



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on September 2, 2010

Russian Govt Tries to Reduce Alcohol Consumption

There is no doubt that excessive consumption of alcohol was a critical health problem in the Soviet Union. Trapped in a grim purgatory empire, the serfs of socialism had few outlets for human expression and drinking provided one of the few means of escaping the endless rhetoric of Marxist paradise so contrary to everyday experience. The realm of Putin, the KGB officer, and his henchmen continues to inspire ordinary Russians to seek solace in vodka.



Like Soviet bureaucrats before him, the leadership of Russia is attempting to mitigate the damage of binge drinking by prohibiting the sale of alcohol after 10:00 p.m. Though the curfew will not apply to cafes or bars and will affect only strong drink, it already is drawing criticism. Vadim Drobiz, Director of the Center for the Study of Federal and Regional Markets for Alcohol, argues that the benefits of limiting the sale of alcohol are myths. Sweden and Finland, he notes, have tried to limit the sale of alcohol, and yet sales in Sweden have risen by 70 percent and alcoholism among women has increased six-fold in the last 10 years.

Drobiz, a libertarian, argues that state control over the sale of alcohol ends up having a counter-productive effect. Homemade brew, just as was the case during the American Prohibition Era, is a consequence of state overregulation. This product, Samogon, is actually more expensive than manufactured alcohol, and it is also more likely to be distilled under unsafe and unhealthy conditions.

Alcoholism, like so many other vices, seems to be relatively immune to statist cures. Yet these vices are handled effectively in societies all over the world. Orthodox Jews, although enjoined to drink (and enjoy) wine as part of religious services, have very low rates of alcoholism. Roman Catholics from Latin parts of Europe also drink, as a matter of faith, and yet have lower rates of alcoholism than the general population of America. Mormons, as a matter of faith, do not consume any alcohol, and that voluntary system of abstinence works well. Private associations like Alcoholics Anonymous are credited with curing alcoholism through a combination of mutual support and faith.

Vices like alcoholism are the plague of mankind and have roots which stretch deeply into biblical history. Yet vice is notoriously hard to end by government fiat. On the other hand, an appeal to the moral compass and ethical foundations of a people — reliance, in the case of our nation, on the Judeo-



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Christian bedrock of our value system — works wonders. When people seek a cure for social problems in draconian statutes and hive-like bureaucracies, they find no cure and are saddled with bigger, costlier government as well. When enough people turn to faith and to conscience, then many social problems shrink to insignificance.



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