AA as a foreign religious cult) have resisted. A St. Petersburg program claims that 45 percent of its more than 500 patients have stayed sober for at least a year—a very impressive figure, Critchlow says, but the mathematics of alcoholism is daunting.

As the AA movement spreads in the next 10 years, she calculates, it may be able to help perhaps 35,000 alcoholics at most. "Ultimately," Critchlow concludes, "any broad-scale solution . . . must come from within Russian society."

The Country of Laughter and Forgetting

"Czech Malaise and Europe" by Matthew Rhodes, in *Problems of Post-Communism* (Mar.–Apr. 2000), George Washington Univ., Inst. for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies, 2013 G St., N.W., Ste. 401, Washington, D.C. 20052.

After the Velvet Revolution toppled Czechoslovakia's communist government in 1989, and an amicable agreement four years later to split the country in two, the Czech Republic appeared to be on a bright track. Faced with the daunting task of recovering from 40 years of oppression and economic stagnation, the country's leaders, notably Prime Minister Václav Klaus, seemed to be creating a model of postcommunist reform. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) invited the Czech Republic to join, and European Union (EU) membership seemed a foregone conclusion. But then, in 1997, says Rhodes, professor of international security studies at the United States Air War College, "the 'Czech miracle' collapsed." Klaus's Civic Democratic Party lost its majority following a series of bank failures and financial scandals. Foreign investment dwindled, a minority government took over, and EU membership became a distant prospect. What went wrong?

Though the economic downturn began before the minority government headed by Milos Zeman, of the Czech Social Democratic Party, took office, government austerity measures have pushed the Social Democrats' public approval ratings below 20 percent. This has made it harder to advance the party's expressly "pro-Europe" goals, says Rhodes.

Zeman campaigned in 1998 by "combining support for NATO membership with a call for a national referendum on the issue," Rhodes notes. But the referendum idea was abandoned in the face of "intense opposition . . . from the other mainstream parties, as well as the quiet disapproval of NATO officials," and NATO membership became a reality in March 1999. Less than a fortnight later, however, popular Czech support for joining the alliance, never strong, evaporated when air strikes against Yugoslavia in support of the Kosovar Albanians commenced. The Czech government gave NATO forces access to Czech territory and airbases, but Zeman denounced the supporters of the bombing as "primitive troglodytes," and claimed the attack had been planned before Czech admission to the alliance.

Meanwhile, popular support for membership in the EU has dropped from 80 percent in the early 1990s to around 40 percent, despite predictions that isolation could cost the country $6 billion in EU aid over six years. Many Czechs have been put off by the EU's corruption, its trade policies, and its criticisms of their government's efforts to alter Czech laws and institutions to fit EU requirements.

"Many disillusioned Czechs have come to view their country's political machinations with indifference," notes Rhodes. As some see it, the recent complications in ties with the West are "just the latest manifestation of the Czech national tradition of giving perfunctory external obeisance to dominant great powers while inwardly seeking to preserve their own traditions and pursue quiet, provincial lives." It's an approach in keeping with the anarchistic spirit of the famous Czech novelist Jaroslav Hašek's *Good Soldier Schweik* (1920–23), and it may "have served Czechs well under the Hapsburgs, Nazis, and Soviets," Rhodes says. But he fears that without firm leadership by a strong national government committed to the European idea, the Czech Republic may be fated for "marginalization in 21st-century Europe."