

The alcohol misuse in Russia is well known; but there is a tendency to exaggerate it, which is evident for inside observers. The exaggeration tends to veil shortcomings of the health care, with responsibility for the low life expectancy especially among men (Zatonski & Bhala, 2012) shifted onto the patients, that is, self-inflicted diseases caused by excessive alcohol. During the 1990s,

veterans. There are however misgivings that the veteran status, which gives considerable advantages in the everyday life and health care, has been awarded gratuitously to some individuals from the privileged milieu.

alcohol was massively transported to

Russia from Georgia; the author observed a huge line of tank-lorries queuing at the border. We do not know, from where this alcohol came to Georgia - it was said that it had been imported from other countries. This alcohol was used for manufacturing not only of vodka but also of other beverages including wine. The Caucasus has been known as a nationwide source of cheap alcohol. It is a well known fact in Russia that legally sold alcoholic beverages often caused up to severe and lethal intoxications. The following absolute numbers of cases of lethal poisoning with alcohol-containing fluids were reported: 1998 – 21,800, 1999 – 24,100, 2000 – 27,200; another increase of lethal poisonings was in 2006 (Pelipas & Miroshnichenko, 2011). The unrecorded figures were certainly much higher, as many cases with undiagnosed diseases, unnatural causes of death including poisonings (Pelipas & Miroshnichenko, 2013a) arguments, certain policies contributed to the high mortality

among workers, paupers, and other social groups. Considering that younger generations drink visibly less today, some people name it parricide (Jargin, 2014); certainly, it is a matter of definition, how to name the policies predictably causing enhanced mortality. Apart from alcohol, limited availability of modern health care is an obvious cause of the relatively low life expectancy in Russia especially among men, who are visibly underrepresented among visitors of governmental policlinics. In the author's opinion, it would be no exaggeration to speak about sexism in Russian health care today. Middle-aged and elderly men are sometimes visibly disadvantaged if they are not war

The per capita alcohol consumption has tended to decrease since approximately the last decade (Neufeld & Rehm, 2013). The heavy binge drinking was reported to decline in Moscow and St Petersburg (Perlman, 2010), which agrees with our observations. A similar tendency has also been noticed in some rural areas and small towns, favored by the immigration from the regions with less widespread alcohol consumption, or explained by the fact that local alcoholics have “died out” with fewer successors. During the Soviet period and shortly afterwards, many inebriated persons could be observed in public places. There are not so many heavily drunk people in the streets today. Consumption of vodka and fortified wines has been partly replaced by beer (WHO, 2011) contributing to a decline in the heavy binge drinking pattern. Moreover, the incidence of alcoholism and of alcohol psychoses was reported to have decreased since approximately 2005 (Koshkina et al., 2013).

All said, the conclusion is cautiously optimistic: Russia has made a step from her alcoholic past. However, there is still a need to prevent the human right violations of people suffering from alcoholism and alcohol-related dementia, aimed at appropriation of their residences, other property, etc. (Jargin, 2010b) Unfortunately, we have but to agree with Avtonomov (2014) that alcoholics in Russia have been those “who can be disdained, rejected, hated and persecuted, legally and without sense of guilt” (Figure 1). In conclusion, among the causes of the relatively high mortality especially among men in Russia, not clearly perceptible from the literature, are the limited availability of modern health care, and toxicity of some legally sold alcoholic beverages, acknowledging that there has been a tendency of quality improvement of sold alcohol since approximately the last decade.

REFERENCES

- Avtonomov, D.A. (2014). The contribution of A.R. Dovzhenko to Russian narcology. *Narkologiya*, 10, 94-103. (in Russian)
- Davydov, M.I., Zaridze, D.G., Lazarev, A.F., Maksimovich, D.M., Igitov, V.I., Boroda, A.M., et al. (2007). Analysis of mortality in Russian population.