

The Russian Lieutenant's Woman – A Tale of Love, Betrayal
and Vodka by Barbara Davies
Hodder and Stoughton 2007.

This is a deeply uncomfortable story to read, as its author spares nothing about herself in the telling of it.

Barbara Davies is a tabloid journalist who went to the Former Soviet Union to write a story about a serial killer. At the prison where he was held she met and fell in lust with an army Lieutenant, Dima Valinsky, with whom she embarked on a passionate affair that led to the conception of their daughter Anya.

The honesty with which Barbara Davies describes her professional and personal life, particularly with regard to her relationships, makes the inevitable breakdown of the relationship with Dima self-evident, the chasm that separated them in terms of culture, education, aspiration and expectation being too great to be bridged. But the journey provides the reader with a fascinating insight into post-communist FSU life, not least the devastating effect on couples of the demon drink, in this case vodka; but there is also much that is positive, not least the closeness and care of Russian women, epitomised by Dima's mother Natalya and her friend and colleague Olga.

Barbara Davies has written her story to tell her daughter how her parents met and how she came into the world. When she grows up I hope that Anya appreciates her mother's honesty, as well as the intensity with which she is loved.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh