

Where's mummy?

50 surrogate babies, many for UK families, stranded in Ukraine



Lockdown infants: Staff care for surrogate babies in the makeshift nursery at the Hotel Venice on the outskirts of Kiev

THEIR heart-rending cries fill the makeshift nursery packed with rows of cots.

But these babies born to surrogate mothers lie stranded in

By **Inderdeep Bains**

a hotel on the outskirts of Kiev because the Covid-19 lockdown means their adoptive

parents cannot collect them. Their new mothers and fathers are in countries around the world, from Britain to the US, Mexico and China, but Ukraine has

closed its borders to foreigners since March.

Some babies are almost two months old and are yet to meet the parents who paid as much as £50,000 for a baby from a surrogate mother.

More than 50 are being cared for by the BioTexCom Centre for Human Reproduction clinic, which released emotive video footage of the babies in an attempt to spur the Ukrainian government into action.

The company is seeking urgent lockdown exemptions so foreign parents who have ordered babies through such clinics can enter Ukraine to collect them.

Denis Herman, BioTexCom's lawyer, said at least one UK couple had been able to take their baby home this month with the help of the British embassy.

Another British mother is also in Ukraine waiting for delivery of her baby after the embassy helped her get permission to enter the country.

The clinic said that while some countries including the UK and US had been keen to assist the couples,

'The mothers are heartbroken'

others such as France and Spain had refused to engage.

The clinic's founder Albert Tochilovsky said this meant many parents had been left in anguish.

'They are heartbroken, in particular the mothers,' he added. 'They contact us on Skype and are visibly stressed and in tears. We have cameras in the cots of the babies so the parents can watch them.'

But the plight of the stranded newborns has led to calls for a ban on the large surrogacy industry in the former Soviet state.

Ukraine is one of only a few countries in the world where commercial surrogacy is legal. A surrogate mother can receive up to £14,000. In the UK, surrogates can be paid



expenses to cover costs such as loss of earnings, extra food and travel. France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Japan prohibit all surrogacy.

The video led the Ukraine president's commissioner for children's rights Mykola Kuleba to demand that surrogacy is outlawed in his country except for its own citizens.

He warned that Ukraine was becoming 'an international online store for babies'.

Lyudmyla Denisova, Ukraine's human rights ombudsman, said there were more than 100 children around the country 'waiting for their parents in various such centres of reproductive medicine'.

But she warned that by the end of the lockdown 'there will be thousands of such babies'.

The infants in the video are being kept at the Hotel Venice, which is owned by BioTexCom and is normally used to house parents while they wait for their babies to arrive.

Mr Tochilovsky said he was 'prepared for the negative reaction' but he went public in the hope of uniting babies with their parents sooner.

Mr Herman said the children were fed and looked after 'but there is no substitute for parental care'.

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The Rime of the Ancient... Mountaineer? How poets created hobby of climbing

ROMANTIC poets may be better known for their sensitive souls than sporting prowess.

But a new book says this is wrong and Wordsworth, Keats and Coleridge were tough, outdoorsy types. Its author, Simon Bainbridge, professor of romantic studies at Lancaster University, said: 'The poets were pioneer mountaineers who went to the strain and effort of climbing mountains for the reward it brings them.'

'The starting point is Samuel Taylor Coleridge, author of Kublai Khan and the Rime of the Ancient Mariner.'

'He makes the first recorded use of the term mountaineer. But

By **Colin Fernandez**

Environment Correspondent

it goes beyond that, they were creating a new activity. They were very keen to prove their hardiness, and the male poets are very keen to prove their masculinity.'

The conquest of Scafell Pike by Coleridge, pictured, in 1802 is acknowledged to be Britain's first recorded rock climb.

Wordsworth scaled Helvellyn, also in the Lake District, at the age of 70 and Keats was one of the first up Ben Nevis in Scotland.

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