

Social and Political Implications of Alcohol Abuse in Russia

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

NILABH KRISHNA



Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies

School of International Studies

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

New Delhi 110067

2012



JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

School of International Studies
New Delhi - 110067

Tel. : 2670 4365
Fax : (+91)-11-2674 1586

Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies

Date: 26.07.2012

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "*Social and Political Implications of Alcohol Abuse in Russia*" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.

Nilabh Krishna
NILABH KRISHNA

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

A. K. Patnaik
Prof. A. K. PATNAIK
Chairperson, CRCAS

A. Upadhyaya
Dr. Archana Upadhyaya
Supervisor



Chairperson
Centre for Russian & Central Asian Studies
School of International Studies
JNU, New Delhi - 110 067



ASSOC. PROFESSOR
Centre for Russian & Central Asian Studies
School of International Studies
JNU, New Delhi - 110 067

for

Rakesh and Bindiya

List of Illustrations

Figures	Page Number
1.1 The Tavern	02
2.1 The Unsteady Worker	18
2.2 At a Wedding, 1990	21
2.3 Home Bound Russian Soldier in 1993	22
3.1 Religious Gathering	28
3.2 Effects of Alcohol at Workplace	29
3.3 Drunkenness is Suicide	33
3.4 The Impact of Campaign	39
4.1 Effect of Alcohol Policy of Russian Czar on Society	46
4.2 Effects of Alcohol	48
4.3 Effects of Alcohol	49
4.4 Fight Drunkenness	52
4.5 Effects of Anti-Alcohol Campaign	54
4.6 The Crisis	56

Acknowledgements

Realization of a dream is certainly a collective endeavor. In the process, directly or indirectly many people other than the one who nurture the dream, contribute towards maintaining it. Therefore I take upon the opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to each other.

The academic endeavor of mine would not have been possible without the help of a number of people, who with their kind cooperation, active supervision and steadfast support have made this research work a reality.

I am extremely grateful to my supervisor Dr. Archana Upadhyay whose able guidance, intellectual ingenuity and avid suggestions helped me in completing this academic exercise. I express my deep gratitude to Prof. Ajay Kumar Patnaik, and Dr. Rajan Kumar for their kind advice and guidance.

I am highly indebted to the librarian and the staff of Central Library of JNU, and the staffs of SIS library as well as the staffs of CRCAS for their continued support and help.

Last but not the least and most importantly I would like to thank my seniors and friends Rocky Sir, Pingua Da, Saurabh Bhaiya, Manoj Chacha, Rakesh Bhaiya, DD Sir, Anand Sir, Shri Asheesh Bhaiya, Golu Sir, Kundan Singh Tichkule. , Yashshvi, Nitin Krishnan, Dr Ravi, Rishi Ji, Mishir Ji, Mongua The Great, Amrit Anand, Ravi Putra, C.M Devadeep, Anindya, Minti, Athar, Amaan, Sanjiv, Rekha, Akshat, Ashutosh, Varun and most importantly Navendu Shekhar Dixit.

The errors and failures of this dissertation are all mine.

Date: 26.07.2012

New Delhi

Nilabh Krishna

NILABH KRISHNA

*Social and Political Implications of
Alcohol Abuse in Russia*

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

“Drinking is the joy of the ruses, we cannot do without it”

Prince Vladimir

Grand prince Vladimir is supposed to have made this statement in the tenth century. However it is very difficult to deny his acute observation even in today's Russia. Today it is impossible to overlook the significance of the impact of alcohol on Russian society. Historically, drinking has been a great menace for the Russian society. Drinking has become a national obsession in Russia especially due to despair in the wake of painful economic changes that took place during the transition period. On account of this obsession, the major concern is the decreasing life expectancy of the population. The change in the demography is impacting the social structure of Russia. Though many attempts have been made to curb this problem in Russia, but these attempts have proved to be futile.

The Russian State, over the centuries, has taken a close interest in a commodity which in other hemisphere is a source of entertainment, wealth generation and employment but for Russia it has proved to be a source of social problem. Instead of creating wealth, it has created lots of problems not only for the society but also for the state. These problems like the demographic crisis, is clearly having an impact on the national dream of the Russian State of becoming a superpower again in near future. Without a healthy population, not a single nation in this world can aspire to become a superpower.

Overview

This work will focus on the evolution of the problem of alcohol abuse in the Russian society and its impact on the demography of Russia. The first section will comprise of a brief discussion on the emergence of the issue of alcoholism in Russia and also how it prospered in the society. The second section will comprise of the literature overview. The relevant literary sources will be discussed which will help to establish a background on

which the present research will be based. As the chapter proceeds the discussion will shift on the objective and the research questions which will form the core of the entire work. The next section of the chapter will deal with the research methodology. This section will help to understand the basic techniques and research tools which will be used to carry out the research. The chapter will finally conclude by giving a brief background of the other chapters of the current work.

Alcohol has been a very important part of everyday Russian life, which has been commented upon by both Russian observers and also by western travelers who have visited the region at least from tenth century onwards. Heavy drinking, to the point of unconsciousness by men and women, of all strata, has amazed the European travelers of the time.(Stephen White 1996).

Historians believe that Ivan IV, impressed by the Tatar *kabaks*,¹ he had seen during the siege of Kazan, started establishing his own government taverns-cum-distilleries. *Kabaks* soon started to appear in all the major towns and the revenues generated by these taverns went straight to the royal treasury. (Martin Mckee, 1999).

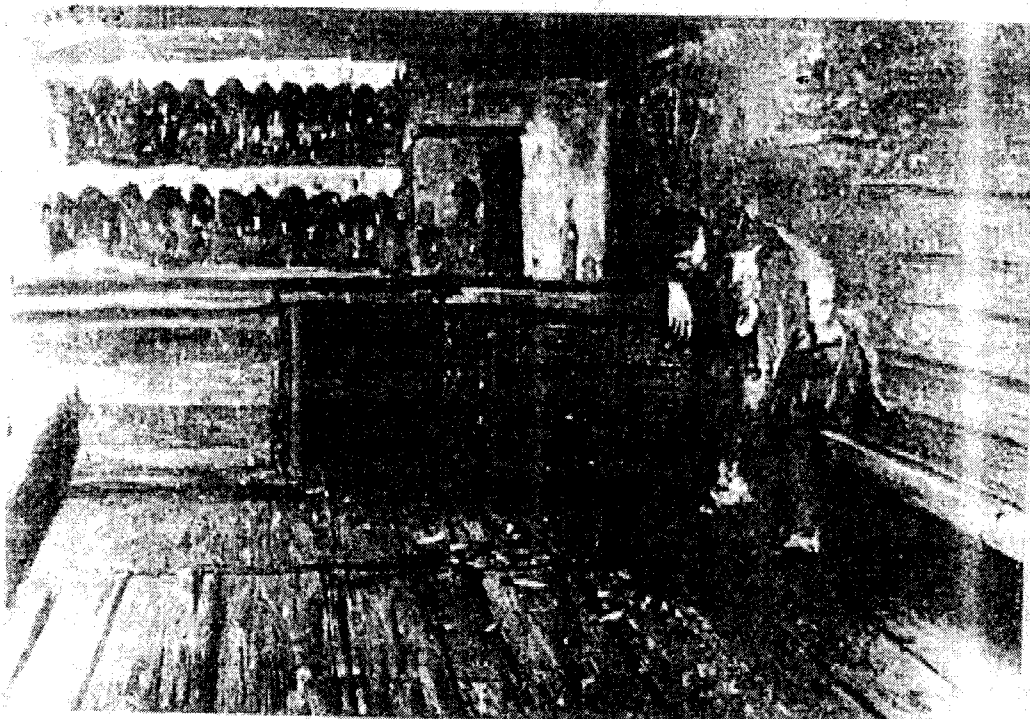


Figure 1.1. The Tavern, source: White, Stephen (1996), *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol State and Society*

¹ Kabaks- Taverns are small houses where alcohol was sold.

The revenues generated were so large that government started forbidding people from distilling or trade in vodka. Private industry of this sort was outlawed, excepting a few landlords. But by the sixteenth century, majority of the taverns were state- controlled and its revenue went directly to the royal treasury. Monopoly on the trade of vodka was asserted by the government through the Law Code of 1649², which made it illegal to sell and purchase vodka except through *kabaks*. Extreme punishments were prescribed for the violators of this law, and it was made clear that all the revenues generated by the sale of vodka were meant for the royal treasury. These *kabaks*, started sprouting up in all the major towns and occasionally in villages, by the early seventeenth century. This helped in embedding the love for alcohol in the Russian society. Vodka which means “little water” has spread through all the levels of society, from children to peasants to the military, to the politicians. According to Stephen White “vodka was the ‘single most important item in the peasantry's festive diet’; it was a ‘basic ingredient of all celebrations’ and a ‘sort of seal on ceremonials’.”³ This shows that the love for vodka is one constant thing in the life of Russian people.

Vodka remained as an important part of everyday life of Russian people as it was embedded into the social life of the Russians. It was the most popular drink at all the major events of a Russian life. Be it festivals, weddings, births, business or even church ceremonies, alcohol remains the favorite. It is believed in Russia that if you are not drinking with your friends, then you are not fit for the social gatherings. This pressure often leads to children start drinking from an early age. At any event drinking alcohol is the customary thing to do in Russia. Alcohol, it seems is not only used for its mental effects, but also used as an anesthetic and medicine. If a family member is sick or celebrating, alcohol will help. Russian alcohol consumption has evolved from traditional, orthodox drinking to modern binge drinking.

“Traditional drinking was characteristic of peasant society and of a weakly monetized economy; modern drinking, of wage labor.”⁴ The traditional drinking pattern shows that,

² Law Code of 1649: the most important legal document in the Russian history, composed between 882 and 1800.

³ White, Stephen(1996).” *Russia goes dry: Alcohol, State and Society*”. Cambridge [England] : Cambridge University Press, p.3

⁴ Patricia Herlihy (1991), “*Joy Of The Rus; Rites and Rituals of Russian Drinking*”, Russian Review Vol.50

alcohol was closely attached with religion, with church events playing the biggest role. Festivals were also an important time to get drunk. Religious activities, added with private occasions such as marriages, births, funerals, all were marked by drinking. Weddings in the traditional peasantry also shows the quantities of alcohol consumed and money spent lavishly on these occasions. According to Patricia Herlihy, “the bridegroom commonly provided six to eight *vedros* (containers in which alcohol was kept) of vodka (approximately seventy-five to a hundred liters), all of which was drunk before the wedding. At the wedding itself the bride's family might spend as much as two hundred rubles on Vodka.”⁵

The concept of *Pomoch*⁶ (help) was also considered as a major source of alcoholism in the peasantry. *Pomoch* meant call for help when a peasant may need extra workers for their work. This help was not paid back monetarily but by the sheer hospitality of the family that needed help. The workers were paid with the food and of course alcohol. Village youth loved this concept and they were always ready to help anybody. Instead of being a productive session, *pomoch* turned into social gathering, and by the end of the day, workers either pass out at the table or returned home dead drunk. Getting drunk and being fed by the host seemed to be the most important aspect of the *pomoch*, work was a distant second.

While all the rural areas were plagued with the problem of alcoholism, the urban population was also not left behind. Workers at the factories were also indulged in the same kind of alcoholism. In the factories, every new recruit were to toast his co-workers with alcohol to get into the league and to get the best know how of the work.

Even the Russian military became another area of major concern where alcohol played an important role. Alcohol was used as a way for the soldiers to keep happy and celebrate. The incompetence of the Russian army in the Russo- Japanese War in 1904-05, is attributed to alcohol only. This war led to the thought of prohibition of alcohol in the army during mobilization. Also public concern over the problem of alcoholism started arising. Public pressure led to further more restrictions over the alcohol trade and the

No.2 ;133

⁵ Ibid,p.135.

⁶ *Pomoch* was a concept in which, any family in need of help for their work, would ask the villagers and they obliged.

public concerns regarding the abuse of alcohol started being discussed in the State *Duma* (the limited parliamentary body that came up in 1905).

After 1917, when the Bolsheviks⁷ came to power, the trade of alcohol was deemed as the evil of the capitalist system and was meant to be done away with. In the process all the factories, distilleries etc. were closed down and anyone who was found with alcohol was apprehended and brought before the military-revolutionary tribunals. Death penalty was introduced in the army for the abuse related to alcohol. Whole of the initial years after the revolution has seen a gradual decline in the cases of alcoholism and at some point of time it was being said that the Russian society has forgotten alcohol. Lenin explained in 1921 that a socialist government can never contemplate a trade which will lead Russia back to capitalism and not forward to communism⁸.

Various laws and decrees were passed by the Russian parliament against trade and use of alcohol in public sphere and it was completely banned. But the obsession of Russian people with alcohol never ended.

The drinking culture of pre-revolution era came back and again the Russian people started drinking heavily, most of it illicit liquor. This prompted Stalin to re-approach this issue with a new thinking. In the 15th Party Congress in December 1927, he told the deputies that instead of accepting the terms of foreign capital as a condition of their assistance, he is resuming the sale of vodka. He re-introduced monopoly of state on the alcohol trade, and proposed that as soon as other source of revenue generation emerges, the sale and production of vodka would be terminated. The production of alcohol again started in full flow and with this the cases of alcohol abuse started to reappear in the Russian society.

During Stalin's rule in order to control the menace of alcohol abuse steps were taken up by promoting certain groups known as temperance societies. These societies helped government in tackling the problems that arose due to alcohol and to make people aware

⁷ Bolsheviks represented the party of the proletariat i.e. the working class..

⁸ V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5th edition, 55 vol. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1958-65), vol.43, p.326.

of the effects caused due to over consumption of alcohol. These societies ultimately gave birth to a "Society for the struggle against Alcoholism" with heavy-weights of the army and government as its patrons. The society, by 1929 has reached almost all the corners of Russia, and started propagating the ill impact of alcohol on social and public life. This "Society for the struggle against Alcoholism" was a major tool of the government to curb the problem of the alcoholism in the society. But, again like the other anti- alcohol programs of the earlier tsarist governments, this program also fizzled out and by the end of 1930, all of its functions were transferred to Moscow organizations and the society was abolished.

Stalin once again monopolized the trade of alcohol for the generation of revenues and all the programs related to alcohol abuse were stopped. This tradition went on even during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev era. It is difficult to get access to any data related to alcohol due to the official secrecy practiced by the different regimes of the Soviet era. It was only after Mikhail Gorbachev coming to power in 1985 that provided transparency and access to the required data.

Review of Literature

Several books, scholarly articles and papers have been written discussing the prevailing problem of alcoholism in Russia. The main issues which directed the selection and the course of the reading are the rate of the consumption of alcohol in Russia, the impact of alcoholism on society and demography and the official position on the issue. A brief review of the articles describing the role, significance, nature and its impact on the nation as a whole has also been provided.

Potentially more reliable figures have been generated outside the USSR by, for example, surveys of emigrants, especially to Israel, although these are problematic as there is evidence that Soviet Jews drank rather less than their Slavic neighbors. Nonetheless, one of the most rigorous studies, although again likely to be an underestimate because it did not include that large volume of alcohol now known to be stolen each year, suggests that consumption more than doubled between 1955 and 1979 to 15.2 liters per person (Trembl,

1975). This figure is higher than that recorded for any OECD country (France was highest at 12.7 liters in 1990, although most other countries were in the range 5–9 liters), where data are largely derived from validated surveys of consumption (World Drink Trends, 1992). Of course, this figure relates to the entire USSR and, for religious and other reasons there are marked regional variations so levels in the Russian heartland are likely to have been much higher. Other studies of émigré families suggested that alcohol consumption accounted for 15–20 per cent of disposable household incomes. Studies by dissidents and others supported the impression that alcohol consumption was increasing at alarming levels, suggesting, for example, that alcohol accounted for 15 per cent of total retail trade (Krasikov, 1981).

Also, Soviet government inadvertently contributed to the already sad state of affairs by promoting other alcoholic beverages such as wine to diminish the consumption of vodka. Instead of perhaps replacing vodka with these wines, they introduced fortified wines, as regular strength wines did not sell. Wine with 7-12 percent alcohol content was replaced with wine containing 17-18 percent alcohol. Thus, a liter of cheap wine was as intoxicating and lethal as a bottle of vodka⁹. Russian purity standards were low, if not criminal. Besides premium vodkas, all other distilled spirits contained low quality ethanol, often in dozes considered dangerous in the west. What is worse, starting in the 1960s and through the 1970s synthetic ethanol was known to be used in state-produced vodkas as the demand was too great to be met otherwise.¹⁰

It is also important to know whether the frequency of drinking and the social context within which it takes place are different from those in other countries. Here, the information is even more fragmentary. Various reports suggest that, by the 1980s, the age at which people began to drink had fallen, that increasing numbers of women and children were heavy drinkers, and in some cities the average consumption among working adults was a bottle of vodka each day (White, 1996). Nemstov (1992) has constructed a series of estimates of overall consumption that are thought likely to reflect at least the true situation. His estimates are based on the proportion of those dying from

⁹ Vladimir G Trem (1982), "Death from Alcohol Poisoning in the USSR," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 4:492

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 493.

violence (accidents, suicides, murders) who were found to be intoxicated at the time of death.

This is assumed to be closely (and linearly) correlated with actual alcohol consumption per capita. The data on which this is based were acquired from surveys of oblast (regional) health authorities in 1991, and again in 1994. After a complex series of deductions and assumptions, the resulting figures are anchored to alcohol consumption per capita, as the relationship is known with a reported high level of certainty for Moscow for 1984 and 1986. There appears to have been a short-term absolute decrease in consumption in 1985, but the level began to recover within a year and had returned to previous levels by the early 1990s. Nemtsov's data are more consistent with other evidence than are the official Goskomstat (State Statistics Committee) figures, as they show alcohol consumption already falling in 1984.

Despite the absence of definitive information on patterns of alcohol use in Russia before 1985, there is considerable evidence from many sources that alcohol was producing wide ranging and substantial social problems. Furthermore, the commonest type of alcohol consumed was vodka and it appears that much drinking was in binges. Consequently, there was substantial scope for reduction when the campaign began in 1985.

When Gorbachev came to power one of the first reforms Gorbachev introduced was the anti-alcohol campaign which was implemented in 1985. It was designed to fight widespread alcoholism in the Soviet Union. Prices of vodka, wine and beer were raised and their sales were restricted. It was pursued vigorously and cut both alcohol sale and government revenue. It was a serious blow to the state budget. Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign was a puzzle piece in the perestroika process that failed despite public pressure and political will, albeit both short-lived. Although there were measurable gains in lives saved, estimated at 1 million people (Nemtsov, 2005)

The mortality rate decreased, absenteeism from the work got curtailed. But this led to the curtailing of revenues in an already stagnant economy, which was a major setback. This anti-alcohol campaign also led to the smuggling of illicit liquor, which eventually led to the serious implications on the health of the society. By 1988, this campaign also failed to

curb the menace of alcoholism and created many other problems like smuggling and black marketing of alcohol.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the problem of alcoholism grew more and more. Boris Yeltsin de-monopolized the trade of vodka, and as the alcohol market was expanding in the early 1990s, the private alcohol industry hurried to divide the market among the various players. Two major developments were the growth of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and operation of wholesale and retail facilities, hundreds of which popped up across the country, many unlicensed and unregistered. The quality and the volume of beverages produced was no longer in the purview of the government and, with the economic gains being the prevalent concern for most alcohol entrepreneurs, quality diminished, while alcohol poisonings increased (Tomilin 1999; McKee 2005).

These companies were all interested in the overseas market of vodka and never took interest in the domestic market. The black marketers of alcohol took opportunity of this situation and started smuggling illicit liquor into the country. The use of illicit liquor enhanced the problem of alcoholism, and the society experienced the serious consequences. The illicit liquor, smuggled from neighboring countries, had serious impact on the health of the Russians and the demography of the country. The mortality rate increased and the cases of divorce, suicide, accidents became rampant all over the country. Criminalization of the society came in forefront, and many cases of murders, domestic violence etc. were reported in the Russian media. The problem of alcoholism loomed over all of the decade of 90's.

Relevance and Research Questions

Russia is experiencing unusually high death rates from non-natural causes, many related to alcoholism. Life expectancy, especially among working-age males, has dropped precipitously. The Russian fertility rate has declined to among the world's lowest (1.54 births per woman), while its abortion rate is among the highest (1.3 million per year). As a result, for the first time in Russian history, the annual number of deaths had exceeded the number of births in the year 1992. Compounding these challenges, the population is aging rapidly—a trend that will accelerate over the next two decades—and immigration

continues to increase, posing thorny political and social problems for a nation historically accustomed to a net outflow of people.

The present section tries to establish the relevance of the present research. The section includes sub-sections dealing with the research questions which have been kept in mind while undertaking the research. This research centers on these questions, answers to which are sought as the research progresses.

In 1992, Russia's population entered a period of negative growth - that is, the number of deaths exceeded the number of births combined with the number of immigrants. This was a first in the peacetime history of Russia. The decline in fertility is contributing to a rapid aging of the Russian population. Between 1959 and 1990, the number of persons aged 60 and over doubled. The trends of population growth and aging in Russia have been profoundly affected by catastrophic events, such as the two world wars, the civil war of 1917-1922, and famines in the early 1920s and '30s. These catastrophes have distorted the population pyramid-the typical age distribution and balance between male and female in the population.

The above said trends put one in the mode of questioning, and it can not be satiated unless some questions are dealt with. The answers to these questions are very crucial for the completion of this research. An attempt has been made here to bring to fore those questions and they have been listed as under.

- What are the factors that have given rise to alcohol abuse in Russia?
- What are the social and political consequences of alcohol abuse in Russia?
- What are the demographic consequences of alcohol abuse in Russia?
- What are the reasons behind the failure of anti alcohol campaigns in curbing the problem of alcohol abuse in Russia?

Research Methods

Historical analytical method has been used to analyze the development of the problem

of alcohol abuse in Russia. Longitudinal comparative study has helped in the understanding of the various state policies that contributed to the aggravation of the problem of alcohol abuse in the region.

The collection of the data comprises of the primary sources and the secondary sources. The speeches of the government officials, documents and reports comprise of the primary source. The secondary source consists of the various books and articles written on the related topic. The data acquired from UN, WHO, and other government organizations have been consulted for the study.

The research is quantitative and qualitative- as per the research requirement. Both type of analysis have complemented each other. Descriptive inferences will weave the events together. Causal inference is necessary to know the cause and effect of the indulgence of politics in the problem of alcohol abuse in Russia.

Conclusion

Growing alcohol consumption is one of the only explanations of increased mortality. Deaths from violence, injuries, and other non-natural causes have contributed heavily to the latest rise. Russia's rates of homicide and suicide are among the highest in the world. Rossow (1996) and Skog (1993) noted that alcohol has been largely ignored in studies of suicide rates. Annual alcohol consumption in Russia is estimated to be nearly 15 liters per person (Nemtsov 2000, Trembl 1997) compared to average rates of about 10 and 7 liters per person in the European Union and the United States, respectively (World Advertising Research Center 2002). The age standardized suicide rate in Russia in 2000 of about 38 per 100,000 persons was second only to Lithuania and was two to three times higher than the European Union average and in the United States. Violent death, including suicide, was also one of the leading causes of the Russian mortality crisis during the 1990s, especially for males (Notzon 1998, Shkolnikov and Mesle 1996). A study done in the late 1990s showed that more than one third of Russian males had admitted to binge drinking (more than five drinks in one sitting) more than once per month.¹¹ Studies have also shown that heavy episodic drinking can lead to acts of violence and suicide and can

¹¹ William Alex Pridemore(2006), "*Heavy Drinking and Suicide in Russia*," Social Forces volume 85 number 1 :413

disinhibit people, pushing suicide-prone or simply disaffected individuals over the edge.¹² In the end, “both male and female suicide rates (in Russia) were positively and significantly associated with heavy drinking.”¹³

In addition, deaths from illness and chronic and degenerative diseases, such as cancer, respiratory failure, and circulatory and cardiovascular diseases, have increased sharply. It is interesting to note that environmental problems, generally given a large share of blame for Russia's health woes, are in fact not among the main culprits. Environmental problems cannot explain the increases in accidents, homicides, and suicides or the much greater increases in mortality for working-age males compared with other population subgroups. In this light the present research examines the problem of alcohol abuse as it exists in Russia.

The **second chapter** traces the policies of different regimes of Russia which aggravated the problem of alcohol abuse in the country. It is noteworthy that, there were many anti alcohol campaigns to control the menace of alcoholism in the society. A brief mention of these campaigns have been highlighted in this chapter.

The **third chapter** of this research has taken into account the social and political consequences of alcohol abuse in Russia. Alcohol has been embedded in the Russian society due to the generational consumption. The impact of this generational consumption on the social fabric of the nation has been discussed in this chapter.

The **fourth chapter** of this research will take into account, the impact of the alcohol abuse on the demography of Russia. The consequence of negative alcohol abuse has led to an impact on large fluctuations in mortality in Russia which is widely recognized. The demography crisis, which is a major challenge for the Russian government posing a threat to its pretensions of emerging as great power in post-cold war era has a direct link to rise in alcohol abuse .

The last chapter summarizes the findings of the study.

¹² Ibid., 415

¹³ Ibid., 421

Chapter Two

**GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND ITS
IMPACT ON ALCOHOL ABUSE**

Introduction

Controlling alcohol consumption is a multi dimensional task complicated by the excessive consumption and the legal status of alcohol in Russia. Variety of policies directed at, controlling consumer behavior, taxation of alcoholic beverages, and monitoring the quality of these beverages, are practiced by various governments of the world. Ranging from absolute prohibition of alcohol in U.S and Sweden, to complete lack of control after the fall of Soviet Union, alcohol control policies have undergone a number of substantial changes, worldwide. The policies of the erstwhile Soviet Union and present day Russian government are the focus of this chapter.

The Russian State, over the centuries, has taken a close interest in a commodity which in other hemisphere is a source of entertainment, wealth generation and employment but for Russia it has proved to be a source of social problem. Instead of creating wealth, it has created lots of problems not only for the society but also for the state. These problems like the demographic crisis, is clearly having an impact on the national aspirations of the Russian State of becoming a superpower again in near future. Without a healthy population, not a single nation in this world can aspire to become a superpower. The influence of the policies of government on the problem of alcohol abuse in the Russian society is the sole focus of this chapter. These policies pursued, during the various regimes will be discussed in this chapter. The issue of alcoholism in the Russian society is the outcome of the policies of the different regimes that have been in power in Russia. The various regimes will include:

- The Imperial era
- The period post 1917 Revolution
- Mikhail Gorbachev's Anti Alcohol Campaign
- The Post Disintegration period
- The Putin period.

IMPERIAL ERA:

Alcohol has been a very important part of everyday Russian life, has been commented upon by both Russian observers and also by western travelers who have visited the region at least from tenth century onwards. Heavy drinking, to the point of unconsciousness by men and women, of all strata, has amazed the European travelers of the time. Historians believe that Ivan IV¹, impressed by the Tatar kabaks², he had seen during the siege of Kazan, started establishing his own government taverns-cum-distilleries. Kabaks soon started to appear in all the major towns and the revenues generated by these taverns went straight to the royal treasury.

The revenues generated were so large that government started forbidding people from distilling or trade in vodka. Private industry of this sort was outlawed, excepting a few landlords. But by the sixteenth century, majority of the taverns were state- controlled and its revenue went directly to the royal treasury. Monopoly on the trade of vodka was asserted by the government through the Law Code of 1649³, which made it illegal to sell and purchase vodka except through kabaks. Extreme punishments were prescribed for the violators of this law, and it was made clear that all the revenues generated by the sale of vodka were meant for the royal treasury. These kabaks, started sprouting up in all the major towns and occasionally in villages, by the early seventeenth century. Extreme monopoly over the trade was there but government also rented these kabaks to private individuals in return of fixed income. Those who rented these taverns were given certain immunities and the tavern for the period of five years. Many taxes were created in the seventeenth century to increase the revenue many fold, including custom duties and liquor taxes.

This system of taxing the individual and the state administration of the kabaks existed till the nineteenth century. Levying of taxes from the individual entrepreneurs was finally abolished in 1861. Instead of levying taxes, a system of excise was introduced, which

¹ Ivan IV was the king of Russia, during the sixteenth century.

² Kabaks were the small houses or taverns, where alcohol was sold and served.

³ Law Code Of 1649 was one of the most important literary and legal document composed between 882 and 1800.

lasted for the next 30 years and it ultimately culminated in the monopolization of the trade by the government once again. Monopolization of the trade was re-introduced in the response of the complaints of adulteration and fraud. Some visitors of the foreign origin had reported that adulteration was almost 50 percent with the use of tobacco, narcotic herbs, belladonna etc.

Absolute control on the trade of alcohol and handling of the consequences of the trade among the general public is an important feature of Tsar period. Government initially suppressed the temperance societies, but later set up these societies itself. These societies promoted moderation than abstinence. Public pressure led to further more restrictions over the alcohol trade and the public concerns regarding the abuse of alcohol started being discussed in the State Duma (the limited parliamentary body that came up in 1905). The defeat in the Russo-Japan war in 1905⁴, forced the government to enact the first Prohibition in the country. Just before World War I the crown had finally stepped in to curb drinking in an effort to mobilize an effective fighting force.

This simply resulted in illegal distilling and continued alcohol consumption, as well as in obvious revenue losses for the government. While the Russian grain production decreased before and during the war years, the illegal distillation flourished-the levels of available alcohol never decreased.⁵ The annual state income from distilled spirits averaged 500-600 million rubles per year for several decades prior to the prohibition, in a budget that averaged two billion rubles.⁶ In essence, one quarter of the government revenue disappeared. The spirits monopoly in the 1900-13 period provided approximately 75 percent of all indirect taxes and 25-30 percent of all state revenues.⁷ While prohibition saved the peasants roughly one billion rubles per year, the grain market became greatly destabilized, as much of it became dedicated to illegal distillation.⁸ Illegal profits rose and corruption, somewhat subdued for a few years, came back with a vengeance. The

⁴ The war was fought between Russia and Japan over the issue of Kurile Islands.

⁵ Joseph Barnes, (1932) "Liquor Regulation in Russia," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 163 : 227.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁷ Vladimir G. Treml, "Alcohol in the USSR: A Fiscal Dilemma," *Soviet Studies* Vol. 27 no.2 (1975): 166

⁸ *Ibid.*

steep decline in revenue due to a dependence on a single commodity caused great budgetary deficits.⁹

In summary, the crown had greatly contributed to the popularization of vodka in Russia. From the tax-farm decades, where generations of Russians developed the love of vodka, to the law that monopolized government vodka production and distribution (1895), ensuring that cheap, homemade stuff was no longer worth the effort, as inexpensive, high quality vodka was made available all over the empire-the government mitigated any possibility of curbing alcoholism based on cost alone, and cemented a long and profound national addiction.¹⁰ Also the Prohibition by the Czar led to the demise of the Russian economy prior to the communist revolution.

POST 1917 REVOLUTION

After 1917, when the Bolsheviks came to power, the trade of alcohol was deemed as the evil of the capitalist system and was meant to be done away with. In the process all the factories, distilleries etc. were closed down and anyone who was found with alcohol was apprehended and brought before the military-revolutionary tribunals. Death penalty was introduced in the army for the abuse related to alcohol. Whole of the initial years after the revolution has seen a gradual decline in the cases of alcoholism and at some point of time it was being said that the Russian society had forgotten alcohol. Lenin explained in 1921 that “a socialist government can never contemplate a trade which will lead Russia back to capitalism and not forward to communism”¹¹.

Various laws and decrees were passed by the Russian parliament against trade and use of alcohol in public sphere and it was completely banned. But the obsession of Russian people with alcohol never ended. The drinking culture of pre-revolution era came back and again the Russian people started drinking heavily, most of it illicit liquor. This prompted Joseph Stalin¹² to re-approach this issue with a new thinking. In the 15th Party Congress in December 1927, he told the deputies that instead of accepting the terms of foreign capital as a condition of their assistance, he is resuming the sale of vodka. He re-

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Patricia Herlihy, “Joy of the Rus’ : Rites and Rituals of Russian Drinking,” 146.

¹¹ V. I. Lenin, *Polnoesobraniesochinenii*, 5th edition, 55 vol. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1958-65), vol.43,p.326.

¹² Joseph Stalin was the General Secretary of the Soviet Union during 1925-52.

introduced monopoly of state on the alcohol trade, and proposed that as soon as other source of revenue generation emerges, the sale and production of vodka would be terminated. The production of alcohol again started in full flow and with this the cases of alcohol abuse started to reappear in the Russian society.

During Stalin's rule in order to control the menace of alcohol abuse steps were taken up by promoting certain groups known as temperance societies. These societies helped government in tackling the problems that arose due to alcohol and to make people aware of the effects caused due to over consumption of alcohol. These societies ultimately gave birth to a "Society for the Struggle Against Alcoholism" with heavy-weights of the army and government as its patrons. The society, by 1929 has reached almost all the corners of Russia, and started propagating the ill impact of alcohol on social and public life. This "Society for the Struggle Against Alcoholism" was a major tool of the government to curb the problem of the alcoholism in the society. But, again like the other anti- alcohol programs of the earlier tsarist governments, this program also fizzled out and by the end of 1930, all of its functions were transferred to Moscow organizations and the society was abolished.

Stalin once again monopolized the trade of alcohol for the generation of revenues and all the programs related to alcohol abuse were stopped. Nikita Khrushchev¹³ had tried to curb vodka consumption, an effort that was hugely unsuccessful. In 1958 he ordered the price of all alcoholic beverages except beer to be raised by 21 percent. His other prohibitions included prohibition of sales of vodka before 10 AM, banning vodka from many types of stores, and limiting restaurant service of vodka to 100 grams per person. These measures resulted in only a 5.4 percent drop in vodka sales. Khrushchev himself admitted in his memoirs that his measures actually hurt families as men simply spent

¹³ Nikita Khrushchev was the General Secretary of the Soviet Union during 1953-64.

more of their budgets on vodka, forgoing more important commodities their families could have used.¹⁴



Figure 2.1, An Unsteady Worker. Source: White, Stephen (1996), *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol, State and Society*.

From the late 1960s into the mid 1970s legal sales of distilled alcohol averaged about 1.5 billion liters per year, increasing at about a 5 percent rate annually; illegal distilling, mainly in the countryside, produced another 500 million liters or *samogon* (*home made alcohol; literally means 'self-distilled'*) per year.¹⁵ The effect of this large amount of consumption started taking its toll on the working population. During Brezhnev's last years the working population was actually in a state of biological decline: in a case that

¹⁴ Vladimir G. Treml, "Alcohol in the USSR: A Fiscal Dilemma," *Soviet Studies* Vol 27 No 2 (1975):167

¹⁵ *Ibid*,164.

was without precedent in the history of developed countries the life expectancy of males fell from sixty-eight to sixty-four years, while the rate of infant mortality increased from three to seven percent.¹⁶ By the time Mikhail Gorbachev¹⁷ came to the power in USSR, the impact of heavy drinking had taken its toll on the population and Gorbachev made his first priority to attack alcoholism.

Mikhail Gorbachev's Anti Alcohol Campaign

When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power (1985), one of the first reforms Gorbachev introduced was the anti-alcohol campaign which was implemented in 1985. It was designed to fight widespread alcoholism in the Soviet Union. He introduced much stricter laws and banned alcohol from public functions, as well as closed down a significant number of state liquor stores. He also introduced such novel concepts as prohibition of alcohol in restaurants before 2 PM, much higher prices for alcohol in the stores that were allowed to operate, and encouraged the emergence of a teetotaler movement, which at its height had over 12 million members.¹⁸ This campaign was the first major change in the government's position toward alcohol consumption in over half a century, a shift from reliance on alcohol revenue to a strict system of rations and controls.¹⁹ The campaign restricted hours of alcohol sales, implemented purchase quotas, closed distilleries and breweries, and destroyed most of the vineyards across a number of Soviet republics .

The broader attempts of these campaigns were on changing public attitudes toward drinking, and to acknowledge the harmful impact of alcohol on the lives of Soviet citizens. But despite these efforts, prevention continued to be practically non-existent; treatment under-funded and inadequate to the task.²⁰ It was pursued vigorously and cut both alcohol sale and government revenue. It was a serious blow to the state budget. But the campaign was very successful in the initial phase. The mortality rate decreased,

¹⁶ Martin Malia,(1996) “ *The Soviet Tragedy, A History Of Socialism in Russia, 1917-91*” New York: Free Press,, 368.

¹⁷ Mikhail Gorbachev was the last General Secretary of the Soviet Union from 1985 till the demise of the Union.

¹⁸ Daniel Tarschys(1993), “The Success of a Failure: Gorbachev's Alcohol Policy, 1985-88,”*Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 45 No.1 : 7-8

¹⁹ Patricia Herlihy (2002),”*The Alcoholic Empire: Vodka and Politics in Late Imperial Russia*”. Oxford University Press, New York

²⁰ Stephen White (1996), *Russia Goes Dry*, Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

absenteeism from the work got curtailed. But this led to the curtailing of revenues in an already stagnant economy, which was a major setback. This anti-alcohol campaign also led to the smuggling of illicit liquor, which eventually led to the serious implications on the health of the society. By 1988, this campaign also failed to curb the menace of alcoholism and created many other problems like smuggling and black marketing of alcohol.

The Anti Alcohol Campaign of Mikhail Gorbachev is considered as one of the major reason for the disintegration of the Soviet Union, as it had given a big blow to the already stagnant economy. A commodity (alcohol), which contributed for 30 percent of Gross Domestic Product, was suddenly rolled backed from the market. This policy gave a serious blow to the revenue of the government and escalated the problem of mafia and black-marketing, problems which Russia faces till today. These problems remained unchecked during the post disintegration period. Subsequently, it became a hurdle in the process of sanitization of the Russian society from the problem of alcohol abuse.

The Post Disintegration Period

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the problem of alcoholism grew more and more. Boris Yeltsin²¹, who came to power in Russia after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, oversaw Russia's initial steps toward democracy and capitalism. With Boris Yeltsin's "Shock Therapy"²² reforms in 1992, government implemented a series of economic programmes to create a market economy. Instead of providing a solid foundation for capitalism, Yeltsin's policies had ushered in a decade of increasing unemployment, hyperinflation, decreasing industrial production and intense poverty. The bad economic condition furthermore increased problem of alcoholism in the country. People with no jobs, and social security coverage, started finding solace in alcohol, most of which were illicit, smuggled, spurious or of low quality.

²¹ Boris Yeltsin was the first President of the Russian Federation, 1991-2000.

²² Shock Therapy: Program proposed by the PM Yegor Gaidar in 1992, which deregulated the price and currency control by the government.



Figure 2.2, At a Wedding in 1990. Source: White, Stephen (1996), *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol, State and Society*.

Boris Yeltsin de-monopolized the trade of vodka, and sold the Russian distilling factories to foreign companies. These companies were all interested in the overseas market of vodka and never took interest in the domestic market. The black marketers of alcohol took opportunity of this situation and started smuggling illicit liquor into the country.

The use of illicit liquor enhanced the problem of alcoholism, and the society experienced the serious consequences. The illicit liquor, smuggled from neighboring countries, had serious impact on the health of the Russians and the demography of the country. This was a first in the peacetime history of Russia. Russia has experienced unusually high death rates from non-natural causes, many related to alcoholism. Life expectancy, especially among working-age males, has dropped precipitously. The Russian fertility rate has declined to among the world's lowest (1.54 births per woman), while its abortion rate is among the highest (1.3 million per year). As a result, for the first time in Russian history, the annual number of deaths has exceeded the number of births in the year 1992. The mortality rate increased and the cases of divorce, suicide, accidents became rampant all over the country. Criminalization of the society came in forefront, and many cases of

murders, domestic violence etc. were reported in the Russian media. The problem of alcoholism loomed over all of the decade of 90's.



Figure 2.3, Homebound Russian Soldier. Source: White, Stephen (1996), *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol, State and Society*.

Vladimir Putin's Period

Vladimir Putin inherited the inglorious legacy of the problems posed by excessive drinking and was mandated to take necessary steps to curb it. He took the task to minimize the damages head on which reflected in his State of the Nation Address in 2005. Here is an excerpt to demonstrate how seriously the Russian leadership wanted to put an end to this degeneration of an entire population of a nation state. President Putin explicitly acknowledged the urgency of this problem in his 2005 'State of the Nation Address', where he stated, "Every year in Russia, about 40 000 people die from alcohol poisonings alone, caused first of all by alcohol substitutes. Mainly they are young men, breadwinners." (President Putin State of the Nation Address, 2005). He took a slew of measures to curb alcoholism.

In an attempt to control the rampant corruption, illegal activity and extremely high rates of alcohol related poisonings, a law on regulation of the production and turnover of ethyl alcohol and alcohol containing products was signed by President Putin on July 21, 2005, effective since January 1, 2006 (Law on Regulation of Ethyl Alcohol, 2005). Excerpts from the Russian Federation Law on the regulation of ethyl alcohol (January 1, 2006)

Aspects of the Law on regulation of ethyl alcohol and products:

1. Production, distribution, and sales (wholesale and retail) are against the law unless a license is obtained and registered with the government. The cost of a license is dependent on the size of the production facility and annual turnover, and is a significant cost increase from prior licensing costs.
2. All of the products must carry an excise stamp designating the destination of sale as the Russian Federation domestic market.
3. Retail sale of alcohol containing products without a proper license is against the law and no licenses are given (alcohol sale is prohibited) at the following locations - child centers, educational, sports, athletic, and cultural facilities, and on public transport.
4. Sales of alcoholic beverages containing more than 15% ethanol alcohol by volume (ABV) are banned in places of large public gatherings, airports, train and metro stations, wholesale markets, military installations, and locations in close proximity to the above places.
5. Products containing 15% pure alcohol and more are not to be sold in kiosks, containers, by individuals, from automobiles, and other places not properly licensed and set up for such sales.
6. All production facilities are required to obtain the electronic recording equipment regulated by this federal law, capable of counting the amount of ethyl alcohol used and produced, including volume and concentration.

7. Records of the amounts of ethyl alcohol or other alcohol-containing products of used and produced are to be automatically collected and sent to the centralized information system.

(Source: Maria Levintova 2007).

The major focus of this legislation is on the control of the volume and quality of alcohol production and sales, with a special focus on registration of production and wholesale facilities, utilization of raw materials, and distribution and sale locations. All the components of this law require substantial financial investment from the producer or seller of alcohol products, including registration fees and equipment costs; new excise stamp procedures, designated sale locations, and extensive reporting guidelines. On the consumer side, higher prices and sale restrictions are expected.²³ The critics of this legislation believed that a decrease in market competition through the elimination of smaller production and distribution facilities and an increase in prices will drive the growth of the illicit market, leading to an increase of already elevated consumption, alcohol related poisonings and mortality.²⁴

Despite the recent economic gains, the Russian population is diminishing in numbers. Recently in a World health Organizations report on Russia came some horrific data regarding the problem of alcoholism in the society. Few disturbing figures from the report are as follows:

- Russians, 16 and older drink the equivalent of roughly four gallons of pure alcohol per capita each year, almost twice the amount of their American counterpart.
- Russia currently has 2 million alcoholics.
- The number of Russian children aged 10-14 who drink alcohol exceeds 10 million.

²³ Marya Levintova,(2007) “*Russian Alcohol Policy in the Making*,” Alcohol and Alcoholism. Vol. 42. No.5,pp:500-505,

²⁴ Nicholson A.(2006) “*Alcohol Deaths Spark Debate in Russia: Spate of Highly Publicized Deaths in Russia Spark Debate About The Problem of Alcoholism*”. The Associated Press, Moscow.

- Roughly 500,000 Russians die annually from alcohol related accidents, crimes and illness.
- Alcohol poisoning alone kills more than 23,000 Russians each year.

In a major shift of stance, Putin along with the President Dmitry Medvedev, elevated alcohol to a national security threat in 2011. They have urged to increase the taxes imposed on alcohol and tobacco related products in a bid to curb the addiction. Putin has vowed the cut down alcohol consumption by halve within 2020. But this task is not so easy. It was only few months back that the Russian legislator redefined beer as an alcoholic drink. Prior to that, its food item status allowed it to be sold widely in stores and kiosks--a factor that increased beer consumption 51-fold between 1995 and 2007. It might look like a lofty goal but considering the falling health of the nation, which has been noted down in many reports and surveys by independent agencies, there is a drastic need to curb alcoholism for the survival of the nation.

Chapter Three

**SOCIAL AND POLITICAL
CONSEQUENCES OF ALCOHOL
ABUSE IN RUSSIA**

Introduction

Russians are known for their inclination towards drinking large amount of alcohol, especially vodka. Any visitor to the country is customarily fed alcohol by the hosts. It seems that Russians are culturally addicted to alcohol and this addiction is already having a profound effect on Russia's population. Alcohol has been used by the Russian authoritarian governments, be it tsarists or communist as a source of income. This particular policy process of these governments has created, unknowingly, a society of addicts, whose lives greatly depend on distilled spirits. This has resulted in conditioning, culturally, of Russians to consume alcohol, and now they are facing tragic demographic declines never seen before in the developed world. For Russians, drinking alcohol is not only an addiction but also a fun pastime. Sadly, Russians take their ability to consume large amount of alcohol as a source of national pride.

The history of Russia shows that autocracy played a huge role in the development of alcohol consumption. The agrarian economy of Russia was steered towards the direction of alcohol production for the generation of revenues as it was a great source of wealth for the king. One of the many accusations made against the poor Tsar Nicholas II¹ was that his government lived off immoral earnings. The accusation came from temperance advocates in Russia and abroad. Their evidence was the fact that the Imperial Treasury derived a healthy proportion of its annual revenues from the profits made by the state spirit monopoly.² The Russian Orthodox Church is also believed to be involved in the promotion of alcohol in the Russian society. It used alcohol, not only as payments to peasants but also as a means to control them. This deepened the dependency of peasants

on alcohol. The mixture of social compliance and religious mysticism, has promoted alcoholism in the society. The Communist revolution brought very little change, with respect to the importance of alcohol, both to government and to the consumers. Masses of the Russian society, with exception to the educated and the party elites, had no ability to socially progress beyond their work and family life. Alcohol filled the void that has been

¹ Tsar Nicholas II was the king of Russia during 1860's.

² Hutchinson J.F (April 1980)., *Science, Politics and the Alcohol Problem in Post -1905 Russia; The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol.58, No.2, p.232.

created by the communist ideology, industry and art. The entire Soviet social fabric strongly depended on alcohol.

This generational consumption has resulted in unprecedented demographic declines which affect Russian economy, health-care and the military. Centuries of alcohol consumption have brought Russia to the brink of societal collapse. In this chapter, we will see how alcohol consumption has got intertwined with the social fabric of Russia. The reasons behind alcohol becoming a social addiction and the impact of this addiction on the Russian society will be the focus of this chapter. Moreover, the politics related with the promotion of alcohol abuse in the Russian society is also dealt in this chapter.

Social Consequences of Alcohol Abuse

Social Custom and Alcohol

The reason behind alcohol consumption being a dominant factor in Russian life rose from the fact that its consumption was systematically embedded through various means. Alcohol was the popular drink at almost all major events from business transactions to even the “*pomoch*”³ (help). Drinking vodka was the customary (*bytovoi*) thing to do at any event in a Russians life. Vodka was also believed to be a medicine as well as an anesthetic.⁴ This shows how much alcohol was embedded into the society. It was believed that if a family member was ill or celebrating, drinking would help. Russian Orthodox Church also played a great role in embedding the society with the problem of alcoholism. Patricia Herlihy, writes that the peasants in Ufa Guberniia said to her: “Orthodox Feasts days claimed ‘more than one-third’ of the year”⁵ Sometimes the party would carry on for days after the feast which led to even more drinking. The extra days of

³ Pomoch was a concept, where families in need of extra help, for their agricultural work, seek help from the people of the village. Generally, these help were repaid with alcohol.

⁴ Smith R.E.F., (1984). *Bread and Salt: A Social and Economic History of Food and Drink in Russia*. 1st ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, P.316.

⁵ Herlihy Patricia.(April 1991) “Joy of the Rus: Rites and Rituals of Russian Drinking”, *Russian Review*. Vol.50. No.2 ,pp.131-147.

celebration were referred to as *podgvozdky*.⁶ Festivals also gave an impetus to the habit of drinking in the society.



Figure 3.1, Religious Gathering. Source: White, Stephen (1996), *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol State and Society*.

According to R.E.F. Smith, alcohol was drunk during festivals because it “has primarily a psychological significance, a sort of compensation for the absence of entertainments.”⁷ Festivals were not the only reason behind propagation of alcoholism in Russian society, but also the weddings. Peasants in the countryside not only consumed large amount of alcohol, but also spend large amount of money in their weddings. Patricia Herlihy writes in her *Joy of the Rus: Rites and Rituals of Russian Drinking* that “the bridegroom commonly provided six to eight *vedro*⁸s of vodka (approximately seventy-five to a hundred liters), all of which was drunk before the wedding. At the wedding itself the bride's family might spend as much as two hundred rubles on Vodka.” This shows the importance of alcohol in the Russian peasantry, were willing to spend large amount of money on alcohol, on one occasion.

Pomoch

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ Smith R.E.F.(1984). *Bread and Salt: A Social and Economic History of Food and Drink in Russia*. 1st ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 317.

⁸ Vedros : containers in which alcohol was kept.

The concept of *Pomoch* (help) was also considered as a major source of alcoholism in the peasantry. *Pomoch* meant call for help when a peasant may need extra workers for their work. This help was not paid back monetarily but by the sheer hospitality of the family that needed help. The workers were paid with the food and of course alcohol. Village youth loved this concept and they were always ready to help anybody. Instead of being a productive session, *pomoch* turned into social gathering, and by the end of the day, workers either pass out at the table or returned home dead drunk. Getting drunk and being fed by the host seemed to be the most important aspect of the *pomoch*, work was a distant second. This event was not only loved by the young workers of the society, it also introduced many youth to heavy drinking.

While all the rural areas were plagued with the problem of alcoholism, the urban population was also not left behind. Workers in the factories were also indulged in the same kind of alcoholism. In the factories, every new recruit were to toast his co-workers with alcohol to get into the league and to get the best know how of the work.



2.3 Boris Efimov, 'I had an accident at work . . .'
(cartoon, 1972).

Figure 3.2, Effect of Alcohol at Work Place. Source: White, Stephen (1996), *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol State and Society*.

Even the Russian military became another area of major concern where alcohol played an important role. Alcohol was used as a way for the soldiers to be happy and to celebrate. The incompetence of the Russian army in the Russo- Japanese War in 1904-05, is mainly attributed to alcohol only. This clearly shows that how the problem of alcoholism has prospered in the Russian society. The consequences of the alcoholism in Russian society are immense and have been continuing through generations. The society is defragmenting and the problem of suicides, divorce, corruption, is on the rise. The problem has turned the Russian society into a society of alcoholics and its consequences are taking its toll. The social consequences of the problem of alcoholism in Russia can be stated as follows:-

- Divorce
- Criminalization of the Society
- Interpersonal or Domestic Violence
- Mortality Crisis.

Divorce

The literature on Russia indicates a relatively high level of drinking (e.g., Segal, 1990; Trembl, 1982). Evidence also indicates that Russian consumption has been increasing (e.g. Partanen, 1987; Sheregi, 1986). Sheregi (1986) noted that per capita consumption rose from 0.88 liters in 1925 to 12.63 in 1980. In spite of the serious drinking problem in the Soviet Union, there has been relatively little social science research on it. The persistence of a drinking problem in Russia has often been an embarrassment to party officials who saw it as a remnant of the old capitalist order that would eventually vanish (Partanen, 1987:).

The relative lack of research on divorce and drinking may be attributed, in part, to a desire of former state officials to ignore the problem or to minimize its importance (Segal, 1990). Further, the Russian state has derived a considerable amount of tax revenue from the sale of alcohol. This fact has been linked to the state's reluctance to

address the problem fully (e.g., Christian, 1987). Related work on marital satisfaction in Russia found that low socio-economic status, number of children, age of children, and non-traditional family status tends to increase dissatisfaction among males (Arutyunyun, 1983).

One of the major consequences of alcoholism in the Russian society has been upon the stability of family life, and specially divorce. The drunkenness of husband was however the factor that was most often cited in such circumstances. In 47 percent of the cases that were brought by the wives, the drunkenness of husband was the main justification that was advanced; psychological factors were cited much less often, in 21 percent of cases, and other factors still less frequently (White 1996:). The drunkenness of the husband as a basis for divorce was more commonly encountered among industrial workers than among other social groups; for office staff it was the second most important cause to be identified, after psychological circumstances. The same was true in Muslim republics, like Uzbekistan: husbands were likely to cite their wives' 'lack of respect' for their parents, but nearly half (44.2 per cent) of all divorcing wives gave their husbands' drinking and abusive behavior as their grounds for petition (White 1996,).

Drunkenness and alcoholism were sometimes the only motive for divorce. More often they were accompanied by charges of cruelty, assault, lack of material support and "major scandals" of other kind (White 1996,). Many other studies also drew similar kind of conclusions. Whatever their detailed findings, there was a general agreement in these studies, that alcoholism was a major and usually the most important cause of divorce and family breakdown, with up to 80 per cent of all cases attributable to its influence (White 1996,).

Criminalization of Society

Alcoholism and crime go hand in hand in Russia. Most of the crimes like homicide and rape, etc., are found to be done in inebriated state. The influence of alcohol abuse on the Russian population was not only limited to physical health, but it also affected patterns of behavior, like crime. According to Stephen White, of all crime, alcohol was related with

serious and violent crime. He says, about 74 per cent of all murders in the Russian republic, for instance, were committed - according to court statistics- under the influence of alcohol, and about the same proportion of rapes; alcohol was associated with 90 per cent of all cases of hooliganism, 84 per cent of all robberies, and 60 per cent of all cases of theft (White 1996,).

He further says that, about 30 per cent of all crime involving juveniles was associated, similarly, with alcohol. Alcohol was associated with group crime and with crimes of a sexually perverted nature; but there was a close association with all forms of crime, about half of which (on the basis of court statistics) were committed in a state of intoxication (White 1996). There are other instances where we can find effect of alcohol abuse on the public health. Traffic violations, which were also associated with alcohol, had a major impact on the public health. In most of the cases, drivers who violated the traffic were found in inebriated state. Also, alcohol abuse was most important single cause of suicide; and the higher the level of consumption, the greater was their number (Christopher Hood: 1976). The relation between levels of alcohol consumption and suicide rates was high before the dissolution of Soviet Union, rose during the nineties, and is among the highest currently.

Annual alcohol consumption in Russia is estimated to be nearly 15 liters per person (Nemtsov 2000, Tremml 1997) compared to average rates of about ten and seven liters per person in the European Union and the United States, respectively (World Advertising Research Center, 2002). The age - standardized suicide rate in Russia in 2000 of about 38 per 100,000 persons was second only to Lithuania and was two to three times higher than the European Union average and in the United States (W. A. Pridemore 2006). Violent death, including suicide, was also one of the leading causes of the Russian mortality crisis during the 1990s, especially for males (Notzon 1998, Shkolnikov and Mesle 1996).

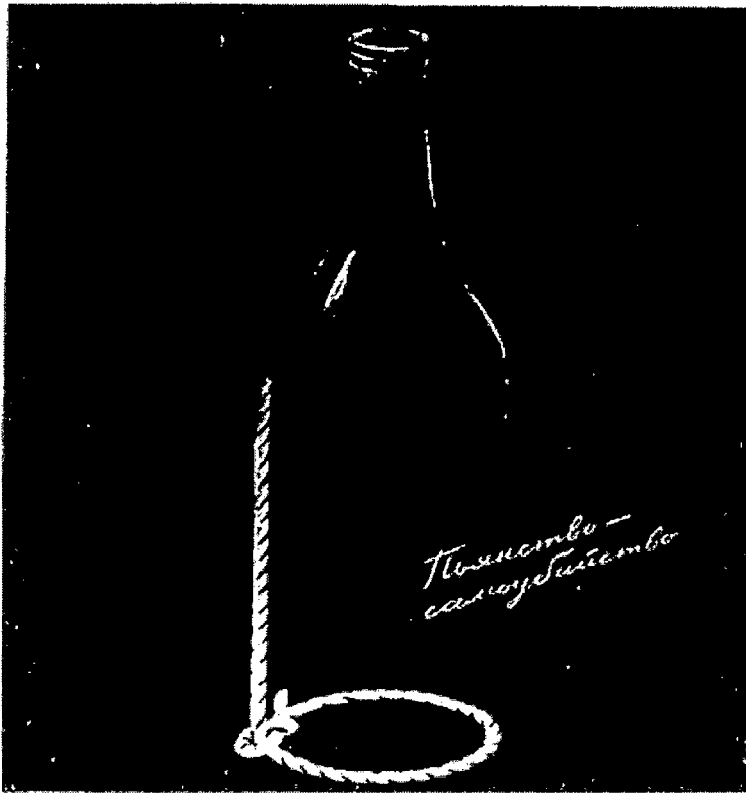


Figure 3.3, Drunkenness is Suicide. Source: White, Stephen (1996), *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol State and Society*.

.....
This shows how alcohol abuse has not only affected the physical health of the Russian people, but it has also its hand in the criminalization of the society.

Interpersonal or Domestic Violence

Violence can include physical and sexual assault, emotional and mental abuse, or neglect. It can be categorized into: interpersonal violence, including youth violence, gang violence (committed by young people), child maltreatment (violence or neglect towards a child by parents or caregivers), intimate partner violence (occurring within an intimate relationship), sexual violence (including sexual assault or unwanted sexual attention), elder abuse (mistreatment or neglect of older people by family or caregivers) and self-directed violence (self-abuse and suicide). Although violence often occurs in personal and social settings, it can also be a major issue within state institutions such as the

military, police, and orphanages and youth detention centers (Policy Briefing, WHO 2006,).

Violent crime and alcohol consumption have increased considerably in the Russian Federation since the late 1980s with harmful health and social consequences for individuals, their families and friends and communities. Heavy alcohol consumption is closely associated with violent behaviour within the Russian Federation and internationally. The relationship between alcohol consumption and violent behaviour is complex, involving physiological, psychological, situational, social and cultural factors. In the Russian Federation, the likelihood of abusing a female partner is higher for men who drink more frequently and for those who drink heavily (three or more drinks) on each drinking occasion (Cubbins LA, Vannoy D. 2005,).

Similarly, the relationship between alcohol and suicide is stronger among those who drink more frequently and to deeper levels of intoxication (W. A. Pridemore 2006,). Factors such as the day of the week, the drinking setting and social control over drinking behaviour can also influence rates of violent behaviour. For instance, the number of deaths from both alcohol and homicide are highest at the weekend .The presence of door staff, bar managers and police officers can help prevent arguments from escalating in public drinking venues. However in the Russian Federation, drinking in private homes or semi-private settings with friends and family is common, with these settings offering little professional control over alcohol consumption and violent behaviour. This may reduce the scope for preventing violence from occurring in such settings (W. A. Pridemore 2004,).

Social and cultural factors also influences the alcohol related violence. With the freedom of intake of alcohol at the work places, Russian federation is said to have high tolerance level for heavy drinking and the violence related with it. The effects of interpersonal violence are not limited to the immediate victims, but also the families, friends and the society in which they live. Russian people are famous for their passion towards drinking and this passion has created a lot of problems for them. Russian society is not only facing the problem of violence, but also the basic element of society- family- is breaking down, due to the abuse of alcohol in the Russian federation. Another major problem faced by

the Russian federation is its depleting population. Never in the peace time history of the world, has any nation faced this crisis, as Russia did in the decade of nineties. The demographic crisis in Russia is also attributed to the abuse of alcohol.

Mortality Crisis

The Russian mortality crisis is unprecedented in the modern history. The demographic crisis is threatening the aspirations of Russia, of becoming a superpower again. Russia is experiencing unusually high death rates from non-natural causes, many related to alcoholism. Life expectancy, especially among working-age males, has dropped precipitously. The Russian fertility rate has declined to among the world's lowest (1.54 births per woman), while its abortion rate is the highest (1.3 million per year). As a result, for the first time in Russian history, the annual number of deaths has exceeded the number of births. Compounding these challenges, the population is aging rapidly - a trend that will accelerate over the next two decades - and immigration continues to increase, posing thorny political and social problems for a nation historically accustomed to a net outflow of people.

In 1992, Russia's population entered a period of negative growth - that is, the number of deaths exceeded the number of births combined with the number of immigrants. This was a first in the peacetime history of Russia. The decline in fertility is contributing to a rapid aging of the Russian population. Between 1959 and 1990, the number of persons aged 60 and over doubled. The trends of population growth and aging in Russia have been profoundly affected by catastrophic events, such as the two world wars, the civil war of 1917-1922, and famines in the early 1920s and '30s. These catastrophes have distorted the population pyramid - the typical age distribution and balance between male and female in the population.

Growing alcohol consumption is one of the only explanations of increased mortality. Deaths from violence, injuries, and other non-natural causes have contributed heavily to the latest rise. Russia's rates of homicide and suicide are among the highest in the world. In addition, deaths from illness and chronic and degenerative diseases, such as cancer,

respiratory failure, and circulatory and cardiovascular diseases, have increased sharply. It is interesting to note that environmental problems, generally given a large share of blame for Russia's health woes, are in fact not among the main culprits. Environmental problems cannot explain the increases in accidents, homicides, and suicides or the much greater increases in mortality for working-age males compared with other population subgroups.

Mirroring the increase in mortality rates, life expectancy in Russia has dropped. However, like the fertility trend, the current pattern is not new. In the mid-1960s, after decades of increase, life expectancy began to decline. This trend was reversed briefly in the mid-1980s due, many believe, to the success of the anti-alcohol campaign between 1985 and 1987. However, by 1993, life expectancy fell again. Russia now has the lowest life expectancy for males in a developed country (58 years) and the largest disparity in the world between male and female life expectancy.

The alcohol abuse and its consequences are taking its toll on the society of the Russian federation, and its aspirations of becoming a superpower again. Society of the Russian federation is said to have high tolerance level for heavy drinking and violence, but this tolerance is creating a society of addicts, whose lives greatly depend on distilled spirits. The cases of divorce, suicide, homicide is rampant in the society and this is all because of alcohol and its abuse. The social consequences of alcohol are a matter of grave concern for the Russian authorities, but these consequences are the result of the promotion and policy process of the Russian governments, all through the history. Promotion of alcohol by the Tsarist government, for generation of revenues, and by the subsequent governments, has created a society of addicts, or more precisely, a society of alcoholics.

Political Consequences of Alcohol Abuse

Alcohol abuse is seen as a social malaise in every society, across the nation states. However, in Russia, historically speaking, alcohol abuse has transcended the social boundary and has affected the political fabric of the nation state as well. The status of alcohol as a substance abuse agent has been habituated in a way that is quite

unprecedented. In many countries alcohol is a source of revenue generation and entertainment. In Russia it serves this dual purpose but the proportional political damage is much widespread and telling. It has a catastrophic effect on the demographic health of the country which in turn has sabotaged the Russian dream of becoming a superpower again. In a country with falling mortality rate and other physical complications arising out alcohol abuse, it is a political agenda and challenge to implement stringent measures in containing the menace.

Barring few exceptions like, prohibition in the 1900's and Gorbachev's anti- alcohol campaign, Russian government has always promoted drinking, due to its capacity of earning large revenues for the treasury. It is also said that government tried to keep working class in inebriated state to avoid dissent among them for the poor living and working condition. While prohibition in the United States in the early 1900s was a long-term venture, the Russian government did not follow the step-wise process of controlling alcohol production and consumption, but rather reacted in a haphazard way, with a partial prohibition directed only at hard liquor introduced in 1913 and lasting four years. The need to mobilize the male population for World War I was one of the factors in the Russian prohibition (Vvedensky, 1915, Levintova 2007).

In addition, Tsar Nicolai II strongly supported prohibition, as he saw firsthand the impact of excessive drinking during one of his visits to various villages of Russia, urging drastic changes in the fight against drunkenness. These events resulted in orders to set fiscal priorities aside, with the state Duma passing a law on closure of liquor stores for 3 years, and in the first 6 months overall government revenue declined by 2.5 million rubles, compared to the same period in the previous year (Herlihy, 2002, Levintova, 2007). The impact on public health of this policy could not be ascertained, due to the lack of data, which was not maintained at that time. Overall, the unavailability of bread consequent to the shortages of grain and sugar added to the civil disobedience prior to the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 (Herlihy, 2002, Levintova 2007).

After 1917, when the Bolsheviks came to power, the trade of alcohol was deemed as the evil of the capitalist system and was meant to be done away with. In the process all the factories, distilleries etc. were closed down and anyone who was found with alcohol was

apprehended and brought before the military-revolutionary tribunals. Death penalty was introduced in the army for the abuse related to alcohol. Whole of the initial years after the revolution has seen a gradual decline in the cases of alcoholism and at some point of time it was being said that the Russian society has forgotten alcohol. Lenin explained in 1921 that a socialist government can never contemplate a trade which will lead Russia back to capitalism and not forward to communism (White 1996). This prohibition affected the public health and life expectancy increased. But this lasted only till Joseph Stalin came to power. He was of the view that instead of taking foreign monetary aid, revenues should be generated in the country itself and hence he allowed re-production of alcohol. The ill effects of alcohol consumption thus again started appearing in the society.

However, Stalin also tried to curb this menace of alcoholism by promoting Temperance Societies. These societies promoted moderation in drinking rather than abstinence, which had very little effect on the alcohol loving people of Russia. After Stalin, Khrushchev, also tried to control this menace but failed miserably. We have seen in the earlier chapter (Government policies and Its Impact), that from Stalin to Brezhnev, all governments have promoted alcoholism in the Soviet Union. This promotion has led to creation of a society of alcoholics, which in turn has hampered the public health, and has led Union into a demography crisis.

When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power (1985), one of the first reforms Gorbachev introduced was the anti-alcohol campaign which was implemented in 1985. It was designed to fight widespread alcoholism in the Soviet Union. He introduced much stricter laws and banned alcohol from public functions, as well as closed down a significant number of state liquor stores. He also introduced such novel concepts as prohibition of alcohol in restaurants before 2 PM, much higher prices for alcohol in the stores that were allowed to operate, and encouraged the emergence of a teetotaler movement, which at its height had over 12 million members (Daniel Tarschys 1993).



3.4 Waiting for opening hours in 1988

5

The campaign retreats

Figure 3.4, The Impact of Campaign. Source: White, Stephen (1996), *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol State and Society*.

This program was a success in its initial phase, life expectancy increased, alcohol related mortality reduced, but ultimately this program also failed to curb the problem of alcoholism in the society. People started brewing alcohol in their home, and the mafia started smuggling illicit alcohol from the neighboring countries. This home brewed and smuggled alcohol made the situation all the more worse and impacted public health harshly. This campaign was repealed in 1988 and paved the way for disintegration of the Soviet Union, as it had hit hardly at the revenues in an already stagnant economy.

After the dissolution of the Union, the situation worsened. Boris Yeltsin, who came to power, after the disintegration, de-monopolized the alcohol trade. With Boris Yeltsin's "Shock Therapy" reforms in 1992, government implemented a series of economic

programs to create a market economy. Instead of providing a solid foundation for capitalism, Yeltsin's policies had ushered in a decade of increasing unemployment, hyperinflation, decreasing industrial production and intense poverty (Roy Medvedev; George Shriver 2001). This transition of the Russian economy has left people in very miserable condition. People found solace in alcohol, which was available to them from the black marketers and smugglers. Most of the alcohol were illicit and of poor quality and had serious impact on the health of the Russian people. The demography crisis worsened and in 1992, Russia's population entered a period of negative growth - that is, the number of deaths exceeded the number of births combined with the number of immigrants. The whole decade of 90's has seen a considerable damage to the Russian population, due to the policies of the Yeltsin government.

In 2001, when Vladimir Putin became the president of the Russian Federation, he was not welcomed only with the problem of failing economy, but also with serious demographic conditions. His concerns towards the demographic conditions were given the highest priority in his first annual presidential address to the nation. He warned that the existence of the nation is at risk, if measures were not taken to control the menace of alcohol abuse. In 2005, he acknowledged the urgency of the problem and clearly stated that around 40,000 people die every year due to alcohol poisoning and mostly young people, who gets affected with this menace.

This showed the urgency in the Russian government for checking and controlling the impact of alcohol abuse on the society. For the purpose of controlling illegal practices in the alcohol industry, Putin signed a Russian Federation Law on Regulation of Ethyl Alcohol in 2005. The major focus of this legislation is on the control of the volume and quality of alcohol production and sales, with a special focus on registration of production and wholesale facilities, utilization of raw materials, and distribution and sale locations (Levintova, 2007). Through this legislation, Putin tried to curb the menace of alcohol abuse in the Russian state. Dmitry Medvedev, who came to power after Putin, also tried to control this problem by increasing the prices of vodka and promoted beer of low alcohol percentage.

The fondness of Russian people with drinking have always outsmarted the government policies regarding the control of the alcohol abuse in the society. This fondness has not only created a society of addicts, but also criminalized the society. The cases of homicide, suicide, divorce, are on the rise and breaking down the very basic element of society that is family. The most important consequence of alcohol abuse in the society is the rising mortality crisis. Deaths from violence, injuries, and other non-natural causes have contributed heavily to the latest rise. Russia's rates of homicide and suicide are among the highest in the world.

Along with the deaths related to alcohol, many other disease, such as cancer, respiratory failure and cardiovascular diseases have enhanced the demography crisis. Western writers have generally blamed Russia's environment problems, for its increasing health problems. But the rise in accidents, homicide and suicides cannot be attributed to environment problems. Both the society and politics in Russia, has promoted the problem of alcohol abuse and it resulted in a demography crisis, which is unprecedented in anywhere in the world.

Chapter Four

**ALCOHOL ABUSE AND ITS IMPACT
ON DEMOGRAPHY**

Introduction

In 2001, in his first annual presidential address to the Russian people, President Vladimir Putin listed the 16 "most acute problems facing our country." Number one on the list, topping even the country's dire economic condition and the diminishing effectiveness of its political institutions, was the declining size of Russia's population. Putin put the matter plainly. The Russian population is shrinking by 750,000 every year, and (thanks to a large excess of deaths over births) looks likely to continue dropping for years to come. If the trend is not altered, he warned, "the very survival of the nation will be endangered." (Murray Feshbach 2001). The dimension of the calamity faced by the country is grimmer than what Putin is reckoning. The death rate is climbing higher and higher and birth rate is going lower. This large fluctuation in birth and death rates is a cause for an alarm in the Russian authorities, as it is hampering their global aspirations of becoming a superpower again.

In 1992, Russia's population entered a period of negative growth - that is, the number of deaths exceeded the number of births combined with the number of immigrants. The Russian population is ageing rapidly, due to the decline in fertility. The population of people of age 60 and over has doubled during 1959-90. Catastrophic events such as two world wars, famines of 1920's and 30's and the civil war of 1917-22 has profoundly affected the trend in population growth and aging in Russia. These catastrophes have distorted the population pyramid-the typical age distribution and balance between male and female in the population. Deaths from violence, injuries, and other non-natural causes have contributed heavily to the latest rise. It is interesting to note that environmental problems, generally given a large share of blame for Russia's health woes, are in fact not among the main culprits. Environmental problems cannot explain the increases in accidents, homicides, and suicides or the much greater increases in mortality for working-age males compared with other population subgroups. Growing alcohol consumption is the one of the only explanations of the growing mortality in the country.

The problem of declining population in Russia is not new. After decades of increase, life expectancy started to fall in the mid 1960's. This trend was reversed briefly in the mid 1980's due, many believe, to the success of anti- alcohol campaign of Mikhail

Gorbachev. But by the time the decade of 90's arrived, the population meltdown again re-started and the life expectancy decreased. The pattern in which demography of Russia has depleted is the result of generational consumption of alcohol by the Russians. The current demography crisis is the result of the various policies pursued by different regimes of Russia. To understand the pattern in the decline of the population, we will divide this chapter in three parts, namely:

- Alcohol Abuse and Mortality in Pre-Revolution Era.
- Alcohol Abuse and Mortality in Communist Era.
- Alcohol Abuse and Mortality Post Disintegration.

The impact of alcohol abuse on the populace is the primary reason behind the increasing population meltdown in Russia or not, is the question we will be discussing in this chapter.

Alcohol Abuse and Mortality in Pre-Revolution Era

Alcohol abuse is seen as a social malaise in every society, across the nation states. However, in Russia, historically speaking, alcohol abuse has transcended the social boundary and has affected the political fabric of the nation state as well. The status of alcohol as a substance abuse agent has been habituated in a way that is quite unprecedented. In many countries alcohol is a source of revenue generation and entertainment. In Russia it serves this dual purpose but the proportional political damage is much widespread and telling. It has a catastrophic effect on the demographic health of the country which in turn has sabotaged the Russian dream of becoming a superpower again. In a country with falling mortality rate and other physical complications arising out alcohol abuse, it is a political agenda and challenge to implement stringent measures in containing the menace.

From the 1540's Ivan IV began to establish kabaks (where spirits were produced and sold) in all major towns, with revenues going directly to the royal treasury. The revenue of the alcohol was so large that government was forced to take full control of the production and sale of alcohol. The private marketing of alcohol was barred by the government and it was mandated that all the marketing of alcohol will be done by the

government owned taverns only. Stephen White in his book *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol, State and Society* demonstrate that Russia has a well-established drinking culture dating back to at least the late 15th century. It was not high consumption or high expenditure on alcohol which made Russians distinctive from their Western counterparts, but their liking for spirits. The dilemma for the tsarist state, despite its concern about the negative impact of alcohol consumption on health and production, was the revenues raised from taxes on alcoholic beverages. As a consequence 'the tsarist authorities had a direct interest in the drink trade ... they could never take effective steps to end its worst abuses. This policy of opening taverns in every major city and in villages too had embedded the love of alcohol in the Russian society. Not only males, but also females and children were engulfed with the love for alcohol. By the seventeenth century, whole of Russia was under the impact of alcohol abuse.

By the end of seventeenth century, alcohol had become an integral part of the Russian society. Be it festivals or any kind of ceremonials, alcohol was the most favored drink. Not only rural peasantry, but also urban working class did not remain aloof from the impact of alcohol abuse. Alcohol became a norm during the festivities or sad or tragic events. But by the early twentieth century, the consumption level was still modest as compared to other western countries. (Stephen White,1996).

It would be equally wrong, however, to suggest that Russia was a home of cultured and moderate drinking during the prerevolutionary years. For a start, levels of consumption of distilled spirits, such as vodka, were much higher than the European average. Russia ranked Twelfth for all forms of alcohol consumption in the early twentieth century, but fifth when the comparison was limited to hard liquor and nearly 90 per cent of all drink was consumed in the form of vodka. (R. Vlassak 1928). Russians never believed in the steady or moderate consumption, rather they indulged in periodic heavy drinking, otherwise known as binge drinking. More than three to four pegs of alcohol in one sitting are was something most Russians were proud of. This heavy drinking has led to the surfacing of the impact of alcohol abuse on the then Russian society.

Levels of alcohol related morbidity and mortality were in fact rather higher than in comparable to Western countries at this time (Stephen White 1996). In 1911 there were

55 alcohol related deaths for every million population; in France where alcohol consumption was much greater, the figure was 11.5, and in Prussia it was 12. In St. Petersburg, similarly, there were up to 20 alcohol related deaths for every 100,000 members of the population, compared with 3 in Berlin and 6 in Paris (patterns of mortality were in other respects very similar).(V. M. Bekhterev 1927).

Reliable comparable historical statistics for the USSR are difficult to find. According to Kanel', a leading authority on alcoholism in pre- revolutionary Russia, deaths from alcohol poisoning in 1895 were about 5.5 per 100,000 compared with 1.15 in France and 1.2 in Prussia. (Kanel' 1916,); Deichman (1929,) both offers rather rough estimates giving the rate of alcohol poisoning at about 4-4 per 100,000 for 1928. (Vladimir G. Treml 1982).

Premature deaths were related particularly closely to alcohol: 1 in 4 was associated with excessive consumption (Stephen White 1996). Virtually all forms of alcohol abuse, indeed, were worse in Russia. In pre war Vienna, for instance, 1 drunk was detained for every 1,220 population, but in St. Petersburg there was 1 for every 25 (Stephen White 1996). Stephen White also highlights the cases of public drunkenness. He says that number of people arrested for public drunkenness in St. Petersburg was 15 times higher than Berlin and also 700 times than Paris. About half the inmates of Russian prisons, in the early twentieth century, had been incarcerated for crimes committed in a state of drunkenness. (N. I. Grigor'ev as in Stephen White 1996). There were relatively few suicides, compared with other European countries, but more of them were connected with alcohol, and a higher proportion of divorces took place on these grounds. (S. S. Stupin as quoted in Stephen White 1996). There was a particularly close association between alcohol and the pogroms that swept through many Russian and Ukrainian cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, in some cases with connivance of the imperial authorities. (Dmitry Shlapentokh 1991).

According to Alexander Nemtsov, alcohol consumption in tsarist Russia was at its peak during 1800's, at 6.2 liters a person in 1863 (Nemtsov 2011). It is interesting to note that, in 1861 serfdom was abolished in Russia and also alcohol prices were lowered in 1863. Both these events gave impetus to the alcohol consumption in Russia. By this time,

drinking heavily at each drinking session has become a norm, not only in villages, but also in urban centers. Though very little is known about the variations in the amount and the drinking style of the population of Russia. Such differences could have been very large between geographical areas, ethnic groups and social classes. Gender differences were certainly significant. The social, religious and ethnic division of Russia must to some extent have been mirrored in different, relatively distinct, drinking traditions (Segal, 1987). The drinking style of the Russians in the tsarist era has affected the populace and its health.



Figure 4.1, Effects of Alcohol Policy of Russian Czar on Society. Source: White, Stephen (1996), *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol State and Society*.

As Russia mobilized for World War I, a ban on alcohol sales in cities was introduced. In August 1914 it was extended “to the end of the war” by an “imperial decree” from Nicholas II. One of the first acts of the new Provisional Government under Kerenski, in March 1917, was to introduce the permanent prohibition of alcohol. In November 1917,

the new Soviet power took the decision to destroy all existing stocks of alcohol. The Soviet Union was born in the midst of war and civil war. The three governments that succeeded each other, from that of the tsar to that of Kerenski to that of Lenin, were all trying to keep the country “dry”. Not until 1921–22 were wine and beer sold freely again. Vodka (40 percent ABV) was not sold freely again until 1925.(Denny Vagero in Nemtsov 2011).

Alcohol Abuse and Mortality in the Communist Era

When the Bolsheviks¹ came into power, they have already understood the dangers of the trend of alcoholism prevailing in the society. Lenin, who came to the power, was himself an abstentionist and openly declared that alcoholism was a disease of capitalism and is meant to be done away with. In the process all the factories, and distilleries etc. were closed down and anyone who was found with alcohol was apprehended and brought before the military-revolutionary tribunals. Death penalty was introduced in the army for the abuse related to alcohol. Whole of the initial years after the revolution saw a gradual decline in the cases of alcoholism and at some point of time it was being said that the Russian society had forgotten alcohol. Lenin explained in 1921 that a socialist government can never contemplate a trade which will lead Russia back to capitalism and not forward to communism (V.I. Lenin 1958).

¹ Bolsheviks: Party of the Proletariat i.e. working class.



Figure 4.2, Effects of Alcohol. Source: White, Stephen (1996), *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol State and Society*.

Various laws and decrees were passed by the Russian parliament, in order to control the menace of alcoholism in the society. But the love of the Russians for their alcohol was never ending and the illicit liquor started making its roads in the public sphere. This new situation prompted Joseph Stalin to re-approach the issue of alcoholism in the society. In the 15th Party Congress in December 1927, he told the deputies that instead of accepting the terms of foreign capital as a condition of their assistance, he was resuming the sale of vodka. He re-introduced monopoly of state on the alcohol trade, and proposed that as soon as other source of revenue generation emerges, the sale and production of vodka would be terminated. (Stephen White 1996).

It is difficult to get access to any data related to alcohol related deaths due to the official secrecy practiced by the different regimes of the Soviet era. But the programs of government to tackle the menace of alcoholism, gives us a complete picture of the grim

situation in Russia. In order to control the problem of alcohol abuse, steps were taken up by promoting certain groups known as temperance societies. These societies helped government in tackling the problems that arose due to alcohol and to make people aware of the effects caused due to over consumption of alcohol. These societies ultimately gave birth to a “Society for the Struggle Against Alcoholism” with heavy-weights of the army and government as its patrons. The society, by 1929 has reached almost all the corners of Russia, and started propagating the ill impact of alcohol on social and public life. This “Society for the Struggle Against Alcoholism” was a major tool of the government to curb the problem of the alcoholism in the society. But, again like the other anti- alcohol programs of the earlier tsarist governments, this program also fizzled out and by the end of 1930, all of its functions were transferred to Moscow organizations and the society was abolished. Stalin once again monopolized the trade of alcohol for the generation of revenues and all the programs related to alcohol abuse were stopped. This tradition went on even during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev era.



Figure 4.3, Effects of Alcohol. Source: White, Stephen (1996), *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol State and Society*.

Despite the absence of the definitive information on patterns of alcohol use in Russia before 1985, there is considerable evidence from many sources that alcohol was producing wide ranging and substantial social problems (Martin Mckee 1999). The Soviet authorities and Soviet media reports acknowledge that the per capita consumption

of alcohol was growing, that drinking by women and minors is increasing, that there was a high correlation between alcoholism and crime, and that drinking had a significant impact on labour productivity and on morbidity and mortality. Unfortunately, most summary statistics covering consumption and production of alcoholic beverages, and especially demographic and health statistics, have been effectively suppressed by the Soviet authorities, making an overall evaluation of the magnitude of the alcohol problem all but impossible. (Vladimir G. Treml 1982). As in the case of most other alcohol-related data, no official statistics on fatal, alcohol poisoning have been published in the USSR in the post-war period. In official mortality-by-cause statistics, separate data are published only for deaths from cardio-vascular ailments and malignancies while alcohol poisonings are concealed in the unexplained residual.(Vladimir G. Treml 1982).

Ethanol and various alcohols and alcohol-containing fluids are the main causes of accidental poisoning, and the explanation of the high and increasing mortality associated with alcohol must lie in a combination of several factors such as the general increase in per capita consumption of alcohol, increase in consumption of toxic home-distilled samogon², and in the deterioration of the quality of state produced alcoholic beverages (Vladimir G. Treml 1982). Soviet forensic medical statistics show that in the mid 1960s about 12,000 people died per year from alcohol poisoning. By 1978 that figure had increased to 51,000, or 19.5 deaths per 100,000 compared with a rate of about 0.3 deaths in other 19 nations surveyed in the 1970s. “The total number of deaths resulting from alcohol in the late 1970s has been estimated at between 370,000 and 400,000 persons per year, or between 140 and 150 per 100 000.” That included alcohol poisoning deaths, as well as other factors such as traffic accidents, domestic violence, and general crime (Daniel Tarschys 1993).

During the 1960s and early 1970s, global figures on mortality from cardiovascular diseases and from cancer were published in statistical and public health periodicals or in the official publications about population and the economy of the USSR. Even this restricted information was discontinued from 1974 when mortality and, in particular, cause of death statistics started to indicate deterioration in the country's health situation.

² Somogon is a home brewed alcohol.

Only in 1988, with the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev's policy change towards more open government (perestroika and glasnost)³, did regular and systematic publication of deaths by cause commence and, for the first time, access to such information was unrestricted. (Lado T. Ruzicka 1996.).

The alcohol related morbidity and mortality was so high and disturbing, in the decades of 1960's and 70's, that data related to it were never published and were kept secret. The alarming situation of alcoholism in the Soviet Union has prompted the newly appointed General Secretary of the Union (Mikhail Gorbachev) to call for drastic measures to curb the menace of alcoholism from the society. Thus, in May 1985, Gorbachev called for an anti- alcohol campaign, to control the increasing case of alcohol related deaths. . It was designed to fight widespread alcoholism in the Soviet Union. The campaign was a successful program at the onset, but in the later years, it also failed to control the menace of alcoholism in the society. This campaign was an ambitious project, which had the potential of safeguarding the Soviet Union from the epidemic of alcoholism, which had engulfed the society.

Mikhail Gorbachev's Anti-Alcohol Campaign

By the time Gorbachev came to the helm of power in Soviet Union, the effects of alcohol or alcoholism on the Union, were profound and obvious. The Soviet government's dependence on alcohol receipts was noted with regret in Gorbachev's speech at the June 1987 Plenum of the Central Committee, which marked the beginning of glasnost' on Soviet public finance. While the budget looked nice from the outside, with income neatly covering expenditure, this had been achieved not through growth in economic efficiency but in other ways that were justifiable neither from an economic nor from a social point of view, said Gorbachev. One of these sick elements was the surging revenue from alcohol. In the years of the 11th five-year plan (1981-85), the receipts from the turnover tax on alcoholic beverages had attained 169 billion rubles, compared with only 67 billion rubles in the eighth five-year plan (Daniel Tarschys 1993).

³ Perestroika i.e Reshuffling and Glasnost i.e Openness are the two programs proposed by Mikhail Gorbachev for the propagation of democracy in Russia.

ПЬЯНСТВУ-БОЙ!



A. Rudkovich, 'Fight drunkenness!'

Figure 4.4, Fight Drunkenness. Source: White, Stephen (1996), *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol State and Society*.

Since failure to achieve planned production objectives appeared to be one of the main reasons for the commercial resistance to the new alcohol policy, spokesmen of the temperance movement repeatedly called for the elimination of alcohol sales from aggregate success indicators. In September 1985 the Central Committee declared that, starting from 1986, it was considered expedient to omit alcohol from the plans for the social and economic development of the USSR. (Daniel Tarschys 1993). Thus started the anti- alcohol campaign of Mikhail Gorbachev. This campaign was the first major change in the government's position toward alcohol consumption in over half a century, a shift

from reliance on alcohol revenue to a strict system of rations and controls.(Patricia Herlihy 2002).

The broader attempts of these campaigns were on changing public attitudes toward drinking, and to acknowledge the harmful impact of alcohol on the lives of Soviet citizens. But despite these efforts, prevention continued to be practically non-existent; treatment under-funded and inadequate to the task. (Stephen White 1996). But these efforts were pursued vigorously and helped in cutting the sale of alcohol. But it also impacted the already stagnant economy. But the campaign was very successful initially. The mortality rate decreased, life expectancy increased and absenteeism from the workplace decreased. This anti-alcohol campaign also led to the smuggling of illicit liquor, which eventually led to the serious implications on the health of the society.

The anti- alcohol campaign was a political and fiscal disaster but, it had great impact on the health of the Russian population. While causal relationships are notoriously difficult to establish with any certainty, it is nonetheless remarkable that the long fall in Soviet male life expectancy-from 66.1 years in 1964-65 to a low of 62.3 in 1980-81-was broken in the mid 1980s and rose from 62.9 years in 1984-85 to 65.1 years in 1987. This increase by more than two years, which far surpassed the simultaneous increase in female life expectancy, cannot be convincingly explained by changes in nutrition, health, or environmental standards, but could with a greater degree of probability be linked to the decline in alcohol consumption. As far as morbidity is concerned, Soviet statistics show no reduction in the total number of in-patients with a diagnosis of alcoholism or alcoholic psychosis in the period 1984-88, but the number of new such diagnoses went down from 206 to 154 per 100,000 inhabitants. Substantial reductions were also recorded in the rates of work related and traffic-related accidents and deaths (Daniel Tarschys 1993).



Figure 4.5, Effects of Anti-alcohol Campaign. Source: White, Stephen (1996), *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol State and Society*.

By 1988, this campaign also failed to curb the menace of alcoholism and created many other problems like smuggling and black marketing of alcohol. Smuggling and black marketing, not only hampered the Union economy, but also hampered the society as well. The smuggling of spurious liquor from the neighboring countries, not only hampered the health of the population, but also became one of the reasons behind the increased mortality in the decade of 90's.

Alcohol Abuse and Mortality Post Disintegration

Russian mortality dynamics for the last 20 years demonstrate very strong dependence on political and economic decisions made by the government. In 1985 Gorbachev introduced the so-called 'anti-alcohol campaign'. This campaign involved placing governmental restrictions on supply and sale of alcohol. Immediately after these measures, the life expectancy of males started to increase and reached its highest level in 1987, increasing

by two years since the beginning of the anti-alcohol campaign (Leon 1997). For industrialized parts of Russia, this effect was even more significant. These anti-alcohol actions, however, were not very popular and caused very strong social tensions that resulted in the quick termination of the anti-alcohol campaign by 1988. By that time, alcohol consumption and mortality rates have nearly returned to the previous, pre-reform, levels. (Natalia S. Gavrilova, Victoria G. Semyonova, Galina N. Endokushkina, Leonid A. Gavrilov, 2000).

At the beginning of 1992, the Russian government started an economic experiment known as 'shock therapy'. Abolition of price control in a highly monopolized economy resulted in soaring consumer prices, a rapid decrease in real wages and pensions, a nearly complete loss of personal savings, and a tremendous increase in the poverty rate. These adverse changes were followed by an unprecedented upsurge in mortality which has no parallel in modern history: female life expectancy dropped by 3 years and male life expectancy by more than 5 years within a three-year period (Vishnevsky 1998; Notzon 1998). Table...

On January 1, 1992 Russia had an estimated population of 148.7 million; by 2003, the number had dropped to 144.5 million (Nicholas Eberstadt 2004). "During its first eleven and a half years of post-Communist independence, Russia's population had apparently declined by over four million people, or about 3 percent." (Nicholas Eberstadt 2004). Many factors conspired to create this stunning statistic. High infertility rates, widespread abortions used as a form of birth control, explosion in STDs, marriage rates down due to initial economic decline after transition to free-market economy, subsequent increase in crime, and so on. (Dimitry Kesi 2009). But "at the end of the day [it] is impossible to overlook the deadly contribution of the Russian love affair with vodka to this record (Nicholas Eberstadt 2004.)



Figure 4.5, The Crisis. Source: White, Stephen (1996), *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol State and Society*.

Alcohol does not only impact the physical health, it also affects the psyche of a person. Russia is facing the crisis, not only through the fertility trends, but a major factor of suicide also enhanced the crisis. Age standardized suicide rate in Russia in 2000 of about 38 per 100,000 persons was second only to Lithuania and was two to three times higher than the European Union average and in the United states (W.A. Pridemore 2006). Studies have shown that suicides increase as binge drinking increases. A study done in the late 1990s showed that more than one third of Russian males had admitted to binge drinking (more than five drinks in one sitting) more than once per month. Studies have also shown that heavy episodic drinking can lead to acts of violence and suicide and can disinhibit people, pushing suicide-prone or simply disaffected individuals over the edge (W. A. Pridemore 2006).

Nicholas Eberstadt in his "*Russia's Demographic Straightjacket*" gives us the picture of the difference in the mortality rates of Russia and other European countries. He says that in Italy has "approximately 103 deaths for every live 100 births", while Russia on other hand reports over 170 deaths for every 100 births. By 2002 "Russia's death total was over 50 percent higher than in 1987 (2.3 million vs. 1.5 million), while its birth level was over one million lower (1.4 million vs. 2.5 million)." (Nicholas Eberstadt 2004).

While this data shows us how the crisis deepened, this also gave us an overview of a trend, which was more serious. As the mortality increased, ageing of people also came into foresight. “The 2002 census revealed that the average age in Russia was 37.7 years old, an increase of three years since the last census was taken in 1989. Children under the age of sixteen comprised only 18 percent of the population.” (Dale Roy Herspring 2004). Women, who are often considered as non- affected from the vices of alcohol in Western countries, do not possess such freedom in Russia. They always bore the brunt of alcoholic male members of the family, who generally become violent after getting drunk, also lose jobs and cause mental distress for the female members. Among contemporary societies at peace, Russia’s level of violent deaths places the country practically in a category of its own. For men under 65 years of age, Russia’s death rate from injury and poisoning is currently over four times as high as Finland’s, the nation with the worst rate in the European Union. Russia’s violent death rate for men under 65 is nearly six times as high as Belgium’s, over nine times as high as Israel’s, and over a dozen times that of the United Kingdom. As is well known, men are more likely than women to die violent deaths—but in a gruesome crossover, these death rates for Russian *women* are now higher than for virtually any Western European *men*. (Nicholas Eberstadt 2004).

Russia’s demographic trends have negative implications for economic development and security, and her lingering health and mortality crisis promises to be an anchor against rapid economic development, frustrating the effort to move Russia onto a path of swift and sustained material advance.(Vladimir Treml 1982). Shrinking numbers of males will impact the military in the long term. Economically, there will be fewer young people to replace the retirees, which will lead to decreasing skill levels and qualifications of the economically active population. Finally, since younger people tend to be associated with discovery, innovation, and entrepreneurship, a pronounced lack of young blood could have real long-term consequences (Vladimir Treml 1982).

Chapter Five

CONCLUSION

Vodka has been as important to Russia as hockey is to Canada ever since the sixteenth century A.D. It is the general consensus that Vodka became popular in Russia around the time when Ivan IV, or as he is more affectionately known, Ivan the Terrible was in power. It was first introduced to Russia sometime around the fourteenth century, but it was not popular until later in the sixteenth century. The Russians referred to this particular type of alcohol as vodka, which means “little water”. Alcohol permeated every level of society from children to peasants to the military to the politicians to the Tsar himself. There was no doubt that alcohol played an important role in the lives of Russians.

Stephen white in his book *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol, State and Society* say that “nearly 90 per cent of all drink was consumed in the form of vodka.” This statement gives the impression that even though Russians had the option to drink beer or wine, they preferred the taste of vodka. It is very clear that alcohol was one thing in Russia that was constant through the decades. Even the most powerful and brutal regime of communists could not fully remove alcohol from the lives of the Russians.

Russians love for alcohol, in particularly vodka, was reflected in one incident. In the late 1970s, the USSR wanted to export alcohol to the West but ran into an unexpected problem—the Western competitors and Poland alleged that the USSR did not have exclusivity to the word *vodka* and therefore could not market their product as such. Initially the USSR did not take these claims seriously, but when the free market rebelled and took the Soviets to court, the regime realized they needed to prove that not only they had the right to call their alcohol *vodka*, but by virtue of inheriting the Russian culture from the previous regime, they had inherited vodka’s provenance, the name itself, and therefore had the natural right to produce and sell vodka as its sole inventors.

St.petersberg times reported that the Soviet government commissioned an unprecedented internal study and was able to prove that vodka was invented in Russia. In 1982, an international tribunal ruled in favor of the USSR, citing that the term *vodka* and the product it represents is genuinely Russian and the USSR can market it as it pleases. The Soviet case was based entirely on their study, and they were able to prove that vodka originated in Moscow decades before the dates Poland claimed to have invented it.

There are several consumable human inventions that have affected human history in very substantial way—iron, petroleum, uranium, and gunpowder come to mind. Grain spirits must also be mentioned among highly influential inventions as they have had a profound impact on human relationships, permeating all levels of social order. The three main problems that distilled alcohol has created are fiscal, both for the state and individual, productive, again both for the state and individual and social.

It is these social problems that have affected the Russian public health, as never seen before, anywhere else in the world, with the demography consequences starting to appear in the 21st century.

W Pokhlebin says that the key to alcohol becoming important is the “emergence of alcohol as a social concept” followed by the formation of the state, and the state becoming “the main agent of society.” That is when the state noted the importance of this commodity and “began to devote serious attention to alcohol”. It is from here that the government realized the importance of alcohol, in its capability to generate revenues. Thus, it started producing alcohol to acquire as much revenue as possible, and unknowingly saw the seed for future problems of alcoholism .According to W. Pokhlebin “Alcoholism has long been a Russian problem; travelers from Europe as far back as the sixteenth century commented on Russian drunkenness”. Sadly, the condition is same, even after five hundred years.

Alcohol was the one thing whose value never decline. It became a great source of revenue for the Tsar, who quickly made it a state controlled enterprise. The production and sale of alcoholic beverages came under direct control of the crown. And it started minting money for the crown. In the 1850s alcohol accounted for at least 200 million rubles in economic impact, or more than 20 percent of the value of all internal trade. In 1859 alone, the government's share of this huge turnover exceeded 120 million rub, or over 40 percent of all national revenues. David Christian says that “this huge sum was enough to cover most of the peacetime expenses of the army on which Russia's status as a great power depended.

Russia was the state of the serfs at that time and all of the economy depended on the relationship between government and its nobles. Russia being largely an agrarian society, economy was handled by the nobles with the help of the government.

Now the nobility carried out all the distilling in Russia and had to sell their entire product to the government. The government, in turn, resold all alcoholic products at a very handsome profit to the tax farmers, who bid on regional vodka trade monopolies at government held auctions every four years. The government encouraged potential bidders by providing official statistics that included numbers of people living in villages, taverns, official vodka allotment, value of government taxes, and prior years alcohol sales figures, all in an effort to entice bidding and get as much money as possible.

The data presented by David Christian in his book "*Vodka and Corruption in Russia on the Eve of Emancipation*" clearly shows that whole country was engrossed in the production of alcohol under the official patronage. For example, in the 26 Great Russian Provinces 723 distilleries existed in 1860, earning close to 17 million rubles per year in government contracts. Besides the Great Provinces, there were sixteen lesser, or privileged provinces, which stretched from the Baltic through Russia, Ukraine and further south to the newly acquired lands. These privileged provinces had an additional 3,890 smaller distilleries, all pumping alcohol into Russian veins. All these distilleries were owned by the nobility, who had held a state-given monopoly on distilling in the Great Provinces since early 19th century; and in the privileged provinces since time immemorial.

Russian alcohol consumption evolved from traditional drinking to modern, instinctive inebriation. Traditional drinking was mostly ritualized and controlled largely by the church, while modern drinking did not have such built-in inhibitions. Although the peasant drinking indeed was ritualistic, the occasions for drink were numerous, thus leading to a frequent state of inebriation. Generally, peasants drank on four occasions: religious holidays, important family events, in extending hospitality, and in connection with a business transaction.

While traditional drinking was limited to only special occasions, these special occasions could have easily comprised at least half of the calendar. Surveys taken at the beginning of the 20th century revealed that there were almost no abstainers in the Russian

countryside. The peasant drank on holidays, baptisms, funerals, weddings, at bazaars, village assemblies, when conscripts departed and returned, and when paid in vodka for any task performed.

Under the state patronage, Church also extended alcohol in the veins of rural peasants. In peasant culture one praised God when one drank to Him, and praise of God was the way to heaven. Unfortunately the opportunities to praise God were quite frequent. One of the survey revealed that over 100 calendar days could be devoted to religious holidays .

Alcohol was consumed not only on holidays, but also on public events. Hosting of any sort of visitor was always mandated with the serving of alcohol. The clergy seemed to have no occasion spared from vodka consumption—blessing construction sites, consecration of churches, hosting visitors, and parish assemblies were just some of the occasions to be celebrated with alcohol .

In Russia, drinking has not only permeated in the rural areas, but also in urban centers. The city workers were not cash strapped as their rural counterparts. This enabled them to indulge in drinking for all year. It is observed that even the Russian intelligentsia was involved in the culture of drinking. Holidays for the founding days of the Universities and Maslenitsa¹, was often marred with the drinking bouts by the intelligentsia. Furthermore, the newly urbanized workers developed new traditions for drinking: getting hired required the new person to treat all; *pomosch*-like city hires were pervasive, where workers or craftsmen would work for weeks just for vodka alone; and finally, reversed order drinking when employers would treat new hires for coming on and existing workers for sticking around were quite common and often expected .

The love for alcohol in Russia was contributed heavily by the Russian military. The introduction of compulsory military service in 1874 made the army a school of drunkenness, where boys acquired heavy drinking habits. Soldiers were traditionally given free distributions of alcohol on nine holidays during the year, and also on special occasions declared by regimental commander. During wartime, rations of alcohol and meat were distributed three times a week. (Sailors, while at sea, received a ration of alcohol every day.) Alcohol was also given as a reward for good performance. The soldiers could take money in lieu of alcohol but were under considerable peer pressure

¹ Maslenitsa is a Russian week long pancake carnival.

could not to do so . David Anderson comments that “the process of turning new recruits into alcoholics and drunks was inescapable due to the social aspect of drinking”.

In summary, it can be said that Tsarist regime has contributed in the promotion and popularization of alcohol in the Russian society. From monopolizing the trade of alcohol and propagating it in the people for more revenues, the crown has heavily contributed in aggravating the impact of alcohol abuse in Russian society.

When the Communists came to the power, in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1917, they were in the knowledge of the revenues generated by the trade of alcohol. Initially, terming the trade as an evil of the capitalist system, communists banned the sale and production of alcohol. These few years of prohibition on the trade of alcohol has had profound effect on the health of the Russian population. The increasing mortality, due to alcohol poisoning, decreased during this period. Financial motives once again came to the fore and the prohibition was repealed. “‘One cannot build socialism in white gloves’, Joseph Stalin told the XIV Congress in 1925”

Stalin was in favor of alcohol monopoly than to bow to the demands of Western countries for their aid. “And a spokesman for the finance commissariat explained it in similar terms a year later: ‘the Soviet government took the path of collecting revenue from the sale of alcohol because it became convinced that in practice it was impossible to combat alcoholism by simple prohibition.’ By 1928 alcohol resumed its rightful place in Russian economy—it generated almost 50 percent of all excise taxes and 12 percent of overall state revenue. By 1930 alcoholic beverages made up more than 28 percent of the state tax revenue. This clearly shows that importance of alcohol in Russian society and at the government level has never come down, despite the regime change.

The communist model of economy that prevailed in USSR has also enhanced the problem of alcohol abuse in the region. The emphasis of the government on capital goods and completely disapproving of consumer market, has created a generations of alcoholics in the form of factory workers. These workers engulfed themselves in drinking as there was no opportunity for the upward mobility. This condition has not spared even the blue collared workers in industry and agriculture sector. Alcohol has become the window that provided the much needed relief from the state management of everyday life. Soon after

the Cold War started, the impact of generational consumption of alcohol started to show its impact on the population.

According to one of the estimates, in the late 1960s the USSR ranked first in the world in terms of per capita consumption of distilled spirits—six liters per person, per year average. The nearest competitors were France and the U.S. with about 4.5 liters each. By 1970s per capita consumption of distilled liquor in the USSR was highest in the world by a factor of 1.5; illegal home production consumed about 5 percent of national crops; government required 3 percent of the net grain, 6 percent of potatoes, 6 percent of sugar beets, and 60 percent of molasses to churn out alcohol; up to 12 percent of state revenue was derived from alcohol; and finally up to 7 percent of GDP was lost simply to alcoholism.

By the decade of the 1970's, this consumption has started to take its toll. During Brezhnev's last years the working population was actually in a state of biological decline: in a case that was without precedent in the history of developed countries the life expectancy of males fell from sixty-eight to sixty-four years, while the rate of infant mortality increased from three to seven percent. A closer examination revealed that between 1939 and 1964 mortality based on age was decreasing every year. However, starting with 1964 the mortality rate for males ages 30 and up began to rise. By mid 1970s the life expectancy advantage females had over males grew from eight years to ten. In the mid 1980's Mikhail Gorbachev tried to curb the problem of alcohol abuse from the country, but failed miserably. But the data accessed for that period shows otherwise. For a brief period of time, the mortality decreased and the life expectancy increased. While causal relationships are notoriously difficult to establish with any certainty, it is nonetheless remarkable that the long fall in Soviet male life expectancy—from 66.1 years in 1964-65 to a low of 62.3 in 1980-81—was broken in the mid 1980s and rose from 62.9 years in 1984-85 to 65.1 years in 1987. This increase by more than two years, which far surpassed the simultaneous increase in female life expectancy, cannot be convincingly explained by changes in nutrition, health, or environmental standards, but could with a greater degree of probability be linked to the decline in alcohol consumption. As far as morbidity is concerned, Soviet statistics show no reduction in the total number of in-patients with a diagnosis of alcoholism or alcoholic psychosis in the period 1984-88, but

the number of new such diagnoses went down from 206 to 154 per 100,000 inhabitants. Substantial reductions were also recorded in the rates of work-related and traffic-related accidents and deaths.

The post- disintegration period saw some of the most horrific consequences of the generational consumption of alcohol by the Russian people. For the first time, life expectancy has gone below 60 years. Also Russian population had entered into an unprecedented, period of extreme low birth rate. The death rate has increased and along with the high number of immigrants, coming to the country, the country was facing a grave danger of demography decline.

As was the custom in USSR, this period of negative growth in population was also aggravated by the sheer policies of the government. The shock therapy program of Boris Yeltsin has not only impacted the economy of the Russian federation, but also the health of the population. During this period, alcohol prices have gone higher and people have started drinking, home brewed, smuggled alcohol, which had an adverse effect on the health of the people. The whole decade of 90 was plagued with the cases of alcohol poisoning and alcohol related deaths.

Vladimir Putin became president of the Russian federation in 2000 and was immediately faced by the depleting human resources in the federation. Moreover, he was concerned with the death of young bread winners of the family. He immediately passed few regulations to control the menace of alcohol abuse, but these are not producing the desired results.

It is clear that Russia is going through a never before seen demography crisis. This crisis is depend by the heavy influx of immigrants from the neighboring countries, which in turn reducing the ethnic population of Russia. In fact, between 1989 and 2002 Russia had absorbed a net 5.5 million immigrants. However, starting in 2002 influx of foreign immigrants and emigration by Russians have slowed down quite a bit—“the net inflow of migration to Russia totaled less than 80,000 in all of 2002, and a mere 25,000 in the first seven months of 2003.

Russia’s long-term health decline is unusual for an industrialized nation. The alarming aspect of this decline is the fact that is it difficult to raise general life expectancy just by a year—drastic changes have to take place within a society to affect this statistic. For

Russian males over the last 40 years life expectancy at birth fell by five years while age-standardized mortality rate rose by over 40 percent. If we account for women, then overall Russian life expectancy had dropped by three years since 1962.

By the dawn of the 21st century Russians consumed an average of 125 cc of vodka per person, per day; a figure three times as high as was in 1913, just before the Czarist prohibition. After the transition to market economy, there is no ban on the sale of alcohol and alcohol is served on the streets in a pre packed cup with a foil on top, like we in India have juices. These can be drunk anywhere and at anytime. This furthermore aggravates the problem of alcohol abuse in the Russian society and in turn impacts the demography.

In Russia, not only general population, but also military, is facing the problem of alcohol abuse. Military personnel were and are facing the brunt of alcohol abuse in their ranks. Any country of the world, who dreams of becoming a super power, needs to maintain a healthy and well equipped army. The Russian armed forces face a massive personnel problem, and the country's demographic trends will reduce the availability of potential male recruits even further in coming years. By 2016, the number of men available for conscription will be half that of 1996, a problem exacerbated by the fact that many potential recruits are unfit for service due to alcohol-related complications.

This chapter has discussed in length all the factors leading to the promotion and propagation of alcohol in Russian society. The chapter also tried to give an overview of the problem of depleting population and its impact on the global aspirations of Russia. Of all the factors which led to the exacerbation of the problem of alcohol abuse in Russian society were the political motives. By political motives, I mean to state about the policies applied by different regimes to earn more and more revenues, by the sale and production of alcohol. These policies in turn embedded the love of alcohol in the Russian society. Thus, the first hypothesis of this study which states that government policies have given an impetus to the problem of alcohol abuse holds true as far as this study is concerned.

According to a report, by 2020, some estimates put Russian population at 130 million, approximately 16 million less than today, and with a higher median age than today. The median age is a significant factor—by 2015 Russia is projected to have a ratio of just four workers for every three non-workers, with a dramatic shift among the nonworking population toward the elderly. The aging of the population and the increase in the

dependency ratio suggest that domestic public and private capital available to refinance new investments may decline over the next two decades, underscoring and increasing the importance of creating the necessary conditions to attract investment from abroad.

For these investments to be brought to Russia, Russia needs a good labor force and a good business environment. But the depleting human resource in Russia is a major hindrance for these investments and for Russia's progress in particular.

Thus, the second hypothesis of this study which states that the impact of alcohol abuse on the demography is adversely hampering Russia's global aspirations holds true as far as this study is concerned.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Indicates Primary Source.

Alexander Nemstov (2011), *A Contemporary History of Alcohol In Russia*, Translation: Howard M Goldfinger & Andrew Stickley, Printed by E-print, Stockholm, Sodertorn Academic Studies 43.

Bobak M., Mckee M, and Rose R, (June 1999), *Alcohol consumption in a National Sample of the Russian population*, *Addiction*, Vol-94, Issue-6.

Boris Moiseevich Segal, (1987), *Russian Drinking: Use and Abuse of Alcohol in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, Publication Division, Rutgers Centre of Alcohol Studies.

Boris Moiseevich Segal, (1990), *The Drunken Society: Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism in the Soviet Union: A Comparative Study*, Hippocrene books.

Bryce David Andreasen (2006), *Stuck in Bottle: Vodka in Russia 1863-1925*, Alberta Canada, Lethbridge University Press.

Conference Report (Dec 2000), "*Russia's Physical and Social Infrastructure: Implications for Future Development*," National Intelligence Council, U.S.A. http://www.dni.gov/nic/confreports_rusfuturedev.html, (Accessed on 13 Jan 2012)

Dana Vannoy; NataliaRimashevskaya; Lisa Cubbins; Marina Malysheva; Elena Meshterkina; Marina Pisklakova(Feb., 2001) , *Marriages in Russia: Couples During the Economic Transition* , Review by M. Janice Hogan; *Hogan Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 63, No. 1), pp. 277-278.

Daniel Tarschys (1993) *The Success of a Failure: Gorbachev's Alcohol Policy 1985-88*; *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.45, No.1, pp.7-25.

David Christian, (1990), *Living Water: Vodka and Russian Society on the Eve of Emancipation*, Clarendon Press.

Dale Roy Herspring (2004), *Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*, New York: Rowman and Littleman.

Dmitry Shlapentokh, (Winter 1991) '*Drunkness and Anarchy in Russia: A Case of Political Culture*' *Russian History*, Vol. 18, no.4) pp. 457-500.

Dimitry Kesi, (2009) "*Russian Vodka- A national Tragedy*". Thesis ,Naval Post-Graduate School, Monterey, California,U.S.A.

Eduard Armenakovich Babaian, Marks Khaimovich Gonopolskii,(1985), *Textbook on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse in the Soviet Union*, International University Press.

Ekaterina V. Botchkovar, LorineA.Huges, (2010), *Strain and Alcohol Use in Russia: a Gendered Analysis*, *Sociological perspectives*, vol.53, no.3.

George E. Snow ,(1997), *Alcoholism in Russian Military: The Public Sphere and the Temperance Discourse 1883-1917*, Jahrbucher fur Geschichte Oeuropeas, NewFolge, Bd.-45, H.-3.

*I.V. Stalin, *Sochineniya*, 13 vols. (Moscow: Ogiz, 1946-51), vol. 9.

J.F.Hutchinson,(Apr1980), *Science, Politics and the Alcohol Problem in Post 1905 Russia*, The Slavonic and East European Review, Vol.-58, No.2.

Jack S Blocker, David M. Fabey, Ian R.Tyrrell, (2003), *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: An International Encyclopedia*, Vol.1, Abc-Clio.

Jessica Smith (2007), *Teens in Russia*, Compass point Books.

Jessica Eve Stern (1994), *Moscow Meltdown: Can Russia Survive?* International Security, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 40-65Published by: The MIT Press.

Joseph Barnes (1932), "*Liquor Regulation in Russia*"; Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 163. P. 227.

Kate Transchel,(2006),*Under the influence: Working class drinking, Temperance and Cultural Revolution in Russia 1895-1932*,Pittsburgh,Pittsburgh University press.

Karen Bogenschneider, Ming-Yeh Wu, Marcela Raffaelli, Jenner C. Tsay (May 1998), "Other Teens Drink, but Not My Kid": Does Parental Awareness of Adolescent Alcohol UseProtect Adolescents from Risky Consequences? "; Journal of Marriage and Family, Vol.60, No.2, pp.356-73.

Klaus Makela, MattiVikari, (1997), *Notes on Alcohol and the State*, Acta Sociologica, vol.20, no.2.

Laurent Chennet, Martin Mckee, David Leon, Vladimir Shkolnikov, Sergei Vassin. (Dec.1998), *Alcohol and Cardiovascular Mortality in Moscow: New Evidence of a Causal Association*, Journal of Epidemiology and Community health.

*L. D. Trotsky, *Sochineniya*, vol.21 (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo,1927)

Letizia Paoli (Jul 2002), *The Price of Freedom: Illegal Drug Markets and Policies in Post-Soviet Russia*; Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 582, Cross-National Drug Policy, pp. 167-180

Lisa A. Cubbins and Dana Vannoy, (Feb 2005) *Socioeconomic Resources, Gender Traditionalism, and Wife Abuse in Urban Russian Couples*; Journal of Marriage and Family, Vol. 67, No. 1, pp. 37-52

Makinen I H, Reitan TC, (May2006), *Continuity and Change in Russian Alcohol Consumption from the Tsars to Transition*, Social History, Vol.-31, Issue-2.

Mark G. Field, (Oct1955), *Alcoholism, Crime and Delinquency in Soviet society*, Social Problems, Vol.-3, No-2.

Mark G. Field and David E. Powell (Oct 1981) , *Alcohol Abuse in the Soviet Union*; The Hastings Center Report, Vol. 11, No. 5, pp. 40-44.

Martin Bobak, Michael Murphy, Richard Rose, Michael Marnot, (Sept.2003), *Determinants of Adult Mortality in Russia: Estimates from Sibling Data*, Epidemiology, vol.14, no.5.

Mckee M, Shkolnikov V, Leon D. A, (Jan 2001), *Alcohol is Implicated in the Fluctuations in the Cardiovascular Disease in Russia Since the 1980's*, Annals of Epidemiology, vol.11, Issue-1.

Natalia S. Gavrilova, Victoria G.Semyonova, Galina N.Evdokushkina and Leonid A. Gavrilov, (Oct2000), *The Response of Violent Mortality to Economic Crisis in Russia*, Population Research and Policy Review, Vol.-19, No.-5.

Nemtsov, A.V., (1999), *Alcohol Consumption, Alcohol-Related Consequences and Alcohol Policy in Russia (1945-96)*, Alcologia.

Nicholas Eberstadt (2004), "*Russia's Demographic StraightJacket*," SAIS Review Vol. XXIV, No. 2.

Patricia Herlihy. (Dec 2002) *The Alcoholic Empire: Vodka and Politics in Late Imperial Russia; Europe-Asia Studies, Vol. 54, No.8.*

Patricia Herlihy, *The Alcoholic Empire: Vodka and Politics in Late Imperial Russia*; Review by: Louise McReynolds, Journal of Social History, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Spring, 2005), pp. 772-774.

Patricia Herlihy (1991), "*Joy of the Rus : Rites and Rituals of Russian Drinking*", Russian Review Vol. 50 No. 2.

Periman Francesea J. A, (Nov2010), *Drinking in Transition: Trends in Alcohol Consumption in Russia 94-2004*, Vol.-10, Article number-691.

PolowyT(), *Alcoholism in Russia* Palgrave Macmillan Limited.

Pridemore W.A., (Aug2004), *Weekend Effects on Binge Drinking and Homicide: the Social Connection Between Alcohol and Violence in Russia*, Addiction, Vol.-99, issue-8.

Pridemore W.A, (Dec2002), *Vodka and Violence: Alcohol consumption and Homicide Rates in Russia*, American Journal of Public Health, Vol.92, Issue-12.

Pridemore William Alex, (Sep2006), *Heavy drinking and Suicide in Russia*, Social Forces, Vol-85, Issue-1.

*President Putin State of the Nation Address (2005) Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, The Kremlin, Moscow.

R. Vlassak, ed., *Alkogolizm Kak Nauchnaya I Butovaya Problema* (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosizdat,1928) p.78.

Reitan TC, (June2001), *The Operation Failed, But the Patient Survived: Varying Assessments of the Soviet Union's Last Anti-Alcohol Campaign*, Communist and Post communist Studies,vol.34, Issue-2.

*Russia. *The Official Report of the British Trade Union Delegation to Russia in November and December 1924* (London: Trades Union Council, 1925.

Roy Medvedev: George Shriver (Nov 2011): *Post Soviet Russia: A Journey Through the Yeltsin Era*; Europe-Asia Studies, Vol. 53, No. 7 pp. 1117-1118.

Sgkolnikov, VM, Nemstov.A (1997), *The Anti-Alcohol Campaign and Variations in Russian Mortality- Premature Death in the New Independent States* (ed.: I IBobadilla, C.A.Costello and F.Mitchell), Washington DC, National Academy Press.

Shkolnikov V, Mckee M, Leon DA, (March 2001), *Changes in Life-Expectancy in Russia in the mid 1980's*, Lancet, Vol.357, Issue-9260.

Simpura J, B.M.Levin and H. Mustoven, (1997), *Russian Drinking in 1990's: Patterns and Trends in International Comparison*, Research report, Helsinki National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health.

Stephen White, (1996), *Russia goes dry: Alcohol, State and Society*, Cambridge University Press.

Steven Stack, Elena Bankowski, (Nov.1994), *Divorce and Drinking: An Analysis of Russian Data*, Journal of Marriage and Family, vol.56, no.4.

Tanya Frisby (Jan 1998) *the Rise of Organized Crime in Russia: Its Roots and Social Significance*; Europe-Asia Studies, Vol.50, No.1. pp. 27-49.

Tekin E, (Oct2004), *Employment, Wages and Alcohol Consumption in Russia*, Southern Economic Journal, Vol.71, Issue-2.

Timothy P.Rouce, N. PrabhaUnnithan, (May 1993), *Comparative Ideologies and Alcoholism: The Protestant and Proletarian Ethics*, Social Problems, Vol.-40, No. 2.

Tkatchenko E, Mckee M, Tsouros AD, (June2000), *Public Health in Russia: The View From the Inside*, Health policy and Planning, Vol.15, Issue-2.

Vera Efron,(1960), *The Soviet Approach to Alcoholism*, Social problems, Vol.-7, No.4.

Vishnevsky, A.G. (1998), Population of Russia in 1998. Annual Demographic Report. Center of Demography and Human Ecology: Moscow

Vladimir G. Treml (Apr 1975), *Alcohol in the USSR: A Fiscal Dilemma*, Soviet Studies, Vol.27, No.2, pp. 161-177.

Vladimir G. Treml, (1982), *Alcohol In the USSR: Statistical Study*, Rutgers Centre Of Alcohol studies, Duke University Press.

Vladimir G. Treml (Oct 1982) *Death From Alcohol Poisoning in the USSR*; Soviet Studies, Vol. 34, No.4. pp. 487-505.

Vladimir Shlapentokh (Jul 1997); *Bonjour Stagnation: Russia's Next Years*, Europe-Asia Studies, Vol. 49, No. 5. Pp. 865-881.

Walter D. Connor, (Sep 1971), *Alcohol and the Soviet society*, Slavic review, vol. 30, no. 3.

V.M.Bekhterev, *Alkogolizm I Bor'ba s Nim* (Leningrad: Izd. Lengubprofsoveta, 1927) p.9.

William Eugene Johnson, (1915), *the Liquor Problem in Russia*, The American Issue Publishing Company.

William C. Cockerham, (June 1997), *The Social Determinants of the Decline of Life Expectancy in Russia and Eastern Europe: A Lifestyle Explanation*; Journal of Health and Social Behavior, Vol. 38, No. 2, pp. 117-130.

William Pokhlebin (1992), *Introduction to a History of Vodka*, Verso, London.

Zygmunt Dzieciolowski, (2006), *The Russian politics of Vodka*, Open democracy.

Internet Sources

www.English Pravda.ru

www.izvestiya.ru.

Joseph Tartakovsky, " *Vodka , elixir of the Masses*", The St. Petersburg Times, April 18, 2006, <http://www.sptimes.ru>.(Accessed on 13Apr 2012).