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CIA/SOV 86-10019 X

Gorbachev's Campaign Against Alcohol

A Research Paper

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SOV 86-10019X
April 1986

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Gorbachev's Campaign Against Alcohol

A Research Paper

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SOV 86-10014X
April 1986

Gorbachev's Campaign Against Alcohol

Key Judgments

Information available as of 5 March 1986 was used in this report.

The antialcohol campaign under way since May 1985 constitutes the most serious and determined effort to curtail alcohol abuse in the USSR since the World War I prohibition. Gorbachev is making the antialcohol program a test of his leadership, both for its potential economic and health benefits and as a highly visible sign that he intends to force the pace of change.

Gorbachev's concern over alcohol abuse is well founded. We estimate that per capita alcohol consumption in the USSR has doubled over the past 30 years; current levels of hard liquor consumption are the highest in the world. The average age of alcoholics has dropped, and women are drinking more heavily than in the past. Alcohol abuse is contributing significantly to industrial accidents and worker absenteeism, and it is involved in a high percentage of violent crimes. It is a leading cause of the country's declining life expectancy and rising infant mortality rates and a principal factor in the growing divorce rate in Slavic areas.

Such problems have been recognized by previous leaders, but their campaigns against Russia's historical plague have failed, partly from the lack of strong Politburo commitment to sustained enforcement in the face of popular resistance and partly from the leadership's own ambivalence about alcohol abuse. The recognized adverse consequences for labor productivity and national health were apparently counterbalanced by liquor's function of diverting citizen frustrations into apolitical channels as well as providing a substitute for consumer goods in short supply

Gorbachev recognizes that alcohol abuse is a major impediment to his overall effort to tighten social discipline, strengthen law enforcement, improve worker output, and shore up popular respect for the regime's ability to deal forcefully with domestic problems. Gorbachev's antialcohol program is appropriately wide ranging in its scope. It specifically includes intensified law enforcement, reduced availability of alcohol, increased penalties for alcohol offenses, holding supervisors responsible for behavior of subordinates, expanded treatment facilities, a public opinion campaign, and better recreational and consumer alternatives. This program, more broadly gauged than previous campaigns, contains some new elements, such as the movement to dismantle large numbers of distilleries. The key ingredient that distinguishes this campaign from its predecessors, however, is not the specific measures adopted but the vigor with which the regime is enforcing them. Especially noteworthy has been the widespread firing of officials for personal violations and lax enforcement

The campaign has already achieved considerable success, as demonstrated by a number of economic indicators and changes visible to foreign observers. Sales of alcohol have dropped by a fourth and public drunkenness has been sharply reduced in Moscow and most other cities. According to statements by [redacted] and articles in the Soviet press, drinking on the job has been eliminated in some enterprises and curtailed in others; Gorbachev reportedly told a meeting of Soviet diplomats in October that the antialcohol measures had boosted labor productivity. KGB Chief Viktor Chebrikov, in his November Revolution Day speech, credited the crackdown with a decline in the crime rate.

Although Gorbachev's efforts are being supported by an increasingly concerned Politburo, there appears to be some tension or uncertainty within the leadership over how far to push the campaign. Gorbachev's objectives seem limited to curtailing the worst abuses, especially drinking on the job. He has publicly ruled out passing a "dry law." But Secretary Ligachev is reportedly defining the goals of the campaign in a more sweeping fashion. In contrast, there are indications that Ukrainian Party boss Shcherbitskiy may be resisting full implementation of the antialcohol measures

Below the senior level, there is reporting of widespread scorn for the campaign among some officials who claim that pushing too far too fast could provoke labor unrest and who think that Gorbachev should have done more to provide substitute outlets for worker dissatisfaction before moving to cut alcohol consumption. [redacted] also report unease among colleagues who fear that they will be capriciously punished for their own alcohol use on the basis of reports by malicious informers. Some local officials have been seriously remiss in enforcing the new measures, as Soviet media have acknowledged

Recent reporting indicates that the campaign has also encountered considerable resistance from some elements of the public, and [redacted] has received reports of worker unrest in several cities. While a core of concerned citizens and officials strongly support the campaign in toto and almost everyone claims to favor eliminating the worst alcohol abuses, there are major societal obstacles to sustaining the campaign's momentum. Heavy drinking habits are deeply ingrained among the Slavic population. The campaign has become a new source of tension in every segment of society, and it will probably combine with other popular frustrations to spark further spontaneous protests.

Gorbachev's continued aggressive support of the antialcohol campaign is necessary to cut through this resistance. However, even if the regime resorts to sterner measures than those already adopted—involving greater police intrusion into the private lives of citizens—it will not be able to monitor and control consumption of homebrew, which Western experts estimate accounts for about a fourth of total consumption. Home brewers and black marketeers have been intimidated to some degree by the burst of law enforcement activity, but over time they will probably expand their supply networks to respond to the tremendous demand caused by decreased availability of liquor in state stores.

How well Gorbachev manages resistance to the campaign could have a significant effect on his political fortunes. If social unrest expands or violation of the liquor laws becomes rampant, he would be under strong pressure to moderate the campaign or even to abandon it altogether. He would probably be able to deflect some of the blame to Ligachev, but his own reputation for tough and effective leadership would suffer.

Public concern about alcohol abuse appears sufficiently widespread, and Gorbachev's commitment to corrective measures sufficiently firm, however, to ensure that the attack will be sustained for some time on the more conspicuous and damaging forms of abuse—drinking on the job and public drunkenness. Demonstrable success in these areas will further Gorbachev's larger policy objectives—both economic and social—and in our judgment will strengthen his political position.

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Gorbachev's Campaign Against Alcohol[1]

The Soviet Alcohol Problem

Heavy drinking has been common among the Slavic and Baltic peoples for centuries. According to popular legend, the ruler of the first Russian state converted to Christianity rather than Islam in the 10th century because Islam prohibited alcohol and "drink is the joy of the Russians." Drinking became such an ingrained habit of life in Russia that some students of history think the czarist government's passage of a prohibition law in 1914 helped pave the way for the 1917 revolution. At least until recently, a bottle of vodka was the most common bribe or token of gratitude for a personal favor.

The Russian Drinking Pattern. Experts tend to agree that various factors have combined to account for the deeply rooted drinking habits of Russians. They assert that heavy drinking is encouraged by:

- A harsh climate and long winter darkness.
- The lack of alternative means of releasing personal emotions in the repressive environment of an authoritarian political system.
- The need to endure the historically low standard of living.
- Its traditional central cultural role in allowing Russians to overcome sexual and other inhibitions. Even more than in most other societies where heavy drinking is accepted, the ability to consume prodigious quantities of vodka is regarded as a sign of masculinity.
- The volatile Russian personality—characterized by swings from extreme passivity to violent activity—predisposes people to drink to excess

Like their Scandinavian neighbors, Russians have developed a style of drinking that is particularly damaging physically and conducive to addiction. Russians typically use alcohol not as an adjunct to food or as a mild mood elevator, but for the purpose of losing control—to obtain the maximum escape and liberation as quickly as possible. Drinking large quantities of vodka on an empty stomach and binge drinking are more common in the USSR than in many other countries that have high alcohol consumption rates.

Growth of Alcohol Abuse. The cataclysmic events of Soviet history—collectivization, the purges, World War II, and the postwar reconstruction—produced severe societal stresses that led to heavier drinking. Industrialization and urbanization uprooted large numbers of people and led to a breakdown in rural traditions that confined drinking largely to holidays and festive occasions. In recent years shortages of consumer goods, a waning of ideological faith, and a general worsening of popular morale[1] have given further impetus to increased drinking

The leading Western expert, Vladimir Treml, estimates on the basis of available evidence that the USSR ranks first in the world in per capita consumption of hard liquor. A number of authorities on alcohol problems, moreover, believe that hard liquor tends to be more destructive than wine and beer to the fabric of society and the health of the individual. This is largely because hard liquor consumption usually, although not invariably, is more associated with drinking to the point of intoxication. Heavy drinking is especially prevalent in Slavic and Baltic regions. People in these areas consume on a per capita basis more than twice the quantity of alcohol consumed by people in Central Asia and other Muslim areas of the USSR.

Soviet and Western specialized studies establish that consumption grew steadily from World War II until 1979, with a modest improvement in the situation in the early 1980s:

[1] For a discussion of these problems see forthcoming Intelligence Assessment SOV 86-10017X, *Domestic Stresses in the USSR*

Sources on the Soviet Alcohol Problem

Severe data problems make it impossible to track Soviet alcohol consumption patterns with any precision or to make exact quantitative comparisons between the alcohol problem in the USSR and that in other countries. Published Soviet statistics on alcohol consumption and abuse are highly selective, providing information for particular localities rather than for the country as a whole. In recent years, the USSR has steadily reduced the availability of comprehensive data on alcohol production, sales, and price. This concealment of comprehensive statistics on alcohol has been consistent with a broader pattern of withdrawing information about other societal ills as disturbing trends appear.

In addition to the paucity of statistics, a lack of standardized definitions makes it difficult to measure the extent of the alcohol problem. For example, Soviet specialized literature often employs various terms such as "clinically alcoholic" and "registered alcoholic" that in some cases have unclear meanings and in other cases have no equivalent in Western terminology.

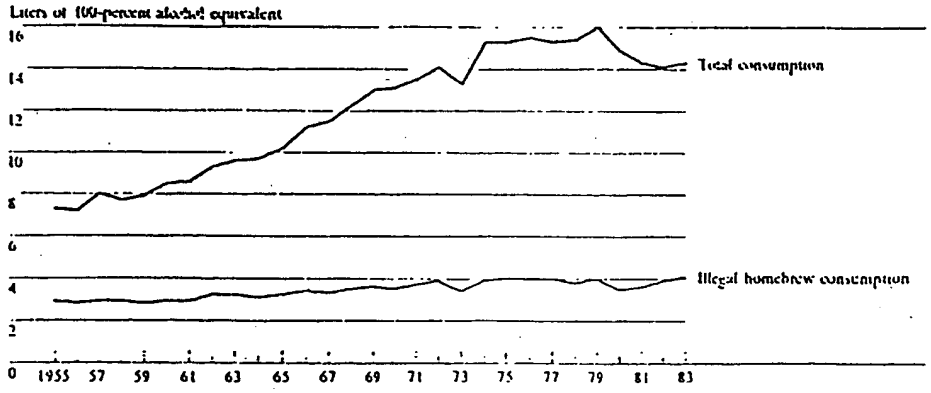
Even if complete alcohol consumption figures were available, it would be difficult to establish scientifically to what extent alcohol consumption contributes to such social and economic problems as crime, divorce, and low labor productivity. Many factors are involved in causing these problems and it is impossible to isolate the impact of alcohol as an independent variable, although it is possible to show a correlation *between alcohol abuse and other social ills.*

In addition to officially published Soviet statistics, there are numerous sources for assessing the extent of alcohol abuse, the level of official concern about the problem, and the attitudes of the Soviet public toward it. These sources include:

- *Studies by Western experts who have compiled Soviet statistics, subjected them to reliability tests, and arrived at independent estimates.*
- [redacted]
- *Reporting by* [redacted] *and* [redacted] *based on discussions with Soviet officials and ordinary citizens, as well as direct field observation of public behavior with regard to drinking and availability of alcohol.*
- *Lectures given by regime spokesmen at Znaniye Society meetings,* [redacted] *which often provide franker appraisals of internal conditions than do Soviet media.*
- *Speeches of Soviet leaders, which must be used cautiously but which reflect sensitivities about societal problems.*
- *Soviet published polls about popular habits and attitudes, which usually suffer from methodological flaws but which can often be compared with other data to assist in establishing general trends.*
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]

Using these various sources, we can arrive at a good approximation of the scope and character of the alcohol problem and an informed evaluation of the Gorbachev campaign against it

Figure 1
USSR: Estimated Total and Illegal Alcohol Consumption*
(Per Capita for Persons 15 and Older)



* Source: Vladimir Treml, *Alcohol in the USSR: A Statistical Study*, Durham, N.C.: Duke Press Policy Studies, 1982, and unpublished draft, *Alcohol Abuse and Quality of Life in the USSR*, 1986. Treml's estimates were partially confirmed by an article in a Soviet sociological journal, which stated that per capita consumption of pure alcohol in 1980 was 11.3 liters, a figure close to Treml's estimate of per capita consumption of state-produced alcohol. The Soviet figure did not include samogon (homebrew).

- Treml's calculations indicate that per capita consumption in the USSR grew by an average of 3.3 percent a year between 1955 and 1979, more-than-doubling, and declining slightly since 1980.

- [redacted] a Soviet research team that conducted a national survey in the 1970s on alcohol use, estimates that between 1913 and the 1970s the percent of alcoholics in the Soviet adult population grew from 1.6 to 9.5.

- A 1984 article in the leading Soviet sociological journal stated that per capita alcohol consumption increased by 10.5 percent a year in the 1950s, by 6.7 percent a year in the 1960s, and by 3.2 percent a year in the 1970s. The article reported that implementation of preventive measures between 1980 and 1982 had resulted in a 6 percent a year decline in consumption during that period.

Comprehensive statistics aside, data from a broad range of Soviet open sources, [redacted] Western newsmen, and other firsthand observers depict the current alcohol problem as enormous:

- A Western expert citing Soviet data reported that 12 to 15 percent of the adult urban population in 1979 were arrested for public drunkenness and processed through sobering-up stations. Vitaliy Fedorchuk, Minister of Internal Affairs until his removal in January 1986, noted in a 1982 *Pravda* article that 800,000 Soviets lost their driver's licenses that year because they were drunk when stopped by police.

- The Soviet newspaper *Selskaya Zhizn* in December 1983 reported that one-third of all registered alcoholics began drinking before they were 10 years old, and that the average age of alcoholics dropped by five to seven years during the preceding decade.

- Other articles in the Soviet press reveal the spread of alcoholism among women as well and indicate that between 10 and 15 percent of Soviet alcoholics are now women.

- In one recent Soviet survey, 20 percent of males and 11 percent of females admitted that they drank on the job.

Economic and Social Costs of Alcohol Abuse

The Soviet leadership must cope with the pernicious impact of alcohol abuse in a number of critical areas. While the precise extent of Soviet drinking may be open to debate, its adverse effects on labor productivity, the general health of the population, stability of the family unit, and crime are well documented.

Labor Productivity. Drinking on the job is responsible for losses in productivity, reduced quality of output, and high turnover of personnel. Manager [redacted] blamed alcohol for a portion of productivity problems [redacted]

[redacted] This view is consistent with Soviet published statements that claim drinking lowers labor productivity by 10 percent or more, and that 60 percent of unlawful absences from work and 25 percent of industrial accidents are because of alcohol abuse.[1]

Health. Soviet and Western researchers accept that alcohol abuse in the USSR is positively linked to several disturbing health trends:

- The USSR is the only industrial country with a declining male life expectancy. Male life expectancy dropped from age 67 in 1964 to age 62 in 1980. Female life expectancy has also fallen, from approximately age 75 in 1965 to age 73 in 1980.

[1] Alcohol consumption also contributes to labor force shortages by raising death rates of the adult population and by lowering birth rates, especially in Slavic areas.

Alcohol at the Soviet Workplace

Various reports indicate there is substantial drinking on the job:

- *According to [redacted] in 1984 workers at an auto parts plant in Latvia were unable to maintain flow of parts to the assembly line because of frequent drunkenness.*

- *In 1984, of drunk drivers involved in accidents in Moscow, approximately 30 percent were drinking on the job, according to* Sovetskaya Rossiya.

- *According to a 1984* Komsomolskaya Pravda *article, workers drank industrial alcohol glue solvent pilfered on the job in a plant in the Smolensk region. The local hospital has files on 412 workers who became sick from drinking the impure product.*

- Komsomolskaya Pravda *in April 1985 quoted a factory manager who complained about the constant round of plant parties, celebrating "Fridays, Saturdays, birthdays, days before holidays, days on which projects were turned over or bonuses received. . . . A million everyday concerns and research and production problems were discussed over a wine glass. . . . Management decisions were resolved by tipsy people."*

- *A letter from a Kharkov worker to* Izvestia *in March 1985 stated: "At the plant where I work there are several people who like to take a little nip, as the saying goes. During the shift they sometimes take so many nips that they can't even work."*

- *According to a woman clerk for a construction combine in south Kazakhstan, both men and women workers started the workday by openly drinking vodka. Bonus money was immediately spent for vodka.*

- *A June 1985* Zhurnalist *article by a Soviet sociologist provided partial results of a survey of drinking among Soviet workers. Over half of the respondents said at least some workers considered it normal to drink before work. Two-thirds reported at least some drinking at their enterprises*

Drinking at Soviet Construction Sites

Western firms involved in construction projects in the Soviet Union have experienced Soviet drinking on the job first hand. A French construction firm building a hotel in Moscow for the 1980 Olympics found it necessary to bribe its Soviet workers with alcohol to prevent their leaving the construction site during the day under one pretext or another in order to get a drink. The Soviet generator operator working for the French went on a two-day binge in the workshack adjacent to his equipment and drank himself to death.

A US engineering firm supervising Soviet contractors found that the work atmosphere facilitated drinking on the job. Disruptions in the work rhythm caused by delayed supply deliveries, insufficient equipment, and inadequate supervision enabled workers who were hung over or slightly drunk to get by and left substantial idle time to steal away for a drink. Presumably because of the prevalence of drinking among the male workers, women were the crane operators, a job requiring responsibility.

- Deaths from alcohol poisoning (a lethal concentration of alcohol in the blood) have quadrupled since 1960 to a rate of 19.5 per 100,000 population. This rate is about 60 times the rate of other developed countries that collect detailed vital statistics.

- Infant deaths in the USSR, in contrast with the rest of the developed world, rose dramatically from 22.9 per 100,000 population in 1970 to 31.1 in 1975 (the last year for which the Soviets published data), and they have probably not improved since then. Soviet experts attribute part of this increase to heavy drinking among pregnant women.

- Rates of mental retardation in the USSR have been kept secret since the mid-1970s, but Soviet researchers assume the rates have gone up because of sharply increased demand for schools for the retarded. Soviet studies emphasize the relationship between alcoholic mothers and birth defects. According to the Moscow Psychiatric Research Institute, one-third of all children born to such mothers are mentally retarded

Family Stability. Soviet experts cite alcoholism as a leading factor in the rise of divorce rates in the USSR. A recent study by the respected Soviet demographer Viktor Perevedentsev reported that alcohol abuse by the spouse is cited as a contributing cause in half of Soviet divorces. Other Soviets cite lower but still very high figures. At the same time, as more women drink heavily, they do not provide the ballast in the family to the extent that they have in the past. A Soviet newspaper article published in late 1984 reported that about two-thirds of registered women alcoholics are divorced.

Crime. Soviet sources indicate that alcohol is a major factor in various types of crime, particularly street crime, and that it contributes to widespread concern among Soviet citizens that public order has eroded in recent years:

- Various published Soviet data indicate that roughly 80 percent of robberies, 75 percent of murders and reported rapes, and 50 percent of personal property thefts that result in convictions are committed by people who were intoxicated.

- In May 1985 *Pravda* quoted Fedorchuk as saying that 70 to 80 percent of those convicted of disorderly conduct or vandalism (hooliganism) were intoxicated.

- In February 1985 the Soviet Institute for the Study of the Causes of Crime reported publicly that nearly three-fourths of all lawbreakers are people who started drinking between the ages of 14 and 17. Other Soviet sources report a strong correlation between drinking and juvenile delinquency

Past Regime Ambivalence

The lack of followthrough characterizing past leadership campaigns to control alcohol consumption can be largely ascribed to strong ambivalence over the issue. As noted in 1971 in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, there has been an "extraordinary social paradox" in the state's approach to alcohol, with the regime struggling against drunkenness at the same time that "it produces unlimited quantities of alcohol and does everything possible to deliver it." Thus [redacted] in the

Alcohol in the Military

Military discipline and close regimentation of the behavior of conscripts make alcohol problems in the Soviet military somewhat easier to control than in civilian life. But military authorities still have trouble keeping alcohol from affecting troop readiness.

In general, the military is strict regarding the use of alcohol on duty and disapproves but reluctantly tolerates drinking off duty. Policies of individual officers vary widely, however; some prohibit the use of alcohol altogether and others tolerate drinking both on and off duty.

Although the difficulties of obtaining alcohol are greater for soldiers than for civilians, the desire to do so is usually also greater. The average Soviet soldier is bored and isolated, poorly housed and fed, and lacks recreational outlets. Despite official efforts to restrict supplies and the employment of punitive measures, Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan use both drugs and alcohol extensively. Soviet soldiers stationed in Eastern Europe and Afghanistan often engage in illegal bartering to acquire alcohol, selling uniforms, gasoline, and, in Afghanistan, even arms. Such trading causes demoralizing corruption and diversion of military supplies.

The most significant alcohol problem in the military is the ingestion of "technical alcohol" and dangerous alcohol substitutes. Conscripts frequently consume alcohol intended for equipment cleaning and occasionally antifreeze, brake fluids, glue, lacquer, and varnish. It can be safely assumed that conscripts make up a disproportionate percentage of Soviet deaths from alcohol poisoning. Overall, alcohol contributes significantly to health problems in the military.

Within the officer corps alcohol abuse is common. Officers have more money to buy liquor and more freedom to drink off duty. On duty, officers are generally less likely than conscripts and warrant officers to abuse alcohol. Citations for drinking offenses can seriously damage an officer's career. Nevertheless, [redacted] reported cases of officers drinking heavily on duty. For example, heavy drinking among pilots has reportedly resulted in a number of helicopter crashes.

early 1980s vodka ranked first in terms of general availability in state stores, followed by bread. In the three campaigns since World War II—in 1958-59 under Khrushchev, in 1970-74 under Brezhnev, and in 1979-82 during Brezhnev's waning years—the regime cracked down on law enforcement, tinkered with the hours and location of alcohol sales, and unleased propaganda barrages. In each case, however, alcohol production was never cut back significantly, and the antialcohol campaigns soon dissipated.

While undoubtedly recognizing that alcohol abuse has adverse consequences for labor productivity and national health, past leaders were obviously unwilling to relinquish the political benefits that came with the problem. Specifically, alcohol provides comfort to the population, diverts popular frustrations into apolitical channels, substitutes for other consumer goods that are in short supply, and brings substantial money into the state coffers. Moreover, Soviet leaders probably believed they would be unable to control samogon (homebrew) production, and that the availability of samogon would undermine any drive to curtail alcohol consumption. Perhaps most important, Soviet leaders have probably feared that challenging the deeply entrenched drinking culture would produce widespread popular discontent and run the risk of touching off labor unrest

Chronology of Alcohol Control in the USSR Since 1914

1914-25	Under the Czar and the Bolsheviks: ***Prohibition began in a wave of war patriotism; it continued under the Bolsheviks until the 1920s, when the state monopoly of vodka production resumed. Samogon (homebrew) production and consumption remained high throughout this period.***
1926-29	Bolsheviks' Search for an Alcohol Policy: • *Price of vodka was raised 50 percent, then reduced.* • *Samogon production rose again, despite total ban by 1928.* • *Liquor sales outlets closed near places of work.* • *Antialcohol propaganda was intensified.* • *Society for struggle against alcoholism was formed (later disbanded).*
1958-59	Khrushchev Antialcohol Program: • *Vodka price was raised 20 percent; consumption fell 5.4 percent for one year.* • *Hours of sale were restricted: from 1000 to 2100; sales outlets were reduced.* • *Restaurant sales were restricted.* • *Wine production increased; prices were reduced.*
1955-65	*The Soviets doubled domestic sugar production and increased a surplus with imports from Cuba; abundant sugar allowed both state alcohol production and illegal private distilling to increase.*
1962	*Penalties for producing samogon were reduced.*
1970-74	Brezhnev Antialcohol Program: • *Hours of sale were reduced: from 1100 to 1900.* • *Production of high-proof vodka (over 40 percent) was prohibited.* • *Samogon prosecution intensified temporarily.* • *Sobering-up stations were established for cities.* • *Medical-labor camps were established for problem drinkers (up to a 2-year sentence).* • *Expansion in wine and beer production was planned.* • *Decrease in vodka production was planned; production declined briefly in 1972.*
1979-82	Antialcohol Measures at End of Brezhnev Regime: • *Alcohol price increased from 17 to 27 percent.* • *Education and propaganda activities increased.* • *Enforcement of existing legal measures intensified.* • *State production continued to increase; samogon production sharply increased.*
1983	Andropov Discipline Campaign: • *Sanctions for absenteeism and discipline violations, many of which are alcohol related, increased.* • *Lower priced vodka line (Andropovka) was introduced.*

Fiscal Returns. Overall, the state's income from alcohol sales is probably about 10 to 12 percent of total revenue—the largest single source of state budget revenue. From 1955 to 1979 proceeds grew an estimated 4.7 times as state alcohol production rose 3.8 times and prices increased by 60 percent.

An Alternative Consumer Good. By soaking up an estimated 15 to 20 percent of family budgets, alcohol consumption has reduced pressure on the regime to increase the production of other consumer goods. [redacted] indicates that alcohol makes up an especially high percentage of consumer goods sold in small cities in remote locations. In fact, alcohol is much easier to produce than many other consumer commodities. The cost of production of vodka has been estimated at from 5 to 12 percent of the retail sales price, while the technology is simple and the raw materials are in relatively stable and abundant supply.

The Samogon Specter. Historically, the leadership has undoubtedly feared that a substantial decline in state alcohol production would be replaced by production of illegal, untaxed, and sometimes dangerous samogon. The Soviets probably have the world's largest illegal liquor production. In recent years Soviet citizens, especially in urban areas, have come to purchase a higher percentage of their liquor from state stores, but samogon still accounts for an estimated 28 percent of total consumption. The process of producing moonshine is easy to learn, and state subsidies for the raw materials—largely sugar—make them affordable for all but the poorest citizens. The Soviet leadership's awareness of the samogon alternative to state-supplied alcohol has served as a check on radical antialcohol policies.

Escape Valve for Discontent. Some knowledgeable Soviet [redacted] believe that the regime has permitted excessive drinking in the belief that it keeps the population docile and politically passive. In 1982, for example, a Soviet [redacted] expressed the view that the authorities regarded alcohol as an essential opiate for the Soviet people in general and for blue-collar workers in particular [redacted] described the regime's attitude: "Better that they be alcoholics than revolutionaries." Other [redacted] believe the toleration of heavy drinking has been part of an implicit social contract between the people and the party, in which the regime does not interfere unduly with the private behavior of citizens as long as such behavior is apolitical in nature.

Factory managers, especially, have in the past been loath to restrict drinking among workers and have often distributed alcohol to workers as rewards or bribes for better performance. In Gorbachev's words, managers have established a "mutual forgiveness" according to which workers accept low pay in exchange for security of employment, tolerance of poor discipline, and drinking on the job. The Soviet labor shortage has reinforced managers' fears that too many restrictions on workers will cause them to seek jobs in other factories.

Growing Support for Tougher Measures

The growth of alcohol abuse in recent years has increasingly caused many Soviet citizens and officials alike to adopt a more alarmist assessment of alcohol's devastating toll. In the early 1980s, local temperance societies had spontaneously formed in some cities; open discussion of the problem in general has grown rapidly. An employee of the Siberian Academy of Sciences, who is active in one temperance society, argued in a public lecture in 1984 that alcohol abuse had become a "national disaster" that was bringing about "progressive degeneration of the nation." He made the exaggerated claim that alcohol-related losses to the economy were four times greater than the 45 billion rubles of annual revenue that alcohol sales bring in. An economist and sociologist recently argued in the Soviet press that "drunkenness is a threat to the social well-being of the entire nation and is a threat to the vital capabilities of the population." And the speaker at a regime-sponsored public lecture in Leningrad in April 1985 maintained that alcohol was a greater threat to the USSR than anti-Communism.

Soviet leaders, also, have evidently concluded that the negative consequences of unrestricted alcohol consumption are becoming intolerable. [redacted] studies, commissioned by the regime, that depicted the magnitude of the problem are said to have especially alarmed top party officials. Even before Gorbachev's accession, the Politburo had reportedly ordered studies on various strategies for dealing with the alcohol problem.

But it was Gorbachev's personal determination to take drastic countermeasures that reportedly accounted for the decision to take action. [redacted] In addition to the well-established reasons for addressing the problem, several factors probably impelled him to embark on a concerted drive against alcohol abuse:

- The campaign would demonstrate his personal power. According to [redacted] Gorbachev saw a tactical political advantage in launching a forceful social policy initiative that would enhance his image as a strong and progressive leader in the Andropov mold.

- The campaign would demonstrate the regime's capacity for vigorous change, without involving a major commitment of material resources. It would shore up popular respect for the system and allay elite concerns about the top leadership's will to act. Yet it would not require any major institutional restructuring or shifts in investment policy.

- The political environment was propitious. New officials beholden to Gorbachev had been put into key positions and other members of the elite, to protect their jobs, had become more anxious to implement regime policy faithfully. The law enforcement apparatus had been purged of many corrupt elements and its powers enhanced since Brezhnev's death. Large segments of the public, including both drinkers and nondrinkers, had come to believe that alcohol abuse had gotten out of hand, and they would respond favorably to a program of alcohol control. A campaign against alcohol could also provide a pretext for moving against political opponents, as had the campaign against corruption.

- The campaign would be compatible with, and perhaps necessary to, other parts of Gorbachev's domestic revitalization strategy. It fit in with his overall emphasis on tightening social discipline, strengthening public order, and spurring economic growth. Gorbachev's hopes of boosting GNP growth rates are heavily dependent on improvements in labor productivity. In his speeches, he has emphasized the importance of "human factors" in the economy. He is reportedly especially fearful that drinking at the workplace will impede the introduction of advanced technology into Soviet plants.

- The Consumer Goods and Services Program and the Food Program offered some hope of delivering on the promises for increased alternatives to alcohol as a consumer item and source of satisfaction.

Shape of the Initiative

The alcohol control initiative was initially approved at a Politburo meeting held on 4 April 1985, less than a month after Gorbachev's accession, at which "overcoming the monstrous phenomenon of alcoholism" was labeled a top national priority. On 17 May a Communist Party Central Committee decree declared that the problem of drunkenness had worsened within the country in recent years and called for an intensified struggle against alcoholism. Simultaneously, the USSR Council of Ministers decree set forth a 28-point set of marching orders to implement the program, and the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet enacted a statute significantly stiffening every area of the Soviet legal code dealing with alcohol consumption, sale, and production. A series of further measures, including a tough internal party memorandum and an assertive Central Committee decree in September, have supplemented these initial actions. The main thrust of these measures has been to: initiate a law enforcement crackdown, reduce the availability of alcohol, increase penalties for alcohol offenses, make supervisors responsible for the behavior of their subordinates, expand facilities for treating alcoholics, marshal public opinion through propaganda and citizen organizations, and provide better recreational and consumer alternatives to drinking

Law Enforcement Crackdown. The decrees ordered the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) to organize a struggle against drunkenness in every district of the country. The MVD police were reprimanded for past laxity and were directed to pursue violators aggressively, the Procuracy to prosecute criminal cases more vigorously, and the judiciary to sentence severely. The police were empowered to levy administrative fines and penalties summarily. In Moscow, the militia has begun making late-night sweeps of the streets, sometimes arresting as many as 350 violators a night. The Minister of Internal Affairs reported 15,000 "exposures" of alcohol sales violations and 200 firings of sales clerks in the first six weeks of the campaign.

Persons who are judged to be incorrigible drinkers can be involuntarily committed for one to two years to corrective "therapy and labor rehabilitation centers" administered by the MVD. Capacity of existing camps of this type is to be expanded into a large nationwide network capable of accepting unlimited commitments.

Curtailment of Opportunities To Purchase Alcohol. Sale hours for state alcohol stores have been reduced by four hours—from 1400 to 1900 weekdays. According to the USSR Central Statistical Administration, from June to September the number of shops selling liquor decreased by 52 percent. Liquor outlets have been closed near workplaces, schools, transportation and health facilities, public recreation and vacation sites, and most other areas where people congregate. In major cities as many as two-thirds of liquor outlets have been closed. Liquor sales in many restaurants have ended, even though this was not required by the decrees. At remaining liquor outlets, lines are long and the average wait is one to two hours.

Cutback in Production. The decrees called for a progressive decrease in alcohol production over a number of years, beginning in 1986. But, by the fall of 1985, over 600 state liquor production enterprises had been ordered to convert to other products. The Deputy Food Minister publicly stated in August that beer plants were operating at 75-percent capacity and that a majority of distilleries are to be permanently reoriented to other production. In December [redacted] stated [redacted] that the regime's goal is to cut back the number of vodka distilleries from about 500-600 to 253 as soon as possible. Alcohol production and sales have been removed from trade enterprise targets for 1986. Goals for sugar beet production have been reduced in the 12th Five-Year Plan, according to one Soviet official, partly because the state needed less sugar for alcohol production.

In August, prices for vodka, brandy, and wine were raised by 20 to 30 percent, and the price of beer increased by a lesser amount. Even before the price hike, the average Soviet worker had to work eight times as long as his American counterpart to earn enough money to buy a bottle of liquor. With the price rise, a half liter of vodka costs seven rubles, roughly the equivalent of a day's wages.

Increased Penalties for Violations. Persons who are drunk in public can now be fined 20 to 30 rubles for the first offense, 30 to 50 rubles for the second offense in the same year, and 50 to 100 rubles for additional offenses (the average worker's monthly wage is 185 rubles). Repeat offenders can also be fined 20 percent of their wages for two months and "administratively" jailed for 15 days. Incorrigible alcoholics are to be confined for up to two-year sentences in "treatment-labor camps" where a punitive prisonlike regimen is to be maintained. The MVD is to build more camps to increase the capacity for this kind of confinement.

Serving alcohol at officially authorized parties at work has been strictly forbidden. Workers found drinking or drunk at work can now be fined 30 to 50 rubles. Drunk workers can be deprived of bonuses, and free vacations, and displaced to the bottom of waiting lists for housing. The decrees imply that severe violators can be fired. According to [redacted] said in the fall of 1985 that thousands of people in the capital city of Tallinn had lost their jobs for alcohol offenses (although Soviet media coverage of the campaign does not suggest that dismissals in other areas have assumed such huge proportions;

Fines for drunk driving have been doubled to 100 rubles or the loss of one's driver's license for one to three years. Repeat offenses in the same year carry penalties of one- to two-year prison terms or fines of up to 300 rubles.

The legal drinking age has been raised from 18 to 21. Parents or others getting a minor drunk can be fined or imprisoned. The number of persons so charged with inciting minors to drunkenness has increased 14 times.

Curtailment of Homebrew Production and Sales. An aggressive campaign against illegal distilling is under way. Penalties for making, selling, and purchasing homebrew have been increased. At the outset of the campaign, some 2,500 known homebrew distillers in one province were given warnings, thousands of stills were reported confiscated in raids, and large numbers were voluntarily turned in. The price of yeast—a key ingredient in moonshine—has been raised. Because of the increased risk and expense of producing and marketing samogon, as well as increased demand, the price of illegal alcohol is said to have doubled.

Expanded Treatment of Alcoholics. The antialcohol decrees call on the Ministry of Health to expand and elaborate the network of "narcological" treatment centers covering every city and rural region. These would provide outpatient and inpatient treatment on a fee basis as well as support education programs within enterprises. (Presumably, the existing city and plant-based alcohol treatment centers would be incorporated into this system.) The educational system is to increase the training of staff for these institutions, and the pharmaceutical industry is to supply them with more drugs for treatment. In October 1985 the Peoples' Control Committee reprimanded the Ministry of Health for deficient work in detoxification assistance and rebuked the official responsible for this department.

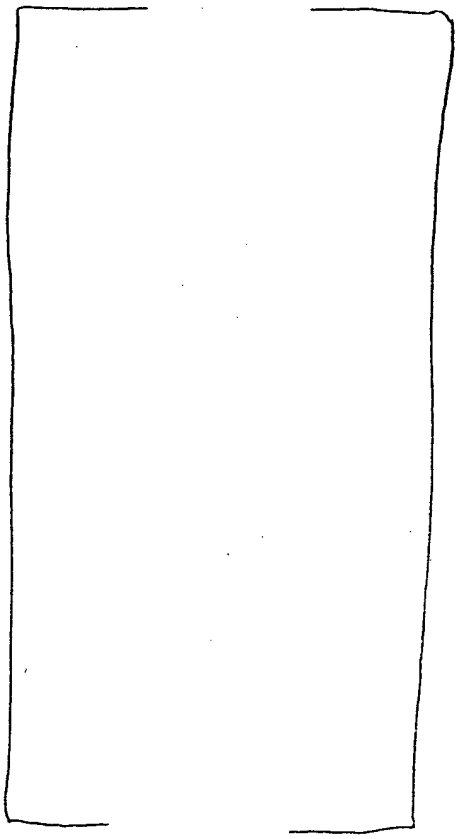
Accountability of Managers and Officials. A key ingredient in the campaign is the principle of executive accountability for results and strict personal compliance by the elite with the antialcohol measures. The decrees stipulate fines and dismissals for factory managers who tolerate drinking by subordinates. Thus, the decrees strike at a major obstacle in enforcing previous antialcohol campaigns—the tacit acceptance by managers of drinking on the job. Especially severe penalties have been established for bosses of drunk drivers.

[redacted] Gorbachev has also put officials on notice that they are required to set an example by strictly abstaining from public drinking. [redacted] reported that the Soviets are not serving alcohol at official functions. As Foreign Minister, Gromyko was unable to get an exemption from this ban, even for diplomatic receptions. [redacted] Moscow has gone so far as to ask the Cubans not to serve liquor to Soviet officials attending Cuban functions. [redacted]

Sobriety in public and moderation in private drinking have become prerequisites for party membership. [redacted] A number of officials have been dismissed from their jobs or received public reprimands either for personal drinking lapses or for failing to enforce the antialcohol measures.

Gorbachev may also have used the alcohol issue as a political weapon against two leaders who have lost their jobs since his accession. [redacted] at the January 1986 Moscow city party conference former Moscow party chief Grishin was criticized for weak implementation of the antialcohol measures. Such reprisals have doubtless had a sobering effect on other senior officials.

Mobilization of Public Opinion. The propaganda apparatus has produced an intense blitz against the evils of alcohol. Educational institutions and mass organizations such as the Komsomol and trade unions have been instructed to intensify antialcohol propaganda. To encourage voluntary participation in the antialcohol campaign, an all-union temperance society and sobriety clubs for reformed alcoholics have been formed. Citizens are being urged to inform authorities about antialcohol violations.



Although, in the past, Soviet media concealed the proportions of the alcohol problem, propagandists now may be exaggerating it to persuade the public that drastic measures are required. At the same time, some propagandists and academics appear to be portraying the crackdown on alcohol abuse as a panacea for problems in Soviet society that actually have multiple causes, some of which the regime would prefer not to acknowledge or deal with directly.

Provision of Alternatives for Amusement and Consumption. The 12th Five-Year Plan (1986-90) is to include construction of more recreation facilities movie theaters, clubs, gyms, and so on. The anti-alcohol decrees call on the Trade Ministry to expand tearooms and family restaurants. Local government and enterprises are to jointly plan recreation facilities in all districts and are authorized to use housing rent proceeds to do so. Attention is to be focused on areas of particular bleakness—rural communities and the newly built-up areas on the outskirts of cities.

The regime has lowered the average price of fruit juice by nearly one-fourth and expanded nonalcoholic "juice bars" in Moscow. Soft drink production, in part through US licenses, is to be expanded. Gosbank has been directed to set up direct deposit procedures into savings accounts (in a society where wages are paid in cash) to reduce payday binges.

In October the regime unveiled a comprehensive Consumer Goods and Services Program. Soviet economic planners have privately stated that this program was considered essential for the success of alcohol control, and a Central Committee resolution in September explicitly acknowledged that both the volume of sales and the quantity of consumer goods must be improved as an alternative to alcohol consumption.

Comparison With Past Campaigns

Many components of Gorbachev's program differ little from measures other Soviet leaderships have taken in the past. Nearly all of the specific offenses spelled out in the decrees have been on the books going back to the 1920s. While the decrees double penalties for most of these offenses, similarly heavy penalties were stipulated for some offenses—such as samogon brewing—in the period from the 1920s through the 1950s. Changes in the number and location of liquor outlets, including directives to close shops near factories, have also been part of previous campaigns.

Nevertheless, the current program contains new elements that, taken together, constitute the most comprehensive attack on alcohol abuse since World War I prohibition:

- Especially noteworthy has been the movement to dismantle a large majority of liquor factories. In none of the earlier campaigns were steps taken to cut back significantly on production capacity for distilled spirits.

- A second unique and critically important feature is the principle of elite accountability. The failure to punish managers and officials for personal violations and lax enforcement was a major deficiency of earlier antialcohol drives.

- The current campaign is more broadly gauged than previous efforts and explicitly acknowledges the linkage between the alcohol problem and popular dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of available consumer goods, and it gives more attention to the need to improve medical and recreational facilities (although so far this part of the program has been put in operation only to a limited degree).

Most important, the current campaign is being executed more vigorously than previous campaigns, reflecting both stronger leadership resolve and stronger support from the public. The leadership's evident commitment to sustain the antialcohol measures and to institutionalize them as a permanent ongoing policy is by far the most striking and significant feature of the current campaign.

Impact on Attitudes and Consumption

The antialcohol campaign has had some initial success, as Gorbachev indicated when he met with US Secretary of Commerce Baldridge in December:

- In the second half of 1985, the Central Statistical Agency reported alcohol sales were down by a quarter from the comparable period of 1984. According to [redacted] reporting as well as Soviet media, public drunkenness has sharply declined in Moscow and many other cities.

- KGB Chief Viktor Chebrikov in his November Revolution Day speech credited the antialcohol measures with a decline in the crime rate, and Secretary Ligachev in a November *Kommunist* article said the percent of crimes that were alcohol related dropped by 16 percent between June and September.

- While the Soviet press has noted some failures in the battle against workplace drinking, drinking on the job has been eliminated in many factories, according to Soviet media and [redacted] This change, together with the discipline campaign, probably contributed to the economy's recovery from its first-quarter slump this year. Gorbachev reportedly told a meeting of Soviet diplomats in October that the antialcohol measures had brought about a decline in industrial accidents and worker absenteeism and had boosted labor productivity.

The campaign has focused the entire country's attention on the alcohol problem. The Central Committee could truthfully say in September that "no member of our society has remained indifferent to the party's efforts to overcome this colossally dangerous evil." [redacted] reporting indicates that the antialcohol initiative has a large constituency of supporters. [redacted] indicate that a significant body of industrious and patriotic workers believe that alcoholism had gotten completely out of control and are grateful to Gorbachev for moving to do something about the situation. Some Soviet polling has indicated that many workers disapprove of their colleagues drinking on the job. Some Soviets, especially career-oriented professionals, have told Western counterparts that they have resolved to reduce their drinking sharply. Various sources have indicated that many Soviet women, in particular, strongly favor the campaign. One local temperance society in July even carried out a public protest that the Gorbachev program did not go far enough.

The Reaction of the Soviet Man in the Street

The following comments of Soviet citizens illustrate the extent to which attitudes about the campaign are polarized. Some citizens are basically positive about the antialcohol measures:

- *An agricultural worker from Central Asia: "It is high time something was done, because here on the state farm 80 persons died last year because of their drinking. We will see if the new law works."*
- *A citizen from a small north Caucacus town: "A strict but very necessary law was put into effect on 7 June. . . . Hard times are dawning for the alcoholics. . . . There are no drunks to be seen, and even our uncle is afraid to go on the street when he is drunk. It is rumored that the vineyard is to be cleared away, which is good because it would be better to grow grain."*
- *An office worker in Moscow: "The propaganda is working and there is a new attitude. . . . Now people look at drunkards on the street in a new way, with disgust."*
- *A resident of a small town in Moldavia: "Because of the crackdown, workers who drink at work can be fined 50 rubles and the factory boss can be fined 100 rubles. Better controls of alcoholic beverages have been necessary for a long time."*

Other citizens are either negative or ambivalent:

- *A resident of Odessa: "The dry law will become effective 1 June 1985. We are very concerned, but we will distill our own alcohol."*
- *A Moscow pensioner waiting in a long line to purchase liquor: "What are they accomplishing here? It's just demagoguery. Only one in a thousand is a drunkard, but we are all made to suffer."*
- *A Leningrad worker: "A worker here who celebrated his 50th birthday became drunk and was fired from his job and kicked out of the party. Everywhere workers are being checked closely for alcohol consumption. . . . People have to hold parties behind locked doors for fear of being arrested."*
- *A Soviet Aeroflot employee: "I think Gorbachev's idea is a good one. Too many people drink too much . . . and that is bad for society. But I don't think the authorities are going about it in the right way. Unfortunately many people are going overboard . . . significantly reducing the number of places where the average Russian can buy his booze. So, people leave work for longer periods of time to stand in longer lines and buy more whenever they can. Being Russians, as soon as they get home they consume all that they bought . . . and miss more work because they are hung over. In the past it seemed to be more spread out. Russians are going to drink no matter how hard the state makes it for them."*
- *A resident of a small town in Kirgizia: "There has been a crackdown on drinking. Nevertheless, drunks abound, and, when the beverage stores open, long lines form. Frequently, the police question those in line concerning their intended use of the alcoholic beverages."*
- *A resident of a small town in Bashkiria: "Those who cannot live without alcohol have found a new source. They buy sweetened condensed milk and they mix it with paint thinner. Many who drink this mixture end up in the hospital."*

Vigorous enforcement of the antialcohol measures, however, is encountering significant resistance from some segments of the public. Fedorchuk has acknowledged a "widespread pattern of evasion." Long lines at liquor stores are reportedly filled with sullen, angry workers defiantly absent from their jobs. [redacted] reported that his colleagues in Moscow told him the militia is nervous and reluctant to arrest these workers or to record their names. When stocks run out or service is slow, resentment of those in queues has sometimes boiled over into violence. According [redacted] reporting, worker disturbances related to the alcohol campaign have been reported in five Soviet cities.

Within society as a whole, many moderate drinkers—irritated by the everyday inconveniences caused by the antialcohol measures—are complaining that the campaign should be limited to attacking excessive rather than "normal" drinking. Not surprisingly, the campaign has led some citizens to turn to illegal suppliers to acquire alcohol, despite the increased penalties and heightened risk of being caught. Many city dwellers immediately sought new liquor sources among taxi drivers, sales clerks, and samogon brewers. The more compulsive or reckless resorted to the old Russian alternative of perfume and industrial fluids, with a resulting increase in poisonings, as reported by *Izvestiya* [redacted] reported hearing a collective farm manager say that peasants on his farm reacted to reduced supplies in state stores simply by brewing and drinking their own liquor

Within the elite, complaints about the antialcohol campaign have focused on three issues:

- A middle-level Soviet official reported that many of his colleagues are concerned that the program is being implemented in a heavyhanded fashion, with too much haste, and without adequate preparation of measures to prevent worker unrest and to provide substitute outlets for popular frustrations. Several other [redacted] report that some officials have privately criticized the program for attacking the symptoms instead of the underlying causes of the alcohol problem.
- Other officials are said to feel personally vulnerable to being accused of drinking offenses. Suspicion of anonymous informers has reportedly increased, as officials fear they may be maliciously denounced by colleagues bearing private grudges.
- [redacted] reports that Soviet economists are worried that the cutback in alcohol production and sales could produce economic problems. The reduction of a major source of state revenue and the disruptions caused by the retooling of liquor plants have probably created considerable distress within the Moscow economic bureaucracy, while some local managers and officials are more directly concerned by the sharp revenue losses of their own enterprises. [redacted] told [redacted] in January 1986 that the economic benefits of reduced industrial accidents had been at least partially offset by the closings of some factories, reduced wages at others, problems in dealing with production of grapes and other fruits and vegetables suitable only for alcohol distilling, and complications in trade relations with Mediterranean countries from which the USSR previously imported large quantities of alcoholic beverages.

High-Level Support for the Program

Despite disgruntlement within the broader elite, the antialcohol initiative appears to maintain the backing of a strong Politburo coalition. Gorbachev himself has strong political reasons for wanting the campaign to succeed: [redacted] indicates that some lower level officials regard the antialcohol measures as a test of his ability to deal effectively with domestic stresses that have worsened in recent years. [redacted] in June 1985, for example, privately expressed the view that if Gorbachev could overcome the alcohol problem this would impress on the United States that the new leadership is capable of solving other internal problems.

The central core of Gorbachev's allies on the Politburo—Secretary Ligachev, Premier Ryzhkov, KGB Chairman Chebrikov, and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze—probably also support the antialcohol initiative. Some leaders not allied with Gorbachev may also favor the campaign—such as Kazakh party boss Kunayev who as a Muslim does not represent a "constituency" of heavy drinkers. Three Politburo members (Chebrikov, Shevardnadze, and First Deputy Premier Aliyev) have been closely identified with a tough law-and-order policy in recent years. Two members (Chebrikov and People's Control Chairman Solomentsev) have current responsibilities that give them a vested interest in advancing programs that expand the role of the apparatus responsible for law enforcement and elite discipline. Two others (Ligachev and Ryzhkov) have backgrounds in supervising the economy, which doubtless make them cognizant of the connection between alcohol abuse and low labor productivity.[1]

Among Politburo supporters of the campaign, however, there appears to be uncertainty or disagreement over how far to carry it. Gorbachev's objectives appear limited to curtailing the worst alcohol abuses that are most damaging to the economy and the society [redacted]

Probably realistic enough to realize that he cannot move Soviet society very far in the direction of sobriety, he has publicly ruled out passing a dry law, saying that this approach has not justified itself in any country. Gorbachev has been observed to be a moderate drinker. [redacted]

But Ligachev is evidently pushing the antialcohol campaign harder than Gorbachev and defining its goals in a more sweeping fashion. Some Western press reporting indicates that Ligachev, said to be an abstainer, is playing a key role in directing the anti-alcohol policy. [redacted] indicates he is demanding not simply more "cultured" drinking but, also the adoption of a "sober way of life." Such a maximal approach to the alcohol problem is consistent with Ligachev's reputation as a promoter of "puritanical" measures to purify the system and to tighten discipline.

Some regime pronouncements have espoused similarly ambitious goals, perhaps reflecting Ligachev's influence. The September Central Committee resolution, for example, stated that "the campaign for sobriety is only just beginning" and "must continuously and consistently be expanded." Moreover, some actions taken so far—especially the cutback in production of soft liquors such as wine and beer, instead of promoting these as alternatives to vodka—suggest an effort to curtail drinking generally, rather than to encourage a shift to less damaging types of alcohol. Some localities, presumably with Moscow's sanction, have established "dry zones" on an experimental basis. Soviet media report that a top Ministry of Health official has been censured for urging "sensible moderation" in drinking instead of taking a more aggressive stance.

To a certain extent, the maximal character of the campaign in action doubtless reflects the Soviet style of implementing high-priority policy initiatives. In the typical Soviet campaign, the regime often engages in excesses or overkill in its effort to achieve full mobilization to attain a sharp, immediate impact. Gorbachev may even think it politically expedient to have Ligachev drawing the fire on such an issue. But the disparity between the goals enunciated in the original decrees in May and the escalation of the campaign since then may reflect some tension within the leadership about objectives and tactics.

In contrast to strong support at the center, reporting indicates considerable regional resistance in implementing the antialcohol measures. Although in many areas strict enforcement is the rule, [redacted] have observed lax enforcement in other localities. In January, *Izvestiya* reported that investigative

[1] Former MVD Chief Fedorchuk, judging from his speeches, would also seem to have been a supporter of the campaign. His removal in January, however, suggests the possibility that he has been held responsible for shortcomings in police enforcement of the campaign

raids into three Russian provincial areas—Perm', Arkhangel'sk, and Kuibyshev—revealed that the campaign's momentum appeared to be "drying up" and lambasted local officials for attempting to "sabotage" the campaign while hiding behind a facade of formalistic compliance. Other Soviet newspaper articles have criticized shortcomings in enforcement elsewhere in the Russian Republic—including Novgorod, Bryansk, and Vladimir.

In general, regional lapses in enforcement probably merely reflect tension between policymakers in Moscow and lower level operatives saddled with the onerous burden of carrying out a policy that taxes local resources and provokes popular complaints. But, in one case, local noncompliance may reflect resistance to the program, or to Gorbachev himself, within the Politburo. [redacted] in the Ukraine have observed substantial noncompliance in that republic, where party boss Shcherbitskiy has reportedly been at odds with Gorbachev on a number of issues. A recently published report of a Ukrainian Central Committee discussion of the antialcohol campaign gave unusual emphasis to the upgrading of consumer alternatives and neglected the law enforcement thrust of the campaign—perhaps suggesting a desire among Ukrainian officials to deemphasize punitive aspects of the campaign.

There are also reports of lax enforcement in the Caucasus republics of Georgia and Armenia. It is possible that the regime is not attempting to push the campaign as hard in these republics because alcohol abuse is less of a problem than in the Slavic republics. But speeches of officials from these republics, where the Soviet wine industry is centered, indicate that economic adjustments necessitated by the campaign are creating hardship for some localities, and these difficulties may have given rise to local evasion.

Maintaining Momentum

In coming months the regime will be confronted with serious challenges as it attempts to consolidate and expand its successes in the antialcohol campaign. The decreased availability and increased price of state-supplied alcohol has increased incentives for black marketing and corruption. Although the regime's increased vigilance against illegal alcohol dealers so far appears to have had some deterrent effect, black-market networks are beginning to adjust to increased public demand for samogon. With illegal liquor selling for two to three times the state price, private operators will certainly move in to fill at least some of the gap in state supplies. The bribes offered to officials who cooperate with illegal traders will undoubtedly increase. Not only the antialcohol policy, but also the regime's campaigns to curtail corruption and shore up law and order, will be tested by the increased profitability of trafficking in illegal alcohol.

The antialcohol measures have also increased the chances of spontaneous outbreaks of protest, especially among factory and construction workers who are among the heaviest drinkers and who regard the right to drink as part of the implicit social contract between state and society. The threat of industrial disorder will increase if Gorbachev moves to adopt other policy changes under discussion—such as a more differentiated wage structure or incentives or requirements for managers to fire redundant labor—that would jeopardize worker benefits and job security.

Decreased purchases of alcohol will increase the surplus of money chasing an inadequate supply of consumer goods, which could have a strong inflationary effect. Gorbachev must find a means of soaking up excess purchasing power and of making up the budgetary deficit created by declining liquor sales. The hike in liquor prices announced in August will facilitate the economic readjustment, but other measures may also be necessary. Price increases or currency reforms are available options in theory, but such measures would be politically difficult in practice. They would require the regime to remove subsidies on basic commodities that the population has come to take for granted

These challenges will severely test the leadership's commitment. The possibility cannot be excluded that societal tensions will mount to the point of pressuring the regime to abandon the campaign altogether. (C NF)

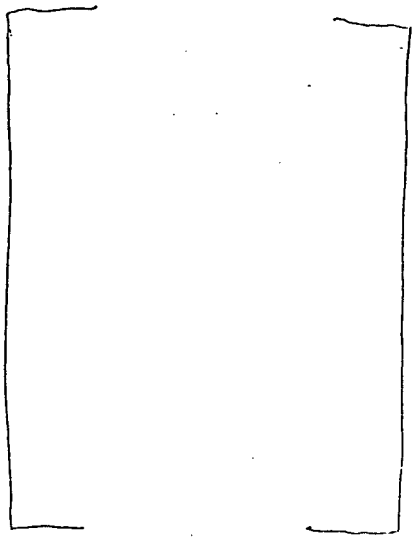


Figure 3. Soviet Samogon Production a Kitchen Handicraft—Schematic of an Apparatus
Translation:—Are we brewing?—Of course not! We're turning it back into sugar . . .

On balance, however, there is a reasonably good chance that the regime will be able to sustain the antialcohol campaign at its current level for some time. The Gorbachev program commands broader support than any previous Soviet campaign against alcohol. Although Gorbachev recognizes there are major limits to his ability to effect social changes, he also knows that many Soviets believe vigorous initiatives in domestic policy are long overdue, that his allies and clients constitute a majority on the Politburo, and that the personnel changes he has made so far have increased the incentive of lower level officials to heed Moscow's directives.

Given continued leadership resolve and intelligent management of the campaign, the regime has an opportunity to realize what appear to be its minimal objectives: sharply curtailing public drunkenness, drinking on the job, drunk driving, and conspicuous alcohol consumption by elites. Such an achievement could have a significant effect on labor productivity, result in lower crime and mortality rates, and improve family life in general

If the leadership attempts to move beyond these minimal objectives to pursue a prohibition program, it will surely fail. Public opinion strongly opposes a policy of abstinence. One study conducted by Soviet sociologists in 1985 indicated that 97 percent of those surveyed approved moderate drinking. Another Soviet poll in 1982 found that 90 percent of the women and 95 percent of the men questioned were opposed to prohibition. A prohibition policy would alienate the public at large, lead to pervasive citizen defiance, and overwhelm the capacity of the police to enforce the law. Even if the leadership embarked on a course of extreme repression—sharply expanding police powers and personnel, extending and systematizing networks of citizen informers, rationing sugar—the barriers to eradicating drinking altogether would be insurmountable. In particular, it would be impossible to monitor and control samogon consumption effectively.

Political Implications for Gorbachev

The stakes in the antialcohol campaign are high for Gorbachev personally. He has set for himself the ambitious objective of reviving Soviet socialism—by revitalizing the economy, the society, the ideology, and the party itself. Sustaining the antialcohol campaign at its current level would reinforce other measures he is taking to shore up public and elite confidence in the system, demonstrating that the leadership had the will to tackle difficult problems and that the days of regime inertia under Brezhnev were over. Achieving the minimal objectives of the campaign would also facilitate the achievement of Gorbachev's goals in particular areas—law enforcement, labor discipline, and economic productivity. Gains in controlling the alcohol problem would give Gorbachev a political boost even if they proved impossible to sustain over the long haul.

If the antialcohol measures produce widespread social unrest or lead to large-scale removals of culpable officials, private grumbling within the elite could expand into politically dangerous opposition to the campaign. Under these circumstances, Gorbachev would probably be able to back away from the campaign without losing face altogether. He has allowed Ligachev to assume a prominent public role in

promoting the campaign, and Ligachev's close identification with the drive against alcohol would probably enable Gorbachev to deflect some of the blame for failure. Gorbachev would not need to renounce the campaign publicly but would probably distance himself from its excesses, by claiming they were the consequence of overzealous party operatives, and allow the campaign to wind down. Past Soviet leaders have used this tactic to change unpopular policies. Thus, Stalin slowed down collectivization in the 1930s by publicly expressing regret that lower officials had become so "dizzy with success" as to resort to extreme measures.

Nevertheless, Gorbachev would not be able to escape political damage if the campaign failed. Soviet elites and many Soviet citizens are paying close attention to Gorbachev's early policy initiatives, some of them hopeful that he will be able to deliver on his promises, some of them skeptical that he will turn out to be much different from his predecessors. If the campaign dies, Gorbachev's reputation for tough and effective leadership will suffer. Popular respect for him will decline and lower level elites will be given a signal that directives from Moscow can, in some cases, be evaded.