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## The Taken Children of Ukraine

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# The taken children of Ukraine

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## Abstract

The invasion of Ukraine paints a complex picture for children. Russia has been accused of kidnapping and genocide, violating international rights and humanitarian laws. Some children taken by Russia will be adopted, all will be *Russified*, and the fate of others is unknown. Children of all ages taken from families or institutions have become weapons of war. Attempts at ‘rescues’ for the purpose of adoption mean children are also at risk from other actors. Social workers and NGOs play important roles in work with these children and their families. *The Taken Children of Ukraine* is the focus of this article.

## Keywords

Adoption, Russo–Ukraine war, taken children, tracing and reunification, weapons of war

## Introduction

The current Russo–Ukraine war offers a prime example of harm inflicted on children in conflict zones. Although Ukraine declared independence from Soviet Russia in 1991, tensions between Russia and Ukraine have continued to escalate since 2014 resulting in Putin’s invasion of Ukraine on the 24th February 2022. Violations of international laws in relation to children and acts of genocide include physical harm, moving children over borders, *Russification* eliminating origins and culture, and fast-tracking adoptions. The Russian government is using children to intimidate and establish Putin’s version of an imperial Russia. As well as Russia’s removal of Ukrainian children, another threat to Ukrainian children has also arisen, that of vigilante *Rambo Rescues*, attempts at moving children across borders for the purposes of adoption.

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This article focuses on *The Taken Children of Ukraine* during the first 6 months of the war and its implications for social workers engaged in work with children and their families. Information on taken children was collected in collaboration with Magnolia, a Ukrainian nongovernmental organization (NGO) and national hotline for missing children, from the first known report in February 2022. Information included in this research were reports from Magnolia, media investigations, official announcements from the governments of Ukraine and Russia including those on social media such as Telegram and translated using Google Translate, other reports and publications as they became available, and historical research on children taken in war. Ethical approval for this research was not required.

## The taken children of Ukraine

Children from institutions (orphanages, hospitals and sanatoriums) in occupied territories, from families in hiding, and children of those serving in the military have been targeted and taken by Russian troops beginning in February 2022 (Ukrainian Defense Ministry, 2022). *The Taken* included those whose parents were killed in the war and children separated from their families. Children, witnesses of war crimes, have been abducted after parents or relatives were killed. For example, Magnolia is actively supporting a family searching for a 15-year-old girl taken from the Kyiv region. During an attempt to flee occupation on the 3rd of March 2022, she witnessed the murder of her parents and suffered a gunshot wound to the leg before being taken by Russian soldiers. Her fate is unknown. As well as concerns about her wellbeing, war crime cover ups are suspected. International and Ukrainian NGOs are working to locate taken children. Magnolia offers services to people throughout the Ukraine who make contact, often through social media. Magnolia works closely with Missing Children Europe to search for missing Ukrainian children. Ukrainians are encouraged to report all taken children to the National Information Bureau that is working with the Red Cross.

On 19th March, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry reported that 2389 children were abducted from Luhansk and Donetsk regions. The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation announced on the 2nd of May that 200,000 children were taken from the Territory of Ukraine, Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. A statement by the Ukrainian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Sergiy Kyslytsya, followed, repeating that 200,000 children had been taken to Russia (Interfax, 2022a). Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy later confirmed that number in an address to an international conference at the Hague (Zelenskyy, 2022). Of course, robust data are difficult to collect in war conditions and the exact number is unknown. To counter allegations of war crimes, Russia claimed they were removing children from danger and that children were going to Russia voluntarily. Coercive conditions were confirmed in a later report (Conflict Observatory, 2023). As early as March 2022, intentions to adopt Ukrainian children by Russian patriots were made clear (Interfax, 2022b).

## Adoption

Russia, a country with its own substandard orphanages and sender of Russian children for inter-country adoption, has a domestic adoption history tied to post-war reconstruction and patriotism. In the late 1920s, it is of note that the interests of adoptees were linked to their first families and maintaining legal ties (Green, 2017). Laws changed over time to reflect political attitudes towards adoption and in response to disputes and responsibilities between families and adoptive families. By the mid 2000s, Russia alongside China was the main source of children for intercountry adoption (Chadwick, 1999; Selman, 2012).

Prior to the invasion of Ukraine, it was illegal for Russians to adopt children who were not Russian citizens (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation, 2022; Yankovskyi, 2022). In early March 2022, Putin asserted that the absence of a Russian passport should not be a barrier to adoption and that Russians should be able to adopt from Donetsk (DPR) and Luhansk (LPR; Interfax, 2022b). In an effort to make the abduction of Ukrainian children across borders legal and to fast-track their adoptions, a new law that extended Russian citizenship to Ukrainians including children was passed. The Russian Commissioner for Children's Rights was overtly pushing for fast-tracked adoptions (United States Mission to the United Nations, 2022). Also in May, Maria Lvova-Belova, the Russian children's rights ombudswoman confirmed that 1560 unaccompanied Ukrainian children were in Russia, many of whom would be adopted (Chernykh and Lessa, 2022). Incentives were offered to Russian families and volunteers collected data for the register of prospective adoptive parents wanting to adopt a Ukrainian child (Romanenko, 2022). The process of Russian adoptions had begun.

*Children in orphanages and older children.* Older children and children with disabilities or chronic health needs are less likely to be adopted than infants. Despite earlier announcements that Ukrainian residential care institutions would be closed, there was a network of approximately 700 Ukrainian orphanages, the highest concentration in Europe. Some state-run and private institutions housed younger children up to 6 years of age and others, older children above 6 years of age (Matthews et al., 2015; Slobin and Plucinska, 2022). Before the Russian invasion, over 90,000 children lived in orphanages and boarding schools mostly in the east in what became occupied territories. As is the case in other countries, children in Ukrainian institutions were not necessarily orphans or without family and may have been in the care of the state or placed in institutions for reasons of poverty, disability or medical needs (Chadwick, 1999; Fronek and Cuthbert, 2012a; Matthews et al., 2015). Half of institutionalised children had disabilities and came to also include children who lost parents in the war or were separated from them (Rozhanskiy, 2022). Although many parents were unable to collect their children due to blockades, some children managed to make some form of contact with their parents (Andryushchenko, 2022).

Of concern were early reports of Russian soldiers emptying orphanages. Data collection mechanisms in Ukrainian orphanages are limited and so tracking and identifying the number of taken children as well as their current locations and wellbeing posed significant challenges. There were some reports that children with greater care needs were left behind with carers during evacuations while more able-bodied children were sent to Poland, Italy and Germany (Rosenthal et al., 2022). Two thousand children were taken from Mariupol institutions by the end of February (Rozhanskiy, 2022). All registered 'orphans' were removed. According to the Russian Defense Ministry, children with disabilities and 'orphans' were in the care of the Russian government. Children with disabilities were most likely to have simply been moved from one substandard institution to another.

If history is a guide, there is a greater risk of older children being coercively conscripted into the Russian army. Children below 18 years of age were taken from the occupied territories of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and recruited as soldiers. These children grew up with propaganda, became anti-Ukraine and their indoctrination made it exceedingly difficult to bring them home (York, 2022). It is most likely that older children will be placed in orphanages or boarding or military schools or recruited into the army or labour force rather than being adopted. There are many historical examples of children turned into child soldiers ranging from German children as young as eight fighting for Nazi Germany in 1944 to child soldiers in today's Nigeria (Levinson, 1985; Poulatova, 2012).

*Rambo rescues.* The term, *Rambo Rescues*, coined by Nigel Cantwell, Special Consultant to Child Identity Protection (CHIP; Nigel Cantwell, 20 June 2022, Personal Communication), is used to describe the motivation to move children across borders for the purposes of adoption inspired by rescue narratives that ignore international advice in emergency situations.

Russia was not the only threat to institutionalised and separated children. Ukrainian and Polish authorities conducted at least one trafficking probe over alleged rescue attempts (Kuznia et al., 2022). Rescues were reported to involve a group of veterans from Nashville, a Baptist pastor who flew to Poland with some congregation members to bring children to Missouri, a priest and a businessman intending to bring children to Pittsburgh, and a former Washington state representative, a far-right Republican, Matt Shea, orchestrating a rescue of 60 children for the purposes of adoption in the United States (Gutman, 2022). While these ‘rescues’ were foiled, it is a reminder of the involvement of individuals, organisations and high-ranking politicians in these removals (Rotabi et al., 2015). Ukraine suspended intercountry adoptions on the 23rd May 2022 (Interfax, 2022c) followed by a call for a full moratorium (The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2022; Wisniewski, 2022).

*The international context of adoption history in war and conflict.* The overarching narrative is that children were being used as weapons of war and the adoption of children incited fear and reshaped identities, while for others, the attempted rescues of children supported adoption-driven narratives with an orientation to humanitarianism and acting as saviours.

Adoption has a long and regrettable history of child rescue. It is well documented that children rescued from war zones have been moved across borders for the purpose of adoption in the West. Children entered the adoption pipeline with a variety of placement outcomes. In Operation Kiddy Car, US pilots flew 950 ‘orphans’ out of Seoul as the city fell (HübINETTE, 2005) and Operation Babylift during the fall of Saigon saw a mass child rescue (Bergquist, 2009; Cherot, 2009; Fronek, 2012). Adoptions were fast-tracked for children already in the adoption pipeline and several thousand children were sent overseas for adoption. Cuthbert et al. (2009) and Fronek (2012) reported on Australia’s involvement at the close of the Vietnam War and the historical exploration of humanitarian sympathy and child rights (Marshall, 2002). Bergquist (2009) explores the idea of ‘baby lift’ or ‘baby abduction’ shedding light on both perspectives.

During Sudanese and Chadian civil conflicts, members of a non-profit agency, Zoe’s Ark (L’Arche de Zoé), planned to rescue 10,000 children from Darfur (Bergquist, 2009). The first airlift was arranged for 103 children destined for adoption by Danish families, a situation denied by the organiser. This resulted in members being initially charged and briefly imprisoned for abducting of Chadian and Sudanese children in 2007 (Bergquist, 2009). Brookfield (2008) provided a historical analysis describing the ‘bleeding hearts’ and ‘radical behaviour’ of Canadian maverick mothers who engaged in orphan rescue from Bangladesh, Vietnam and Cambodia for the purposes of adoption.

The history of adoption also shows that children who were not the intended targets can often be swept up in improper rescues. After the Haiti earthquake for example, children were swept off the tarmac into a private plane simply because they were standing there, and in the rush to fill planes in Operation Baby Lift children were collected on the way to the airport (Fronek, 2012; Fronek and Cuthbert, 2012b; Rotabi et al., 2015).

Adoption has also been weaponised to achieve political ends. During and after the Spanish Civil War 1936–1939 under Franco, tens of thousands of children, known as the *Lost children of Francoism*, were taken from parents deemed to be political enemies (Anderson, 2017). Babies were taken from their imprisoned mothers at birth and adopted by families of the regime or placed in orphanages (Richards, 2005). Children were raised to believe lies about their families and hold

them in contempt. In a 1940 study, 72 percent of these children were found to disapprove of the morality of their birth parents due to indoctrination (Richards, 2005).

During the Guatemalan Civil War, 1960–1966, many Mayan children were taken by soldiers who were also complicit in their adoptions (Rotabi and Bromfield, 2017). Only a handful of those people abducted as children have been able to be reunited with their families (Proyecto Interdiocesano Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, Catholic Institute for International Relations and Latin America Bureau, 1999). As well as this, a corrupt system of intercountry adoption emerged and children were fraudulently sent to many countries including Russia and the United States (Bunkers et al., 2009). Documents were falsified, buying and selling of children and abduction were features of the adoption system (CICIG, 2010; Rotabi and Bromfield, 2017).

During the 12-year civil war (1970–1992) in El Salvador, children were stolen, sold and adopted. Imprisoned mothers were murdered after giving birth. Many children were placed in institutions or adopted domestically or internationally. Documents were falsified and children sold for up to US\$10,000. Over 300 people stolen as children have been reunited with their families (Monico and Rotabi, 2012; Pro-búsqueda, 2002). Both sides of the conflict coerced or abducted older children to be child soldiers, which included other functions such as cooking and sex (Miller, 2016).

Argentina's 'Dirty War' 1976–1983 echoed many of the strategies of Franco's regime, especially relating to *The Disappeared*. The kidnapping of an estimated 450 children born to imprisoned mothers who were tortured and later killed was planned and systematic (Brysk, 1994; Lazzara, 2013; Oren, 2001; Rotabi, 2012; Rotabi and Bromfield, 2017). Children's records were falsified, and many children were adopted by the military or police responsible for the torture and murder of parents. Others were placed in orphanages.

Adoption should never occur during a crisis or be the purpose of child removal (Fronek and Cuthbert, 2012a). In these cases, separations are at risk of permanency and reunification is near impossible in war and post-war conditions, particularly if conflict is prolonged or records falsified or destroyed. International advice has long been against the adoption of children post disasters whether natural or man-made instead emphasising tracing and reunification strategies. Where systems are adoption driven, children have been fraudulently or illegally adopted with few attempts at reunification, resulting in unnecessary, permanent separation from families, communities and cultures (Monico and Rotabi, 2012; Rotabi and Bromfield, 2017; Smolin, 2006).

## Russification

Disallowing a nation's language and culture and replacing it with Russian is *Russification*. Children taken by the Russians are being schooled in Russian language and history to become Russian (Chernykh and Lessa, 2022; Yankovskiy, 2022). Teachers were sent from Russia to oversee what was being taught in occupied Ukrainian schools and were being offered up to 15 times their usual salary to do so (Chernykh and Lessa, 2022; Dixon, 2022). Dixon (2022) quoted the Russian Education Minister, Sergei Kravtsov, as saying Ukrainian education 'must be corrected'. There were reports of book burnings and the destruction of Ukrainian libraries, forcing adults and children to have Russian passports, censoring media and Internet access, and other indoctrination strategies that use children (Carrasco Rodriguez, 2022; York, 2022). Newborns were required to be registered under Russian law in order to have Russian documents and to be eligible for payments.

Russification-type strategies are not new in the politics of central Europe. For example, Zahra (2017) discussed the struggles between Germanisation and Czechification of children in Bohemia during the Imperial Austrian regime creating situations of conflict between schools and welfare institutions. New laws limited parents' capacity to choose German speaking or Czech speaking



schools for their children. In 1921, Germans were reclassified as Czech. In Silesia and Yugoslavia, Germans were reclassified as Poles.

The Nazis reclaimed those of German heritage including orphans and foster children who were deemed racially acceptable through re-Germanisation usually through forced adoption. Nazi officials were called to account for re-Germanisation at Nuremberg. Zahra (2017) made the point that children were considered to be valuable assets who needed to be owned by the nation. These actions were considered a breach of human rights and an act of genocide.

Accusation of de-nazifying the Ukraine by Putin masked the reality that Putin himself is repeating much of the history of Europe. Dixon (2022) reported that Russia was also controlling digital communications and media and Ukrainian street signs in occupied territories were changed to Russian. The aim was that Ukraine becomes part of Putin's Russia in what he viewed as reclaiming Russian territory.

## **Genocide**

Armed conflict has always posed extremely dangerous scenarios for children. The history of children in war and the impact of trauma is recognised in every modern conflict zone. Children have been victims of genocide, for example, children of the Holocaust during the Second World War 1939–1945, Rwanda in 1994, Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge in 1975–1979, and the erasure of First Peoples around the world to name just a few (Fitzgerald, 2011; Foster et al., 2003; Graham, 2002; Haskins and Jacobs, 2002; Kiernan, 2008).

To shorten the long history of Russian imperialism and colonisation of the Ukraine, it is not the first time Russian regimes have attempted control over Ukraine through genocide. For example, the genocidal famine, known as Holodomor, from 1932 to 1933 involved the purposeful starvation of the Ukrainian people as part of Stalin's Soviet imperialistic strategy (Curran et al., 2015).

Russia's actions in Ukraine, now in its second year, are under scrutiny for violating fundamental norms of international humanitarian and human rights law including the UN Charter, Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (1949), prior agreements between Russia and the Ukraine on borders, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (1993; UN, 2002, 2022a). Its invasion of Ukraine meets the Definition of Aggression provided in the UN General Assembly Resolution 3314 (UN, 1974).

Genocide was introduced as a crime in 1946 after the Second World War. The breaking of international laws and moves to obliterate Ukrainian culture and identity through Russification and adoption intensified concerns for Ukrainian children. Ukrainian Prosecutor General, Iryna Venediktova, built a genocide case related to the forced deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia (Deutsch and Van den Berg, 2022). Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide outlines actions that can be understood in three ways – physical harm, psychological harm and preventing the continuation of the group by either preventing procreation or the removal of children to another group 'committed with intent to destroy, in whole or part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group' (UN, n.d.).

Raphael Lemkin who drafted the genocide convention held a much broader view of genocide that included the active policies of the Nazi Regime (Zahra, 2017). Certainly, the same extension could be applied to Putin's co-ordinated policies in the war he instigated. The Yale study confirmed centrally co-ordinated actions and a network of actors at all levels of the Russian government (Conflict Observatory, 2023). Actions against the children of Ukraine sought to destroy all traces

of Ukrainian identity. Forced adoption through abduction and the obliteration of identity, culture, history and family are acts of genocide. Russian adoptions of Ukrainian children are not being conducted in the child's interests rather Russia's laws have been changed to enable the fast-tracking of adoption as a geopolitical weapon.

It has been reported that Ukrainian children have been subjected to horrific sexual violence during the invasion, sometimes with parents forced to watch (Klitina, 2022a, 2022b; UN, 2022b). The Ukraine has been added to the list of countries being monitored by the UN for sexual violence against children. According to Resolution 1888 of the UN Security Council, sexual violence is recognised as a tactic of war and calls on states to be prosecuted for 'genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other egregious crimes perpetrated against civilians' (Goetz, 2009; UN, 2009).

## Locating taken children

The first reports of the fate of some taken children came to light in June 2022. Reported in Russian and Ukrainian newspapers, over 400 children taken from the Donetsk region were located in Russia. Some of the children were taken from boarding schools, others are children of men serving in the Ukrainian army, and the youngest child detained was 2 years of age. These children were living in the Romashka Sanatorium in the city of Taganrog (Klitina, 2022a, 2022b). Before the war, Romashka was a state-sponsored health and sports facility for children. In April 2022, Lvova-Belova said summer camps would be organised to teach the Russian language to Ukrainian children (Chernykh and Lessa, 2022). By July, hundreds of children were estimated to be undergoing Russification in children's camps in Russia. Also in July, 44 captured Ukrainian children were returned. It has since been found that the return of children being re-educated in camps has been blocked (Conflict Observatory, 2023).

A key moment for Ukraine was the release of Vladyslav Buryak, the 16-year-old son of Oleg Buryak, the Head of the Zaphorizhzhia District Administration. Vlad was abducted on the 8th of April 2022 while trying to leave the district with family friends and was held captive for 90 days (Coydash, 2022; Lykhoglyad, 2022). Eventually released as part of a prisoner-swap, Vlad recounted observing torture in the prison (Villegas and Thebault, 2022). Magnolia with Missing Children Europe advocated for his return.

## Discussion

Putin's invasion of Ukraine has repeated histories that perpetuated atrocities to achieve imperialistic ends. These blunt strategies have been executed before as shown in European, Asian and South American cases. Children have been taken and adopted, and cultures and origins obliterated. Older children have met different fates.

Social workers are intimately involved in the practice of adoption across the lifespan – pre- and post-adoption and therapeutically with adults. Without understanding the realities of conflict, social workers can be consciously or unconsciously complicit in poor practices constrained by a lack of resources, demand and politics. Adoption is rarely framed as a weapon of war due to the wholly positive perceptions of the practice which minimises the child's loss of identity, family and culture. Instead, humanitarian concerns and child rescue discourses can be privileged, provided rescue is perpetrated by particular political regimes. Given the extensive history of coercive practices in adoptions and foster care and their lifelong implications, and private models of practice with minimal oversight in many countries, Schools of Social Work should ensure the inclusion of knowledge about coercive practices in various contexts in curriculums.



In the case of the children taken by Russia, their removal and alleged adoptions were acts of war and genocide achieved by obliterating children's identity, origins, culture and family ties, and recreating them as Russian children. Yet, Rambo Rescues are often presented as acts of humanitarianism and 'orphan' rescue, although the outcome is much the same for the adopted children involved. Whether aimed at rebuilding Russia or not, Putin considers the Ukraine to be part of Russia and therefore justifying their Russification. Rambo rescuers assert that they are saving children. Both positions are misguided.

There will be long-term psychosocial consequences for The Taken Children of Ukraine. It is unknown how many Ukrainian children will be adopted, how they will be received and what stigma they may face in Russia. Children's origins and their identity as Ukrainians will be obliterated as a form of re-socialisation. Implications for children who can remember their past and those who were too young to remember are profound. As with historical examples, Ukrainian children may have forgotten their language, culture and family and be indoctrinated to reject their own families by the time the war is over. Many children may have no memory of their Ukrainian roots or of their families given their ages at time of abduction and Russification strategies. Due to the nature of adoption processes, the duration of the war, the victor and post-war relations, some children may never be found. Russians are keeping records (Interfax, 2022b), and it is hoped that this record keeping will assist in post-war searching and that access to truthful records will be allowed for family tracing and personal histories. Social workers in Russia and Ukraine will have key roles to play in this process.

Some Russian and non-Russian officials have called for fast-tracking adoptions. Others have considered adoption to address the problems of institutionalisation. These are missteps repeatedly demonstrated in the history of national and intercountry adoptions resulting in further trauma for children who lose identities and a failure to address the problems that bring children to institutions. Nascent health, disability and child protection systems struggle to prioritise the needs of children and their families over would-be adopters. Long term, well-supported care in families which allows for adequate psychosocial support, tracing, reunification, reparation and restitution can meet the needs of children and their families in conditions of war (Fronck et al., 2021; Roby, 2012).

Historical examples confirm four post-war responsibilities – tracing and reunion, war crimes investigations, and reparation and restitution including the establishment of a Truth Commission. In post-war conditions and for people adopted across borders as children, their struggles have often been lonely journeys, sometimes supported by adoptive families or peer support organisations to source information, trace origins or support reunification. Adoptees are often left to navigate systems in countries of origin as services that support reunification across borders are non-existent or underfunded. Properly funded post-war services that support tracing and reunification will be essential for Ukrainian children and their families and should include DNA repositories, access to Russian documentation and longer term psychosocial support. DNA repositories proved important in Argentina (Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, n.d.). Methods of tracing in post-conflict environments have been successfully utilised in countries like El Salvador (Monico and Rotabi, 2012).

Reparation and restitution are rare in illicit or fraudulent adoptions usually due to the framing of humanitarian intent. Often courts in the adopting countries accept humanitarian assumptions rather than recognise the losses of parents whose children were wrongly taken and the losses for children themselves. One exception was the approach taken in fraudulent adoption cases from Samoa, where financial restitution was ordered and social work case management facilitated renewed contact between children and families, and in some cases, reunification (Fronck et al., 2021; Roby, 2012). Argentinian grandmothers fought for restitution and the return of stolen children (Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, n.d.). The Russian invasion clearly demonstrates the need to hold

perpetrators to account and to take further the concept of reparation for children taken illegally in contexts of war. The Ukraine should be supported in these endeavours.

Over 16,000 war crimes have been reported in the Ukraine with 200–300 new reports daily, many involving children (Roccatello, 2022). An Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine by UN Human Rights was established in March 2022 to investigate violations of human rights and international law (Human Rights Council, 2022). A Truth Commission should be considered in post-war Ukraine as was the case in Guatemala (REMHL, 1999). The purpose of Truth Commissions is to allow the truth about suffering, perpetrators and the whereabouts of those forcibly disappeared to be heard and to access effective remedies (ICTJ, 2013). Ideally, Truth Commissions should include a consultative process between governments and the public as a critical part of reconciliation. Such a commission in the Ukraine would contribute to national healing.

## Conclusion

The Taken Children of Ukraine provides a complicated narrative, a narrative that is yet to be resolved. The future of Ukrainian children and their families has been sacrificed for geopolitical interests and the imperialistic goals of Vladimir Putin with reverberating global impact. The illicit movement of children across borders for the purposes of adoption has been highlighted, in particular, the use of adoption as a political weapon. Rambo rescues, in turn, have revealed how the act of taking children can be viewed differently in receiving countries of children depending on the regime. Social workers will be integral to meeting need when the war is over.

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