

The following might be helpful simply in quantifying the stark contrast between the care provided by the 'world' and that provided by a body of believers who have been motivated by men of God who have heard His heart for the orphan.

I have described below the institutional system in common use throughout Russia, and many of the former soviet states.

Dom Rebyonka – Baby House. Babies aged 0 to 4 years. Normally organized into groups of 10 – 14 infants. Average population is 100 to 150. Conditions vary widely and are governed by 2 primary factors; a) general economic conditions of the region. b) adoption activity. Even in circumstances where corrupt officials divert money, the generosity of adopting parents invariably has a positive impact for the children that remain. While medical care is usually outdated, and the children often suffer developmental delays due to under-stimulation, the doctors and caregivers are generally dedicated, compassionate people.

Dyetsky Dom – Children's Home. Children aged 5 to 16 or 17. The quality of care varies widely, the primary factor being the experience and motivation of the director and management team. International and domestic adoptions among this age group are less common so funding is more dependent upon local government. Due to the broad age range, these facilities often struggle with a wide range of institutional issues. Substance abuse, sexual exploitation, bullying are some of the worst.

Preyoot – Children's Shelter. Children aged 5 to 16 or 17. Children are initially admitted to these facilities with the intention that they will return to their families. Some are placed there by their parents while they attempt to resolve an economic crisis or other domestic problem. Others are apprehended by social agencies for their protection. The standard of care is usually reasonable due to the accountability to social services and guardians. Many of the children will experience several admissions – on average, 30 – 40% will ultimately be permanently abandoned and transferred to a Dyetsky Dom.

Internat – Facility for disabled children. These institutions epitomize the discrimination, social classifications and collectivist philosophies developed under Stalin. Normal orphanages are described using the word 'dom' which means home. While standards in the 'dom' may fall well short of our ideals, the general motivation is to provide care and a substitute family environment. The word 'Internat' derives from the same root as the word prison. Children with physical or mental challenges are still often viewed as a threat to society and so the motivation for placing them in these institutions has more to do with social engineering than compassion. The staff who work in these places are poorly paid and very rarely have any qualifications. Brutality and abuse are common – I have seen these things first hand.

This example can be compared to the biblically based models for orphan care implemented by Mr. C.H. Spurgeon and Mr. George Müller. I have not reproduced those here since they are extensive and readily available from a number of sources. I would strongly recommend their materials to anyone with an interest in this type of ministry.

