



Друзья русских сирот

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NOW MORE THAN EVER

Dear FORO Friends and Supporters,

If one positive could emerge – and the struggle to find one is great – from Russian President Putin’s ban on adoption of Russian orphans by Americans, it is that, for a brief moment, homeless children in the former Soviet Union were once again on the world’s radar screen. Although the plight of Russian orphans received considerable attention in the late 1990s, it faded quickly from view. That scenario is not new in our media-saturated, news-cycle driven world. The truth is, if human suffering is not immediately before our eyes, our attention often will be drawn elsewhere. Now that nearly a year has passed since the adoption ban was announced, that appears to once again be the case for Russian orphans.



The sad reality which receives virtually no news attention is that the number, and needs, of Russian orphans continue to grow. According to Russian governmental statistics, more than

730,000 children in Russia either have no parents or have been deserted by their parents. Children are abandoned to the state at a rate of 113,000 per year. Hundreds of thousands live in orphanages or on the street.

International adoptions from Russian – one wonderful means to care for some of these desperate children – dropped from nearly 10,000 in 2004 to roughly 3,000 in 2009. Since the United States far outpaces the world as the home destination for international adoptees, the American adoption ban means that international adoption of Russian orphans will grind to a near halt. And, don’t hope that domestic adoptions within Russia’s borders will pick up the slack. There is no active, strategic de-institutionalization program in Russia to help move Russia’s homeless children into families. Russia’s neighbor, Bulgaria, has just 7,000 orphans in orphanages, yet there is an active staged de-institutionalization game plan, albeit a slow one.



Adoption has never been the total answer to the needs of Russian orphans, but it was one part of the solution. Now that this option is closed, only humanitarian organizations like “Friends of Russian Orphans” can supplement, or provide alternatives, to the resources provided to orphanages by the Russian government. Yet, even that avenue of hope has narrowed considerably in recent years. In the late 1990s, scores of humanitarian



organizations went to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union following televised reports of the suffering in Romanian orphanages. Recent statistics show that less than 10% of the organizations which began working there are still providing assistance. Unlike many of the others, FORO has stood the course, and in 2014, will begin its twelfth year of service to Russian orphans and their caregivers.



The net result of all these disturbing trends is that Russian orphans need our help, *NOW MORE THAN EVER*. The orphanages FORO assists, and the dedicated orphanage directors who rely on our support, need help and encouragement, *NOW MORE THAN EVER*. The Russian adoption ban has demanded a reassessment of FORO's goals and commitments, which our Executive Committee has recently undertaken in a strategic planning retreat. The result of that assessment is that FORO's work must be ramped up, not scaled back. Our responsibility to Russia's orphans is greater *NOW MORE THAN EVER*. The prophet Ezekiel once spoke for Russian orphans when we wrote: "I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap. . . but I found no one." FORO must now stand in the gap for Russian orphans.

Please stand with us. *NOW MORE THAN EVER*, FORO needs your help. We cannot change Governmental policy or world politics, but then, FORO has never advocated a political agenda. But we can change the lives of some of the vulnerable, defenseless children who have been dealt the unfair of hand of living out their childhood in an institution. We can respond to the evil that surrounds these children by offering help and hope.



This year, as part of that response, FORO is making a direct and explicit year-end appeal to our friends and supporters for financial assistance. The work FORO is doing is making a difference, not in

ending the Russian orphan problem entirely, but in bettering the lives of individual orphans in specific areas of need. The money you donate will be used to carry out numerous FORO programs which have stood the test of time.



Enclosed with this letter is envelope which you may use to make a financial contribution to FORO. You may also donate via PayPal, which can be accessed at FORO's web site: www.fororphans.org. If it has been some time since you last made a financial contribution to further FORO's work, please consider renewing your commitment now.

NOW MORE THAN EVER, stand in the gap. Be a Friend of Russian Orphans.

Sincerely,

Lisa A. Wurster, President
Friends of Russian Orphans
November 2013

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