

# Soviets seek new alcohol programs

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Novosti Press Agency

MOSCOW — In 1985, the first year of *perestroika*, the Soviet leadership decided to launch a serious attack on alcohol addiction.

May 1985 saw the publication of resolution by the CPSU Central Committee, "On Measures to Overcome Hard Drinking and Alcoholism."

The idea was to re-orient people to new cultural values. But the old command methods of combating alcoholism were used to implement the resolution.

Stringent limitations on the sale of alcoholic drinks were introduced in this country. Administrative penalties were applied to heavy drinkers, a campaign to destroy vineyards was undertaken in the southern areas, and people were watched in order to determine who was drinking and who was not.

The results of this aggressive campaign were deplorable. It caused a resurgence in moonshining, the disappearance of sugar, yeast, tomato paste and caramel from the shops, a sharp increase in the consumption of drugs and toxic substances and huge lines for liquor.

But the chief result was that people began to drink mainly at home, which led to a disastrous increase in the rate of domestic violence.

However, Moscow's chief drug-addiction expert, Eduard Drozdov, who heads Drug-Addiction Hospital Number 17 with 6,600 beds, believes that at first the campaign played a positive role.

"The administrative pressure at the beginning of the campaign resulted in a drop in industrial and other injuries, cardiovascular diseases and alcoholic

psychoses. And we saw that a real reduction of per capita alcohol consumption can produce good results," Drozdov said.

"But the illusion of favorable change proved to be short-lived. The flow of glue sniffers, solvent abusers and drug addicts to our hospital increased," he continued.

In Drozdov's view, no administrative measure can influence alcohol consumption if the population has a stable habit of consumption. This lack of understanding of the situation produced adverse effects.

## • The Punitive Principle

The nature of alcoholism, as well as its causes, are still unknown. Some explain it by weakness, and others by social, genetic and biological factors. Soviet physicians consider alcoholism to be a grave disease closely linked to social phenomena. But they still have to work within the framework of the existing system of alcoholism treatment.

"In our country they don't treat an alcoholic like a person, but like a biological drinking machine. They give patients pills which temporarily diminish the craving for liquor," said Drozdov, who is now trying to change the existing approaches.

Gen. Boris Voronov, who was recently appointed head of the Crime Prevention Administration at the USSR Ministry of the Interior, like Drozdov, views the existing system as incorrect and therefore ineffective.

"Today, the Interior Ministry staffers do the main job. Militiamen carry a drunken person to a detox center, where practically no assistance is given. He sleeps there for a short time and then leaves the center with a terri-

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ble hangover. He pays a fine and they report the offense to his place of work.

"The detox centers, as well as the treatment and labor camps where chronic alcoholics and drug addicts who do not want to undergo treatment at "drying-out clinics" are forcibly sent, are run by the Ministry of the Interior. But this system of forcible

rehabilitation is ineffective," Voronov said.

"At our clinic, we treat people who come voluntarily," Drozdov said.

"We carry out a detoxification program, but eventually a patient leaves and again finds himself among his drinking buddies. Besides that, he gets

# • New approaches sought in alcoholism

registered by his neighborhood drug-addiction specialist, and is thereby deprived of some of his rights: Sick-leaves at work are no longer paid, he is not allowed to drive a car, and he can't get a respectable job.

"It is a paradoxical situation when closet alcoholics are allowed to do anything, but once an individual undergoes a course of treatment for alcoholism, he becomes a social outcast, and the treatment turns into punishment," Drozdov said.

According to Drozdov, in the Soviet Union excessive priority is given to the medical-biological aspect, ignoring psychological treatment.

True, we have registered successes in this field, from detoxication to eliminating the inclination for drinking. Specifically, natural preparations are used to correct biochemical processes through the regulation of amino acid content.

Soviet scientists have also achieved successes in the clinical treatment of alcoholism and have written many papers on genetic factors.

"What we need most of all now is a social environment where an alcoholic can find support after clinical treatment. We have none of the social programs which the Americans are so strong in now," Drozdov said.

## • Soviet-American Cooperation

In late May, at Drug-Addiction Hospital Number 17, Drozdov and the president of the Caron Foundation signed a Soviet-American agreement on setting up and running a center for training alcohol-addiction specialists at the Moscow hospital.

The agreement was a follow-up to the contacts already established between Hospital Number 17 and other American organizations, specifically Sullivan County Community College, the State University of New York and Veritas Villa, a drug and alcoholism treatment center in Kerhonson, N.Y.

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*—Eduard Drozdov*

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At the Moscow center, American specialists will train Soviet consulting specialists on alcoholism problems, specifically for work at industrial plants. The fact that Soviet psychologists have a good theoretical background will help them get involved quickly in treatment and psychotherapy for alcoholics.

Boris Voronov, in particular, is greatly interested in the programs specifically designed for policemen on the problems of alcoholism, which could be used in training neighborhood militia officers.

Besides that, at the center the Russian physicians will study English in order to undergo a course of practical training in the United States. In turn,

the Soviet doctors will share their experience in the medicinal treatment of alcoholism.

Drozdov is very thankful to Alcoholics Anonymous of the United States. The organization came to the Soviet Union two years ago and helped set up a Soviet AA movement, which holds a special place among the anti-alcohol abuse movements.

"AA groups now exist in 12 Soviet cities, and this movement is gaining momentum. I hope that with the assistance of American specialists, we will develop new approaches to assisting those who really need help," Drozdov said.

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