



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on July 10, 2009

Death in Russia: “Killing Girls”

Of course, while not all civilizations held their offspring to the strict standards of the Spartans, infanticide was common in the pagan world. Despite this, it's hard to imagine an ancient society that murdered its young on the magnitude of the modern world with its abortion-on-demand culture. And in this modern world, the culture of death is nowhere more intense than in Russia.



This is one of the facts we learn in the [DVD documentary *Killing Girls*](#), a work about the lives of Russian women and, something that occurs all too often, the deaths of their unborn children. The documentary presents the stories of Anna Sirota, the narrator of the work, and three girls, Valya, 15; Nastja, 17; and Sasha, 16; all of whom had abortions. It also features the Family and Reproduction Center (such places are always euphemistically named, aren't they?) in St. Petersburg, Russia, which offers late-term abortions to teenage girls.

While these women's stories are tragic, more tragic still is that they're far from unusual. *Killing Girls* tells us that, staggeringly, 80 percent of Russian women have between two and 10 abortions each. Moreover, many of these are performed late-term, despite the fact that the government offers free abortion up to 12 weeks gestation. This is because older girls often counsel the younger ones to wait beyond 20 weeks, with the reasoning that induced abortion is better for their health than the surgical variety. If waiting is a problem, it might only be because it's the only way their parents will discover their condition, given that the law allows girls 15 and older to get abortions without parental consent.

The documentary portrays well the harshness of Russian life, something reflected in both the people's moral and monetary poverty. The girls in question live a hardscrabble existence in a drab post-communist environment and have few resources, a factor that encourages them to abort their children. As for morals, when Sirota got married at 19 years of age, her grandmother told her, "If you get pregnant, get an abortion." This callous attitude was illustrated perhaps even better by Sasha's experience at the abortion center: when she cries in pain while attempting to birth her aborted baby, attending physician Dr. Irina Serdechnaja — who also figures prominently in the documentary — says, "Why are you crying?... If you don't want my help, do it yourself." And this seems to typify the Siberian-winter bedside manner of the abortionists. Of course, I suppose it would be incongruous if people involved in such a dark trade acted otherwise.

Killing Girls bills itself as being neither pro-abortion nor pro-life, and this just may be an honest relation



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of the creators' intentions. Yet values are projected through every work, if not explicitly, then implicitly, and the documentary is imbued with the view that abortion should be rare and regrettable but nevertheless obtainable. In it, for example, Sirota, whose thoughts are expressed in the narration, laments how Russian youth are painfully naïve about sexual matters. She attributes this to the lack of sex education in the schools and to how, according to her, the birds and the bees aren't a big part of Russian parents' vocabulary. And, for sure, the naiveté of the young can be striking. For example, one girl in the documentary actually said that she didn't know you could get pregnant the first time.

Nevertheless, Sirota's thesis doesn't hold water. After all, ignorance might explain one pregnancy, but I would remind you that 80 percent of Russian women have an average of about *six abortions each*. Now, if I was pulled over by a cop for speeding on a given road for the sixth time, would pleading ignorance of the law get me very far? And as to this fool-me-twice-shame-on-me behavior, Sirota had four abortions herself (she also has one daughter), and Sasha was on her second when the documentary was shot (she said that she trusts her boyfriend, and they're "not keen on condoms." She also doesn't want to take birth-control pills because she is worried about gaining weight). Then there is Valya. Upon going to the abortion clinic, she gets scared and leaves and ultimately decides to have her baby girl. Life is tough, as she lives with her mother — her father was murdered by street thugs three years earlier — in a Spartan flat on a shoestring budget; nevertheless, she eventually obtains work and she and grandmother find that their new addition brings them much joy. Yet, despite this, she gets pregnant *again*, saying she got careless (she didn't say she got naïve). She then aborts her second child, citing financial hardship. Now, these women had all learned the facts of life the hard way, yet they still made the same "mistakes." That's not called ignorance. It's called lust.

Thus, *Killing Girls*' greatest defect is that, insofar as it implicitly renders social commentary, its analyses are very shallow. As for sex education, the documentarians could have looked at the United States' half-century experiment with it and noted that it hasn't exactly been a smashing success. After all, our out-of-wedlock birth rate has skyrocketed from 3.8 percent in 1940 to 40 percent today. So, what changed?

The only opinion on this in the documentary is rendered by the abortionist Dr. Serdechnaja, who says something about how it all starts with the family. This is, of course, largely true, but a more meaty analysis of root causes could have begun with something Sirota said about the girls seeking abortions. To wit: "There are few who can precisely define what morals are." No doubt. We should note that the common thread in all modern societies experiencing increasing promiscuity is the decline of religion and rise of relativism. In light of this, it isn't surprising to find an intense culture of death in a nation in which communists sought to destroy faith for nigh on 75 years.

Yet the only appearance religion makes in the film is when Valya's daughter is baptized in, presumably, the Russian Orthodox Church. But I would very much have liked to see an interview with one of its prelates, especially since, not surprisingly, the church is at the heart of a nascent pro-life movement in Russia. And fewer and fewer can deny that hearing its position would have lent the work great depth, given that even science is now starting to vindicate church teachings. For example, consider AIDS prevention, which is mentioned in *Killing Girls*. Just recently, Edward C. Green, director of the AIDS Prevention Research Project at the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies, broke libertine hearts everywhere when he said that "the Pope is correct" about condoms, that they do not prevent AIDS "at the level of population."

Of course, Sirota and *Killing Girls* producer/director David Kinsella would probably counter that such an



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exposition was beyond the scope of their work, and admittedly, it certainly would be incongruent with its tone. They call *Killing Girls* “a story made for women with a woman’s point of view,” and this is unarguable. At risk of sounding flippant and tweaking female egos, it does have a chick-flick, Oprah-esque documentary quality, in that it’s short on facts, figures, and philosophy and long on emotion.

Yet, while it’s not how I would have treated the issue, Kinsella and Sirota did create a haunting work that portrays a sizeable part of the horror of abortion. And they certainly made a sincere attempt to be, for whatever the quality is worth, even-handed. A pro-abortion individual could watch the documentary and conclude that, as Dr. Serdechnaja said, abortion may be “the lesser evil”; someone who is pro-life could point to her expression of truth, that abortion is “legalized murder.” And what of those in the middle? Will the ugliness of abortion override the ugliness that is life for so many in today’s Russia? It’s hard to say, but one thing is certain: the documentary will grab viewers emotionally and make them think. And to paraphrase G.K. Chesterton, “If we think about any issue for long enough, there is a real danger we will discover the truth about it.” Thus, in our unthinking culture of death, *Killing Girls* is probably a step in the right direction.

To watch the trailer for *Killing Girls*, click [here](#); to order the DVD, click [here](#).



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