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# Bonbons and Bolsheviks: The Stigmatization of Chocolate in Revolutionary Russia

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## **Bonbons and Bolsheviks: The Stigmatization of Chocolate in Revolutionary Russia**

Food was an especially important site for ideological and cultural struggle in the early Soviet period, a time when many Russians had just experienced – and, in many cases, were still experiencing – widespread hunger, malnutrition, famine, and starvation. The way food is perceived and represented in a culture usually serves to refract a society's larger discourses, helping us to decipher the broader meaning of contemporary events and developments. In the instance of revolutionary Russia, as I will argue in this essay, the literary and artistic representation of chocolate – as a food symbol in which larger political, ideological and cultural values are inscribed – reflects how the official Party attitude toward this luxury food item changed rather dramatically during the first two decades of Bolshevik rule. In the immediate aftermath of the October 1917 Revolution, zealous and idealistic Communists, inspired in part by the ascetic model provided by Lenin himself, condemned chocolate as a decadent luxury item that they associated closely with the self-indulgent consumerism and egoistic, philistine way of life enjoyed by their hated class enemy, the bourgeoisie. With the onset of Stalin's cultural revolution in the late 1920s and early 1930s, however, chocolate suddenly became transformed into a positive symbol of the economic prosperity, material abundance, and cultural progress that the building of socialism, it was claimed, had finally achieved in Soviet Russia. My essay will explore some of the reasons not just for the initial Bolshevik stigmatization of chocolate, but also for this dramatic turn around in the way chocolate was perceived subsequently by the Stalinist leadership. The focus will be centered mainly on the way chocolate was represented in works of Soviet literature during both decades.

## **Chocolate in Russia: From the Tsars to the Commissars**

One reason why indulgence in chocolate was generally looked upon with deep suspicion, if not outright disdain and overt condemnation, during the early years of Bolshevik rule in revolutionary Russia is the country's cultural-historical legacy from tsarist days. The Russian Orthodox Church, which preached a neo-Platonic asceticism that denigrated physical pleasures as a serious hindrance to spiritual development and moral well-being, imposed strict dietary restrictions upon the Russian people. As Leonid Heretz has shown in his study of the practice and significance of fasting in Russian peasant culture, nearly half of the dates in the calendar year were fast days, during which time Orthodox believers were expected to forego certain foods as a means of penitence and purification, hoping to control their bodily appetites – especially carnal lust – and subordinate them to the concerns of the spirit. Fasting, Heretz explains, was “directed toward taming the sexual aspect of human nature, not only by enjoining periodic celibacy but also by restricting the consumption of what are seen as the fuels of sexual desire.”<sup>1</sup> Many scholars believe that this Russian Orthodox hostility toward the body – and especially toward such sensual pleasures as eating and sex – profoundly influenced and decisively shaped the moral and cultural consciousness of the Russian people.<sup>2</sup> Long before Lenin and the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917, the national stereotype, promulgated quite vociferously by many Slavophiles in nineteenth-century Russia, held that the people of holy Russia possess a deeply spiritual nature and an inherent concern for the soul (*dukhovnost*) that the more secularized and materialistic people in modern Europe and America generally lacked.<sup>3</sup> Such traditional indigenous institutions as autocratic rule, serfdom, and Eastern Orthodoxy may well have contributed directly to making Russia a relatively backward, if not medieval, country in terms of material, political and scientific progress, especially when compared to some of its more

advanced neighbors in the West. At the same time, however, so the Slavophiles argued, these distinctively Russian institutions contributed to the preservation of spiritual and moral values that were fast disappearing elsewhere in the modern world. According to this Slavophilic conceptualization of their cultural history and national identity, Russians lived more for the spirit, than for the flesh; they sought to nourish their souls, rather than simply fill their bellies or stimulate their palates.

The novels of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and other giants of nineteenth-century Russian literature are replete with fictional characters from the Russian common folk (*narod*) who embody this strong native sense of spiritual and moral integrity. Quite frequently they appear in the guise of idealized peasants – such as Dostoevsky’s Makar Dolgoruky (*The Adolescent*) and Tolstoy’s Platon Karataev (*War and Peace*) – who have not yet been morally compromised through broad exposure to Western capitalistic practices and bourgeois materialistic values. Nineteenth-century Russian novels are likewise filled with memorable portrayals of decadent members of a highly westernized privileged class (such as Stiva Oblonsky in Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*) who appear to have sold their Russian souls for the pleasures of the flesh.<sup>4</sup> Tolstoy, in particular, responded with great alarm to the significant broadening of access he was witnessing during his lifetime to the material privileges that had traditionally been the exclusive domain of the aristocracy in tsarist Russia. The Age of Reform, ushered in with the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, had spurred the growth of a burgeoning middle class and had prompted the development of a consumer society whose members, by century’s end, were eager to share in the bounty of a newly found material affluence.<sup>5</sup> The first condition for a morally good life, Tolstoy repeatedly insisted during his later years, was to abstain from corporeal – and especially gastronomical – pleasures. In his essay, “The First Step” (1892), for instance, he lamented the

disturbing fact that gluttony was fast becoming “the primary aim” and “the chief pleasure” in people’s lives, not only for the wealthiest people in Russian society, but for the poorest as well.<sup>6</sup> Even destitute working-class people, Tolstoy sadly noted, were seeking to follow the pernicious example provided by the decadent gentry class: they, too, were seeking to acquire “the tastiest and sweetest foods” and “to eat and drink as much as they can.”<sup>7</sup> The primary, fundamental, and most widespread ailment plaguing people in fin-de-siècle Russia, Tolstoy asserted, was “gluttony – that is, gourmandism and worship of the belly.”<sup>8</sup>

Tolstoy’s fear that an increase in consumer desire would lead to a sharp decline in moral and spiritual values may well be somewhat exaggerated, but it is worth noting that during the period of rapid and intense embourgeoisement that occurred between 1875 and 1894 chocolate consumption skyrocketed in Russia: from 6,000 to 180,000 pounds per year (a 3000% increase).<sup>9</sup> One of the pioneers of chocolate production and sales in nineteenth-century Russia was an entrepreneurial merchant named Grigory Borman, who in 1862 founded a chocolate factory and retail store on Nevsky Prospect in St. Petersburg. Borman’s company, which was honored in 1876 with the title of official supplier of confectionery items for the tsar (this granted it the right to depict the state emblem of the Russian empire on its labels) and which was awarded three gold medals in 1878 at the World Exhibition in Paris, opened a second chocolate factory – equipped with the very latest and most modern equipment – in Kharkhov in 1896.<sup>10</sup> Another enterprising and highly successful *chocolatier* in tsarist Russia was Theodore Von Einem, a German national who had come to Moscow in 1850 in hopes of starting his own business. A year later he managed to organize a small shop on the Arbat that produced chocolates and candies. In 1857, Von Einem met his future business partner, Julius Heuss, a skillful entrepreneur. Together they opened a confectionery store on Teatralnaia Square that provided them with the capital they

needed to import modern equipment from Europe and construct a state-of-the-art chocolate factory on the banks of the Moscow River in 1867. The Einem chocolate factory boasted not only a workers' dormitory and a cafeteria for its employees, but also a pension plan and a school for their children. Having been awarded the Grand Prix at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1900, the Einem chocolate company became the official supplier at the court of his majesty the Emperor in 1913. Nationalized early in 1918, immediately following the Bolshevik Revolution, it was renamed initially State Confectionery Factory No. 1, and then, a few years later (in 1922), the Red October chocolate factory.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the Borman and Einem chocolate enterprises, several other confectionery magnates – including A. I. Abrikosov and Sons and A. Siu and Company – appeared in late imperial Russia.

From a Marxist-Leninist perspective, the steep rise in chocolate consumption in late nineteenth-century Russia could be said to serve as a measure of the growing size and ascendancy of the country's bourgeois class, with its concomitant fetishization of creature comforts, on the eve of the October Revolution. When Lenin and his Bolshevik cohorts finally did come to power in 1917, their concern was more with bread, however, than with chocolate. Indeed, they were faced with the serious challenge of finding effective ways to redress the severe food shortages that had resulted from chronic mismanagement on the part of both the tsarist regime and then the provisional government near the end of World War I, when bread riots were increasingly taking place in Moscow, Petrograd, and other major cities, and food rationing finally had to be introduced.<sup>12</sup> Instances of hunger, malnutrition, and starvation multiplied during the ensuing Civil War (1918-1921), as the Soviet government was forced to initiate the compulsory requisitioning of foodstuffs in order to be able to provision the Red Army adequately in its battle against the counter-revolutionary activities of White Guard forces. The terrible

material privations that the Russian populace suffered during these years, under the dictatorial, non-market policy of “War Communism,” were somewhat ameliorated by the New Economic Policy. Introduced in 1921, NEP was designed to provide a temporary relaxation of the government’s centralized command and control over the production and distribution of goods in an attempt to revive the flagging economy. In many ways, it did manage to stabilize the economy and resolve the food crisis. At the same time, however, it succeeded in widening the growing gap between rich and poor, allowing for a greater impoverishment of the working masses, since it was primarily the entrepreneurial few – such as the bands of private traders and unscrupulous speculators who came to be known pejoratively as “Nepmen” – that managed to derive much of the benefit from the temporary increases in consumer goods.

### **Revolutionary Russia: Stigmatizing Chocolate as a Bourgeois Indulgence**

At this historical juncture, as Soviet Russia was moving from the sacrifices of War Communism to the moral and ideological corruptions of NEP in the early 1920s, chocolate became even more closely associated with – if not, in fact, directly emblematic of – a level of bourgeois comfort, material well-being, and sensual depravity that was highly inappropriate for, even offensive to, proletarian sensibilities and Bolshevik values. Moreover, as the country struggled to rebuild its economic infrastructure and industrial capacity after the devastations of World War I and the Civil War, chocolate was increasingly identified as a decadent luxury food item that was imported from abroad, rather than produced at home, and that was likely to be consumed by the privileged few, not by the starving masses. In Alexander Blok’s famous narrative poem set in the immediate wake of the October Revolution, *The Twelve* (*Dvenadtsat’*, 1919), for example,

one of the soldiers in the Red Guard detachment shoots his turncoat ex-girlfriend, Katya, who had recently abandoned the revolutionary cause and slept with members of the bourgeoisie (the proletariat's main class enemy), accepting their material gifts in return for her sexual favors. She is castigated for wearing lace and furs and for "devouring Mignon chocolate," all of which serve as unambiguous emblems of the "sweet life" of material privilege she was enjoying by consorting with the enemy.<sup>13</sup> Throughout the NEP period, indulgence in chocolate was associated mainly with those opportunistic Soviet citizens who were now beginning to derive benefit from the excesses possible with the relaxation of government controls over the economy. Citing such films as *Aelita* (1924), *The Prostitute* (*Prostitutka*, 1927), and *House in the Snow Drifts* (*Dom v sugrobakh*, 1928), Eric Naiman notes that Soviet cinema in the 1920s "routinely depicted Nepmen and Nepwomen gorging themselves on rich, sweet foods," such as chocolate.<sup>14</sup> For the young Soviet writer Andrei Platonov, who continued to cherish the utopian dreams and the rhetoric of sacrifice and sublimation that prevailed under War Communism, "NEP" (actually, "NEPO," the original acronym) was a word that reminded him of "chocolate perfumed with cheap pomade."<sup>15</sup> In Iurii Olesha's famous children's story, *The Three Fat Men* (*Tri tolstiaka*, 1924), meanwhile, the tyrannical rule of a soon-to-be-deposed oligarchy of the "wealthy" and the "gluttonous" is exemplified gastronomically by a huge confectionery kitchen located on the palace grounds. A special holiday cake that is being prepared there is described as "a kingdom of chocolate and oranges, pomegranates and whipped cream, candied fruit, powdered sugar and jam."<sup>16</sup> This luxurious confectionery kingdom is strictly off limits to the common people of the realm, of course, who are left to starve as the privileged ruling triumvirate, "which has no greater care than to watch their bellies grow," batters at the expense of the hungry, poverty-stricken populace.<sup>17</sup>



The bourgeois aura of socio-economic exclusivity and sensual indulgence that surrounded chocolate during these revolutionary years is captured most memorably in Aleksandr Tarasov-Rodionov's novel, *Shokolad* (1922). This early work of proletarian fiction reads as a cautionary tale about a Cheka official, named Zudin, whose life and career are fatally derailed as a result of his failure to appreciate fully the powerful and destructive allure of chocolate. The enticing charms of this sweet confection are personified in Elena Val'ts, a seductive ballet dancer-turned-prostitute and White Guard sympathizer, whom he hires to work as a member of his secretarial staff at the local Cheka headquarters and who subsequently attempts (unsuccessfully) to seduce her new boss with her sexual charms.<sup>18</sup> In an early episode that is key for the novel's subsequent plot development, Val'ts gives Zudin's wife and two young children a gift of nearly twenty pounds of tasty chocolate ("real imported chocolate," his wife points out), which, it turns out, she herself had received as a token of affection from her lover, Edward Hackey, a British spy in the diplomatic service who had been stationed in Soviet Russia.<sup>19</sup> This gift of chocolate is later considered to have been one of several bribes that Zudin is alleged to have accepted from counterrevolutionary elements; as a result, the Cheka officer is arrested, interrogated, and sentenced to be executed for his putative crimes. During his interrogation, Zudin tries to explain why he hired an obvious class enemy like Val'ts in the first place. "I thought that an honest job would help to get her back on her feet as a human being, and would help her to shake off the cobwebs of the despicable bourgeois mode of life," he explains. "But apparently I made a mistake: chocolate proved to be stronger."<sup>20</sup> It is only to be expected that a petit-bourgeois, White Guard sympathizer like Elena Val'ts would succumb to the enticements of chocolate, considered as a source of bourgeois comfort. It becomes especially troubling, however, when a dedicated Bolshevik like Zudin, despite his protestations to the contrary, is now

likewise suspected of having compromised his moral integrity and ideological purity by indulging in chocolate and in the “sweet” bourgeois life of moral and ideological laxity that it symbolizes. Although he has always strived to maintain what he calls “proletarian standards” of ethical conduct, Zudin now realizes that the mere appearance of ethical misconduct on his part may well be enough to discredit both him in particular (as a Bolshevik leader) and the Party in general (as a guiding force for implementing the changes promised by the Revolution).<sup>21</sup>

During his incarceration, Zudin experiences two allegorical dreams that reflect graphically the moral, political and ideological stigma that chocolate had come to acquire in revolutionary Russia. In the first dream, Zudin encounters a gigantic old peasant who is going hungry because his bread has been taken away from him, eaten up by his landlord as well as by taxes. Zudin preaches to the peasant the necessity of sharing his last piece of bread with the workers in order to free himself from both masters and merchants. But after the peasant breaks his last remaining crust of bread in two and gives Zudin the larger portion, the bread cannot fit into the latter’s pocket because it is already filled by a huge, fragrant piece of chocolate. “What’s this?” exclaims the peasant. “You’ve deceived me?! . . . You’ve taken my last piece of bread when you already have bonbons!”<sup>22</sup> Confused and embarrassed, Zudin tries to continue walking forward, but finds that he keeps falling down into the mud. “He was covered all over with a sticky brown mass,” the narrator observes. “Was it clay? Or was it chocolate?”<sup>23</sup> Zudin suddenly awakens, startled by this disquieting dream, and asks himself: “Really, what is this damned chocolate, this chocolate that follows me so stubbornly and annoyingly? Where did it come from?”<sup>24</sup> The answers to these two troubling questions seem to be provided by a second dream that visits upon him. In it, Zudin visualizes himself as a young man in a tsarist-era factory run by a fat, puffy industrialist who, Zudin is told, “can import chocolate for next to nothing from negroes in

exchange for brass gods and glass beads, or even, you know, simply take it from them for nothing.”<sup>25</sup> The dream scene then shifts suddenly to a rather primitive colonialist sweatshop somewhere in the undeveloped world where scantily clad negro workers are slaving over hot kettles in which bean pods are being melted down into cocoa. Their labor is being closely monitored by a handful of white men who are carrying whips and revolvers. Zudin attempts to raise the consciousness of these black workers as well, urging them to rise up against their imperialist white masters and cease to do their bidding. The negroes are overjoyed to hear that Zudin, unlike the other “avaricious slave drivers from the North,” is a white man who is not seeking to exploit them. “So you mean to say that you are not a master!” one of them exclaims in surprise. “You do not eat chocolate! You are our brother?!”<sup>26</sup> But just as in his earlier dream about the starving peasant, Zudin’s promise to lead these poor downtrodden laborers to a chocolate-free future, to a workers’ utopia free of any capitalist exploitation, rings hollow when the negroes find that there is chocolate in Zudin’s pocket. “This is a master!” they shout disconcertedly upon their discovery. “He has deceived us! . . . He has chocolate!”<sup>27</sup>

These two crudely allegorical dreams make Zudin realize how the guiding role of the vanguard of the proletariat in Marxist-Leninist doctrine can be fatally undermined when a Bolshevik leader is perceived as abandoning the political cause of workers and peasants alike and indulging instead in such self-indulgent, personal pleasures as are afforded by a luxury food item (chocolate), which had historically been associated with the privileged classes in Russia, initially by the aristocracy and then later with the bourgeoisie. He now understands that his credibility – both as a dedicated Communist and as an effective labor organizer who can consolidate the exploited workers, raise their class consciousness, and ultimately liberate them from the oppressive capitalistic chains that shackle them – is effectively destroyed when he is perceived as being yet another “master:” that is, a Bolshevik who reaps material benefits from

his privileged status as a member of the *nomenklatura* and indulges himself in bourgeois style by eating chocolate.

### **Revolutionary Asceticism: The Bolshevik Campaign Against Pleasure**

The political and ideological stigmatization of chocolate that took place in revolutionary Russia during the 1920s – a stigmatization that resulted from the Bolsheviks branding this sweet confection a decadent, bourgeois, luxury food item that a true proletarian and a true Communist should categorically refuse to eat – extended into the realm of sexuality as well. As Eric Naiman has convincingly demonstrated in *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (1997), pleasure was personified by, and embodied in, the bourgeoisie during NEP. Communist zealots and Party officials alike were experiencing deep anxieties about the ideological impurities and contamination of guiding principles that might result from the unavoidable commercial traffic with bourgeois elements that was occurring during the NEP period. These fears about the possible contamination of Bolshevik ideological purity by the virus of a bourgeois appetite for pleasure, Naiman has shown, led to the discourse on food, sex, and the body becoming highly political and moralistic in early Soviet Russia. As Andrei Sinyavsky has observed, perhaps the most insidious feature that plagued the “old” ( bourgeois) psychology and pre-socialist human nature, both of which Bolshevism aimed to transform rapidly and radically, was “egoism or individualism, the desire to live for oneself as opposed to the common good.”<sup>28</sup> As part of an effort to help forge the collectivist mentality of the “new Soviet man” that they hoped to create, Party leaders launched a vigorous campaign against private life and personal pleasure during the 1920s, advancing a rhetoric of both gastronomical and sexual sublimation. Messages advocating sexual self-restraint in Soviet Russia during the 1920s, Sheila Fitzpatrick notes, came mainly in the form of advice from Party authorities to Communist youth: “The authorities – most of them Old Bolsheviks, who saw the revolutionary cause as a vocation requiring sacrifice – recommended self-discipline, abstinence, fidelity to one partner, and

sublimation of sexual energies in work.”<sup>29</sup> One of the most extreme and dogmatic champions of this puritanical message of spartan self-denial was the Bolshevik moral commentator, Aron Zalkind, whose twelve “sexual commandments” spelled out quite clearly how revolutionary youth could divert their sexual energy away from personal pleasure and sublimate it instead into productive labor and meaningful class-oriented activity.<sup>30</sup> The main rationale for advocating such rigorously ascetic behavior on the part of young Bolsheviks was to insure that the builders of Socialism in Russia would place social duty and class loyalty well above their own personal desires and physical needs. As Sinyavsky points out, Feliks Dzerzhinsky, the first Cheka chief, for instance, was a notoriously cruel and merciless instrument of the Red Terror, but his austere lifestyle as a “knight ascetic” and “soldier-monk,” a devoted Bolshevik who sacrificed his own personal life as he gave himself over completely to the revolutionary cause, made it possible for him to serve throughout the 1920s as an ethical model for others to emulate of the self-denying behavior expected of the new Soviet man.<sup>31</sup>

The rhetoric of sexual sublimation and revolutionary asceticism is especially evident in literary and cinematic texts of the early Soviet period. Bolshevik heroes in Soviet film and fiction of the 1920s and early 1930s were frequently portrayed as ideal ascetic models: they would characteristically gird and discipline themselves – through extreme physical self-denial and emotional self-abnegation – in order to render themselves capable (and worthy) of fulfilling the important and challenging revolutionary tasks that they were being called upon to undertake. One of the fervent “new” young people in Lev Gumilevsky’s *Dog Alley (Sobachii pereulok*, 1926), for example, when she explains why the desire for sexual pleasure must be sublimated and postponed until the Communist utopia has been achieved, exclaims, “The renunciation of carnal joy for the sake of the principle of responsibility! For the sake of the struggle!”<sup>32</sup> In the words of Mikhail Zolotonosov, “It became characteristic for Soviet prose of the 1920s to feature a positive hero: the communist who seeks to overcome the criminal call of the flesh.”<sup>33</sup> Since food was closely linked with sex during the 1920s and early 1930s as part of the Bolshevik rhetoric about abstinence from physical pleasures, the “criminal call of the flesh” that Zolotonosov refers to

was frequently a criminal call of the palate and the belly as well as of the loins. “During NEP,” Naiman observes,

excess in eating and excess in sexual behavior were two of the traits used to distinguish the bourgeois from his or her hardworking proletarian counterpart. Sexual consumption and gastronomic consumption were routinely lumped together as signs of social corruption . . . Protecting one’s ideological purity during NEP entailed not only controlling sexual urges but also refraining from overeating and, in general, from surrounding oneself with opulence.<sup>34</sup>

Resisting sexual temptation was thus understood as being tantamount, in metaphorical terms, to resisting gastronomical temptation. And perhaps no food item was considered more dangerous, alluring, seductive, and “sinful” for young Communists to eat during the 1920s than chocolate, which was now judged to be not merely unethical, but even immoral to consume. In Tarasov-Rodionov’s *Shokolad*, therefore, it is not terribly surprising to find that Elena Val’ts, the seductive, promiscuous female class enemy whose sexual advances Zudin must struggle to resist, is consistently identified with the strong allure of chocolate. Her eyes, for example, are repeatedly characterized as being “chocolate-colored” (*shokoladnye*), and the sexual excitation she arouses in Zudin is said to resemble “a flood of soft, fragrant, warm, sticky lava of tasty milk chocolate” that spreads all over him, “pouring into his mouth and choking his throat to the point of spasms.”<sup>35</sup> When Zudin tries to explain to Elena why, as a staunch Bolshevik zealously devoted to the cause of the Revolution, he must not yield to the attractive prospect of a sexual dalliance with her, he uses a revealing confectionery metaphor. “There are many places where there is a great deal of sweet chocolate,” he tells her, “but that is alien to us. We are not at all accustomed to it. With its softness it only hinders us in our cruel struggle, and since that is the case, we have no need for it”<sup>36</sup> True Communists, in other words, must resist the enticing temptation of chocolate – and of sexual pleasure – since it only develops within them an unhealthy appetite for additional bodily pleasures and thus hinders them in their total dedication to the advancement of the revolutionary cause.

Indeed, true Communists, Zudin assures Elena, have no real need for such sexual and gastronomical pleasures: they can succeed in resisting the alluring charms of both women and chocolate because of the proletarian class consciousness they have developed. “I am not a saint, of course,” he tells her.

All sorts of tender and coarse feelings, all the instincts that are natural to man, are not alien to me either. But all the same there is also something within me, Elena Valentinovna, something that you will not understand – how can I explain it to you? – I have within me class feeling! It is a wondrous, ever-living, and powerful spring. I derive from it all of my strength, from it alone do I drink all of my personal, sublime happiness. . . . It weaves garlands of wondrous delights for us; before it, the dreams of our heart and the thoughts in our head about women are but mere trifles. It resounds in our heart with a mighty upsurge. Both reason and emotion are held in its joyous power.<sup>37</sup>

“So should I suppress this feeling, or exchange it for something else, or forget it?” Zudin asks her rhetorically. “And all for the sake of experiencing the delicate love of a woman?”<sup>38</sup> The rather trite (and readily transparent) moral that Tarasov-Rodionov’s proletarian novel thus seeks to convey to its intended audience of contemporary readers is that only extreme self-denial and constant vigilance in both the gastronomical and sexual spheres could guarantee that those serving in the vanguard of the Revolution would be able to preserve their moral, as well as political and ideological, purity amidst an environment that threatens them with bourgeois contamination. As Zudin himself comes to realize, the strongest enemy facing the Revolution – the egoistic desire for bodily pleasures and material comforts – lies within the soul of each Communist, whose greatest challenge becomes to eradicate, or at least stifle, this appetite. Only a diet free of chocolate and other seductive sweets, Tarasov-Rodioniv’s novel strongly suggests, can insure that they would remain steadfast enough to resist the sinful temptations that threaten to erode their resolve in working to construct the socialist paradise in Soviet Russia. Real Bolsheviks, in other words, do not eat chocolate. Nor, by extension, do they indulge in sexual pleasure. Class enemies of the proletariat, on the other hand, such as the petit bourgeois Elena

Val'ts, are categorically unable to overcome their chronic addiction to sensual pleasure, as emblemized by chocolate. They are doomed to remain inveterate “sexoholics” and “chocoholics.”

Through its resonant one-word title and its widespread symbolization of the central motif of “chocolate,” Tarasov-Rodionov’s cautionary tale of 1922 thus draws a clear distinction – in terms of social class, gender, politics, ideology, and morality – between the pure proletarian-Bolshevik (Zudin), who strives to practice abstinence, sublimation, and self-denial, and the depraved bourgeois (Val'ts), who freely indulges in both sexual and gastronomical pleasure.<sup>39</sup> This distinction between purity and depravity is reified gastronomically in the novel’s opposition between “bread,” a food staple that represents the basic staff of life, and “chocolate,” a luxury food item that symbolizes excess and indulgence. Whether it be the starving peasant in Zudin’s first dream (who is willing to share his last crust of bread), the factory bosses in his second dream (who try to economize on costs by importing chocolate from the colonial world rather than producing bread at home), the actual factory workers in the local town (who often fail to receive their meager daily ration of bread, while Zudin and other privileged Party officials are believed to be devouring chocolate), or the elegant and alluring Elena Val'ts (who likes to nibble on Caille chocolate bars during her strolls), the author of *Shokolad* repeatedly and consistently encodes these two opposing food items with semiotic values that categorically designate the social class affiliation, ideology, ethics, and morality of the people who do or do not eat them. If Val'ts, as a petit-bourgeois whore who becomes involved in an espionage ring, plans an extortion scheme, and participates in other forms of counter-revolutionary activity, is the demon of sexual temptation that must be resisted and destroyed in Bolshevik Russia, then the tasty chocolate that is so closely associated with her throughout the novel is the demon of gastronomical temptation that must likewise be exorcised.

### **Destigmatizing Chocolate in Stalinist Russia**



The stigmatization of chocolate that occurred in revolutionary Russia did not persist much beyond the late 1920s, however. Immediately following the start of the cultural revolution that Stalin imposed from above after the conclusion of the NEP period, the Bolshevik campaign against private life and personal pleasure was abruptly halted. The reintroduction of middle-class values early in the Stalinist era led, in the opinion of many, to a retreat from the fundamental tenets of Communism and, as part of what has been called the “sexual thermidor,” the government reversed its earlier official policy toward love, marriage, and the family.<sup>40</sup> In a policy shift that some have characterized as a “great retreat” from – if not an outright “betrayal” of – the basic principles and core values that had guided the October Revolution, the Soviet leadership suddenly abandoned the ascetic puritanism, sublimation of desire, and rhetoric of sacrifice and self-denial that had dominated the early years of Bolshevik rule.<sup>41</sup> Proclaiming that the transitional period from capitalism to socialism had now been successfully completed, Stalin signaled a new ideological orientation that celebrated – rather than condemned or stigmatized – images of abundance and pleasure. These images of prosperity were designed to offer graphic proof that the Communist utopia had now been established in Soviet Russia, thus vindicating Stalin’s famous line that “Life has become better, comrades. Life has become more cheerful.” By the mid 1930s, as one scholar points out, “food, drink, and consumer goods came to be celebrated with a fervor that even Madison Avenue might have envied.”<sup>42</sup> Along with champagne, ice cream, and other luxury food items that earlier had been categorically condemned as markers of bourgeois decadence and philistine venality, chocolate now became a symbol of a newly achieved material well-being and economic prosperity in Stalinist Russia. “This was *la vie en rose*, Soviet style,” notes Sheila Fitzpatrick in discussing how a relaxation of social mores and the promotion of leisure culture came to characterize the Stalinist rhetoric used

by government officials and Party leaders during this period. “To some people,” she writes, “it looked like embourgeoisement or ‘a second NEP’.”<sup>43</sup>

Soviet citizens during the 1930s were witnessing the birth of a consumer society and a culture of consumption in Stalinist Russia. In an effort to validate Comrade Stalin’s assurance that the severe material scarcities that had plagued the Soviet Union during the immediate post-revolutionary period – and especially during the first Five-Year Plan (1928-1932) – had now been overcome and the long-awaited socialist utopia of prosperity had at last been established, Soviet authorities exerted tremendous effort and committed enormous resources toward dramatically increasing the production and distribution of new consumer goods. This drastic shift in the direction of the centrally-planned economy (from heavy industry to light industry, from production to consumption) is particularly evident in the area of luxury goods, which were now ordered to be produced and distributed in unprecedented quantities. Previously unavailable, discredited, and repudiated luxury food items, such as caviar, cognac, champagne, and chocolate, suddenly became the focus of intensive economic planning. As Jukka Gronow explains in his study, *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin’s Russia* (2003), Stalin believed that success in revolutionizing the consumer goods industry in the USSR (by increasing the quantity and improving the quality of luxury items) so that it could rival Western standards would “validate the socialist state and demonstrate that the Soviet Union could compete on a world stage.”<sup>44</sup> Foodstuffs, clothing, and household items that had been conspicuously absent from store shelves during the final years of collectivization and the first Five-Year Plan were now suddenly advertised as being available for purchase. “The history of the rebirth of the Soviet chocolate industry is particularly revealing,” writes Gronow, “within a couple of years its product variety jumped from just a dozen to several hundred.”<sup>45</sup> From the

perspective of the Soviet leadership, the availability of new luxury consumer goods such as chocolate acted as a visible sign that the happy and prosperous way of life promised by socialism had indeed been achieved following the Revolution.

The report for the Soviet Food Industry, delivered on January 16, 1936 by Anastas Mikoyan, Stalin's Food Commissar, provides us with a clear indication of just how drastically the Party's and the government's official attitude toward consumption – and consumption of luxury food items in particular – had changed. Noting that historically tsarist Russia had no need for a food industry, since the more cultured segments of the country's bourgeois and aristocratic population could get the luxury food items they wanted at chic import shops located in both Petersburg and Moscow (such as the famous Eliseev store on Tverskoi Boulevard), Mikoyan boasted that these items no longer needed to be imported from abroad since they were now being produced at home. And whereas only a very few Russian confectionery factories (such as the George Borman chocolate factories in Petersburg and Kharkov) had even existed in tsarist days, and these produced chocolate bonbons retailed exclusively for the upper crust (what Mikoyan calls the “cream” of bourgeois society in Russia), the nine Soviet-era chocolate factories that had been newly built during the early 1930s under Stalin's first two Five-Year Plans were now said to be able to provide the average Soviet consumer with sufficient amounts and a wide assortment of high-quality chocolate. Comrade Stalin and the Party's Central Committee, it was also announced, had decided to allot 900,000 rubles toward the importation of more cocoa beans into Soviet Russia. “Thank you, Central Committee,” Mikoyan says to loud applause during his speech,

Now we will have delicious chocolate bonbons in abundance . . . We no longer need to import tractors, and we do not import automobiles. We are now wealthy enough to be

able to spend a small amount of our foreign currency on cocoa beans for chocolate. We possess a confectionery industry that is technologically well-equipped and we possess qualified personnel: we can produce high-quality chocolate bonbons in enormous quantities.<sup>46</sup>

This optimistic 1936 Food Industry report, which reflects a strong feeling of national pride in the country's new-found economic self-sufficiency (e.g., the claim that the Soviet Union no longer needs to import chocolate from capitalist countries) as well as a Marxist-Leninist concern for the more widespread (as well as more egalitarian and equitable) distribution of a luxury food item, which in tsarist Russia had been exclusively produced for, distributed to, and consumed by the privileged classes, reveals the startling change that has occurred in the official policy concerning the consumption of food products.<sup>47</sup> Commissar Mikoyan concludes his upbeat report on the state of the Soviet Food Industry with the following optimistic prognosis for the near future: “Under the banner of Lenin and Stalin, we will move ahead toward an abundance of food products, toward an abundance of consumer goods, and toward a cultured life for all the members of our society!”<sup>48</sup>

“The Soviet citizen was meant to be and look happy, to dress better and to enjoy life – especially in the sphere of material culture,” notes Gronow when describing Stalin's new cultural policy vis-à-vis consumption during the mid-1930s.<sup>49</sup> Revolutionary asceticism – and the Bolshevik struggle against bodily pleasure that it mandated – was no longer fashionable, of course, in this changed ideological climate of relatively conspicuous consumption. Where the cultural politics of the 1920s had been dominated by “the conception of proletarian culture” and “the ideal of the ascetic self-sacrificing worker,” the official rhetoric of the mid-1930s was instead characterized by a spirit of material indulgence, hedonism, and consumerism.<sup>50</sup> Julie

Hessler, who has studied the Stalinist turn to consumerism that occurred in the mid-1930s by concentrating her research on the government's campaign for "cultured trade" during this period, notes the seismic shift in Party thinking that accompanied this policy change. "In the 1920s," she observes, "an interest in material possessions was portrayed in official publications as a sign of bourgeois decadence, a deviation from the ascetic values of the socialist revolution. By the mid-1930s, by contrast, the 'growing material demands' of Soviet citizens were cited with pride."<sup>51</sup> The regime's public valorization and official sanction of material values meant that the populace need no longer eschew consumer goods, including luxury items such as chocolate, as decadent bourgeois indulgences. "During these years," Hessler points out, "asceticism gave way to cultured consumerism as the recognized relation of the individual to material possessions."<sup>52</sup> "In the mid-1930s," writes Gronow, "the former ideals of revolutionary asceticism and social egalitarianism gave way to the emergence of a new hierarchy and a new system of social order, one that allowed for a more hedonistic and individualistic way of life."<sup>53</sup> Like so many other utopian dreams from the Bolshevik 1920s, revolutionary asceticism was destined to disappear suddenly and irrevocably from the discourse that surrounded the betrayal of the revolution in the USSR under Stalin and his successors.<sup>54</sup>

### **Socialist Realist Representations of Chocolate in Children's Literature**

Sheila Fitzpatrick, when discussing what she calls the "glaring contradiction between the egalitarian, ascetic socialist ideals associated with the Bolshevik Revolution and the emergence in the 1930s of a privileged new elite whose values would have been labeled 'bourgeois' a decade earlier," asks whether the members of the new Soviet elite in Stalin's Russia were

themselves aware of this glaring contradiction?<sup>55</sup> And if so, how did they succeed in explaining and justifying it? The answer, she suggests, is provided by what she calls the “discourse of socialist realism.”<sup>56</sup> By “socialist realism,” Fitzpatrick has in mind not the literary theory and method that the Party had handed down to Soviet writers in 1934, but rather the method of representation that was characteristic of the Stalinist *mentalité* during these years: a wishful way of thinking that arose from the Soviet leadership’s “tendency to view the present through the prism of an imagined future.”<sup>57</sup> One finds instances of this socialist-realist method of representation, Fitzpatrick insists, well outside the fields of literature and art.<sup>58</sup> In such essays as “Middle-Class Values and Social Life in the 1930s” and “Being Cultured: Socialist Realism and the Representation of Privilege and Taste,” she chronicles numerous non-literary (mostly journalistic) instances of this socialist-realist method of representation in Stalin’s Russia, whereby “life as it is” becomes conflated (and confused) with “life as it ought to be” and “life as it is becoming.”<sup>59</sup>

Tarasov-Rodionov’s *Shokolad*, a novel that endorses the revolutionary asceticism, sublimation of desire, and ethos of self-denial prevalent in the Bolshevism of the 1920s, finds its counter-text just one year later in a work of pre-Stalinist fiction that is already advancing the “discourse of socialist realism” that Fitzpatrick locates in the 1930s. It also bears the very same title as Tarasov-Rodionov’s novel: that is, Vera Il’ina’s narrative poem, *Shokolad* (1923), subtitled “a verse tale for youth.” Like the earlier proletarian novel, Il’ina’s children’s poem centers upon the ideological and political significance of chocolate as a luxury food item in revolutionary Russia, but her *Shokolad* treats this motif in an entirely different (and opposed) way. In Part 1, titled “Daydreams About Chocolate,” the poem focuses upon a group of poor, working-class children living in a large, dismal courtyard in the Malaia Presnia district of

Moscow. These impoverished street urchins, who often eat only bread and a couple of spoonfuls of kvas for supper, can only daydream about what chocolate might taste like. The poem's hero, a clever young lad named Vanya, questions why it is that they don't have any chocolate in tsarist Russia, especially if – as they are learning in the books they are now able to read – it is supposed to taste so good. “Each of us ought to be able to taste it at least once!” he insists.<sup>60</sup> Although his father assures him that the revolution will eventually change things (in the near future they will no longer need to swallow table scraps, but will instead be able to enjoy sweet rolls and bonbons), young Vanya decides to create, with his friends, a “Chocolate Center,” whose goal is to find out what chocolate, which they have learned exists in places like Europe and America, actually tastes like. “I will take it upon myself to get some foreign chocolate for you,” Vanya vows to the children.<sup>61</sup> The hero's daydreams about chocolate and his promise to his friends in Part 1 prompt a “marvelous dream,” described in Part 2 (“How in His Dream Vanya Tried to Obtain Chocolate”), in which the lad joins his father in a journey abroad – they visit Poland, Germany, and Switzerland – in search of chocolate, only to find that in ravaged, post-war Europe chocolate is rarely to be found; it exists only among the wealthy, who are too selfish and greedy to share any of it with others. In Part 3 (“How Chocolate Was Obtained”), we are told that five years have elapsed following this dream. By this time, Russia has been dramatically transformed by the revolution: everywhere there is now electricity, indoor plumbing, telegraphs, telephones, automobiles, and, most importantly, an abundance of food supplies. “Now foreign fruits and mountains of grapes, bonbons, and rolls are the rewards for the worker for his labors.”<sup>62</sup> Vanya, for his part, has changed significantly as well: he is now fully grown up, a well-educated Party member, who has not forgotten the vow he once made to the children of Malaia Presnia. Near poem's end, an enormous truck, filled with chocolate, rolls into their courtyard with Vanya

sprinkling chocolate treats (*shokoladki*) into the crowd of excited, happy children who sing out as one in a friendly voice: “What a sweet reward! Yes, and it was worth the effort! Ah, if only the trains with chocolate would come here a little more often!”<sup>63</sup> Acknowledging that it is important for them to work rather than play all the time, the children nonetheless maintain, “But we are glad to have some sweets too – And what harm can there be in that?”<sup>64</sup>

Tarasov-Rodionov’s *Shokolad*, as we have seen, focuses on a Bolshevik leader who must learn to practice strict revolutionary asceticism by showing self-restraint in matters involving private pleasures, demonizing chocolate – as well as sexual desire – as a dangerously addictive social, ideological, and moral evil. Il’ina’s *Shokolad*, on the other hand, as a pre-Socialist Realist work that envisions Soviet Russia as a utopian workers’ paradise blessed with a great munificence of material goods, focuses instead on children who are soon to be rewarded for their labors in constructing a socialist state by being allowed to indulge in tasty chocolate treats. As such, Il’ina’s *Shokolad* anticipates the Stalinist utopia of material well-being and economic prosperity that was purportedly achieved during the mid-1930s, when, as we have seen, images of agricultural abundance and gastronomic pleasure heralded the advent of consumer happiness in long-suffering Soviet Russia and marked the country’s industrial success as a result of the first Five-Year Plan. Indeed, if, as Evgeny Steiner argues, the new Soviet regime’s ideological objectives during the post-revolutionary years were most effectively embodied in works of children’s literature, then Il’ina’s Lenin-era poem may be said to have provided the confectionery version of the “fairy tale” that Stalin-era enthusiasts sought to have come true by striving to turn it into a reality.<sup>65</sup> The salient difference, of course, if we are to believe Mikoyan’s 1936 Food Industry report, is that chocolate would no longer have to come to



Stalinist Russia imported from abroad, since it could now be produced, distributed, and consumed in abundance domestically.

Another work of children's literature from the mid-1920s, Elizaveta Tarakhovskaia's *About How Chocolate Came to Mosselprom (O tom kak priekhal shokolad v Mossel'prom, 1925)*, likewise anticipates not only the boastful claims that Commissar Mikoyan would make about domestic chocolate production in Stalin's Russia, but also the "discourse of socialist realism" that Fitzpatrick finds to be prevalent during the 1930s.<sup>66</sup> Part I of Tarakhovskaia's children's poem, wonderfully illustrated by Iurii Ganf, tells the story of two wild, primitive kids – a Negro boy named Sammi and his friend, the "redskinned" Dzho – who climb up the tall trees where they live in "distant America" and cut down the large, round cacao pods that grow on them. After they slice the cacao pods in half and remove the pulp inside, the boys allow the cacao beans to dry at the edge of the forest and then place them into crates that are subsequently loaded onto a modern steamship, "The Red Sailor," that sails under the Soviet flag. Part II of the poem opens in Moscow. The cacao beans, which had grown under the blazing sun in faraway lands across the ocean, have now arrived by train in the Soviet capital. At daybreak, male and female workers arrive for work at the "Red October" chocolate factory, where confections are made, and soon the machines begin their dance. The workers, dressed in tidy outfits that resemble surgical gowns, direct the machines to crush and crumble the cacao beans, grinding them into a fine powder and heating them to release their oil. After adding milk, sugar, and almond oil, the workers pour this mixture down a long chute into an enormous metal cylinder that spins these ingredients and turns them into a thick, dark dough that flies out of the machine in one solid piece. The chocolate is poured into a row of iron molds, where it hardens, and is then cut into bars, which are placed inside colorful wrappers and loaded into crates that are

delivered by trucks to Mossel'prom stores in distant towns, much to the delight of the children who live there. The chocolate bars are put on display behind the stores' plate glass windows beneath the familiar sign, "Mossel'prom Products." And on every street corner, rain or shine, there stand female vendors – young girls, adolescents, and elderly women alike – carrying trays filled with these chocolate bars for sale. All of these vendors are wearing stylish aprons on which the red letters spelling out the word "Mossel'prom" are inscribed.

Like Il'ina's *Shokolad*, Tarakhovskaia's verse narrative for children envisions the Soviet Russia of her day as a gastronomic paradise blessed with an abundance of a luxury food item such as chocolate. If, as a pair of early Soviet scholars once asserted, children's books are designed to "educate the citizen in the child,"<sup>67</sup> then *About How Chocolate Came to Mossel'prom* teaches young Soviet readers in the mid-1920s that their newly established Socialist country has already taken its rightful place in the developed world among the colonialist-imperialist powers of Western capitalism: it now imports cacao beans from the primitive economies in "distant America" and produces chocolate bars out of them at the state-of-the-art "Red October" factory in modern industrial Moscow. Clean, healthy, well-dressed adults live and work in this thriving metropolis where commerce operates through the very latest means of transport. And happy young children can purchase delicious chocolate bars at the well-provisioned Mossel'prom stores or from friendly vendors standing on every street corner in even the most distant reaches of the Soviet Union. Tarakhovskaia's illustrated story, as Steiner points out, constitutes the "children's literature" version of an adult "production novel," detailing the process of manufacturing chocolate in a modern factory and thus serving as "visual propaganda for the coming materialist paradise."<sup>68</sup>

### Food Commissar Mikoyan's Literary-Culinary Utopia

Perhaps the quintessential literary reflection of the drastic reconfiguration of chocolate (as a destigmatized food luxury) in the Stalinist 1930s occurs not in any work of Soviet literature, however, but rather in the famous cookbook and household guide, *The Book About Tasty and Healthy Food* (*Kniga o vkusnoi i zdorovoi pishche*), commissioned by Food Commissar Mikoyan in 1939.<sup>69</sup> Although Vil'iam Pokhlebin, the noted Soviet food writer and cultural critic, characterized *The Book About Tasty and Healthy Food* as a unique “culinary codex” that codified the repertoire of Soviet cuisine,<sup>70</sup> other scholars have considered this Bible of Soviet cuisine a *sui generis* “culinary utopia” that projects numerous images of the material abundance, good taste, and physical health that are associated with an ideal (and idealized) cuisine that never really existed in the USSR. Aleksandr Genis, for example, has argued that this “literary-culinary utopia” serves as a gastronomic analogue to such well-known cultural monuments of the Stalin epoch as the Moscow metro and the Exhibition on the Achievements of the National Economy.<sup>71</sup> Irina Glushchenko, meanwhile, observes, “The real diet was very far from the ideal depicted in the book. Many of the products were simply not available in everyday life.”<sup>72</sup> Regardless of how one ultimately characterizes *The Book About Tasty and Healthy Food*, the fact remains that Commissar Mikoyan's signature is written all over it.<sup>73</sup> The book allowed him to provide much more than just a mere collection of recipes; it also enabled him to provide propagandistic commentary on how the Soviet food industry, unlike the tsarist one that preceded it, had succeeded – through industrialization, technological advancements, and socialist construction – in solving at last the accursed “food question” that had plagued the people of Russia for decades, if not centuries. “The book is simultaneously a practical culinary guide, a unique utopia, and an

instrument of propaganda,” Glushchenko explains. “It affirms the Soviet way of life through food and eating.”<sup>74</sup> It also affirms the legitimacy of chocolate as an acceptable food item in the Soviet diet through the way various forms of chocolate – from chocolate bonbons to chocolate toppings – are highlighted both verbally and visually as delicious culinary options for Soviet homemakers to prepare and for Soviet citizens to consume.

The radical reconfiguration of chocolate that occurred in early Soviet Russia, when this luxury food item was destigmatized as a result of the shift from the revolutionary asceticism of the Bolsheviks in the 1920s to the culture of consumption initiated under Stalin during the 1930s, was maintained throughout the remaining years of Soviet rule. In post-Soviet Russia, where the desire and demand for consumer goods have only intensified as the country struggles to shift from a centralized command economy to a free market economy, we have witnessed – and are still witnessing today – a veritable chocolate boom taking place. Numerous websites are now to be found on the internet, whether for actual chocolate factories (such as “Red October” and “Rossiia”) or for online retail vendors, all of them advertising the many health benefits that chocolate supposedly possesses: from improving one’s mood (and increasing one’s sexual potency) to stimulating circulation of the blood. It may well be that Bolsheviks and bonbons did not mix in revolutionary Russia. But the privileged elite that developed under Stalin (and his successors), and now the “new Russians” who have risen to the top of the socio-economic ladder in post-Soviet Russia, certainly have found a way to overcome any lingering antipathy toward chocolate that might have existed earlier in modern Russian history. For these neo-bourgeois Russian consumers, enjoyment of the joys of chocolate has been freed of the socio-political, ideological, and moral stigma that had attached itself to gastronomical indulgence in this sweet confection during the early years of Bolshevik rule. Post-Soviet Russians, like their

contemporary American counterparts, seem at last to have taken a lesson from the French, or at least from the distinctively French *mentalité* that suffuses Joanne Harris's best-selling novel, *Chocolat* (1999). In terms of their recent cultural history, the new Russians have learned to free themselves from a Bolshevik ethos of ascetic self-denial similar to the one preached by that popular novel's repressed (and repressive) xocolatophobic Catholic curé, Père Reynaud, and to unleash their natural appetite for "a little luxury, a little self-indulgence," as advised by Harris's free-spirited heroine, the benign *chocolatière* Vianne Rocher, who helps to liberate the denizens of her anhedonic town from their chronic fear of pleasure.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Leonid Heretz, “The Practice and Significance of Fasting in Russian Peasant Culture at the Turn of the Century,” *Food in Russian History and Culture*, ed. Musya Glants and Joyce Toomre (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> “The contradiction between the ‘high’ culture’s supreme spirituality and utter disregard for the life of the body and the ‘low’ culture’s insistence on the inescapable reality of natural life runs like a thread through the entire history of Russian culture,” writes Igor Kon, who examines how the intense spirituality and rigorous asceticism found in Russian Orthodox doctrine contributed to the antisexual ethos that dominated Russian thinking about corporeal pleasure for centuries. See *The Sexual Revolution in Russia: From the Age of the Czars to Today*, trans. James Riordan (New York: Free Press, 1995), pp. 13-14.

<sup>3</sup> As the editors of a volume of essays on the history of sexuality in Russia observe, the religious philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev’s so-called Russian idea in large part celebrates “the triumph of morality and sublimation over the temptations of the flesh” in his native land. See *Sexuality and the Body in Russian Culture*, ed. Jane Costlow, Stephanie Sandler and Judith Vowles (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> In the final section of *Anna Karenina* (Part 8), the landowner Levin has an illuminating conversation at harvest time with a wise peasant named Platon, who tells him that in our lives we should be aiming to live not for our belly, but for our soul. L. N. Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1928-1958), vol. 19, pp. 376-377.

<sup>5</sup> See the essays in *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution, 1881-1940*, ed. Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> “Pervaia stupen’,” in Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 29, p. 74.

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<sup>7</sup> Tolstoi, “Pervaia stupen’”, 74.

<sup>8</sup> See his letter of 9 May 1891 to M. V. Alekhin in Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 65, p. 292.

<sup>9</sup> Zhorzh Borman, “Shokolad,” in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’* (St. Petersburg: F. A. Brokgauz, I. A. Efron, 1890), vol. 78, p. 766.

<sup>10</sup> For historical background on George Borman and his confectionery business operations in Russia, see K. K. Vishniakov-Vishnevetskii, “Konditerskoe delo Bormanov v Peterburge,” *Istoriia Peterburga*, no. 6 (2003): 32-34, and Leonid Machulin, “ZhB – brend na veka,” *Vestnik torgovo-promyshlennoi palaty*, no. 3-4 (2008): 33-36.

<sup>11</sup> For historical background on Theodor Von Einem and his chocolate factory, see the website for the Moscow confectionery factory “Red October” ([www.konfetki.ru](http://www.konfetki.ru)) and the link to “history and traditions.”

<sup>12</sup> See Orlando Figes, *A People’s Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996). “The February Revolution was born in the bread queue,” Figes writes. “It all began with bread.” See pp. 300, 307.

<sup>13</sup> Aleksandr Blok, “Dvenadtsat’,” in Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh* (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1980), vol. 2, pp. 316, 318.

<sup>14</sup> Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 209.

<sup>15</sup> Platonov’s remark is made in a letter (preserved in the Russian State Archive for Literature and Art) that is cited in Naiman, *Sex in Public*, p. 8. I am grateful to the author for drawing my attention to Platonov’s remark.

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<sup>16</sup> Iurii Olesha, “Tri tolstiaka,” in Olesha, *Izbrannoe* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1974), p. 114.

<sup>17</sup> Olesha, “Tri tolstiaka,” p. 104.

<sup>18</sup> For a more detailed examination of Tarasov-Rodionov’s novel, especially as it relates to the moral, political, and ideological significance of chocolate, see Ronald D. LeBlanc, “The Sweet Seduction of Sin: Food, Sexual Desire, and Ideological Purity in Alexander Tarasov-Rodionov’s *Shokolad*,” *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*, 3, no. 4 (2003): 31-41.

<sup>19</sup> Aleksandr Tarasov-Rodionov, “Shokolad,” in *Sobachii pereulok: detektivnye romany i povest’* (Moscow: Sovremennyi pisatel’, 1993), p. 286.

<sup>20</sup> Tarasov-Rodionov, “Shokolad,” p. 340.

<sup>21</sup> Tarasov-Rodionov, “Shokolad,” p. 289. Workers at the local factory, when approached by Party officials about helping to defend their town against nearby White Guard units, are already expressing cynicism about the behavior of their Bolshevik leaders. “And where were you before? Were you out devouring chocolate?” they ask derisively. “Where is that Zudin of yours?” they add. “Bring him here and hand him over to us: we’ll straighten him out! We’re not even being given our daily allotment of one-eighth of a pound of bread every day, while he gets chocolate?! Our children are dying in the cold from starvation, while he keeps company with a ballet dancer dressed in silks?! Why do you protect him? Or are you just as guilty as he is? Until you uproot and exterminate this foul scum, we won’t believe what you say any more. We don’t believe you! We don’t believe you! And we won’t go anywhere for you. Go devour your chocolates!” (363-364).

<sup>22</sup> Tarasov-Rodionov, “Shokolad,” p. 346.

<sup>23</sup> Tarasov-Rodionov, “Shokolad,” p. 346.

<sup>24</sup> Tarasov-Rodionov, “Shokolad,” p. 347.



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<sup>25</sup> Tarasov-Rodionov, “Shokolad,” p. 349.

<sup>26</sup> Tarasov-Rodionov, “Shokolad,” pp. 358-359.

<sup>27</sup> Tarasov-Rodionov, “Shokolad,” p. 359.

<sup>28</sup> Andrei Sinyavsky, *Soviet Civilization: A Cultural History*, trans. Joanne Turnbull (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1988), p. 116.

<sup>29</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 69.

<sup>30</sup> Zalkind wrote such works as “Polovaia zhizn’ i sovremennaia molodezh’,” *Molodaia gvardiia*, no. 6 (1923): 245-249, *Polovoi fetishism: K peresmotru polovogo voprosa* (Moscow, 1925), and *Polovoi vopros v usloviakh sovetskoi obshchestvennosti* (Leningrad, 1926). For a discussion of Zalkind’s controversial theory of “revolutionary sublimation,” see Igor Kon, *The Sexual Revolution in Russia: From the Age of the Czars to Today*, trans. James Riordan (New York: The Free Press, 1995), pp. 51-66, and Eliot Borenstein, *Men Without Women: Masculinity and Revolution in Russian Fiction, 1917-1929* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 12-13.

<sup>31</sup> Sinyavsky, *Soviet Civilization*, p. 128.

<sup>32</sup> Lev Gumilevskii, “Sobachii pereulok,” in *Sobachii pereulok: detektivnye romany i povest’* (Moscow: Sovremennyi pisatel’, 1993), p. 192.

<sup>33</sup> Mikhail Zolotonosov, “Masturbanizatsiia: ‘Erogennye zony’ sovetskoi kul’tury 1920-1930-x godov,” *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, no. 11 (1991): 94.

<sup>34</sup> Naiman, *Sex in Public*, p. 214. “Oral as well as genital asceticism,” Naiman adds, “functioned as behavioral identity cards for the ideologically committed builders of communist society.”

<sup>35</sup> Tarasov-Rodionov, “Shokolad,” p. 294.

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<sup>36</sup> Tarasov-Rodionov, “Shokolad,” p. 296.

<sup>37</sup> Tarasov-Rodionov, “Shokolad,” p. 295-296.

<sup>38</sup> Tarasov-Rodionov, “Shokolad,” p. 296.

<sup>39</sup> Aleksandra Kollontai’s *Vasilisa Malygina* (1923) switches the gendered aspect of this juxtaposition. In her feminist novel, it is the eponymous heroine Vasilisa who practices revolutionary asceticism, while her philandering husband Vladimir (nicknamed “the American”) is the one who freely indulges a bourgeois appetite for sensual pleasures.

<sup>40</sup> See Wendy Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Richard Stites discusses the “sexual thermidor” in *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where is it Going?* trans. Max Eastman (New York: Merit Publishers, 1965) and Nicholas S. Timasheff, *The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1946).

<sup>42</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 89.

<sup>43</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, p. 93.

<sup>44</sup> Jukka Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin’s Russia* (New York: Berg, 2003), p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> “The Party and the government are all the time following a policy aimed toward lowering prices and widening the supply of food products in our country,” Mikoyan explains. “As the

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result of a decrease in state-regulated prices and a decline in market prices, consumption has expanded considerably. This speaks to the growth of a cultured and prosperous life.” See A. I. Mikoian, *Pishchevaia industriia Sovetskogo Soiuz*a (Leningrad: Partizdat, 1936), p. 48. As a token of the decidedly non-ascetic tone he takes in his report, Mikoian at one point mocks Herman Goering, Hitler’s minister, for the “monastic” promise he had made recently to go without butter or fat in his own diet so that Nazi Germany might be able to re-arm itself militarily (12).

<sup>47</sup> Mikoian, *Pishchevaia industriia Sovetskogo Soiuz*a, p. 57.

<sup>48</sup> Mikoian, *Pishchevaia industriia Sovetskogo Soiuz*a, p. 63.

<sup>49</sup> Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> Julie Hessler, “Cultured Trade: The Stalinist Turn Towards Consumerism,” in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 183.

<sup>52</sup> Hessler, “Cultured Trade,” p. 184.

<sup>53</sup> Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, p. 9.

<sup>54</sup> Soviet commentators during the Stalinist and post-Stalinist years were careful to point out that although Tarasov-Rodionov was to be commended for having raised the theme of the pernicious influence that bourgeois mores and manners can have upon members of the proletariat, the author of *Shokolad* committed some serious ideological errors in his novel. “In particular,” notes one critic, “he yielded to the ‘sacrificial’ philosophy of the irreconcilability of personal interests with social duty.” See V. V. Buznik, “Tema revoliutsii i grazhdanskoi voiny. Rozhdenie novoi prozy: novye temy, konflikty, geroi. Formirovanie sotsial’no-psikhologicheskogo romana novogo mira,” in *Istoriia russkogo sovetskogo romana*, kn. 1, ed. V. A. Kovachev (Moscow-

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Leningrad: Nauka, 1965), p. 101. See also V. N. Chuvakov, "Tarasov-Rodionov, Aleksandr Ignat'evich," in *Kratkaia literaturnaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 7, ed. A. A. Surkov (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1972), p. 387.

<sup>55</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Becoming Cultured: Socialist Realism and the Representation of Privilege and Taste," in Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 216.

<sup>56</sup> Fitzpatrick, "Becoming Cultured," p. 216.

<sup>57</sup> Fitzpatrick, "Becoming Cultured," p. 216.

<sup>58</sup> "It was ubiquitous in Soviet journalism of the 1930s," Fitzpatrick explains, "and its traces can also be found in every bureaucratic report and statistical compilation of the period. In the socialist-realist view of the world, a dry, half-dug ditch signified a future canal full of loaded barges, a ruined church was a potential kolkhoz clubhouse, and the inscription of a project in the Five-Year Plan was a magical act of creation that might almost obviate the need for more concrete exertions" (216).

<sup>59</sup> See "Middle-Class Values and Social Values in the 1930s," in Richard Sheldon and Terry L. Thompson, *Soviet Society and Culture: Essays in Honor of Vera S. Dunham*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 20-38, and "Being Cultured: Socialist Realism and the Representation of Privilege and Taste," in Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 216-237.

<sup>60</sup> Vera Il'ina, *Shokolad: Povest' v stikhakh dlia otrochestva* (Moscow: Knigopechatnik, 1923), p. 11.

<sup>61</sup> Il'ina, *Shokolad*, p. 18.

<sup>62</sup> Il'ina, *Shokolad*, p. 48.

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<sup>63</sup> Il'ina, *Shokolad*, p. 51.

<sup>64</sup> Il'ina, *Shokolad*, p. 53.

<sup>65</sup> Evgeny Steiner, *Stories for Little Comrades: Revolutionary Artists and the Making of Early Soviet Children's Books*, trans. Jane Ann Miller (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1999), p. 7.

<sup>66</sup> E. Tarakhovskaia, *O tom kak priekhal shokolad v Mossel'prom* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Druz'ia detei," 1922).

<sup>67</sup> P. Dulskii and Ia. Meksin, *Illiustratsiia v detskoii knige* (Kazan: Izdanie avtorov, 1925), p. 127.

<sup>68</sup> Steiner, *Stories for Little Comrades*, pp. 71, 154.

<sup>69</sup> Mikoyan is the one who originally insisted on this book being composed and published, ordering the editor of the newspaper *Pishchevaia industriia* to print the first edition in 1939. Sixteen subsequent editions were published between 1945 and 2002. See Glushchenko, *Obshchepit: Mikoian i sovetskaia kukhnia*, p. 137.

<sup>70</sup> Vil'iam Pokhlebkina, *Kukhnia veka* (Moscow: Polifakt. Itogi veka, 2000), p. 177.

<sup>71</sup> Aleksandr Genis, "Krasnyi khleb: kulinarnaia istoriia sovetskoi vlasti," *Panorama*, no. 706 (1994): 11.

<sup>72</sup> See Glushchenko's interview with Romanian philosopher Vasile Ernu, "Modernizatsiia na kukhne," which is published in the online journal, *Levaia Politika*, no. 13 (2010) [[http://leftpolicy.ru/articles.php?article\\_id=144](http://leftpolicy.ru/articles.php?article_id=144)].

<sup>73</sup> "The presence of Commissar Mikoian permeates the entire book," writes Glushchenko. "He can be heard throughout it, relating stories, expressing surprise, speaking his mind, being ironic, being provocative . . ." See *Obshchepit: Mikoian i sovetskaia kukhnia*, p. 139.

<sup>74</sup> Glushchenko, *Obshchepit: Mikoian i sovetskaia kukhnia*, p. 167.

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<sup>75</sup> Joanne Harris, *Chocolat* (New York: Viking Press, 1999), p. 31.