

WOMAN

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Struggle

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WOMEN LEADERS ARRESTED IN BANGLADESH

Dhaka, Bangladesh - Bangladesh's government has put under house arrest the women who led the country's two opposition parties.

Sheik Hasina Wajed, the daughter of Bangladesh's first president after independence, Sheik Mujibur Rahman, is the leader of the Awami League. Khaleda Zia Rahman, widow of President Ziaur Rahman, who came to power in a military coup in 1975 that killed Sheik Mujibur Rahman, heads the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Both opposition parties are coalitions of smaller groups.

Hasina Wajed is the leader of the opposition in the nation's parliament.

The opposition is trying to force President H.M. Ershad, who took power in a 1982 coup and was confirmed as president in a rigged election last year to hold a free election. Members of both opposition groups have been holding street protests, and the government has responded by putting the leaders under house arrest.

Bangladesh, one of the world's poorest nations, has been under military rule since 1975.

Info from New York Times 11/12

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CHILD TRADE IS BOOMING BUSINESS

Stories of the wide-spread practice of child slavery emerged from an investigation by a parliamentarian from the Netherlands. A Bolivian lawyer recently made a handsome profit on the sale of a young boy whom he paid kidnappers US\$40.00 and then resold for \$10,000. In Guatemala the owner of a creche made a profit on babies he paid \$50.00 for, selling them at \$2,000 each. Gypsy children in Yugoslavia bought from their families for \$30.00 have allegedly been resold to criminal gangs in Italy for \$7,500.

Along with these reports by the Piet Stoffelen study are others concerning the yearly "export" for adoption of hundreds of babies from El Salvador to the United States and Europe and the selling of young girls from Macao into prostitution in the USA.

The Council of Europe, to who Stoffelen's findings were presented last October plans to introduce stricter controls in an effort to prevent the trafficking. The international trade in children for prostitution has well trodden supply paths, mostly from South-East Asia and from Africa and South America. It is an extremely lucrative business in which prices charged for sex with child prostitutes are as much as five times more than with adults.

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WEST GERMAN UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN

An organization of women from all over West Germany has emerged in order to deal with sex trafficking and the marriage trade. AGISRA, the Union Against International Sexual and Racist Exploitation held its second "networking meeting" in Frankfurt last year. Fifty women attended the meeting to discuss the possibility of future collaboration and common actions. The participants included women from church organizations, the staff from two homes for battered women, Amnesty for Women, Terre des Femmes.

The member organizations differ in their political assessments of the sex trade. "We only agree that we are all against sexual slavery" says one of the two paid staffers of AGISRA.

Traders deal in a "merchandise" of women from Thailand, the Philipines, The Dominican Republic, Ghana and Poland.

One aspect of the trade is the "mail order bride" (those who come voluntarily, not by direct force.) Many of these women are refugees who have not right to asylum because neither poverty nor sex discrimination is considered a reason for asylum.

Women from the Philipines despite the educational work of "Gabriela" still take the risk travelling to the unknown, because they know the misery of their own situation.

Connexions 1987 No.23

CONFLICTING VIEWS OVER THE ORIGIN OF AIDS

Two doctors, one North American and the other British claim that the HIV virus could only have been created by splicing of infectious animal viruses. Their research has led them to believe that the AIDS virus was made in a civilian laboratory engaged in cancer research.

Other reports disagree. In March, 1987 the Soviet news agency, TASS repeated the findings of a study by two East German microbiologists, Lilli and Jakob Segal. The Segals contend that there is a strong possibility that the virus originated in the US Army's Biological Warfare Laboratory at Fort Detrick and was then spread accidentally. The Segals presented the scenario that "volunteer" prisoners were injected with the virus around 1977 and then released, apparently disease-free.

The Pentagon claims that Fort Detrick has had no involvement with the AIDS virus other than its research involving the drug ribavirin. Although Richard Nixon claimed in 1969 that biological warfare experimentation had stopped at Fort Detrick, a recently settled lawsuit forced the Department of Defense to admit that one of the activities of this laboratory was the creation of a new virus by genetic engineering.

Women's World No.15 September 1987

ANTI-ABORTION BILL IN BRITAIN

London - British feminists are fighting a bill in Parliament that would curtail abortion rights.

The private member's bill, by Liberal Member of Parliament David Alton, a Roman Catholic would reduce the legal time for an abortion from 24 weeks to 18 weeks.

Alton claims that technological improvements in keeping premature babies alive means that the definition of a "viable" fetus or a fetus that the state should not allow a woman to abort, should change. Even if one agreed with that argument, no premature babies as young as 18 weeks have survived.

The women who would be hardest hit by the proposed change probably are young women, who would might not realize they are pregnant, and women who decide to have an abortion after learning the results of amniocentesis, which cannot be done until the fetus is 18 - 20 weeks. Alton says that severe fetal disability is not a legitimate reason for an abortion.

Lobbyists from the Roman Catholic Church and SPUC (the Society for the Protection of the Unborn) are working hard for the bill.

Info from Spare Rib 11/87

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FINES FOR DISCRIMINATION

Helsinki - Finland has recently established fines for employers found guilty of sex discrimination. Women - or men - can sue for damages if they have been discriminated against.

Companies cannot advertise job openings by sex, according to the new law. They cannot base job descriptions on sex, or promotions, transfers or dismissals. They must pay equal wages for equal work.

Also, government authorities are required by the law to "provide conditions for increased equality in child care and domestic work." The law also says that school books must not contain material that would "enhance stereotyped perceptions of role models in family and working life."

Currently, women in Finland's salaries average about 60 percent of men's salaries. Only about five percent of workplaces have equal numbers of male and female workers. Thirty percent of workers are in workplaces that are 90 percent female or 90 percent male.

Info from WIN News summer 1987

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