any mental problems hidden and to "mind your own business" (*yaa suek*) (50). Hence, we do not have reliable statistics about the long-term psychological impact of forced prostitution on the Thai girls.

In a bizarre pattern reminiscent of the so-called "Stockholm syndrome," many prostitutes voluntarily return to the brothels after their release. Their method of coping and staying alive becomes to identify obsessively with the needs and goals

of the pimp, thus warping their own psyche in such a way that they come to sympathize with their own tormenters.

Bales informs the reader that a few rehabilitation centers run by charities do exist in Thailand, but not nearly enough. In a coda at the end of the book, Bales provides a list of five things the reader can do to help stop enforced prostitution and trafficking, including joining the organization Anti-Slavery International.

In contrast to Bales, *Global Human Smuggling*, edited by David Kyle and Rey Koslowski, focuses on Western Europe, Mexico, Russia, and China, drawing more often on objective statistics than on personal stories. Considering the large number of chapters (thirteen), written by several different university professors, the volume is very well integrated. The editors have done a superb job highlighting the salient themes in the introduction. Human smuggling is a much more complex, global phenomenon than many realize; consequently, a multi-faceted approach must be taken to curb it. The trafficking problem is exacerbated by multiple sets of interlocking problems such as widening social inequality, state corruption, and ethnic and gender discriminations. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) estimates that transnational human smuggling, hardly a global issue in the 1980s, is now a multibillion-dollar trade worldwide, rivaling the drug trade. The IOM estimated total global revenues in 1997 of up to \$7 billion, up from a 1994 UN estimate of \$3.5 billion (4). The editors argue that, rather than simply demonizing the smugglers—some of whom actually provide safe passage out of hazardous situations and dismal places—one must look closely at the symbiosis between corrupt state officials and the smugglers. Moreover, some measures taken to control illegal migration, such as tighter border controls, do not solve the smuggling problem, and in some cases, merely render the smuggling operations more lucrative. The illegal migrants must be stopped at their point of origin, not just in transit. Economic sanctions should be imposed on the sending and transit countries that tolerate traffickers and fail to cooperate with U.S. efforts to apprehend the aliens (8).

In *War's Dirty Secret: Rape, Prostitution, and Other Crimes Against Women*, Anne Barstow explores sex not as a money-making tool, but as a weapon of war. The book is composed of several parts: sexual slavery (using the Korean “comfort women” in Japan during World War II as a case study); rape during warfare (utilizing case studies of the rape camps in the former Yugoslavia and gang rapes in Rwanda, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Haiti, and several African countries); women and the U.S. military; and the international response. In her final chapter, Barstow adopts an upbeat tone as she points to signs of progress in the women’s movement. The United Nations has devoted more attention to the plight of women, as the dramatic increase in the number of people (almost fifty thousand women) who attended the UN’s Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 indicates. The UN and other international organizations have taken some important steps forward. For example, before 1998 rape during warfare was never considered a crime. Then, on September 2, 1998, Jean-Paul Akayesu, former mayor of the Taba commune in Rwanda, was found guilty of rape on nine counts and given three life sentences. Barstow emphasizes that this was the first



time an international court (the Montreal-based International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development) found rape to be an act of genocide and punished sexual violence committed during a civil war (242).

All five books would enhance courses in post-Soviet politics, human rights, international relations, political science, and sociology, as well as enlighten more advanced scholars of global human trafficking. New policies must be devised to eliminate the human rights violations inherent in the sex trade, despite the explosion in world population. If enough people become aware of the problem, perhaps the collective moral conscience and respect for human dignity will outweigh economic laws of supply and demand. For more recent analytical surveys of the phenomenon of irregular migration, readers should consult Bill Jordan and Franck Duvell, *Irregular Migration: The Dilemmas of Transnational Mobility* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2003) and Jan Hjarno, *Illegal Immigrants and Developments in Employment in the Labour Markets of the EU* (Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003).

### NOTES

1. *Torgovlya Liud'mi: Sotsiokriminologicheskii Analiz* (Moscow: Akademia, 2002), 141.
2. *Ibid.* 11.
3. Kevin Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 4.
4. *Ibid.* 43.
5. United Nations, "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons" supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Vienna, 2000). A/55/383.