

“Capitalism Means Freedom”

“Capitalism means freedom.” So spoke a far right-wing defender of capitalism in a debate on the meaning of capitalism recently.

Human Trafficking

He and his fellow defenders of capitalism should try telling this to the estimated 27 million people who are enslaved in the world today. Caught up in the web of human trafficking usually involving forced labor, these people are often used as sex slaves in a \$9 billion (yearly) industry.

The collapse of Stalinism has a lot to do with this explosion of human trafficking. The many decades that the working class was prevented from maintaining its own organizations led to the development of a crude and brutal form of capitalism as the working class was unable to keep it in check. As a result, many of these countries are “source countries” for the human trafficking industry. On top of this was the weakening of the workers’ organizations in the industrialized capitalist world. This weakening has meant the further weakening of any regulations to control and keep an eye on the global flow of capital and the products capital buys, including human beings.

Body Part Trafficking

This trafficking in human beings has another and more grisly aspect: The trafficking in human body parts. After all, if live humans can be bought and sold like so many cattle, why can’t their kidneys?

One of the foremost experts on this subject is Nancy Scheper-Hughes, director of Organs Watch, a UC Berkeley-based documentation and research project. According to one article (from the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs) *‘Transplant tourism involving trafficked living organ donors is increasingly common in a world where, Scheper-Hughes says, cadaver organs are scarce, while desperately poor people are plentiful and “available.” When she tried to spread word about the problem in Eastern Europe to the Council of Europe about a year ago, Scheper-Hughes was met with laughter, some hisses and even boos from an audience mainly comprised of doctors.’*

Organ “donors” are often promised payments of from \$1,000 to \$10,000 for body parts, but these payments are often then not made.

One of the foremost exporters of human body parts apparently is Brazil – a country where both extreme poverty and extreme lawlessness prevail. However, we should not conclude that this industry is simply controlled by lawless gangs operating outside of the mainstream of respectable capitalist society. Many prominent doctors and their hospitals are involved.

Racism Involved

It is no coincidence that Israel, one of the most racist states in the world today, stands in the forefront of this trafficking. This is partly because the state pays up to \$80,000 for its

citizens to travel abroad for organ transplants, and partly because of the extremely low numbers of organ donors in Israel.

One of the prime source countries for organ donors to Israelis is Moldova – the poorest country in Europe. It is also no accident that this is the home country for Avigdor Lieberman, Israeli foreign policy minister and an open racist. As a 2001 BBC documentary reported: *“Hundreds of Israelis have created a production line that starts in the villages of Moldova, where men today are walking around with one kidney.”*

There is apparently also a history of organ stealing in Israel which goes back to 1968, when the first heart transplant was performed in Israel. This transplant was carried out by a prominent team of physicians at Israel’s Bellinson Medical Center near Tel Aviv. One Avraham Sadeqat unexpectedly died there after having suffered a stroke. From all evidence, his heart was used for the historic transplant without family authorization.

It is not such a long step from that to letting patients die in order to use their organs, and this too has apparently happened in Israel. The brutal racism against Palestinians carried out by the State of Israel has carried this process even further. According to Dr. A. Clare Brandabur, there are numerous reports of Palestinian children shot and killed by Israeli soldiers whose bodies were removed and only returned several days later after having undergone an unexplained “autopsy” in an Israeli hospital.

It should also be noted that open, blatant racism is considered an acceptable part of official Israeli politics, as the presence of Avigdor Lieberman in the present Israeli cabinet shows. This, too, relates to the issue.

As the article from Middle East Report explains, *“A very small but significant minority of Israelis, including military officers and governmental ministers, hold extremist supremacist views relevant to organ extraction. In 1996, Jewish Week reported that Rabbi Yitzhak Ginsburgh, a leader of the Lubavitch sect of Judaism and the dean of a religious Jewish school in a West Bank settlement, stated: “If a Jew needs a liver, can you take the liver of an innocent non-Jew passing by to save him? The Torah would probably permit that.” Ginsburgh elaborated: “Jewish life has infinite value. There is something infinitely more holy and unique about Jewish life than non-Jewish life.” [The Jewish Week, April 26, 1996, pp. 12, 31]”*

There is nothing unique to Judaism nor to the Jewish people in this trade. It is simply the logical extension of a system that views everything as a commodity and a source for profit. In order to maintain its political rule, the capitalist class fosters racism as a form of dividing the working class.

So when the defenders of capitalism equate it with “freedom” they really mean the freedom of capital to go anywhere, buy anything and do anything. Freedom for capital; enslavement of one form or another for the great masses of the Earth’s people.

