

EATING SOVIET: FOOD AND CULTURE IN THE USSR, 1917-1991

BY

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Abstract

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This dissertation argues that the best way to understand the nature of Soviet history is through the prism of food. Soviet citizens were encouraged to see the availability of food as the main measure of success for the construction of a new, Soviet civilization. The disappointment with the inability of the Soviet government to provide the quantity, quality and variety of food that the Soviet consumers expected was one of the major causes for the collapse of the USSR. The first chapter addresses the reasons why and how so unlikely a food as sausage became and remains the primary Russian symbol of economic abundance. Unlike the similarly symbolic goods in other socialist regimes, the Soviet craving for sausage has not been resolved and remains a point of tension in the post-socialist era. The second chapter argues that in a society of scarcity it became necessary to possess heroic status in order to be rewarded with better food in greater amounts. As a result, the heroic claims of the primary beneficiaries of the system, such as the Communist Party, became highly contested. The third chapter deepens the understanding of the successes and failures of the attempts to construct a uniquely Soviet ethnic identity. The two attempts to create a Pan-Soviet cuisine show how even food choices became highly politicized and reflected the fates of the Soviet nationalities policy. Yet, the continued popularity of multi-ethnic dishes demonstrates the continued personal engagement of many consumers with the Soviet past. The fourth chapter unravels a commonly held view by demonstrating that the arrival

of McDonald's and other Western food innovations to the late USSR were a continuity of Soviet modernization policies rather than their disruption. The importation of Western-style fast-food into the USSR was supposed to resolve Soviet inefficiency, ease the double burden of working women, and rationalize the process of eating. Soviet culinary reforms faltered and while trying to create the New Soviet Man and Woman, they have given rise to the Nutritionally Dissatisfied Man and Woman instead.

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Introduction

Whenever I brought up the subject of food in the Soviet Union in conversation, the most common response that I received was "But was there any?" It is remarkable that the history of food in a major world power, one that began its existence with a demand for bread, and one most commonly associated with food shortages, has not yet been written. In the historiography of the Soviet Union, food is everywhere and yet nowhere. As if the obviousness of Soviet inadequacy of food provisioning was simply a fact of nature, few scholars have addressed the subject. In part this has much to do with the history of the Soviet Union still being written to answer questions of the Cold War, determined by the rivalry of the capitalist and socialist systems for the "hearts and minds" of the world. The history of food, on the other hand, has often been guided by the research agendas of culinary specialists or social scientists. When the two historiographies have met, the works almost exclusively focused on the moments of greatest crisis. This dissertation seeks to explore the key aspects of Soviet food culture, in good times and bad.

The broad topic and chronological framework of this dissertation allow for the examination of four interrelated case studies, addressing what are some of the primary questions of Soviet history: the paradox of a society that promised but consistently failed to deliver an abundance of goods; the reasoning behind the social inequality in an ostensibly egalitarian state; the tensions between the overlapping ethnic identities of Soviet culture; and the uneven modernization of the Soviet economy and society.

The reason for the selection of food as the most fruitful prism through which to analyze Soviet society is twofold. Food security has been a consistent topic of concern for the world generally and for the former member-states of the Soviet Union in particular. If shortages were the most defining features of socialist societies, their post-socialist governments have staked a lot

of their legitimacy on the consistent availability of foods. When this availability is threatened, they are forced to act quickly and publicly to avoid unflattering comparisons with the preceding regime. When a major drought destroyed a large part of Russian and Kazakh crops in 2010, the governments rapidly announced a ban on grain exports and promised to punish price gouging, but brief shortages of buckwheat and panic buying occurred anyway.¹

The second reason is perhaps more prosaic. If we are to understand how the Soviet system functioned and what Soviet lives were like, we need to look beyond political repressions, party slogans, and technological marvels such as the space program. Soviet citizens could not taste the Sputnik, but they could assess the success or failure of the Soviet state based on whether or not they could buy sausage. Most people were not arrested by the political police on a daily basis, but they did have to stand in long lines for almost all foods. It was through their experiences with food that they could judge the power of their government.

Most of Soviet history, written from the moment that the Bolshevik party, led by Vladimir Lenin, came to power in November 1917, was strongly politicized. The Russian revolutionaries presented their goals as the construction of an alternative modernity, more advanced than that of Capitalism and without all the injustices that were associated with it. Most of the scholarship within and without Russia has focused on the opposition of the two systems. After World War Two, when the USSR was old enough for genuinely historic works to be written about it, the dominant Western paradigm was based on the totalitarian thesis. Works by such scholars as Carl Joachim Friedrich, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Merle Fainsod, Richard Pipes, and Robert Conquest argued that the Soviet state exercised deep control of its people and was a

¹ Alexey Kovalev, "Buckwheat Crisis Hurts Russian Pride," *The Guardian*, August 26, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/aug/26/russia-buckwheat-shortage>; Irina Filatova, "Prices Skyrocket as Buckwheat Vanishes From Shelves," *Moscow Times*, August 25, 2010. See also the selection of reports collected by Russia's RIA-Novosti agency, "Russia's Food Security," RIA-Novosti Russia, accessed July 26, 2013, http://en.rian.ru/trend/food_security.

criminal regime comparable to that of Nazi Germany.² The possibility that the Soviet population could identify with or contribute to such a regime was simply not considered. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the context of the Cold War, most of these works essentially presented mirror-images of the Soviet claims, simply “replacing a positive evaluation with a negative one.”³ Starting in the 1960s, some scholars who came to be known as the revisionist school began to question these assumptions. Scholars such as Sheila Fitzpatrick, Steven Kotkin, and Lewis Siegelbaum looked at the social history of the Soviet Union.⁴ More recently, Western and Russian scholars began to examine the history of Soviet consumerism.⁵

The other two broad categories under which this dissertation falls are the history of food and socialist Eastern Europe. The history of food is still a fairly young, but exponentially growing field.⁶ From its beginnings in the 1960s, the study of food has by now grown to an enormous body of work. The five themes of food history discussed in the *Oxford Handbook of Food History* – politics, cultural change, identity, industrialization, and nutrition – are all

² Carl Joachim Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956); Merle Fainsod, *How Russia is Ruled* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953); Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties* (New York: Macmillan, 1968); Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1990). More recent works continue to deal with the questions first raised during the Cold War. See for example, Robert Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler: the Age of Social Catastrophe* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007) and Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

³ Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Revisionism in Retrospect: A Personal View,” *Slavic Review* 67 (2008): 683.

⁴ Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Lewis Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁵ Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917-1953* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Amy Randall, *The Soviet Dream World of Retail Trade and Consumption in the 1930s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Lewis Siegelbaum, *Cars for Comrades: The Life of the Soviet Automobile* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); N. B. Leбина, and A.N. Chistikov, *Obyvatel' i reformy: kartiny povsednevnoi zhizni gorozhan v gody nepa i khrushchevskogo desiatiletiia* [The City-Dweller and Reforms: Pictures of Everyday City Life in the Years of the NEP and the Khrushchevian Decade] (Saint-Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2003).

⁶ For a thorough discussion of the food bibliography see Jeffrey M. Pilcher, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Food History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Also relevant are P.J. Atkins and I.R. Bowler, *Food in Society, Economy, Culture, Geography* (New York: Arnold, 2001) and Kyri W. Claflin and Peter Scholliers, *Writing Food History: A Global Perspective* (Oxford: Berg, 2012).

relevant to the story of Soviet food and are discussed in this dissertation. The historiography of socialist Eastern Europe, or the Eastern Bloc, has recently begun to include the history of consumerism. Because of their association with the Soviet Union, the socialist nations from East Germany (DDR) to Bulgaria were previously perceived as uniformly gray, totalitarian nations. Yet, the alternative modernity that they were constructing had to engage not only Soviet ideology but also the rival nations in the West. As a result, most of Soviet allies in Europe have developed what was termed “goulash communism,” with economies producing or importing more consumer goods than did the Soviet Union and were often used by the Soviets as acceptable models for further development.⁷ Food in Eastern Europe and especially East Germany has also drawn scholarly attention.⁸

The number of histories discussing food in Russia and the Soviet Union in close detail has been very small. Most commonly, the works of social history allude to food being a key issue in the actions of certain sections of Soviet society but do not go further.⁹ The economic aspects of food in the imperial period have been covered by the work of R.E.F. Smith and David Christian.¹⁰ Alison K. Smith recently wrote about the cultural impact of Russian culinary

⁷ For recent studies of Eastern or Central European Consumerism see David Crowley, Susan E. Reid, ed., *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (Oxford: Berg, 2002); Katherine Pence, Paul Betts, ed., *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture And Politics* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008); David Crowley, Susan E. Reid, ed., *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010); Djurdja Bartlett, *FashionEast: The Spectre that Haunted Socialism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

⁸ See for example, Patrice G. Poutrus, *Die Erfindung des Goldbroilers Über den Zusammenhang zwischen Herrschaftssicherung und Konsumententwicklung in der DDR* [The Foundation of the Gold Broiler: On the Relationship between Securing Power and Developing Consumption in the DDR] (Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, Weimar 2002) and Alice Weintreb, “Matters of Taste: The Politics of Food and Hunger in Divided Germany 1945-1971” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2009).

⁹ See for example Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Choi Chatterjee, *Celebrating Women: Gender, Festival Culture, and Bolshevik Ideology, 1910-1939* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002). In Goldman's and Chatterjee's monographs women take jobs to obtain food, prepare it, and become disgruntled when food is in shortage. However, no details about what that “food” might have been are provided.

¹⁰ R.E.F. Smith and David Christian, *Bread and Salt: A Social and Economic History of Food and Drink in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

discourse in the first half of the nineteenth century.¹¹ A few scholars have examined the importance of food distribution in establishing Soviet power before Stalin.¹² Elena Osokina has pointed out the role of food distribution in the 1930s.¹³ Tamara Kondrat'eva compared medieval and Soviet Russian practices of food distribution to establish the loyalty of the elites.¹⁴ Jukka Gronow has written about the focus on luxury foods such as caviar and champagne in the mid-1930s.¹⁵ Articles on the history of the most popular Soviet cookbook, Soviet-Armenian cuisine, Soviet ice cream, and canned meat have also appeared over the past two decades.¹⁶ Russian and Soviet drinking practices have also attracted significant scholarly attention.¹⁷ Finally, within

¹¹ Alison Smith, *Recipes for Russia: Food and Nationhood Under the Tsars* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008).

¹² Lars T. Lih, *Bread and Authority in Russia, 1914-1921* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990); Mauricio Borrero, *Hungry Moscow: Scarcity and Urban Society in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1921* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003)

¹³ Elena Osokina, *Za fasadom "stalinskogo izobiliya": Raspredelenie i rynek v snabzhenii naseleniya v gody industrializatsii, 1927-1941* [Behind the Stalinist Façade of Abundance: Distribution and the Market in the Provisioning of the Population in the Years of Industrialization, 1927-1941] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1998).

¹⁴ Tamara Kondratieva, *Kormit' i pravit': O vlasti v Rossii XVI-XX veka* [Feed and Rule: On Power in Russia in the XVI-XX Centuries] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2006). Originally published in French as Tamara Kondratieva, *Gouverner et nourrir. Du pouvoir en Russie (xvi^e-xx^e siècles)* (Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2002).

¹⁵ Jukka Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin's Russia* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

¹⁶ For the brief histories of the dominant Book of Healthy and Tasty Food as well as Soviet-Armenian cuisines see *Food in Russian History and Culture*, Musya Glants and Joyce Stetson Toomre, eds., (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1997). See also Jenny Smith, "Empire of Ice Cream: How Life Got Sweeter in the Postwar Soviet Union," in *Food Chains: From Farmyard to Shopping Cart*, Roger Horowitz and Warren Belasco, eds., (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 142-159; Jenny Smith, "Tushonka: Cultivating Soviet Postwar Taste," *M/C Journal* 13 (2010), accessed July 30, 2013, <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/299>; Edward Geist, "Cooking Bolshevik: Anastas Mikoian and the Making of the *Book about Delicious and Healthy Food*" *Russian Review* 71 (2012): 295–313.

¹⁷ See for example Stephen White, *Russia Goes Dry: Alcohol, State and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Laura L. Phillips, *Bolsheviks and the Bottle: Drink and Worker Culture in St. Petersburg, 1900-1929* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000); Irina Takala, *Veseliye Rusi: istoriia alkogol'noi problemy v Rossii* [The Joy of the Rus: The History of the Alcohol Question in Russia] (Saint-Peterburg: Zhurnal Neva, 2002); Kate Transchel, *Under the Influence: Working-Class Drinking, Temperance, and Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1895-1932* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006); *Veseliye Rusi, XX vek: gradus noveishei rossiiskoi istorii ot "p'ianogo biudzheta" do "sukhogo zakona"* [The Joy of the Rus and the XX Century: The Degree of Modern Russian History from the "Drunken Budget" to "Dry Law"], V. B. Aksenov, ed., (Moscow: Probel-2000, 2007).

Russia itself the topic of Soviet food remains quite relevant and a number of popular histories have been published.¹⁸

But while the fields of study relevant to this dissertation continue to grow, no one has so far attempted to examine Soviet history through the prism of food for the entirety of the existence of the Soviet state. This approach has allowed me to trace the story of Soviet food from the beginning to the end. For Bolsheviks who came to power in 1917 there was one grand goal – the establishment of a just, world-wide system in which everyone would contribute according to his or her abilities and receive according to their needs. When my students and family have asked me for the reasons why the Soviet Union ultimately collapsed, I had to think about the possible answer to this broad and, frankly, impossible question. In this dissertation I argue that it was the uneven, disappointing provisioning of food that led to the loss of confidence in the Soviet system. No one had mapped out for the Soviet leadership and citizens the path from Revolution to Communism. They had to struggle along, coming up with the means to deal with the basic problems that came up along the way – how to hold on to power, how to modernize an underdeveloped economy, and how to feed all the participants in this great experiment of civilization building. To eat Soviet – it was imagined – was to modernize every aspect of food and nutrition, to catch up and then swiftly overtake the West in the production and consumption of food.

In many ways, the interrelated narratives of this dissertation tell a story of good intentions. Soviet authorities promised their citizens that they would eat better than ever, a promise that would always have to be moderated. First the Civil War (1918-1921) interfered with any plans to improve the Soviet diet. Just when the New Economic Policy (1921-1927)

¹⁸ See for example, Villiam Pokhlebkina *Kukhnia veka* [The Kitchen of the Century] (Moscow: Polifakt, 2000) and Irina Glushchenko, *Obshchepit: Mikoian i sovetskaia kukhnia* [Public Catering: Mioyan and the Soviet Cuisine] (Moscow: Izdatel'skii dom Gosudarstvennogo universiteta - Vysshei shkoly ekonomiki, 2010).

allowed some private commerce to reestablish the food supply to the cities, the new goals of rapid industrialization and collectivization (1927-1941) subordinated consumer needs once again. The Soviet Union was on war footing again from 1939 to 1945, so food for private consumers had to be sacrificed for the needs of the military. Even when the Soviet government tried to focus more on consumer needs, the interests of the military-industrial complex and showpiece heavy-industry projects ate up the funding that could make significant improvements to the food supply or to the infrastructure needed to facilitate these improvements. Yet none of these difficulties stopped the official discourse of abundance that told Soviet consumers what to expect from their government. They were told that “only in the Soviet Union...the problem of nutrition...is being successfully resolved.”¹⁹ Through continuous and detailed promises of abundance, Soviet citizens were constantly reminded of which exact foods they were lacking. And through the length of Soviet history, the leitmotif of never quite having what they were told to expect, caused the greatest damage to their view of their own political system.

Chapter Outline

The four chapters of my dissertation discuss major features of the world of Soviet food thematically to demonstrate how specific foods and food-related behaviors became central to forming a uniquely Soviet identity. For a work with such a broad title, there are also topics that I cover in less detail. From the time he came to power in 1917 and until his death in 1924, Lenin had little time to devote to planning a Soviet diet. Therefore, the early revolutionary period is not analyzed in great detail. I see the food situation during the second World War to be too complex to discuss appropriately without writing a separate work. Finally, while one of the chapters

¹⁹ *Kniga o vkusnoi i zdorovoi pishche* [The Book about Tasty and Healthy Food] (Moscow-Leningrad: Pishchepromizdat, 1939), 6.

addresses the story of the Soviet ethnic cuisine, the dissertation puts much greater focus on Soviet food as it was seen by the Russian population of the USSR.

The introduction outlines the main topics of the dissertation and their historiography. Chapter one, “The Façade of Abundance: Bread, Vodka and Sausage” addresses the reasons for and reactions to the Soviet food shortages. It argues that the visual and cultural rhetoric during the rule of Joseph Stalin (1925-1953) had set up a “decorative façade of...abundance and...plenty,” leading to this period being remembered as a time of prosperity, despite the actual impoverishment and constant shortages of even basic foods.²⁰ The chapter then traces how bread, vodka, and especially sausage became the most important benchmarks of abundance that the Soviet consumers have come to expect from their leaders. It argues that the lack of sausage became the most important symbol of the failure of the Soviet economic and social system and contributed to their collapse.

My second chapter, “Food for Heroes,” demonstrates how the notion of heroism helped determine who deserved to receive the greater share of the limited supplies of food. Polar explorers and aviators, cosmonauts, certain social groups, and even cities were selected as particularly heroic and deserving to be lavished with plentiful and specially-designed food. At the same time, many Soviet consumers, who were encouraged by the propaganda to see themselves as everyday heroes, felt resentment and envy at what they saw as undeserved or excessive nutritional benefits bestowed upon other ostensible heroes, such as the Communist Party leadership.

The third chapter, “The Soviet Melting Pot,” discusses the tension between Pan-Soviet and specific ethnic culinary identities. I argue that there were two Pan-Soviet cuisines and that

²⁰ Elena Osokina, *Za fasadom “stalinskogo izobilija”: Raspredelenie i rynek v snabzhenii naseleniia v gody industrializatsii. 1927-1941*, 2nd ed., (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2008, 1999), 17-18. The translation used here and elsewhere in this work is mine unless otherwise noted.

their history illustrates the development of the Soviet nationalities policy. The first Pan-Soviet cuisine that came into existence before World War Two was an attempt to modernize the cuisines of Soviet ethnicities. It combined the cuisines of the pre-revolutionary Russian middle classes with the latest culinary trends of the United States, while ignoring the ethnic culinary traditions of the Soviet people. I argue that the second Pan-Soviet Cuisine began due to the Cold War-era rejection of American and Western cultural influences. It reversed the trends of the first Pan-Soviet cuisine and embraced the cuisines of Soviet ethnicities, while viewing foreign foods with apprehension. I further argue that the denunciation of the second Pan-Soviet cuisine that was voiced soon after its introduction had more to do with the rise of political nationalism than any culinary preference.

The fourth chapter, “The Soviet Quest for Fast Food,” traces Soviet attempts to introduce Western fast-food into the Soviet Union as a further demonstration of Soviet progress and modernity. I argue that the Soviet embrace of Fordism as a model of economic development, the need to address the “double-burden” of Soviet women, and the failure of the Soviet domestic public-catering system led to the introduction of McDonald’s into the USSR in January 1990. I further argue that unlike contemporary claims, the Soviet embrace of McDonald’s was not an indication of Soviet defeat but rather a late attempt to reform a system that the majority of Soviet people still believed in.

Finally, the conclusion discusses the implications of all these cases for our understanding of the Soviet experience.

Chapter 1 A Façade of Abundance: Bread, Vodka, and Sausage

On the eve of Russia's 2004 "National Sovereignty Day" celebrations, *Novaia gazeta*, one of Russia's most popular daily newspapers, suggested that the country needed a dietary counterpart to Count Sergei Uvarov's famous national doctrine. Instead of Uvarov's "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality," the newspaper proposed "the modern triad" of "sausage–bread–vodka."²¹ In the same way that the American Farm Bureau Federation annually reports the cost of a complete Thanksgiving meal, America's most symbolic repast, Russian newspapers report on the prices of the Russian culinary trinity.²² Of these three consumables, sausage bears the heaviest symbolic weight. Something happened between the revolution, whose slogans demanded "Land, Peace, and Bread" and the present, when even the president speaks about the social construct of "sausage in exchange for freedom," while producers and consumers discuss sausage ingredients, prices, and use it as a medium to recreate world masterpieces (see fig.1.1).²³ Why, by the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, did sausage – rather than bread or vodka – enter "almost every conversation on social justice and political legitimacy" and become a "discursive successor to bread?"²⁴ More significantly, what does this tell us about the former

²¹ "Narkom v kolbasnom razreze" [The People's Commissar Through a Sausage Prism], *Novaia gazeta*, June 10, 2004.

²² Cost of Classic Thanksgiving Dinner Up Slightly This Year, The Voice of Agriculture, <http://www.fb.org/index.php?action=newsroom.news&year=2012&file=nr1108.html>. For an example of the Russian reports of bread, vodka, sausage prices, see Valerii Rukobraskii, "Vodka, khleb, i kolbasa dorozhat' ne budut" [Vodka, Bread, and Sausage Will Not Become More Expensive], *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, September 6, 2006 and "V Kaluge podorazhali khleb, kolbasa i vodka" [Bread, Sausage and Vodka Have Become More Expensive in Kaluga], Regnum, 15:32 August 20, 2010, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1317015.html>

²³ "Deklaratsiia Medvedeva. God 2009" [The Medvedev Declaration. Year 2009], *Novaia gazeta*, April 15, 2009; Anatolii Novichkov, "Kartiny iz kolbasy – rossiiane opiiat' v Knige Ginessa" [Sausage Paintings – Russians Again Enter the Guinness Book of Records], RIA Video, accessed June 5, 2013, <http://ria.ru/video/20080930/151730890.html> and "Vystavka kartin iz kolbasy v Ekaterinburge" [An Exhibit of Sausage Paintings in Yekaterinburg], 66.ru, accessed June 5, 2013, <http://s.66.ru/localStorage/collection/a6/15/33/de/a61533de.jpg>.

²⁴ Stephen Lovell, "Power, Personalism, and Provisioning in Russian History," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9 (2008): 378-379.



Figure 1.1. Sausage paintings in Russia. Above: Anatolii Novichkov, “Kartiny iz kolbasy – rossiiane opiat’ v Knige Guinnessa” [Sausage Paintings – Russians Again Enter the Guinness Book of Records], RIA Video, accessed June 5, 2013, <http://ria.ru/video/20080930/151730890.html>.

Below: “Vystavka kartin iz kolbasy v Ekaterinburge” [An Exhibit of Sausage Paintings in Yekaterinburg], 66.ru, accessed June 5, 2013, <http://s.66.ru/localStorage/collection/a6/15/33/de/a61533de.jpg>.

Soviet Union? This chapter argues that from its roots as the popular working class food of the 19th century, by the 1930s sausage was selected as an appropriate symbol of abundance in a worker's state, along with bread and, more variably, alcohol. So powerful was the imagery of Stalin's "façade of abundance" that his successors were unable to change the consumer demand for sausage, one of its key ingredients, as proof that the USSR was prospering under socialism. Crucially, while bread and vodka were relatively abundant, providing a satisfactory amount of sausage proved elusive to Soviet economic planners. This chapter further argues that the absence of sausage, an iconic product of an abundance that was not achieved, was one of the key reasons for the increasing dissatisfaction of Soviet citizens with their state that led to its collapse.

This chapter will first examine the Stalinist roots of the promise of abundance, the particular goods which became its emblems, and the shortages that prevented an abundance of food from ever becoming a reality. I briefly look at the pre-revolutionary diet of the Russian peasants and workers which guided the selection of foods for the Soviet food industry to produce. I will then move to the "magical thinking" that led Soviet planners to make promises that they had no ability to deliver and the resulting abundance of ersatz foods. The chapter then looks at the mid-1930s when sausage began to take precedence over bread and vodka as the most symbolic food of the promised better and happier life. The subsequent sections examine why the Stalinist symbols of abundance were so powerful and how Stalin's successors addressed the ever growing but never fulfilled demand for bread, vodka, and, especially, sausage.

The Russian Diet in the late 19th – Early 20th Centuries.

The three foods that form the modern Russian food "triad" are rooted in the pre-revolutionary eating habits of peasants and workers. The traditional Russian peasant diet, as it appeared by the late 19th century, consisted largely of rye bread, cabbage, potatoes, and other

vegetables. Grain and potatoes provided, on average, between 60 to 80 percent of calories consumed by the majority of the Russian population, depending on season and region. These ingredients were generally consumed in the form of bread, soup, and gruel. Meat and fish were rare and milk was used primarily as a condiment. Fruit, berries, honey, and mushrooms gathered in the woods supplemented the peasant diet. The main drinks were the grain-based, mildly alcoholic *kvass* and vodka. Salt served as the main preservative, and by the mid-19th century, sugar replaced honey as the main sweetener.²⁵

After serfdom was abolished in 1861, more peasants moved to the cities. Though they were strongly tied to their home villages, the diet of urban workers began to change. Sausage, a relatively cheap source of protein, became a favorite both as an accompaniment to vodka and as a convenience food. In Moscow's markets, the lower classes ate "fried spoiled sausage" in flop houses where the smell of cheap tobacco "only slightly destroyed the smell of...stale vodka"²⁶ Similar meals of bread, vodka, and sausage were shared by groups of workers celebrating a signed labor contract, as well as by poor art students after the successful sale of a painting.²⁷ Sausage was also a convenience food, perfect for eating on the go. In pointing out that many workers had little time or money for better food, *Pravda*, the central Bolshevik newspaper before and after the Revolution, commonly cited sausage as one of the few foods besides bread that a poor worker could have in a hurry.²⁸ The production and sale of vodka was a state monopoly since 1894. By making high-quality alcohol widely available, the imperial state earned as much as 30 percent of its budget through vodka

²⁵ R.E.F. Smith and David Christian, *Bread and Salt: A Social and Economic History of Food and Drink in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1984), 251-253.

²⁶ Vladimir Gil'iarovskii, *Moskva i moskvichi* [Moscow and the Muscovites] (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1981), 16, 50, 114, 120.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 256, 209, 92.

²⁸ See for example, "V raznykh predpriiiaakh" [At Different Enterprises], *Pravda*, June 12, 1912; "V plenu u zheleza" [In Iron Captivity], *Pravda*, June 15, 1912; I. Kolosov, "Professional'nye zabolevaniia tramvaiinykh rabochikh" [Work-related Illnesses of the Tram Workers], *Pravda*, August 9, 1912.

sales and allowed vodka consumption to almost double from 8 to 14 liters per person by 1914 when prohibition was declared.²⁹ When these favorite foods of the urban poor began to disappear during the shortages of World War One, it was said that the going price of a prostitute was “a pound of bread, a pound of sausage, and a bottle of moonshine.”³⁰ As the food situation improved somewhat after the end of the Russian Civil War (1918-1921), diet reformists noted that sausage remained a popular working-class lunch and breakfast, if the budget allowed.³¹ The bulk of working-class calories still came from bread, quite unlike Western Europe and the United States where dairy, eggs, and meat were now increasingly accessible to even the poorest citizens.³² As part of the process of modernizing Russia, the Revolutionary government wanted to move the Russian diet along with Russian industry and culture into Western modernity. This would require dealing with natural and economic obstacles that began before 1917.

Planning for an Abundance of Food

Despite its large territory, Russia was and remains extremely vulnerable to weather-related crop failures due to its cool climate and relatively poor soil.³³ During World War One, the imperial government secured food for the armed forces and major industrial centers at the cost of greater shortages and harsh measures, such as forced grain requisitions and rationing, as did most of the other belligerents. These measures reflected the growing role of the state in

²⁹ Mark Lawrence Schrad, “Kicking the Vodka Habit,” *Moscow Times*, November 3, 2006 and Mark Lawrence Schrad, “The First Social Policy: Alcohol Control and Modernity in Policy Studies,” *Journal of Policy History* 19 (2007): 441-442, 445.

³⁰ V.B. Aksenov, “Sverzhenie tsaria i votsarenie ‘khanzhi’ [The Overthrowing of the Tsar and the Enthronement of the Hypocrite] in V.B. Aksenov, ed., *Veseliie Rusi. XX vek. Gradus noveishei rossiiskoi istorii: ot ‘p’ianogo biudzheta’ do ‘sukhogo zakona’* [The Joy of Russia. XX Century. The Degree of Modern Russian History from the “Drunken Budget” to the “Dry Law” (Moscow: Probel-2000, 2007), 167.

³¹ E. Mikulina, *Chem vy pitaetes’?* [What Do You Eat?] (Moscow: Narpit, 1930), 30; Olga Velikanova, *Popular Perception of Soviet Politics in the 1920s: Disenchantment of the Dreamers* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 12.

³² Mauricio Borrero, *Hungry Moscow: Scarcity and Urban Society in the Russian Civil War, 1917–1921* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 77-78.

³³ Nikolai M. Dronin and Edward G. Bellinger, *Climate Dependence and Food Problems in Russia, 1900-1990 : The Interaction of Climate and Agricultural Policy and Their Effect on Food Problems* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press (CEU Press), 2005), 10-11.

Europe and were continued by the Soviet state after the revolution.³⁴ What made the Soviet approach to feeding the masses new was the strength of faith in the transformational power of the Revolution, which would make the impossible – possible. Between 1917 and 1928, the Soviet government alternated between forcing and negotiating with the peasantry to give up their grain in the amounts and at prices that the government needed.³⁵ Moving away from the ad hoc policies of the earlier period, Joseph Stalin saw planning in agriculture and industry as complimentary and necessary for successfully reforming the Soviet economy. Industrialization in the Soviet Union would occur under Five-Year Plans and be achieved at the expense of the peasantry. In 1928, addressing the party that he led from 1922 to his death in 1953, Stalin declared that the peasantry was “undoubtedly...capable of bearing the burden” of generating the resources for the successful industrialization of the USSR.³⁶ The peasants would produce enough food to feed workers and to sell abroad in exchange for new technology. Agriculture was collectivized starting in 1929, in a process that was supposed to transform independent farms into “factories of grain.”³⁷ This would be achieved through “new technical means in agriculture, mechanization..., collective peasant labor, and the electrification of the country.”³⁸ Natural limitations would no longer matter – according to Stalin, there were “no fortresses that the working people, the Bolsheviks, cannot capture.”³⁹

Stalin was echoed by the dominant biological theory of the Soviet Union, originating

³⁴ David Hoffman, “On His Book *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939*” Rorotoko, accessed July 31, 2013, http://rorotoko.com/interview/20120113_hoffmann_david_on_cultivating_the_masses.

³⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 24-26.

³⁶ J.V. Stalin, “Industrialization and the Grain Problem,” in J.V. Stalin, *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), 11:168. The collection will hereafter be referred to as *Works*. Though translated into English, the translator’s name is not indicated.

³⁷ J.V. Stalin, “The Work of the April Joint Plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Committee, (1928),” in *Works*, 11:45.

³⁸ Stalin, “Industrialization,” *Works*, 11:171.

³⁹ J.V. Stalin, “The Work of the April Joint Plenum,” *Works*, 11:62.

from a self-taught practitioner of agricultural selection Ivan Michurin (1855-1935), who asserted that “we cannot wait for favors from Nature; to take them from her – that is our goal.”⁴⁰ Most images of agricultural work in the 1930s portrayed it as a rigidly organized, militaristic activity. Instead of the rustic sower, portrayed on the Soviet banknotes of 1924 (see fig. 1.2), the new peasantry of official photographs marched to the fields in neat files (see fig. 1.3) or plowed in conveyor-like ranks of tractors (see fig. 1.4). In this city-slicker-revolutionary conception of agriculture, the harvest just happened and could be reaped (see fig. 1.5) and delivered to storehouses almost effortlessly, with the same militaristic, industrial precision (see fig. 1.6). Symptomatically, a Soviet biologist, when asked when his promises of remaking nature through “Michurian genetics” were going to happen, answered that “when a Bolshevik says – **it will happen**, that means we can say – **it is here**.”⁴¹

This “magical thinking” of seeing the present as it would become in the imagined future that Sheila Fitzpatrick described as the “discourse of socialist realism,” had significant, long-term implications.⁴² Despite assurances to the contrary, Soviet planning did not rely on careful calculations. Instead, “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.”⁴³ Statistics themselves reflected this form of wishful thinking. Between 1933 and 1954 Soviet statisticians calculated harvests based on the so-called biological yield, “the maximum possible yield of the standing crop in the field at the moment of maximum ripeness,” estimated from samples. This was done to make sure

⁴⁰ I.V. Michurin, *Itogi shestidesiatilemih rabot* [The Sum of Sixty Years’ Work] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo sel’skhozaiistvennoii literatury, 1949, 1936), 74.

⁴¹ Ia. Cherniak, “Vtorzhenie v prirodu” [Invasion of Nature], *Nashi dostizheniia* [Our Achievements] no.3 (1934): 96. Emphasis in text.

⁴² Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 217.

⁴³ *Ibid.*



Figure 1.2. Soviet three chervonets note (1924), enlarged detail. "3 Chervontsa Russia's Banknote," Banknote World, accessed July 22, 2013, <http://banknoteworld.com/banknote/russia/3%20Chervontsa/10680>

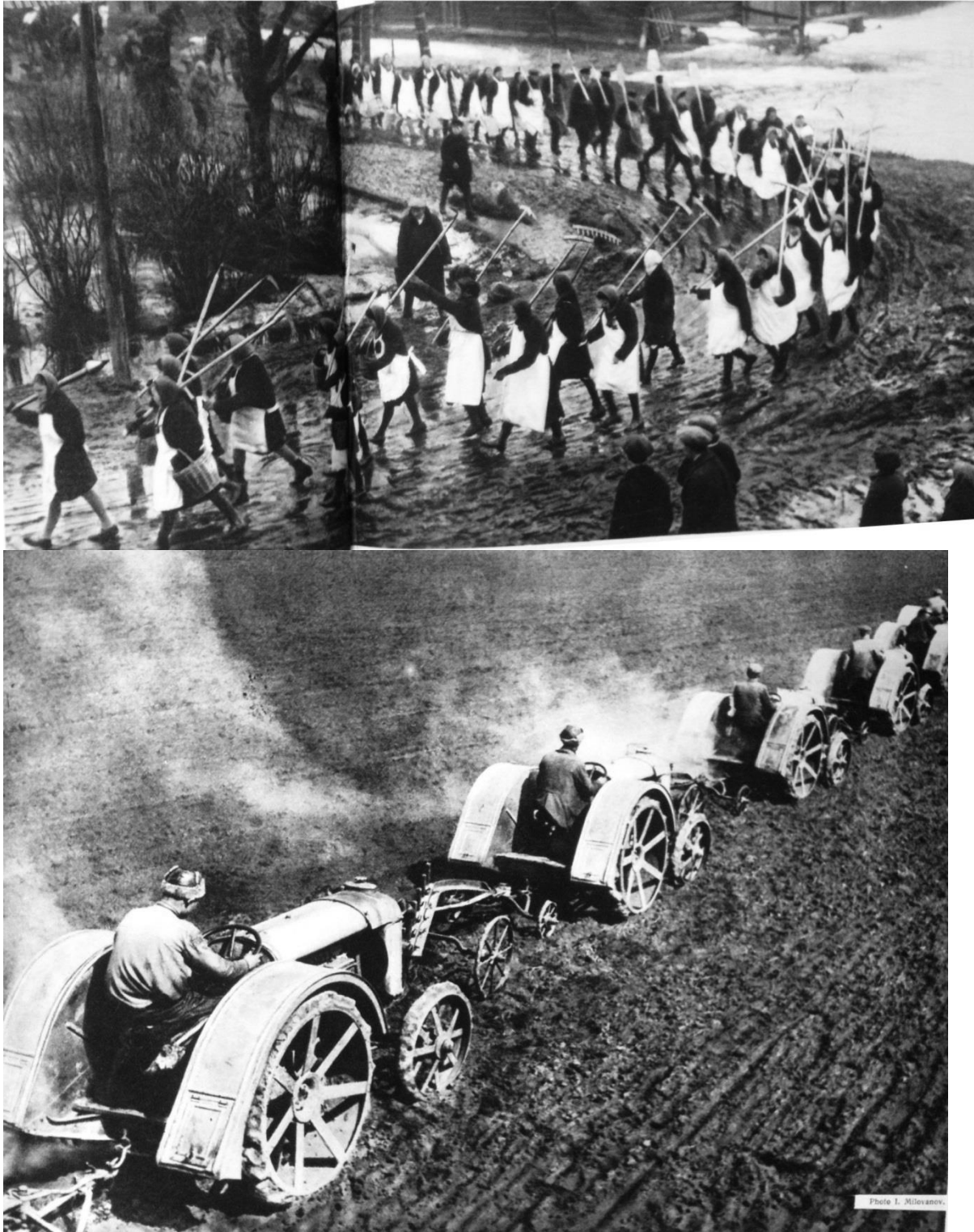


Figure 1.3 (top). Marching Soviet peasants. *USSR in Construction* no.2 (1932): 13-14.
Figure 1.4 (bottom). A “conveyor” of tractors. *USSR in Construction* no.2 (1932): 16.



Figure 1.5. The crop is ready. *USSR in Construction* no.2 (1932): 21.



Figure 1.6. Delivery of grain. *USSR in Construction* no.2 (1932): 26.

that the collective farms would deliver the maximum possible grain to the state.⁴⁴ Similarly, when calculating the amounts of meat produced, Soviet statisticians, unlike their counterparts in the West included “fats, offal, [and] byproducts” in the totals.⁴⁵ As a result, the statistics and expectations of planners were quite inaccurate and even deadly. Collective farms (*kolkhozy*) would distribute surplus food and any monetary profits to their members only after delivering the planned amounts of food to the state. The creation of *kolkhozy* did not lead to an increase in agricultural productivity nor prosperity of the peasants. Instead, they became an efficient way for the state to collect food to be redistributed according to planned priorities. Thanks to inaccurate planning and ruthless enforcement of state assignments to the collective farms, the most fertile areas of the USSR suffered from a deadly famine between 1932-1933, a disaster that some scholars have equated with genocide.⁴⁶

Unlike the peasantry, city dwellers were entitled to rations under a system instituted to deal with the shortages between 1930 and 1935. The urban population was divided into rationing categories based on place of residency, workplace, and job function. The higher the priority of the project, the city, or the job in constructing a modern industrial economy, the more food its workers received. Thus, a worker who worked at a major heavy-industry plant in Moscow, Leningrad, or Khar’kov received much more food than a worker who made spoons at a small factory in a provincial city. A non-industrial employee (*sluzhashchii*), such as an accountant, received fewer rations than an industrial worker. The intellectual and the party elites, as well as

⁴⁴ Dronin and Bellinger, *Climate Dependence*, 24.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴⁶ For opinions in favor of the genocidal theory see Halyna Hryn, *Hunger by Design: The Great Ukrainian Famine and Its Soviet Context* (Cambridge, MA: Ukrainian Research Institute, 2008, 2005) and Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010). For the opponents' claims, that while the famine was a terrible and criminal consequence of Stalinist policies, it was not their primary goal, and affected all grain-producing regions, see R.W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931-1933* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), xvi, xvi n12, 441 and O. A. Antipova, et al, eds., *Golod v SSSR, 1930-1934 gg.* [Hunger in the USSR, 1930-1934] (Moscow: Federal'noe arkhivnoe agentstvo, 2009).

the highly productive shock-workers (*udarniki*) got better rations than their non-elite counterparts, but a party secretary in Moscow had greater access to goods than a party secretary in Vladivostok.⁴⁷

Because the official discourse looked only forward and saw these difficulties as temporary, they were commonly discussed as if they were already resolved in the past. In a 1930 brochure on the grain problem, the Minister of Provisioning (later Trade) Anastas Mikoyan used verb tenses interchangeably and mixed plans with results. He explained that the grain collections plan would “satisfy all the needs of the country in grain and would allow the resumption of the grain exports” in exchange for machinery. While he at first suggested that there was “every reason to *count on* the complete victory...[to] fulfill the party decision on bread collections” which would “mean the final exit from grain difficulties...in the nearest year,” just a few paragraphs further he asserted that “*having achieved victory* on the bread front we *have received*...a key to solve all the other food goals.” He even claimed that it was the quality of bread and not its availability that was a primary concern for Soviet consumers since “in the consciousness of the working masses bread is already a passed stage, a resolved problem.”⁴⁸

Continuing to mix the present and the past, in the midst of the collectivization campaign and just as the rationing system was being put in place, Stalin declared to the Sixteenth Party Congress in June 1930 that “the grain crisis can be regarded as having been, in the main, solved,” and that it was now possible “to begin to resolve the problem of animal husbandry.”⁴⁹ Meat, as a more “progressive” form of calories, was supported by the Marxist theory of civilization and

⁴⁷ For a detailed discussion of the Soviet rationing system on which this account is based, see Elena Osokina, *Za fasadom “stalinskogo izobilija:” Raspredelenie i rynek v snabzhenii naseleniia v gody industrializatsii. 1927-1941* [Behind the Façade of “Stalinist Abundance:” Distribution and the Market in the Provisioning of the Population in the Years of Industrialization], 2nd ed., (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2008, 1999), 123-154.

⁴⁸ Anastas Mikoyan, *Prodovol’stvennoe snabzhenie i nashi zadachi* [Food Provisioning and the Current Goals] (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1930), 16, 17, 21, 22. The italics are added by me for emphasis.

⁴⁹ Stalin, “Political report,” *Works*, 12: 269-270.

Friedrich Engels' claim that "man did not come into existence without a meat diet."⁵⁰ In the Soviet future, meat was "about to play the same exclusive role in the creation by the proletariat of the highest form of human society - communism."⁵¹ Soviet consumption of meat per person was supposed to rise from just under 30 kilograms per year to the average levels of consumption in Germany (53 kilograms), and then finally to those of the United States (70 kilograms).⁵²

Pigs, "the primary machine for making meat," were supposed to become the main tool to achieve these goals.⁵³ They bred well, matured quickly, and could be fed almost anything. All that pork, it was suggested, was best sold to the consumers in the form of sausage, as well as hams.⁵⁴ This approach was popularized in the national press including the special meat-themed issue of *The Crocodile*, the main Soviet journal of satire (no.20, 1930, see figs. 1.7 and 1.8). The state goals were also reflected in Yurii Olesha's well-received novel, *Envy* (1927). In a key scene, one of its central characters, Ivan Babichev, who lives and breathes to create better food for the working class, celebrates his new triumph – the creation of a delicious yet inexpensive sausage, made possible by the combined efforts of Soviet industry and agriculture.⁵⁵

Like Babichev, Soviet leaders saw industrially produced food as superior.⁵⁶ As an industrially processed meat, sausage was perfect. It could be the *pièce de résistance* of the American-designed meat processing plants being constructed in the early 1930s in major Soviet cities including Moscow. The Moscow Meat Processing Works (*Moskovskii Miasokombinat*), the

⁵⁰ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House 1950), 79; also quoted in F. Kornushin "Pervenets miasnoi industrii SSSR" [The Firstborn of the Meat Industry of the USSR], *Pishchevaia Promyshlennost'* [The Food Industry] no.1 (1931): 33.

⁵¹ Kornushin "Pervenets", 34.

⁵² S. Shnitser, "Osnovnye problemy piatiletnego plana razvitiia miasnoi promyshlennosti" [The Primary Problems of the Five-Year Plan of Development for the Meat Industry], *Pishchevaia Promyshlennost'* no.2-3 (1931): 17.

⁵³ V. Pavlov, "Blagozatel' noe otnoshenie," *Krokodil*, no.20 (1930): 3.

⁵⁴ Shnitser, "Osnovnye," 17.

⁵⁵ Iu. K. Olesha, *Zavist'* [Envy] (Moscow-Leningrad: Zemlia i fabrika, 1927). On warm reception of *Zavist'* see Rimgaila Salys, ed., *Olesha's Envy: A Critical Companion* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press), 18-19.

⁵⁶ Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 91.



Figure 1.7. The men invite the pig to stop hanging out in the yard and join them as a part of the meeting agenda. *Krokodil* no.20 (1930): cover.

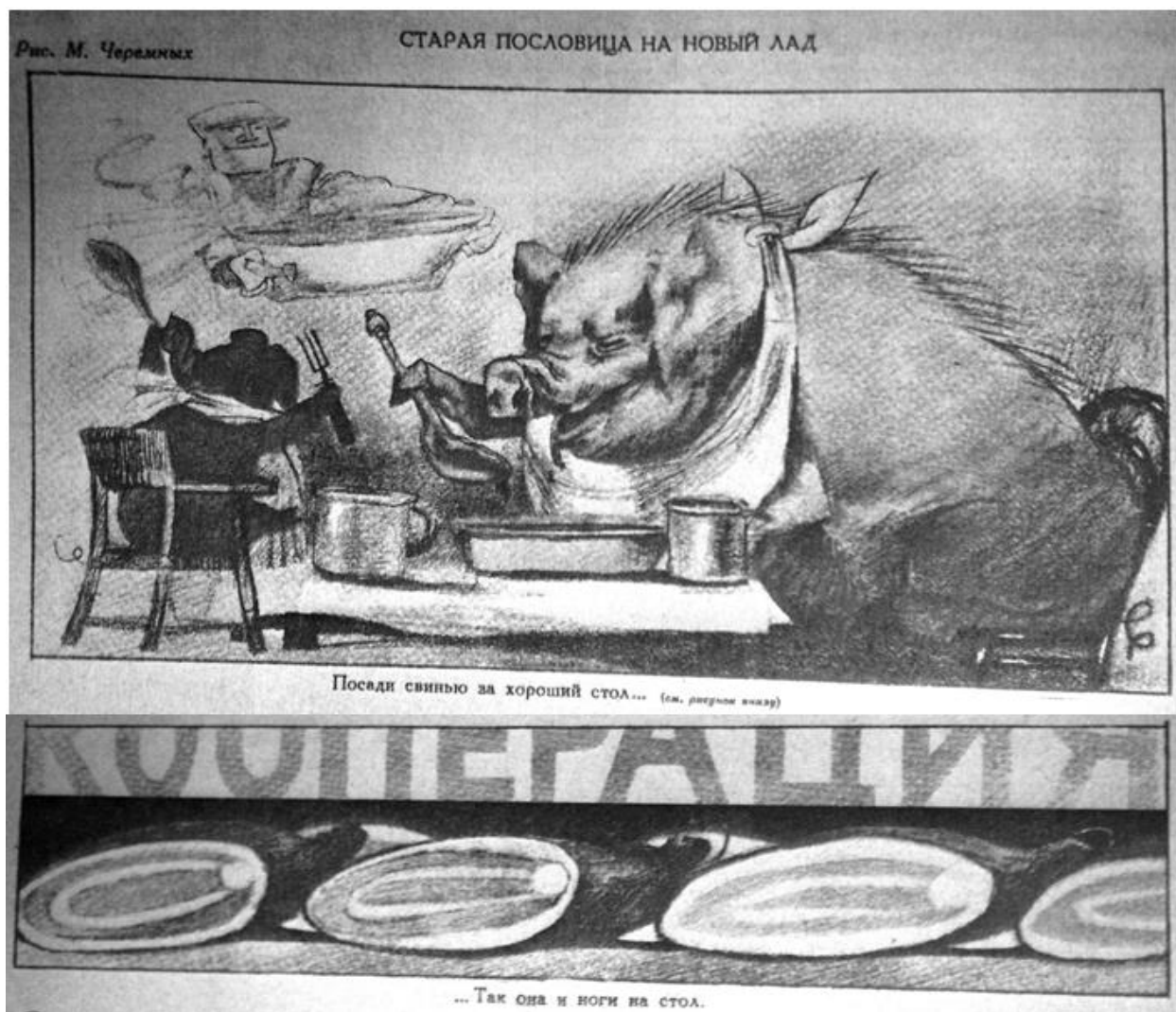


Figure 1.8. A new meaning to an old proverb: “Put a pig at a good table and it will put its legs on the table.” The legs are, of course, hams. *Krokodil* no. 20 (1930): 2.

“firstborn of the meat industry,” would have the capacity to produce 370 thousand tons of meat products a year. By 1933, state farms (*sovkhozy*) were supposed to supply forty thousand heads of specialized cattle, thirty thousand of which would come from milk farms, with the rest being supplied by the collective farms (*kolkhozy*). State farms would also supply 885 thousand pigs, while collective farms would send just under two million for slaughter and processing.⁵⁷ The unmentioned difficulties lay in the raw ingredients for the mighty machines, since the Soviet livestock suffered as much as grain production during the chaos of the collectivization campaign.

By 1933, when the Moscow Meat Processing Works was completed, half of the cattle and pigs in the Soviet Union in 1928 were gone. The population of cattle would not return to pre-World War One levels until 1958. The weight of an average cow slaughtered for the state was 335 kilograms in 1928, but only 231 in 1933. The numbers were even worse for pigs, with the average weight of a slaughtered pig being 111 kilograms in 1928, but declining to fifty-six kilograms by 1933, although their larger number and relative ease of processing made them a more reliable source of meat.⁵⁸

Ersatz Abundance: Vodka and Rabbits

There was little available to purchase in Soviet stores, even with ration coupons. For a large part of the state budget, the Soviet treasury began to rely increasingly on vodka. After the end of the prohibition that lasted from 1916 to 1924, the USSR began to allow the production of vodka as a “temporary measure.” By reestablishing the old state monopoly, the Soviet Union found a steady source of funding for the national economy. Though explained to the public as a measure to battle the dangers of unchecked consumption of homemade alcohol, the vodka monopoly was created to make money, as state and party officials openly admitted to trusted

⁵⁷ Korniushin, “Pervenets,” 37, 39. The *sovkhozy*, or state farms, with employees working on state-owned land, were supposed to supersede the collectively owned *kolkhozy* (collective farms) as a more socialist form of agriculture.

⁵⁸ This account is based Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, 326-327.

audiences.⁵⁹ Stalin explained the return to vodka manufacture as a way to finance industrialization without borrowing money from capitalists. The choice was “between bondage and vodka, and those people who think that it is possible to build socialism in white gloves are grievously mistaken,” claimed Stalin in 1925.⁶⁰ In 1930, writing to his closest political ally and prime minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, Stalin further exhorted him to abandon “a false sense of shame” and to raise “vodka production...to the [greatest] extent possible.”⁶¹ The temporary measure proved permanent – until the early 1980s, vodka consumption in the Soviet Union would rise steadily and provided, on average, fifteen to twenty-five percent of the entire Soviet budget.⁶²

Though it would fill some of the budgetary holes produced by a shortage of goods, vodka could not replace food. In another practice that was borrowed from the shortages of World War One and would be retained by later Soviet governments, the official press conducted campaigns to extoll the virtues of ersatz foods. Along with claims that the grain and meat questions were already resolved, there would be articles explaining that a “number of...conditions have acted to break the tempos of growth in the number of livestock and the solution to the meat problem.” Thanks to modern science and the “creative initiatives of the masses,” these articles argued, perfectly adequate replacements were discovered and, with enough pressure on the food industry,

⁵⁹ See for example R.I. Berzin, “Iz dnevnika 1932-1937 godov” [Excerpts from the Diary of 1932-1937] in *Nikolaii Muralov* (Moscow: Moskovskii Rabochii, 1990), 141.

⁶⁰ J.V. Stalin, “Political Report of the Central Committee, December 18, 1925,” *Works*, 7:339-340.

⁶¹ *Stalin's Letters to Molotov, 1925-1936*, Lars T. Lih, Oleg V. Naumov, and Oleg Khlevniuk, eds., Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, tran. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 209.

⁶² Schrad, “Kicking the Vodka Habit.” See also Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917-1953* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 164 and I.R. Takala, *Veseliie Rusi: Istoriia alkogol'noii problemy v Rossii* [The Joy of Rus': A History of the Alcohol Problem in Russia] (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal Neva, 2002), 203. Hessler estimates that by 1932, between 33 to 39 percent of all sales in rural areas involved vodka.

they would soon use more “rhubarb, agar, soy, reindeer and rabbit meat.”⁶³ The campaigns blamed the food industry that was not prescient to produce the exotic ersatz replacement that was, it was claimed, commonly available in many other nations. The consumers often shared the blame because of “simple cultural prejudice” they refused to eat perfectly nutritious foods.⁶⁴

The rabbit breeding campaign that peaked in 1932 was an especially well-publicized example of the apparent Soviet tendency “to do ordinary things,” such as trying to feed its population, “by extraordinary methods.”⁶⁵ After the mass publication of the decree (*postanovlenie*) of the Communist Party that required factories to organize rabbit breeding in the main industrial regions of Russia, the campaign got front cover treatment in most publications including *Ogonek* (*The Flamelet*), the Soviet counterpart to the *Life* magazine.⁶⁶ Only “ignorance of the useful economic qualities of the rabbit can explain the underdevelopment of rabbit breeding in the Soviet Union,” one of the *Ogonek* articles claimed, especially since “in France, Belgium and England rabbit meat is eaten daily in families, restaurants, and cafes.”⁶⁷ The campaign does not appear to have been taken too seriously, probably because rabbits get sick easily and were difficult to process industrially.⁶⁸ By the mid-1930s the campaign largely disappeared, as the state priorities switched back to lauding abundance rather than measures to counteract its lack.

So what did the people actually eat? About half of all food the average worker ate during

⁶³ “Bol’she productsii i luchshego kachestva” [More Goods and of Better Quality], *Pishchevaia promyshlennost’* [The Food Industry] no.53 (1932): 3.

⁶⁴ Borrero, *Hungry Moscow*, 79. Borrero describes a 1919 article in a Moscow trade journal that attempted to normalize the consumption of dog meat that appeared in the city markets by pointing out that it was a perfectly normal practice in ancient Mexico and China.

⁶⁵ R.O.G. Urch, *The Rabbit King of Russia* (London: The Right Book Club, 1939), v.

⁶⁶ *Ogonek*, no.14, May 20, 1932 and *Ogonek*, no.16, June 10, 1932. For newspaper publications see *Sovetskaia Sibir’* [Soviet Siberia], May 18, 1932 and *Krasnyi sever* [The Red North], May 18, 1932, and almost any other Soviet newspaper that day.

⁶⁷ P.Nikitinykh, “Nauchnuiu bazu krolikovodstvu” [Give Rabbit Breeding Scientific Support], *Ogonek*, no.16, June 10, 1932, 2.

⁶⁸ Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, 305-306, 305n23.

the day in the first half of the 1930s consisted of bread. Another quarter of all food was potatoes. Meat consumption remained very low, with the average worker eating twenty-four kilograms of meat per year in 1932 and fourteen and a half kilograms in 1933, 2.3 and 1.4 ounces per day, respectively.⁶⁹ John Scott, an American working at the construction of the Magnitogorsk steel plant in the 1930s, recalled a lunch he and his colleagues regularly ate. Magnitogorsk was a priority project, receiving better rations than many other industries, but the workers received food similar to their colleagues everywhere: a large bowl of cabbage and grain soup, a large plate of potatoes with thin gravy, and a tiny piece of meat. They also received 200 grams of bread with lunch which the workers complained was not enough.⁷⁰ Even the official photographs of the time, meant to demonstrate the good life of the working class, show workers eating only thin soup and large hunks of bread (see figs. 1.9, 1.10).

When cooking at home, consumers had to depend on what they could get with ration cards or buy in the few, but expensive, non-rationed shops. *Rabotnitsa* (The Female Worker), the primary Soviet women's magazine, acknowledged the difficulties its readers faced more candidly than official pronouncements. The *Rabotnitsa* audience, presumed to be responsible for feeding their families, was assured that "currently a large family can receive many herrings with ration cards," that "herring is very nutritious," and that it could be used to prepare numerous tasty dishes.⁷¹ The recipes essentially combined foods that were already commonly available: "Porridge cutlets," "Potato leftovers baked with herring," "Soup from stale rye bread," and "Sweet pie filling from pumpkin, carrot, and beets."⁷²

Because of the very high priority given to the financing of the heavy industry at the

⁶⁹ Osokina, *Za fasadom*, 333.

⁷⁰ John Scott, *Behind the Urals: An American Worker in Russia's City of Steel* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1973), 32, 30.

⁷¹ *V pomoshch' rabotnitse* [An Aid to the Female Worker] supplement to *Rabotnitsa* no.7, (1930): 3.

⁷² *Ibid.*



Figure 1.9. A worker's family at home. *USSR in Construction* no.4 (1930): 30.



Figure 1.10. Collective farmers at lunch. Note the huge piles of bread on the tables. *USSR in Construction* no.5 (1931): 37.

expense of every other sector, the Soviet diet remained precarious throughout the Stalin era. Though the working-class diet began to improve after 1933, neither did the consumption of animal products rise nor did the risk of utter starvation entirely disappear in the USSR until about 1950.⁷³ Yet, paradoxically, it is the second half of the 1930s that had been remembered as time of great abundance, rather than the 1970s when the Soviet Union reached rough parity with Western Europe in terms of food consumption.⁷⁴ It was not accidental that at this time sausage, rather than vodka, bread, or any other foodstuff, began to symbolize abundance. In many ways this development had as much to do with Soviet visual arts as it did with Soviet agriculture.

Bread, Vodka, and Sausage as Part of the Façade of Abundance

By the middle of the 1930s, food availability and variety improved as a result of the state selling less food abroad and the improvements in the efficiency of food distribution through state stores and farmers' markets rather than by ration allotments.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, there still was not enough food grown and processed to provide for the promised cornucopia. Instead, abundance moved from mere empty promises in the first half of the 1930s to selective, symbolic appearances in the second half. Moscow, Leningrad, and the Donbass coal region received a lion's share of Soviet goods.⁷⁶ Major holidays, including elections and special masked balls (*karnavaly*) held in major cities, were also occasions for plentiful food to be displayed and sold. The official explanation for this discrepancy, on the rare occasions when it was acknowledged, was that the well-supplied areas were functioning models to be emulated elsewhere. Less charitably, if more precisely, modern scholars have referred to the displays as "consumer-goods

⁷³ Hessler, *A Social History*, 227 and Dronin and Bellinger, *Climate Dependence*, 13.

⁷⁴ Dronin and Bellinger, *Climate Dependence*, 13 and Osokina, *Za fasadom*, 17-18.

⁷⁵ Oleg Khlevnyuk and R. W. Davies, "The End of Rationing in the Soviet Union, 1934-1935," *Europe-Asia Studies* 51 (1999): 571, 592.

⁷⁶ The issues of privileges will be fully addressed in Chapter 2, "Food for Heroes."

pornography” or the “façade of abundance.”⁷⁷

In 1935, Stalin spoke to the first meeting of Stakhanovites, members of a new high-productivity movement named after Aleksey Stakhanov, a coal miner who managed to over-fulfill his quota for the day fourteen times over. Changing the paradigm of what it meant to live like a Soviet from self-sacrifice to enjoyment, Stalin announced that the Soviet Union could begin reaping the fruit of the First-Five Year Plan. Rationing was abolished by 1935 and in his speech, Stalin defined the Russian Revolution as one that not only brought “freedom, but also succeeded in creating the material conditions of a prosperous life for the people.”⁷⁸ His claims were distilled into a frequently used slogan – “Life has become better, life has become happier.” The “shelves of open stores...[would demonstrate]...to each worker the meaning of the victory of industrialization, [and] of collective agriculture,” it was claimed, and even outside the shops, the new paradigm of Soviet life manifested itself through the constant discussion and display of food.⁷⁹

The most obvious contrast to the preceding years was the abundance of bread, sold without ration limits. The abolition of bread rationing was managed carefully to make a greater impression on the public. Drafts of memos on the subject of the abolition of bread rationing emphasized the utmost necessity of producing greater quantity and quality of bread, especially in Moscow, to avoid any bread queues.⁸⁰ While the supply of bread in the first few days without rationing was uneven, the sudden appearance of so many previously unavailable goods amid a celebratory atmosphere made a powerful impression. Aleksandr Avdeenko, then a young Siberian writer visiting Moscow, thought about the contrast between the previous four years,

⁷⁷ Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 90; Osokina, *Za fasadom*, 17-18.

⁷⁸ J.V. Stalin, “Speech at the First All-Union Conference of Stakhanovites,” *Works* (London: Red Star Press, 1978), 14:99.

⁷⁹ “Velikaiia godovschina,” *Miasnaiia industriia SSSR* 11 (1935): 5.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 573.

when “every piece of bread was worth its weight in gold,” and the new abundance that he found in a Moscow bread shop in the winter of 1935.⁸¹ Here, a store filled with people late into the night proudly advertised the sale of 220 varieties of bread “in honor of the gathering of the Congress of Soviets.”⁸² Avdeenko bought as much as he could and gave it to passersby in the square who “shared in...[his] happiness: smiled and took the treats.”⁸³ Another memoirist, an alcohol factory specialist N.S. Ternovsky, recalled how happy he was to be paid with a bag of flour during his student years in the early 1930s and finally how miraculous it seemed to simply walk into a provincial store and buy a loaf of bread on the day that rationing was abolished.⁸⁴

The optimism of the second half of the 1930s also extended to the question of alcoholism which was now declared completely resolved in the official discourse. Since the First Five-Year plan raised not only the material but also the “cultural standard” for all working people, vodka consumption was going down.⁸⁵ According to Anastas Mikoyan, alcoholism had to disappear since one would not want to get “drunk” while living a “happy and prosperous life.” In fact, it would be appropriate to have a joyous, celebratory drink since “life became happier.”⁸⁶ Furthermore, Mikoyan and Stalin personally devoted much time and effort to the increased production of Soviet champagne explaining that as the highly productive Stakhanovite workers earned more money they would therefore want to buy champagne to celebrate properly.⁸⁷

Because the increase in meat consumption has been “historically equated...with an

⁸¹ Aleksandr Avdeenko, *Nakazanie bez prestupleniia* (Moscow: Sovetskaiia Rossiia, 1991), 84-85.

⁸² Avdeenko, *Nakazanie*, 85.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ N.S. Ternovsky, *O vinokurakh Rossii: vospominaniia* [On Russian Distillers: A Memoir] (Moscow: Pishchepromizdat, 1997), 38, 54, 55, 62.

⁸⁵ Stalin, “Report to the Seventeenth,” *Works*, 13:343; Anastas Mikoyan, “Na velikom podyome” [A Great Surge], in *Pishchevaiia industriia Sovetskogo Soiuz*a [The Food Industry of the Soviet Union] (Moscow: Pishchepromizdat, 1941), 66.

⁸⁶ Anastas Mikoyan, “Pishchevaiia industriia Sovetskogo Soiuz” [The Food Industry of the Soviet Union] in *Pishchevaiia industriia*, 156-157.

⁸⁷ Anastas Mikoyan, “Dob’ emsia izobiliia pishchevykh produktov,” [Let Us Achieve an Abundance of Food] in *Pishchevaiia industriia*, 232-233. See also Jukka Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin's Russia* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

improved standard of living,” neither the increase in the availability of bread nor the purported decrease in the consumption of vodka was enough to demonstrate prosperity and abundance.⁸⁸

By the mid-1930s, the Soviet Union was rivaled for systemic supremacy not only by the capitalist democracies but also by German and Italian fascism. It was important to emphasize that as rival regimes suffered from the Great Depression or, in the case of fascist Italy, state-imposed austerity, the Soviet Union was the only nation enjoying unequalled culinary freedom.⁸⁹

Sausage became an especially important element of the Soviet façade of abundance.

According to the *Meat Industry of the USSR*, a professional journal, sausage was to become one of the driving forces in the development of Soviet trade, the largest source of income for the meat industry and a clear proof of the growing industrialization of meat processing.⁹⁰ Judging by the frequent exhortations that the sausage production shop was not “the trash can of the factory,” sausage was also valued by the industry because it could conceal parts of meat that would not otherwise sell well.⁹¹ No longer simply an accompaniment for vodka, the efforts of the meat industry had turned sausage into a product of mass consumption.⁹² Though already a popular food of the urban working classes, sausage was said to become the predominant form of meat

⁸⁸ Bettina Heinz and Ronald Lee, “Getting Down to the Meat: The Symbolic Construction of Meat Consumption,” *Communication Studies* 49 (1998): 96.

⁸⁹ For Italian austerity measures in the 1920s and 30s see Carol Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil: Politics and Food in Italy* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 63-126; for Germany see H. Berghoff, “Methoden der Verbrauchlenkung im Nationalsozialismus” [Methods of Consumption Guidance Under National Socialism], in D. Gosewinkel, ed., *Wirtschaftskontrolle und Recht in der nationalsozialistischen Diktatur* [Economic control and justice in the Nazi dictatorship] (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann Vittorio, 2005), 281-316 and Gustavo Corni and Horst Gies, *Brot-Butter-Kanonen: die Ernährungswirtschaft in Deutschland unter der Diktatur Hitlers* [Bread-Butter-Cannons: The Food Industry in Germany under Hitler's Dictatorship] (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), especially 353- 363.

⁹⁰ “Pered boevym smotrom kolbasnogo proizvodstva” [Before the Pre-Battle Inspection of Sausage Production], *Miasnnaia industriia SSSR* no.3 (1935): 2; S. Shnitser, “Miasnnaia promyshlennost’ v 1936 g.” [The Meat Industry of the USSR in 1936], *Miasnnaia industriia SSSR* no.3 (1937): 8.

⁹¹ For an example of such warnings, see A. Strikovskii, “Vypolnit’ polnost’iu v 1935 g. zadaniia partii i pravitel’sstva” [Completely Fulfill the Assignments of the Party and Government in 1935], *Miasnnaia industriia SSSR* no.1-2 (1935):6,7. For complaints of poorly prepared sausages see A.F. Filippov, “My mozhem vypuskat’ gorazdo luchshie kolbasy” [We Can Make Much Better Sausages], *Pravda*, May 18, 1936.

⁹² See for example “Proizvodstvo sosisok v tsentr vnimaniia, [Manufacture of Frankfurters to be the Center of Attention]” *Miasnnaia industriia SSSR* 5 (1935): 1-3.

consumption in the well-supplied Donbass coal mining region by 1936.⁹³ Other cities were less lucky – but tellingly still demanded sausage rather than some other food. In September 1935, *Pravda* published a letter from workers in the city of Rostov asking why was it tolerated that their city had neither sausage nor frankfurters for days, denied “a product for which there is an enormous demand?”⁹⁴ The authors expressed a wish that the whole city be equipped with well-stocked shops.

In order to address such concerns, *Gastronom*-branded shops were specially created by Anastas Mikoyan to serve as model stores and to be emulated across the USSR. Sausage was one of the most popular goods they carried and were a hot topic during consumer conferences held by *Gastronom* officials throughout the Soviet Union. Consumer demand for sausage differed only by what they could afford. Working-class shoppers in Baku, Saratov, and Khar’kov asked the store directors for more affordable sausages, at seven rubles per kilogram.⁹⁵ Those who shopped in Moscow’s opulent *Gastronom No.1* asked for a wider selection and better service, not simply lower prices. They were upset that Ukrainian sausage was not on sale as advertised and that they were given lower-quality sausages but charged a premium price. One shopper was incensed that he was not allowed to select a particular hunk of sausage and that the subsequent argument with the store clerk led to his losing his appetite “because of these 250 grams [of sausage]” – and on a holiday, no less!⁹⁶ Moscovites were especially proud that their store used an imported machine, rather than the banal knife to slice the sausages.⁹⁷ In all cases, these delicacies were pricy compared to the average salary, since even the wealthier Moscow shoppers were

⁹³ “Zakrepit’ uspekhi stakhanovskoi dekadyy” [Secure the Successes of the Stakhanovite Decade], *Miasnaya industriya SSSR* [The Meat Industry of the USSR] 5 (1936): 1.

⁹⁴ A. Maslov and A. Lutsenko, “Nashi pozhelaniya” [Our Wishes], *Pravda*, September 28, 1935.

⁹⁵ RGAE, f.7971, op.1, d.363, ll.29, 39, 46.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, ll.61-62.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, ll.58-59.

unhappy that most sausage in the *Gastronom No.1* cost between twenty-five and thirty rubles a kilogram.⁹⁸ Stocking expensive sausage signaled that the store was a functioning model, a platonic ideal supposed to make a provincial visitor exclaim: “We need a shop like this in our city!”⁹⁹ Abundance may have been more frequently encountered in the press and during special events, but this did not make its message any less powerful. The images and entertainments informed Soviet consumers what abundance *should* be like and what kinds of goods they *should* ask for.

Sausage dominated these messages as well. To commemorate the end of rationing, the satiric *Krokodil* published a full-page cartoon in which two workers were installing a new *Gastronom* sign over the already full display window of the former ration distribution office. A symbol of the miraculous change from shortage to abundance overnight, the shop window was piled high with bread, liquors, and sausages, the latter displayed front and center (see fig. 1.11). In 1936, the *Stakhanovite*, a magazine for the eponymous members of the high-productivity work movement, published its own vision of a cornucopia, framing Stalin’s claim that socialism can only defeat capitalism by providing food and consumer goods with a photomontage of edible and inedible goods, including a massive garland of sausage (see fig. 1.12). Images of Sausage and other processed meats could also stand in for the abundance of food generally. In Iurii Pimenov’s painting, *In the Store* (1938), only the hams are clearly visible among the variety of food on the shelves (see fig. 1.13). An early 1941 issue of the illustrated *Ogonek* magazine, asked Soviet shoppers in a series of articles whether they were being served well in the shops. Though the article covered a variety of Soviet stores, the cover illustrated the general theme with the image of a food store including an enlarged photograph of the sausage display, retouched to

⁹⁸ Ibid., 1.60.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 1.62.



Figure 1.11. The simple sign for the “Closed distributorship” lies on the ground, below the *Gastronom* window filled with food. *Krokodil* no.26 (1935): 24 (rear cover).



Figure 1.12. A Soviet cornucopia. *Stakhanovets* no.21-22 (1936): inner rear cover.



Figure 1.13. Iurii Pimenov, *V magazine* [In the Store], 1938, Lugans'kyi oblasnyi khudozhniy muzeii [The Lugansk State Regional Art Museum], accessed September 5, 2011, <http://www.artmuseum.lg.ua/pics/catalog/0185jv-s.jpg>.

make sure that the names of sausages would be clearly visible (see figs. 1.14, 1.15).

“We were born to make fairy tales come true,” an instantly memorable slogan from the Stalin period, was not only indicative of the magical thinking of Soviet planners but also of the way abundance would be portrayed in live entertainment. Sausages were a key feature of an amateur review staged by the Moscow Meat Works employees to illustrate the arrival of a better and happier life in the mid-1930s. It featured a marching and singing chorus of sausages and hot dogs delivering their lines in rhyme: “We are Soviet sausages/we have reached (*pronikli*) the masses/there are a hundred-twenty-five varieties of us/all we wait for are your mouths.”¹⁰⁰ At a carnival held in June 1936 in honor of the new Soviet constitution, the food industry exhibited the goods it produced and many of its employees dressed as their own products, including sausage.¹⁰¹

In many cases the virtual abundance was tied to an actual one, however temporary. During a 1936 mass carnival in Moscow’s Manezh Square, a “garden of abundance” was set up “where frankfurters and sausages grew on trees,” and “a foaming mug of beer sat next to amazing Poltava sausage, pink ham, . . . marble-white pig lard. Right next to these earthly delights, a *Gastronom* grocery was set up with a selection to satisfy “even the most demanding gourmand.”¹⁰² A year later, the “Pavilion of Abundance” was set up in the middle of Manezh Square, topped by a carousel in which fishes, crabs, sauce bottles, hams, sausages, and oranges danced around in a “fellowship [*sodruzhestvo*] of foods and drinks.” Below this “mountain of food” was the food court, its servers calling out to the passerby to sample the wares inside.¹⁰³

When it opened for its first season in 1939, the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition (*VSKhV*)

¹⁰⁰ Cited by Irina Glushchenko, *Obshchepit: Mikoian i sovetskaia kukhnia* [Public Catering: Mikoyan and the Soviet Cuisine] (Moscow: Izdatel’skii dom Gosudarstvennogo universiteta – Vyssheii shkoly ekonomiki, 2010), 121.

¹⁰¹ Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, 37-38.

¹⁰² “Narodnyi prazdnik” [A People’s Celebration], *Komsomol’skaia Pravda*, May 4, 1936.

¹⁰³ E. Gabrilovich, “Manezhnaia ploshchad” [The Manezh Square], *Vecherniaia Moskva*, May 2, 1937.



Figure 1.14. The headline asks “Are you being served well?” *Ogonek* no.8 (1941): cover.

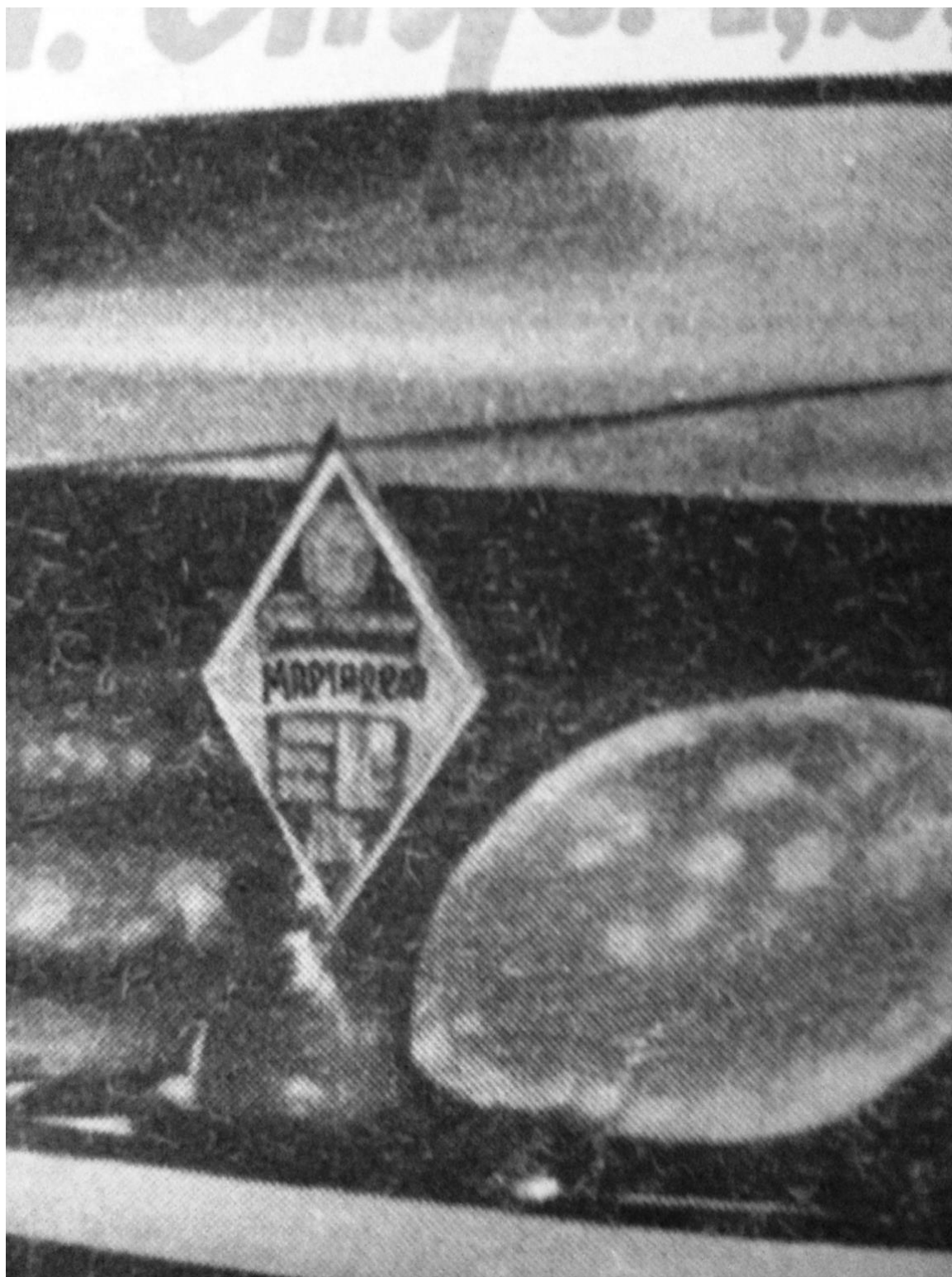


Figure 1.15. The photograph of the “mortadella” was retouched by hand. Enlargement of *Ogonek* no.8 (1941): cover.

featured not only prize cattle and models of goods but shops run by the industries where one could actually get a sample or make a purchase. The pavilion of the Main Meat Administration (*Glavmiaso*) sold hot hamburgers, frankfurters, and sausage to visitors, as did the kiosks of the *Gastronom* store chain.¹⁰⁴ The impression to be taken away from this display was clear – “[i]t is jolly to be in the land of abundance...[i]t is good and joyous to live in our motherland.”¹⁰⁵

The paradox of the façade of abundance was its effectiveness in the face of a fairly grim reality. Even if the already overoptimistic plans of the mid-1930s to catch up and overtake America in terms of meat production and consumption were fulfilled, they would provide the Soviet population with less than five kilograms of meat in any form, per person, for the entire year.¹⁰⁶ Contemporary Americans, however, ate on average just over five kilograms of meat per month – and these kilograms did not include inner organs.¹⁰⁷ Until 1960s there were few specialized breeds of livestock, and agriculture focused on producing grains, not meat.¹⁰⁸ Due to lack of proper transportation and refrigeration equipment, meat production remained seasonal, as even otherwise optimistic *Gastronom* shop managers had to remind their customers.¹⁰⁹ The Moscow Meat Works ended up processing about half of their annual output in the last quarter of the year, the traditional period of slaughter.¹¹⁰ Meat plants, no matter how modern or well-equipped, had no guarantee that the raw ingredients they would get were usable. The “meat” they

¹⁰⁴ *Chto gde na vystavke* [What’s Where at the Exhibition] (Moscow: Sel’khozgiz, 1939), 12.

¹⁰⁵ “Narodnyi prazdnik.”

¹⁰⁶ For meat production goals see “Istoricheskie resheniia” [The Historic Resolutions], *Miasnnaia industriia SSSR* 1 (1936): 1-13. The total Soviet population figure of 162,039,470 is from the notoriously suppressed census of 1937 as evaluated in E. M. Andreev, L.E. Darskii, and T. Kh. Khar’kova, *Naselenie Sovetskogo Soiuz 1922-1991* [The Population of the Soviet Union 1922-1991] (Moscow: Nauka, 1993), 23-29 and in Iu.Ia. Poliakov, V.B.Zhiromskaia, and E.B. Kiselev, “Polveka molchaniia (Vsesoiuznnaia perepis’ naseleniia 1937g.)” [A Half-century of Silence (The All-Union Population Census of 1937)], *Sotsiologicheskoe issledovanie* 7 (1990): 3-25.

¹⁰⁷ Roger Horowitz, *Putting Meat on the American Table: Taste, Technology, Transformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 1-2. I converted the amount to kilograms from the pounds used by Horowitz.

¹⁰⁸ Dronin and Bellinger, *Climate Dependence*, 230,232.

¹⁰⁹ RGAE, f.7971, op.1, d.363, l.23.

¹¹⁰ V. Pavliker and E. Mendzerzhevskii, “Syr’evaiia zona Moskovskogo miasokombinata I problema likvidatsii sezonnosti,” *Miasnnaia industriia SSSR* 9 (1936): 12.

were sent could mean any animal including rabbit, which the plants could not easily process or livestock that was so poorly fed that it negated all attempts at efficiency.¹¹¹

Both factories and customers suffered from a planned economy that could be best compared to an odd assortment of bedmates, pulling a very small blanket from each other. On the one hand the state planners and the press encouraged public canteens, military suppliers, and even the GULAG prison camp system to collect scraps to feed pigs and therefore provide enough meat for themselves. On the other hand, multiple articles in the meat industry journal told their readers to take every last bit of pork fat from the same organizations to keep sausage production flowing smoothly, while the director of the Moscow Meat Works petitioned Anastas Mikoyan himself to “bring all available stock of pork and gut sausage casings” to *his* plant.¹¹² Moscow, Leningrad, and major industrial areas were already the recipients of the majority of all goods.¹¹³ In April 1937, the entire country had 151,991 tons of meat. Moscow and Leningrad – with 4 percent of the population – had almost 40 percent of the entire national meat supply, though they received about one-third of all meat on average. The Donbass region, which along with coal mining areas included the major industrial city of Khar’kov, had 5.4 percent of the national population and received just over 6 percent of all meat. By contrast, the rest of the Ukraine, with about 11.5 percent of the total Soviet population, received 4.8 percent of all meat.¹¹⁴

The precariousness of supply lines could quickly lead to consumer panic and hoarding

¹¹¹ For receiving unusable rabbit meat see A. Rybkin, “Ratsional’nye metody pererabotki krolikov” [Rational Methods for Processing Rabbits], *Miasnaiia industriia SSSR* no.2 (1937): 41-42 and RGAE, f.8543, op.1, d.382, l.76. For underfed cattle see Strikovskii, “Vypolnit’ polnost’iu,” 3 and Ia. Zaks, “Proizvodstvo miasnogo skota” [The Production of Meat Cattle], *Miasnaiia industriia SSSR* no.5 (1937): 23.

¹¹² “Pered boevym smotrom,” 2 and Strikovskii, “Vypolnit’ polnost’iu,” 7; RGAE, f.8543, op. 1, d. 380, ll. 133-133r.

¹¹³ Moscow Meat Works received meat from as far east as the Bashkir Autonomous Republic and as far north as Kalinin (present-day Tver’). See V. Pavliker and E. Mendzerzhievskii, “Syr’evaiia zona Moskovskogo miasokombinata i problema likvidatsii sezonnosti” [The Supply Zone of the Moscow Meat Works and the Question of Ending Seasonality], *Miasnaiia industriia SSSR* 9 (1936): 8.

¹¹⁴ RGAE, f.8543, op. 1, d.379, l.1, and *Lubianka. Sovetskaia elita na stalinskoi golgofe. 1937-1938* [Lubianka. Soviet Elite on Stalinist Calvary. 1937-1938], V.N. Khaustov, ed. (Moscow: MFD, 2011), 418.

that would make any shortage significantly worse. Consumers of a working-class suburb of Baku warned trade managers not to concentrate all food sales in a single large store because in the event of a shortage there would be “queues such as will break your windows.”¹¹⁵ In 1935, in the Siberian mining town of Kemerovo, a rumor led to a massive, week-long panic and bread hoarding.¹¹⁶ Shortages reappeared in every part of the Soviet Union with the beginning of the Winter War with Finland (1939-1940). Because Soviet leadership was reluctant to reintroduce rationing, the situation did indeed lead to violent queues that broke windows and to complaints from shoppers.¹¹⁷ Bread and meat troubles were reported in Kuybyshev, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Sverdlovsk, and Belarus.¹¹⁸ Even vodka was now scarce, since, at least according to popular opinion, “trainloads” of it went to the troops in Finland.¹¹⁹ With vodka and much else gone, large numbers of people began to drink surrogate alcohol, often with fatal results.¹²⁰ One party member from Stalingrad wrote to the Central Committee of the Party asking them to put pressure on local authorities to “fulfill the decisions of the XVIII Party Congress in regard to the supply of the population of their region” since the city was experiencing great problems with the supply of bread.¹²¹ One T. Makarenko of Sebastopol wrote to Stalin, as to a “closest friend,” to report witnessing a worker crushed to death in a terrible queue for sausage in Sebastopol. “By then,” Makarenko wrote, “no one would buy the sausage since there was a corpse in the store.”¹²²

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¹¹⁵ RGAE, f.7971, op.1, d.363, ll.31, 34.

¹¹⁶ GAKO, f. p-15, op. 7, d. 138, ll. 3-6 cited according to V.Bedin, M.Kushnikova, V.Togulev, *Kemerovo i Stalinsk: Panorama provintsial'nogo byta v arkhivnykh khronikakh 1920-1930kh gg.* [Kemerovo and Stalinsk: A Panorama of Provincial Life in Archival Chronicles] (Kemerovo: Kuzbassvuzizdat, 1999), 123-124.

¹¹⁷ For an example of queues breaking window and doors see Hessler, *A Social History*, 238.

¹¹⁸ RGAE, f.7971, op.16, d.76, ll. 47, 108-109, 112-113.

¹¹⁹ A.G.Man'kov, *Dnevnik tridtsatykh godov* [Diaries of the Thirties] (St. Petersburg: Evropeiskii dom, 2001), 244.

¹²⁰ RGAE, f.7971, op.16, d.76, ll.136-136r, 143-143r.

¹²¹ RGAE, f.7971, op.16, d.78, ll.92-93.

¹²² *Ibid.*, l.161.

The Soviet propaganda of abundance was effective both despite and because of the shortages. The situation of the mid-1930s was better than it was just a few years earlier. Galina Vladimirovna Shtange, a wife of a well-placed engineer and college professor, noted in her diary the abundance of goods that she saw in Moscow. With her maid on vacation, Shtange had to do her own shopping and confessed that she “must say that we have really magnificent stores now, both in design and contents. The meat, fish, vegetable, and delicatessen departments are stocked with a wide assortment of high-quality goods.” She was especially impressed that “when you recall the first years after the revolution and the way things were back then, it’s just exhilarating to think that all this has been achieved in just twenty years.”¹²³ Shtange was equally impressed with the abundance placed on display for the Constitution Day celebrations in 1936. “Everyone is cheerful, there’s music, and singing everywhere, the streets are full of people,” she wrote, “[b]ooths have been set up with various delicacies, and there are even tables with white tablecloths, loaded with all kinds of refreshments for sale at reasonable prices.” Shtange, “with [her] own eyes, saw “a samovar [traditional tea urn] with hot tea.”¹²⁴ Such celebrations could even impress the sister of an exiled monarchist, Petr Petrovich Migulin, when she ventured into Leningrad from a suburb during the election campaign in 1934, and wrote to him that “[m]any stores and food kiosks were opened, where buns, bagels, sugar, candy, fruit, wine, vodka...are sold.”¹²⁵

The very speed with which food seemed to appear *and* disappear on Soviet store shelves imbued Soviet consumers with the same kind of magical thinking as their leadership – that if the

¹²³ G.V. Shtange, “Diary of Galina Vladimirovna Shtange” in *Intimacy and Terror*, Veronique Garros, Natalia Korenevskaya, and Thomas Lahusen, eds., Carol A. Flath, tran., (New York: New Press, 1995), 209.

¹²⁴ Shtange, “Diary,” 186.

¹²⁵ Yuliya [?] to Petr Migulin, December 27, 1934, Petr Petrovich Migulin Papers, ca. 1920-1939, Box 1 Catalogued and Arranged Correspondence, BAR Ms Coll/Migulin, Bakhmeteff Archive, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York, NY. I could find no further information on the surname or family of Migulin’s sister.

“powers that be” *really* wanted to, their promises of abundance would be fulfilled. Weather, transportation, supply and demand did not factor into either Soviet planning or Soviet consumer expectations. Boris Morozov, a Belorussian high school student, wrote a letter to Anastas Mikoyan filled with questions dangerous enough that it was forwarded to the local NKVD office “for taking measures.”¹²⁶ But the author, an idealistic supporter of the Soviet system, did not question the reality of the plans – only their fulfilment. Why did fish disappear, Morozov asked, when we still have the same seas as before? Why did bread disappear, he wondered if, according to his calculations and the harvest reported in the newspapers, there should have been over 500 kilograms per person?¹²⁷ Valentina Bogdan, an émigré author of a pointedly anti-Soviet memoir, wrote that as soon as Stalin’s slogan that life had become better was disseminated, food enterprises “immediatley began to issue better and more varied foods.” Just when people thought that the recipes for old delicacies were long forgotten, Bogdan wrote, “as if *by waving a magic wand*, excellent...goods appeared in the stores.”¹²⁸

Even if the goods were not on the shelves, consumers were told repeatedly which particular goods had to be there. Because sausage formed an important part of the narratives of abundance, it began to be strongly associated with Stalin and his promise of an abundant and prosperous life. Mikoyan repeatedly told the anecdote of Stalin reminding him to make plenty of sausage and especially frankfurters in his speeches, and the quote was published in the first edition of the primary Soviet cookbook, the *Book of Tasty and Healthy Food* (1939). The American press was greatly amused by this focus on “hot dogs” and published a number of

¹²⁶ RGAE, f.7971, op.16, d.76, l.168.

¹²⁷ Ibid., ll.169 -169r.

¹²⁸ Valentina Bogdan, *Mimikriia v SSSR: Vospominaniia inzhenera 1935-1942 gody Rostov-na-Donu* [Mimicry in the USSR: Memoirs of an Engineer 1935-1942 Rostov-on-the-Don] (Frankfurt-am-Main: Possev, 1982), 26-27. Italics are mine.

humorously bemused articles on the subject.¹²⁹ A Soviet diarist, concerned about possible arrest was said to add entries of gratitude to Stalin for the sausage that she bought, while another Soviet citizen saw the appearance of even middling quality sausage as a sign of better things ahead.¹³⁰

The association between sausage and abundance can also be seen in the opinions of Soviet refugees interviewed by the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System right after World War Two. Asked about whether Moscow experienced *clothing* shortages with the rest of the Soviet Union, one respondent replied that “between Moscow and the rest of the country there... is a tremendous difference.” There were “no lines queued up before the shops [and] one can buy... as much [cheap sausage] as one's stomach demands.”¹³¹ Another recalled his surprise at the prosperity of Rumanians when he entered the country with the Soviet Army. “Every store was full of everything you wanted,” he told his interviewer, “sausage, bread, a great deal of everything.”¹³²

The mid-1930s and the specific foods that became associated with them, were understood as the last point of “normalcy” to return to after World War Two.¹³³ After years of war when even workers at defense plants subsisted on 600 grams of bread and an average Moscovite lost about fifteen pounds, food of any kind, and especially sausage provided highly welcome symbols of peace.¹³⁴ Hot dogs in a bun were sold at the first post-war Revolution Day parade in Moscow

¹²⁹ For Mikoyan story of Stalin's interest in hot dogs see Mikoyan, “Na velikom pod'eme,” *Pishchevaia industriia*, 63; Mikoyan, “Pishchevaia industriia,” *Pishchevaia industriia*, 135; *Kniga o vkusnoi i zdorovoi pishche* (Moscow-Lenigrad: Pishchepromizdat, 1939), 288. For American articles on the subject see for example Richard S. Davis, “Not Exactly A Column: The Hot Dog in Russia,” *Milwaukee Journal*, Nov 21, 1935; “‘Hot Dogs’ of America New Guide for Russians,” *New York Times*, November 18, 1935; “Stalin Trains Russians To Be Hot Dog Eaters,” *Baltimore Sun*, November 18, 1935.

¹³⁰ Bogdan, *Mimikriia v SSSR*, 132, 13.

¹³¹ Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, Schedule A, Vol. 35, Case 131/(NY)1497 (interviewer J.F., type A4), 40-41.

¹³² Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 22, Case 446 (interviewer J.O., type A4), 86.

¹³³ Hessler, *Social History*, 304.

¹³⁴ William Moskoff, *The Bread of Affliction: The Food Supply in the USSR During World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 222-223.

in November 1945.¹³⁵ Sausage along with other luxury goods returned to the stores in major cities, though at very high prices.¹³⁶ In visual propoaganda, sausage once again took its place in images of Soviet cornucopia (see figs. 1.16, 1.17, and 1.18). Art critic and memoirist Mikhail German remembered receiving a present of a piece of white bread with a piece of sausage during the war and eating them separatly since they were both forgotten luxuries and needed to be savored individually.¹³⁷ Returning from the evacuation to her room in a communal apartment, a Soviet woman recalled finding a note and a piece of sausage left as a present from her husband and feeling that she “had come home.”¹³⁸

The transformation of a working-class snack into an attribute of peace and abundance that had occurred with sausage by the time Stalin died in 1953 may be profitably compared with the symbolic importance of turkey to Americans alluded to at the start of this chapter. The role of turkey as a centerpiece of a holiday meal developed over the 19th and the 20th centuries and it remains the primary American symbol of abundance today. Kathy Kaufman suggested that the popularity of Charles Dickens’ *Christmas Carol* in the United States changed American expectations of what a proper holiday meal was like by presenting them with a new, national “roadmap” of a shared family meal centered on a turkey and finished with a pudding.¹³⁹ The power of Soviet sausage imagery can be compared to the iconic “Freedom from Want” by Norman Rockwell (see fig.1.19). Rockwell’s tastes and vision were extremely close to those of Soviet socialist-realists whom he openly admired.¹⁴⁰ He claimed to “paint life as I would like it to be” and presented his viewers “with images of the kind of America they either remembered or

¹³⁵ “Stalin Absent at Red Review,” *The Spokesman-Review*, November 8, 1945.

¹³⁶ Mikhail German, *Slozhnoe proshedshee* [The Complex Past] (Sankt Peterburg: Iskusstvo-SPB, 2000), 143.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹³⁸ Cited according to Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 265.

¹³⁹ Kathy Kaufman, “The Ideal Christmas Dinner,” *Gastronomica* 4 (2004): 17-24.

¹⁴⁰ Norman Rockwell and Thomas Rockwell, *My Adventures as an Illustrator: An Autobiography* (Indianapolis, IN: Curtis Publishing Company, 1979), 198.



Figure 1.16. Note the sausages in the glass display case. “To trade in a cultured manner is honorable labor!” 1949, Plakaty.ru, accessed September 5, 2011, <http://www.plakaty.ru/posters?cid=4&sort=year&part=1949&id=1884>

**ЦЕНЫ СНИЖЕНЫ
НА:**

хлебобулочные
изделия 33-57%

мясопродукты
10-25%

вина битоградные
25%

рыботоровары
18-37%

папиросы
50%

САХАР
в 1940 г. в 1913 г.
21,5 млн. цент. в 1½ РАЗА МЕНЬШЕ

КОНСЕРВЫ
в 1940 г. в 1913 г.
1100 млн. бан. 90 млн. банок

Figure 1.17. Left side of a two-page illustration. Note the return of the cornucopia-like arrangements with baked goods flowing into sausage, followed by alcohol and cigarettes. “Prices are lowered by:” *Ogonek* no.10-11 (1946): 6.



Figure 1.18. A promotional supermarket photo again centers on a pile of mortadella. Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions and Disappointments, 1945-1957* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 103.

OURS...to fight for



FREEDOM FROM WANT

Figure 1.19. Norman Rockwell, Freedom from Want, 1943, Teen Thoughts on Democracy, accessed July 22, 2013, http://teenthoughtsondemocracy.wolfsonian.org/sites/default/files/Final_Want.jpg.

wished they had.”¹⁴¹ In his *Four Freedoms*, Rockwell “translated abstract concepts of freedom into four scenes of everyday American life” and in *Freedom from Want* presented American abundance specifically as a complete Thanksgiving dinner, centered on a turkey.¹⁴² In the same way that Stalinist images of sausage demonstrated for Soviet consumers what an abundant life was supposed to look like, Dickens and Rockwell presented Americans with a memorable and specific standard of a good meal to aspire to. Whether turkey and a large happy family to share it with were practically available to them or not, American consumers knew the ideal to strive for. Indeed, though preparations and side dishes may differ, the presence of a turkey at a Thanksgiving meal is the only invariable expectation across the United States.¹⁴³

Just as vegan activists and presidential pardons of turkeys have not been able to change the basic American Thanksgiving menu, Stalin’s successors could not change the values and the terms of the Soviet discourse of abundance. After endless bombardment with images of prosperity, Soviet consumers later recalled the foods depicted on paper as if they existed in fact and demanded the return of pre-1953 abundance in numerous angry letters to Soviet leaders and the press after the death of Stalin.¹⁴⁴ Considering that according to a recent study of the Stalin cult, “in the collective imagination Stalin had become indistinguishable from his portrait” through continuous exposure to it, it is unsurprising that Soviet consumers began to perceive pre-

¹⁴¹ Rockwell and Rockwell, *My Adventures*, 24 and Tricia Wright, *American Art and Artists* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 123.

¹⁴² The Four Freedoms, Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art From World War II, The National Archives, accessed June 26, 2013, http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/four_freedoms/four_freedoms.html.

¹⁴³ “Myths and Folklore,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America*, Thomas Burford, Andrew F. Smith, and Lucy Longe, eds. (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed July 31, 2013, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195154375.001.0001/acref-9780195154375-e-0546>.

¹⁴⁴ Yurii Akxiutin, *Khrushchevskaia “ottepel” i obshchestvennye nastroyeniia v SSSR v 1953-1964gg.* [The Khrushchev Thaw and the Public Sentiments in the USSR in 1953-1964] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004), 416 and ““Ob“ediniates” vokrug Khrista – bol’sheviki povysili tseny” [Gather Around Christ–The Bolsheviks Raised Prices] in *Neizvestnaia Rossiia XX vek* [Unknown Russia XX Century] (Moscow: Istoricheskoe nasledie, 1993), 3:169, 175.

war images of abundance as the real thing.¹⁴⁵

For many Soviet consumers, the mass arrests of the people responsible for managing the meat processing plants and stores in the mid-1930s served as an adequate explanation for the shortages. Under Stalin's rule, a consumer could still claim that "some criminal paw again had damaged the provisioning" of their town.¹⁴⁶ But after Nikita Khrushchev's repudiation of Stalin's policies in 1956 and again in 1961, terror was no longer an option, internal enemies were no longer to blame. The men executed for stalling meat production plans and for "deliberately causing the displeasure of the population with the policies of the party and government" were exonerated.¹⁴⁷ This situation left Soviet central planners in a difficult position. High food prices and relative shortages of desirable foods occurred even in the United States, but when beef prices shot up in 1973, American consumers largely blamed the farmers and supermarkets rather than state authorities.¹⁴⁸ The Soviet state and their socialist allies in Eastern Europe however, positioned themselves as the primary producers and distributors of material goods. According to Krisztina Fehérváry, this led to consumers blaming the state for any problems that they encountered with the goods. Material goods thereby began to stand for the state, and consumer complaints became politicized.¹⁴⁹ Soviet managers were aware of this, telling shoppers as early as the 1930s that when a customer of a state store is unhappy, that consumer does not blame a particular employee "but Soviet power" as whole.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Jan Plamper, *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), xiii.

¹⁴⁶ Osokina, *Za fasadom*, 275.

¹⁴⁷ *Lubianka*, 417-418.

¹⁴⁸ On the beef prices and consumer boycott of 1973 see, for example, "Changing Farm Policy to Cut Food Prices," *Time*, April 9, 1973; "Meatless Days Already Standard in Some Areas," *Lewiston Daily Sun*, February 22, 1973; H.J. Heller, "Meat Costs Wrecking Food Budgets," *Dispatch*, January 31, 1973.

¹⁴⁹ Krisztina Fehérváry, "Goods and States: The Political Logic of State-Socialism Material Culture," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51 (2009):426-459.

¹⁵⁰ RGAE f.7971 o.1 d.363 ll.24-25.

Stalin's successors were left without many of his repressive mechanisms but still inherited his agenda, whether in politics or sausage making. Alexei Yurchak has argued that Stalin was the last Soviet leader able to shape authoritative discourse from above the fray, as a master possessing a special knowledge of Marxism-Leninism. His successors no longer had the power to introduce new discourses but could only establish their knowledge of official dogma by scrupulously copying already established slogans.¹⁵¹ With Stalin, the last prophet, gone, the remaining priesthood could only repeat the scriptures, not create new ones. Soviet leadership could neither change the Soviet consumer demand for sausage, nor produce enough of it to satisfy that demand.

“Sausage on a Stalk” and “Russian Wonder:” Bread, Vodka, and Sausage under Khrushchev

During his years in power, 1953-1964, as head of the party and then also as the head of the government from 1958, Nikita Khrushchev did a lot to improve the Soviet diet. Under his leadership the Soviet Union began to make greater investments in agriculture, paying the collectivized peasantry better prices for their goods and expanding the access of Soviet citizens to food.¹⁵² At the same time Khrushchev relied on the earlier magical thinking in his plans and saw each of his agricultural reforms – the plowing of the Virgin Lands starting in 1953 and the mass planting of corn (1955-1964) – as panaceas to cure Soviet food shortages. As a result, Khrushchev's political liberalization was overshadowed by the failures of his campaign to overcome America in meat and milk production and by the bread shortages resulting from the mismanagement of the corn campaign.

Khrushchev's first solution to the agricultural difficulties that he inherited from Stalin

¹⁵¹ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything was Forever Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 37, 43, 46-48.

¹⁵² For a succinct but thorough account of Khrushchev's economic policies, see Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR* (London: Penguin, 1969), 327-368.

was the Virgin Lands campaign, which consisted of sending large numbers of peasants and Young Communist League (*Komsomol*) members to the parts of western Siberia and Kazakhstan which were to be planted with grain. While the campaign was successful for the first few years, the newly plowed lands eventually suffered from dust bowl conditions.¹⁵³ Despite the early improvements in the availability of bread, Soviet citizens wrote to Khrushchev that while the people were not starving, one could not “raise a healthy new generation on bread alone.”¹⁵⁴ “Our people have lived through a lot,” wrote one Muscovite, “and it is time to create normal living conditions for them.”¹⁵⁵

Khrushchev agreed with these sentiments, responding with wildly optimistic plans and promises to improve the situation. He was also close to his fellow Soviets in discussing most matters of material abundance in terms of sausage, reinforcing their expectations. Extolling the need for greater harvests in 1954, Khrushchev asked his audience “What kind of a Communist society would it be without sausage?...But,” he concluded, “better foods cannot be created without an abundance of grain.”¹⁵⁶ In 1955, Khrushchev decided that an American-style corn belt would solve the problem of providing enough feed grain to fatten Soviet livestock.¹⁵⁷ In the same year he met Roswell Garst, an Iowa a breeder and dealer in hybrid corn seed, but whom Khrushchev liked to describe as a simple Iowa farmer. The two men, kindred spirits fond of

¹⁵³ N.S. Khrushchev, *Vremia.Liudi.Vlast'* [Time, People, Power] (Moscow: Moskovskie novosti, 1999), 4:84.

¹⁵⁴ “Obzor pisem v TsK KPSS, v kotorykh ukazyvaetsia na tiazhelye material'nye uslovia v sviazi s ukhudsheniem snabzheniia prodovol'stvennymi tovarami” [An Overview of Letters to the Central Committee of the CPSU, Which Indicate Difficult Conditions in Connection with a Worsening of Food Provisioning], Arkhiv Aleksandra Yakovleva, accessed November 7, 2011, <http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/almanah/inside/almanah-doc/1007441>.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ N.S. Khrushchev, “Prevratim vse sovkhozy v obraztsovye, vysokodokhodnye khoziaistva” [Let Us Turn All State Farms Into Model, High-Earning Enterprises] in *Stroitel'stvo kommunizma v SSSR i razvitie sel'skogo khoziaistva* [The Construction of Communism in the USSR and the Development of Agriculture] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1962), 1:154.

¹⁵⁷ N.S. Khrushchev, “Ob uvelichenii proizvodstva produktov zhivotnovodstva [On the Raising the Production of Livestock] in *Stroitel'stvo*, 1:431-432, 453-456.

folksy speech, struck a friendship, and Garst became Khrushchev's personal "corn guru."¹⁵⁸ And "corn," according to Khrushchev, "was "sausage on a stalk."¹⁵⁹

Khrushchev did not take into account that the climate of the Soviet Union would not allow it to produce as much corn as the United States nor that meat production could rise instantly. In 1957 he promised that the Western "imperialists" would know the strength of Soviet industry when in the "next few years" the country would catch up "to the United States of America in the per person production of products of animal husbandry."¹⁶⁰ Scientists who told him that meat production could rise only modestly simply did not understand politics, Khrushchev said. The USSR could not wait too long to prove to the United States and the world that the Soviet way of life was superior.¹⁶¹ Soviet consumers, though no longer subject to the constant threat from starvation, were also becoming impatient after years of promises that were not being fulfilled.

1961 was a year of Soviet optimism. The USSR sent the first man to space, Khrushchev ordered Stalin to be removed from the mausoleum in the Red Square, and the Soviet people were promised the arrival of Communism by 1980. In 1962, however, prices on milk and meat were raised to enable the state to pay collective farmers more for their goods. Unfortunately, this measure coincided with the lowering of industrial salaries. After years of promises that meat production and salaries would rise and prices would fall, there was widespread grumbling and small-scale protest across the Soviet Union. Sausage played a major role in these events. In the

¹⁵⁸ William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2003), 372.

¹⁵⁹ "Rasskaz ob opyte" [A Story of Experience], *Pravda*, December 10, 1961.

¹⁶⁰ N.S. Khrushchev, "Rech' na soveshchanii rabotnikov sel'skogo khoziaistva oblasteii i avtonomykh respublik severo-zapada RSFSR 22 Maia 1957" [A Speech at the Conference of Agricultural Workers of the Regions and Autonomous Republics of North-Western RSFSR 22 May 1957] in *Stroitel'stvo*, 2:443-444.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 449. This impatience also explains Khrushchev's decision to retain the services of the now notorious Trofim Lysenko as the main Soviet biologist. Lysenko was not a good scientist – he believed in the possibility of inheriting acquired characteristics – but he understood politics very well. For a detailed account of Lysenko, see David Joravsky, *The Lysenko Affair* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970).

city of Novocherkassk, the protests became multi-day riots that had to be suppressed by armed troops. During the riot, workers, according to some reports, threatened to turn Khrushchev himself into sausage.¹⁶² Demonstrators broke into the city Party headquarters and brought plates of sausage out onto the balcony to show to the crowds, yelling: “Look at what they eat, while we can’t have any!”¹⁶³ Earlier, in 1959, the lack of sausage was also one of the specific complaints from the disgruntled Virgin Lands farmers in Temir-Tau, another riot prone city.¹⁶⁴

Recognizing the importance of sausage, Khrushchev’s government tried to make up for the shortages of pork and beef with sausage made of horse and whale meat, leaving consumers disgusted and unsatisfied. Horse sausage was described as the “Neigh-brand” (*yego-go*) which some disgruntled purchasers threatened to feed to Khrushchev and his ministers.¹⁶⁵ Whale meat sausage, was nicknamed *nikitovaia kolbasa*, cleverly combining Khrushchev’s first name (Nikita) with *kit*, the Russian word for whale. It left poor college students, the only consumers desperate enough to buy it, with painful memories of how it stank up the hallways of their dormitories when they tried to fry it.¹⁶⁶ Such strange foods led to speculation that the next step would be the use of something even more unpleasantly exotic, with rumors circulating that on his trips to visit Asian and African allies, Khrushchev was actually buying monkey and elephant meat in exchange for warplanes.¹⁶⁷

The suspicion over the use of surrogate ingredients also touched vodka. Though any

¹⁶² Samuel H. Barron, *Bloody Saturday in the Soviet Union: Novocherkassk, 1962* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 27, 99.

¹⁶³ V.A. Kozlov, *Massovye besporiadki v SSSR pri Khrushcheve i Brezhneve (1953 – nachalo 1980-h gg.)* [Mass Unrest in the USSR Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev (1953-early 1980s)] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2010), 373; and I. Mardar’, *Khronika neobiavlennogo ubiystva* [A Chronicle of an Unannounced Murder] (Novocherkassk: Press-servis, 1992), 32.

¹⁶⁴ Max Frankel, “Kazakh Pioneers Charge Neglect,” *New York Times*, November 29, 1959.

¹⁶⁵ *Kramola: Inakomyslie v SSSR pri Khrushcheve i Brezhneve, 1953-1982 gg.* [Sedition: Nonconformity in the USSR Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, 1953-1982], V.A. Kozlov and S.V. Mironenko, eds. (Moscow: Materik, 2005), 262.

¹⁶⁶ Aksiutin, *Khrushchevskaiia “ottepel”*, 429.

¹⁶⁷ *Kramola*, 145.

actual steps to reduce consumption of alcohol were minimal, Khrushchev prominently discussed reducing the use of using edible plants for alcohol.¹⁶⁸ Instead, he claimed that alcohol for industrial and food uses would be “produced from [natural] gas,” of which there was an “unlimited supply.”¹⁶⁹ The use of other surrogate materials and the traditional name for cheap vodka (*suchok*, twig) prompted wide-spread rumors that poor-quality vodka was made of wood or some chemical substance.¹⁷⁰ This did not stop anyone from drinking it, but since state manufactured vodka was increasingly expensive, many began to consume alcohol-containing liquids not meant for human consumption, such as brake fluid.¹⁷¹

Corn became an even less loved surrogate. While originally pushed as feed for livestock, by 1961 it was promoted as a major ingredient of all foods including special sausages, *Amber*-brand wine, and most problematically, bread.¹⁷² Though journalists tried to claim that adding ten to twenty percent of corn flour to baked goods could save grain and gave them an “appetizing yellowness...as if permeated with an amber sunlight,” the actual sale of these breads was unsuccessful.¹⁷³ A very poor harvest in 1963 and the growing predominance of corn over other grains led to a shortage of bread. It was a testament to the actual successes of Soviet agriculture

¹⁶⁸ G.G. Zaigraev, “Gosudarstvennaia politika kak faktor alkogolizatsii naseleniia” [State Policies as a Factor of the Alcoholization of the Population], *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia* no.4 (1997): 110. In 1958 it was forbidden to sell vodka in all dining facilities, except restaurants, located in or near train stations and airports. Vodka could also not be sold near medical, educational facilities, places of entertainment, or factories.

¹⁶⁹ N.S. Khrushchev, “Bor’ba KPSS za pod’em sel’skogo khoziaistva” [The Struggle of the CPSU for the Upsurge in Agriculture] in *Stroitel’stvo*, 4:121.

¹⁷⁰ Vladimir G. Treml, *Alcohol in the Soviet Underground Economy*, Berkeley-Duke Occasional Papers on the Second Economy in the USSR no.5 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985), 9; Vladimir G. Treml, *Alcohol in the USSR: A Statistical Study* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1982), 36-45; and Vladimir Voinovich, *Antisovetskii sovetskii soiuz* [The Anti-Soviet Soviet Union] (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1985), 27. On the origins of the term see A.E. Krylov, *Ne kvasom zemlia polita: primechaniia k “Chelovecheskoi tragedii” Aleksandra Galicha* [Not by Kvass Alone is Watered the Land: Notes for Aleksandr Galich’s ‘Human Tragedy’] (Uglich: Promdizain, 2001), 43-45. The word *suchok* was probably also popular due to its close similarity to the Russian word *suka* or *suchka* (bitch).

¹⁷¹ For examples of alcohol surrogate use see Solomon Volkov, *Dialogi s Iosifom Brodskim* [Dialogs With Joseph Brodsky] (Moscow: Nezavisimaia gazeta, 1998), 28 and Evgenii Evtushenko, “Ballada o vypivke” [The Ballad of the Drink], in *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy* [Poems] (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1987), 428-430.

¹⁷² N. Vorb’ev and V. Zhuravskii, “Sto bliud iz kukuruzy” [One Hundred Corn Dishes], *Pravda*, September 7, 1961 and V. Nakariakov, “Menu iz sta bliud” [A Menu of One Hundred Dishes], *Izvestiia*, September 7, 1961.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

that most of the bread consumed was now wheaten white bread, but its shortages led to panic buying and shortages of the dark rye bread as well.¹⁷⁴ Bread slices for sandwiches were ordered to be sliced thinner and some overeager officials were ready to order the gathering and reuse of breadcrumbs from canteen tables.¹⁷⁵ Wheat and rye flour was now cut with increasing percentages of the plentiful corn and sometimes even pea meal, and bread was often unofficially rationed.¹⁷⁶ Only small children and those with a medical prescription could get white bread that year, with the rest having to settle for the mixed-flour loaf mockingly dubbed the “Russian Wonder” (*Russkoe chudo*).¹⁷⁷

Bread shortages were the final straw. Some immediately recalled the deadly shortages of the war-time Siege of Leningrad (1941-1944).¹⁷⁸ Others mocked Khrushchev in rude ditties as a “bald fag” who “tormented the working class.”¹⁷⁹ There would be plenty of bread if Khrushchev “didn’t run about with [his] corn like a fool,” remembered one Soviet citizen in 1990s, while another claimed that the shortages came about because “Khrushchev the Fool covered us in corn!”¹⁸⁰ Two decades after the end of the war, the USSR again considered official bread rationing and had to purchase grain from the “capitalists” using more than a third of precious gold reserves, as Khrushchev’s opponents were quick to note in their list of accusations against

¹⁷⁴ RGAE, f.195, op.1, d.375, ll.64-65. Of all bread consumed in the USSR in 1963, the share of white bread was seventy to eighty percent.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, ll.118, 110.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, ll.62, 92, 110.

¹⁷⁷ Aksiutin, *Khrushchevskaiia “ottepel’*,” 428 and RGAE, f.195, op.1, d.375, l.54. For mentions of the “Russian Wonder” loaf see Natal’ia Ermolina, “Kino, kuda zhe katitsa ono?” [Where is the Cinema Going?], *Respublika Kareliia*, August 29, 2011, accessed September 28, 2011, <http://rk.karelia.ru/2011/08/kino-kuda-zhe-katitsya-ono>; Aleksandr Etoev, “Patentovanoie sredstvo dlia uskoreniia rosta ushei. Obzor novinok bukinistecheskoi literatury na Ozon,” [A Patented Method for Encouraging the Growth of Ears. An Overview of Used Book Novelties at Ozon] *Ozon.ru*, accessed September 28, 2011, <http://www.ozon.ru/context/detail/id/2084463>; Aksiutin, *Khrushchevskaiia*, 426-427.

¹⁷⁸ Tat’iana Derviz, “Riadam s bol’shoi istoriei. Ocherki chastnoi zhizni serediny XX veka” [Near Big History. Sketches of Private Life in the Mid-XX Century], *Zvezda* no.9 (2008): 93.

¹⁷⁹ Cited according to Etoev, “Patentovanoie sredstvo.” The original Russian version reads “Chtoby lysyi p[idora]s ne ugnetal rabochii klass.”

¹⁸⁰ Aksiutin, *Khrushchevskaiia ottepel’*, 432.

him.¹⁸¹ In October 1964, Khrushchev was removed from all leadership posts, sent into retirement, and replaced by Leonid Brezhnev.

Sausage Trains and Sausage Envy (1964-1982)

Brezhnev's term as Soviet leader was long (1964 to 1982) and remarkably stable. There were no major food riots. Stability was to be achieved at any cost and as the leadership aged, most of the population increasingly felt that "everything was forever."¹⁸² Under Brezhnev, Soviet consumers experienced greater material well-being than ever before. The government tried not to repeat Khrushchev's mistakes - salaries rose but prices on basic foods did not. At the same time, Soviet citizens became more vocal in their complaints about the material conditions. Larger salaries led to increased demand for goods that consumers expected but the state was unable to supply. Greater exposure to foreign consumer cultures, whether through visits to the socialist nations of Eastern Europe or even by viewing foreign films or magazines led to the inevitable and often unflattering comparisons of the material conditions. Though Soviet citizens had more bread, vodka and sausage than at any point in the history of the country, they were also most dissatisfied.¹⁸³

Brezhnev and his generation could not understand why the younger generations were unsatisfied with savoring the triumph in the World War and the abundance of inexpensive bread to which the government increasingly drew attention. "We...did everything...so the younger generation of Soviet people would not know the slightest lack of [bread]," read a letter from a combine operator, "...but do we always foster in the new generation the only required

¹⁸¹ Egor Gaidar, *Gibel' imperii. Uroki dlia sovremennoi Rossii* [Death of an Empire. Lessons for Modern Russia] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2006), 171; "Takovy, tovarishchi, fakty" ["Such are the Facts, Comrades"], *Istochnik 2* (1998): 106.

¹⁸² Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 1.

¹⁸³ The paradox of Soviet people's rising expectations and grumbling despite great improvements in their lives is well described in John Bushnell, "The New Soviet Man' Turns Pessimist," in Stephen F. Cohen, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Robert Sharlet, eds., *The Soviet Union Since Stalin* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980), 179-199.

knowledge – the knowledge of the price of bread, the price that never goes down?”¹⁸⁴ The image of children playing soccer with a bread roll seems to have been especially haunting, recurring in journalism and the arts. Sergei Mikhalkov’s poem *Bulka* (1980), for instance, describes kids using a bread roll to play soccer being upbraided by a baker, who picks up the roll, dusts it off and kisses it “calmly and openly.”¹⁸⁵

The sharp turn to improving the livestock sector that characterized Brezhnev’s agricultural policy was another reason for constant talk of saving bread. Grain harvests rose, thanks to improved use of fertilizers, but not high enough to feed Soviet livestock. Because of the rise in oil and gas prices after the Suez crisis in 1967 and the OPEC oil embargo, the Soviet state no longer had to reach into the gold reserve as Khrushchev’s government did, but still imported as much grain as its ports could handle, reaching forty-two million tons annually by the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (1981-85)¹⁸⁶ The amounts of meat available to the Soviet population also rose. At least according to official statistics, in 1960, 4,406,000 tons of meat, including sausages and offal, were manufactured in the USSR, yielding only 20.3 kilos per person.¹⁸⁷ Twenty years later, towards the end of Brezhnev’s life, 9,140,000 tons of meat (34.4 kilos per person) and 3,074,000 tons of sausage (11.6 kilos per person) were manufactured.¹⁸⁸ Large

¹⁸⁴ *Komsomol’skaia Pravda*, 13 October 1974 cited in Mikhail Alekseev, “Dorogaia tsena” [A High Price], *Literaturnaia gazeta*, June 27 1979.

¹⁸⁵ Sergei Mikhalkov, “Bulka” [A bun] in *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh* [Collected Works in Six Volumes] (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1981), 1:6, 219. For an example of a letter see one by S.Fomenko in *Pravda*, August 14, 1975.

¹⁸⁶ For rise in fuel prices see Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 15-16. For Soviet grain imports see Raymond E. Zickel, ed., *Soviet Union : A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division Library of Congress, 1991), 532. For a good account of these changes in the Soviet system of agriculture see Dronin and Bellinger, *Climate Dependence*, 221-266.

¹⁸⁷ *Narodnoe khoziastvo SSSR v 1960 godu* [National Economy of the USSR in 1960] (Moscow: Gosstatizdat TsSU SSSR, 1961), 348.

¹⁸⁸ *Narodnoe khoziastvo SSSR v 1990 g.* [National Economy of the USSR in 1990] (Moscow: Finansy i statistika, 1991), 517.

quantities of meat were also imported and collective farmers were encouraged to grow more food to be sold at market prices directly to the consumers.¹⁸⁹

Quantitatively, the Soviet diet improved enough to create concerns about growing rates of obesity, a health issue that was barely mentioned before. In the 1930s, gaining weight was supposed to be a sign of improved health. A 1933 article on a rural health resort (*sanatoriĭ*) used half of its nine pages to describe at length the food offered and the amounts of weight gained by the patients as the only criteria of the resort's success.¹⁹⁰ By the mid-1960s the Soviet Union's first mass-print book dedicated to nutrition as a means to maintain and lose weight was published, and posters encouraging better eating habits were distributed (see fig. 1.20).¹⁹¹ Though the caloric intake of the Soviet people was roughly equivalent to that of the United States, most of these calories came from bread and potatoes, while proteins came from dairy and eggs, rather than meat.¹⁹²

Alcohol consumption was still largely confined to vodka, and all alcohol was generally consumed in binge drinking sessions, rather than gradual sipping.¹⁹³ Timid measures to limit the production and consumption of hard alcohol in 1972 were limited by budgetary concerns. The directive to manufacture more wines, as a more "cultured" way to consume alcohol, was fulfilled in addition to continuing to manufacture vodka. The USSR increased the manufacture of "fruit-

¹⁸⁹ Dronin and Bellinger, *Climate Dependence*, 229.

¹⁹⁰ I.Taradin and B. Ugriumov, "Istoriia kolkhoznogo sanatoria" [A Story of a Collective-farm Health Resort], *Nashi dostizheniia* no.11 (1933): 96-104.

¹⁹¹ A.A.Pokrovskii, *Besedy o pitanii* [Conversations About Nutrition] (Moscow: Ekonomika, 1964).

¹⁹² US Central Intelligence Agency, *A Comparison of the US and Soviet Economies: Evaluating the Performance of the Soviet System, A Reference Aid* (Office of Soviet Analysis, Directorate of Intelligence, October 1985, Released as Sanitized 1999), accessed July 14, 2013, www.foia.cia.gov, 62-63 .

¹⁹³ On binge drinking in Russia and northern Europe see Ruth C. Engs, "Do Traditional Western European Drinking Practices Have Origins In Antiquity?," *Addiction Research* 2 (1995): 227-239 and M. Bobak et al, "Contribution of Drinking Patterns to Differences in Rates of Alcohol Related Problems Between Three Urban Populations," *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 58 (2004): 238-242.



Figure 1.20. The thin woman is labelled “I eat a large breakfast,” while the larger one’s label states that she eats a large supper. *Plotno zavtrakaiu. Plotno uzhinaiu.* 1969, Kontakt-Kul’tura, accessed October 7, 2011, <http://www.plakat.ru/Catalog/cat7.htm>.

and-berry,” flavored fortified wines (*plodovo-iagodnye vina*) which, because of their low quality but comparatively high prices and popularity became known as “fruit-profitable” (*plodovo-vygodnye*).¹⁹⁴

With the bread and vodka plentiful, Soviet consumers demanded sausage. Its growing importance can be noted in the recollections of the Soviet Baby Boomer generation of Saratov interviewed by Donald J. Raleigh. Almost all their responses to questions about shortages in provincial Saratov as compared to the well-supplied Moscow revolved around sausage. Sausage was obtained on business trips, shopping trips, sent back in packages, obtained in literal backdoor deals or purchased at high prices from cooperative stores selling collective farm-produced goods. Raw meat and cooked sausage began to be conflated in consumer minds— as they were in Soviet statistics. Some would purposefully “go to Moscow for meat, sausages, delicacies,” while others “never returned from a business trip to Moscow without meat and sausages.” Others mixed the ingredient and the product as they wondered why they had to buy Saratov-made *sausage* in Moscow, suggesting that *meat* was sent to the capital as window-dressing.¹⁹⁵ Not only did this generation look on Moscow with what Raleigh called “sausage envy,” they began to measure prosperity whether in the Soviet Union or abroad by the number of sausage varieties available for sale.¹⁹⁶ The best provincial cities could hope for were stores stocked with unappetizing canned goods, vodka, fortified wines, and the occasional “grey offal

¹⁹⁴ Zaigraev, “Gosudarstvennaia politika,” 110-111. For references to fruit-profitable wines see Andrei Makarevich, *Zanimatel'naia narkologiya* [Diverting Narcology] (Moscow: Makhaon, 2006), 38.

¹⁹⁵ Donald J. Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 225. For more talk about sausage by Raleigh's informants see pp. 224-227, 231.

¹⁹⁶ Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers*, 224, 233. One of Raleigh's informants specifically quoted “167 different types of lunch meat” available for sale in Saratov during the “better” 1967. See also L. Novikova, “Glazami turista i stranoveda. Po Iugoslavii” [Through the Eyes of a Tourist. Around Yugoslavia], *Argumenty i fakty*, July 16, 1988 and Irina Zhuravskaiia, “GDR: Odn nedelia zimy” [GDR: One Week in Winter], *Rabotnitsa* no.4 (1990): 24. Novikova and Zhuravskaiia informed their readers about the number of sausage varieties on sale in Yugoslavia and East Germany, respectively.

sausage, for which people kill each other.”¹⁹⁷ The trains that took people into large cities (and especially Moscow and Leningrad) were now called “Sausage Trains” (*Kolbasnyi poezd/Kolbasnaia elektrichka*) (see fig. 1.21).¹⁹⁸

The desire for sausage was not only encouraged by years of official discourse, but also by the lack of other convenience foods. By the 1970s and 80s, sausage was not a luxury but rather a necessity.¹⁹⁹ For all the talk about the need to help homemakers with convenience foods, fairly few were produced. The busy characters in Natalya Baranskaya’s *A Week Like Any Other*, a story published in 1969 about Soviet women’s “double burden” of a career and housework, are eating sausage at almost every meal.²⁰⁰ Just as before the Revolution, sausage remained the convenience food of choice for the now numerous urban proletariat, whose living conditions were still far from comfortable (see fig. 1.22). A worker at a Moscow auto plant in the 1970s described his daily lunch, remembering “we ate in the factory cafeteria—coffee, a piece of salami.” “Sometimes we’d load up on loaves of white bread and cartons of milk,” he continued, “that was our food... [m]ilk, a piece of cheese, salami, and bread.”²⁰¹ For research scientists working in Moscow, a normal lunch was “5-6 [sausage] sandwiches...without butter,” chased by coffee.²⁰² In the same era, it was perfectly acceptable to use ground sausage as a filling for

¹⁹⁷ A. Cherniaev, *Sovmestnyi iskhod. Dnevnik dvukh epoch. 1972-1991 gody* [A Mutual Exit. A Diary of Two Eras. 1972-1991] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2010), 203, 225; Yurii Nagibin, *Dnevnik* [A Diary] (Moscow: Knizhnyi sad, 1996), 357.

¹⁹⁸ N.B. Lebina, *Entsiklopediia banal’nostei: Sovetskaia povsednevnost’: Kontury, simvoly, znaki* [Encyclopedia of Banalities. The Soviet Everyday: Contours, Symbols, Signs] (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2006), 195-196 and Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers*, 226.

¹⁹⁹ For sausage perceived to be a luxury see Neringa Klumbyte, “The Soviet Sausage Renaissance,” *American Anthropologist* 112 (2010): 27.

²⁰⁰ Natalya Baranskaya, “Nedelia kak nedelia,” [A Week Like Any Other] *Novyi mir* no.11 (1969): 23-55; translated as Natalya Baranskaya, “A Week Like Any Other,” in *A Week Like Any Other: Novellas and Stories*, tr. Pieta Monks (Seattle: Seal, 1989).

²⁰¹ David Mandel, *Rabotyagi: Perestroika and After Viewed from Below: Interviews with Workers in the Former Soviet Union* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1994), 53. The term “salami” appears in the English text, but it is likely that the worker simply said *kolbasa*. By 1970s, the general term commonly meant bologna sausage.

²⁰² Andreii Bil’zho, *Eda:40 istorii pro edu s risunkami avtora* [Food: 40 Stories about Food with Drawings by the Author] (Moscow: Izdatel’skii dom Meshcheriakova, 2006), 3.



Figure 1.21. "Smells like sausage, must be the Moscow train!" *Krokodil* no.1 (1988): 4-5.



Figure 1.22. Man eating a standard Soviet convenience lunch: Thickly sliced bologna, a loaf of white bread, a liter of milk. *Wirklichkeit als Tragödie* [Reality as Tragedy], Viktor Fedjuschin, Alexander Fedorowskij, and Roland Gretler, ed. (Zurich: Offizin, 1990), 71.

blintzes, instead of ground whole meat which was often in even greater shortage.²⁰³

The Soviet government was well aware of the special role that sausage played in the popular imagination. Large amounts were imported for the Moscow Olympics in 1980. That year, a foreign visitor to Moscow was informed, without prompting, by a customs official that there “there was plenty of Finnish sausage in Moscow stores.”²⁰⁴ Even when the Soviet Union was not in the world’s eye, both consumers and Soviet nutritionists agreed that the Soviet diet needed to include fewer carbohydrates (especially in vodka form) and more proteins. To make up for the chronic absence of meat, the state, often under the guise of science, again resorted to surrogate foods. The language of the Party press and slogans spilled into sausage manufacture, exhorting workers to increase the “utilization of offal of the second category,” as well as previously unusable meat that was somehow “made harmless,” all in honor of the next Party Congress or even Lenin’s centennial of birth.²⁰⁵ It did not help that chemists, such as A.N. Nesmianov, the president of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, began to seriously consider the development of foods artificially synthesized from organic compounds, such as petroleum.²⁰⁶ The unsavory discussions of artificially-created foods that made their way from the popular science press into the Soviet consumer imagination, now combined with the suspicions produced by the strange appearance of poorly mixed sausage filling, which included increasing amounts of

²⁰³ O. Nazarova and K. Kobrin, *Puteshestvia na kraii tarelki* [A Trip to the Edge of a Plate] (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2009), 57.

²⁰⁴ David K. Willis, “Moscow Puts on Western Face for Olympics,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 14, 1980.

²⁰⁵ “Polnost’iu isspol’zovat’ tsennoe belkovoe syr’e dlia proizvodstva vysokokachestvennykh pishchevykh produktov” [Completely Use Valuable Protein Ingredients for the Production of High-Quality Foods] *Miasnaia industriia SSSR* no. 1 (1970): 2 and V. Anufriev, “Uluchshenie ispol’zovaniia subproduktov, krovi i drugogo pishchevogo syr’ia, poluchaemogo pri pererabotke skota, i uvelichenie za etot schet resursov miasoproduktov” [The Improvement of the Use of Offal, Blood, and Other Food Ingredients Resulting from Livestock Processing and the Enlargement of Meat Resources Due to These], *Miasnaia industriia SSSR* no.1 (1970): 7,8.

²⁰⁶ A.N. Nesmeianov, *Na kacheliakh XX veka* [On the Swings of the XX Century] (Moscow: Nauka, 1999), 281-286 and L.N.Strel’nikova, “Reaktsiia Nesmeianova” [The Nesmeianov Reaction], *Russian Science News*, accessed November 1, 2011, http://www.informnauka.ru/rus/1999/nesm_r.htm.

starch. Sausage, in the popular imagination, was suspected of having been manufactured with the addition of toilet paper, resulting in “cellulose-paper ersatz” or even “all but shit.”²⁰⁷

The changes in the sausage ingredients were done not only to increase the amount of meat products by rationally (and literally) squeezing out every bit of a pig or cow, but also in the name of better nutrition. Sausage contained too much fat and not enough protein, researchers suggested in 1971. Therefore, in order to fulfill the recommendations of the Institute of Nutrition of the Academy of Sciences, sausage would be enriched with blood, milk, and offal.²⁰⁸ The Academy of Sciences also began to offer BELIP or “The Protein Product of the Institute of Nutrition of the Academy of Sciences.” This mixture of skim milk cheese, cod fish, and oil was described as easily digestible, nutritious, and could be made into other foods, including, naturally, sausage.²⁰⁹ In another campaign, Soviet consumers were told to get over their conservative tastes and eat more seafood. According to the authors of one tome of seafood propaganda, soon the fear of seafood would become “an amusing misunderstanding,” just like the one-time European fear of tea and potatoes.²¹⁰ There were even suggestions to make sausages out of muskrat.²¹¹ The campaigns did not succeed, likely because they presented BELIP, seafood not on their own terms, but as replacements for the meat and sausage that Soviet consumers actually wanted.

The Death of Food (1982-1991)

²⁰⁷ Aleksandr Levintov, *Kniga o vkusnoi zhizni: Nebol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* [The Book of a Tasty Life: Not a Large Soviet Encyclopedia] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Ol'gi Morozovoi, 2008), 96; Iuz Aleshkovskii, *Ruka: (povestvovanie palacha)* [The Hand (An Executioner's Tale)] (New York: Russica Publishers, 1980), 25, 55-56. The addition of toilet paper to sausage would have been strange indeed, since there were terrible shortages of it too.

²⁰⁸ V. Mitsyk, “Puti rasshireniia proizvodstva miasoproduktov s vysokimi pitatel'nymi svoistvami” [The Paths to Broaden the Manufacture of Meat Products with High Nutritional Qualities], *Miasnaia industriia SSSR* no.2 (1970): 7-11.

²⁰⁹ A.A. Pokrovskii, “Belip, belkovyi produkt Instituta pitaniia AN SSSR” [Belip, the Protein Product of the Institute of Nutrition of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR] *Voprosy pitaniia* 23 (1964): 1-3 and Pokrovskii, *Besedy o pitanii*, 164-165.

²¹⁰ Lev Zenkevich et al., *Dary moria* [Seafood] (Moscow: Ekonomika, 1968), 10.

²¹¹ V. Tolstov, “Tem, kto vyrastil nutriiu” [For Those Who Raised the Muskrat], *Izvestiia*, March 31, 1982.

Neither Brezhnev's death in 1982, the brief tenures of his decrepit successors Iurii Andropov (1982-1984) and Konstantin Chernenko (1984-1985), nor even the reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union, changed the trajectory of Soviet food, though not for lack of trying. Gorbachev labeled the previous regime a period of stagnation and embarked on the path of reforms to rebuild the Soviet system (*perestroika*) and to make it more open and democratic (*glasnost*). His attempt to finally tackle the growth of alcoholism by implementing a strict limit on vodka production led only to huge, embarrassing queues, production of moonshine and, paradoxically, an increased demand for the drink. Since vodka became rationed, all adults received ration coupons and did not want to waste them. Curtailing vodka production also led to a huge gap in the Soviet budget, as did the sudden drop in the price of oil on the world market.²¹² With less money to spend on reforms and to invest in agriculture, the late Soviet state attempted to continue the work of the earlier government and try to reform Soviet tastes in food.

An increasing number of books and articles attempted to turn Russian consumers from desiring meat or sausage and to be satisfied with the basic goods that were commonly available in stores.²¹³ According to their authors, the main culprits of unsatisfied consumer demands were the consumers themselves, guilty of giving in to their taste buds. A 1984 article in *The Week* (Nedelia), a popular supplement to *Izvestiia* suggested that Soviet consumers were spend-thrifts, pining after pricy foods when their protein needs could be met with simple and wholesome foods, such as bread and milk. With the money thus saved on food, the article claimed, consumers could buy more interesting goods, perhaps even a car (see fig. 1.23).²¹⁴ A later article

²¹² Schrad, "The First Social Policy," 445.

²¹³ In addition to others cited in this chapter, see V. S. Mikhailov, N.R. Uspenskaia, A.D. Ignat'ev, *Rastitel'no-molochno-iaichnye bliuda* [Plant-Milk-Egg Dishes] (Moscow: Legkaia i pishchevaia promyshlennost, 1982); A.F. Vasilaki, D.I. Grave, V.S. Mikhailov, *Rezervy rastitel'noi pishchi* [The Reserves of Plant Food] (Kishinev: Karta Moldoveniaske, 1984); V. S. Mikhailov, L. A. Trushkina, N. P. Mogil'nyi, *Kul'tura pitaniia i zdorov'e sem'i* [The Culture of Nutrition and the Health of the Family] (Moscow: Profizdat, 1987).

²¹⁴ Yuliya Khodosh, "Kak nayti lishnii rubl'" [How to Find an Extra Ruble], *Nedelia* no. 5 (1984): 14.



Figure 1.23. The dreamers blanket is a one ruble note. Above his head are the milk and bread that will help him save money while eating enough protein. Yuliya Khodosh, “Kak nayti lishnii rubl’” [How to Find an Extra Ruble], *Nedelia* no. 5 (1984): 14.

offered a frugal meal of stewed fish, potatoes and cabbage as an alternative to pricy delicacies. “You might say: well, what about taste?,” the author asked. “Science respects emotions and specifics of individual tastes,” but “experience shows that...taste can be nurtured,” the readers were told. The author even claimed to know “many people who...[never] liked fish or farmers cheese [*tvorog*] but understood their importance for health and taught themselves to like these foods.”²¹⁵ “Have you thought about what you eat,” asked a 1989 article published in *Rabotnitsa*, the primary Soviet women’s magazine. “Did you know that all your heroic efforts [and] culinary fancies [*izyski*] push your loved ones toward every possible disease,” it warned, “did you know that eggs, cheese, sour cream, cream, and animal fats are products rich in cholesterol?” Eating such things would “reward you with the disease of the century – arteriosclerosis.”²¹⁶ “One should not eat according to taste,” argued Vladimir Mikhailov, the most ardent proponent of the new diet, “but according to science.”²¹⁷ Mikhailov’s “food of the XXI century” guided the readers to eat a diet of porridges, cooked with vegetables, a little fatty pork, milk, more vegetables, wild plants, and “easily digestible” margarine – essentially the foods that one could still buy in a state store or grow on a small garden plot. While Soviet consumers had for many years relied on the woods and their summer house (*dacha*) garden plots for additional food, the last time the Soviet government actively provided recipes for wild greens was during World War II.²¹⁸

The proponents of the new diet suggested that the only thing that the diners had to

²¹⁵ Yu. Khodosh, “Ekonomit’ li na ede?” [Should One Save on Food?], *Rabotnitsa* no.8 (1985): 1-2 of the supplement.

²¹⁶ L. Petrova, “Yest’ chtoby zhit’, ili zhit’ chtoby yest’” [Eating to Live, or Living to Eat], *Rabotnitsa* no.10 (1989): 10 of the supplement.

²¹⁷ V. Mikhailov and A. Pal’ko, *Vybiraem zdorov’e!* [We Choose Health!] (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1985), rear cover.

²¹⁸ For using *dacha* and other private plots see Z.I. Kalugina, *Lichnoe podsobnoe khoziastvo v SSSR: Sotsial’nye reguliatory i rezul’taty razvitiia* [Personal Garden Plots in the USSR: Social Regulations and Results of Development] (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1991), 165-184 and Stephen Lovell, *Summerfolk: a History of the Dacha, 1710-2000* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 218, 234. For World War Two plant recipes see *Bliuda iz dikorastushchei zeleni* [Dishes Made from Wild Greens] (Moscow: Gostorgizdat, 1943, 1944).

overcome was their “psychological barrier” that stood between them and the foods that sustained their peasant ancestors.²¹⁹ An article published by *Rabotnitsa* asked Russian housewives whether it was worth chasing after sausage so that after they “stood in line, [and] overpaid” all they really got was “a dose of carcinogens” that would “raise [their] blood cholesterol.” “Better take some regular cabbage,” they were told, “carrots, and onions and make a simple salad with vegetable oil.”²²⁰ An even more “ingenious” way to save money and calories was suggested by a 1989 book entitled *Eating with an Appetite*. A family was to sit around the table, place “a thin slice of sausage on a large dish and surround it with vegetables.” They were to look at the dish, inhale deeply for ten to fifteen minutes, relax, close their eyes and imagine the taste of sausage. After eating only the vegetables, the sausage was to then be wrapped tightly and placed into the refrigerator, to be reused for up to a month.²²¹ Such suggestions were not popular, and their publication was met with “a storm of readers’ letters” and less than flattering assessments in the increasingly liberalized press.²²²

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the availability of Soviet food was precarious. Mock funerals of food in general were broadcast on television and a popular satirist wrote its obituary entitled “Once, There was Food (Winter 1991),” in which a father struggled to describe for his curious children what food even was.²²³ More and more, the press connected the lack of food generally to the lack of one specific food – sausage. The satiric *Krokodil* published caricatures

²¹⁹ L. Trushkina, V. Mikahilov, N. Mogil’nyi, *Eda s appetitom* [Eating With an Appetite] (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1989), 1, 4-5, 27-30, 45 and Mikhailov and Pal’ko, *Vybiraem*, 149, 152.

²²⁰ Petrova, “Yest’,” 10.

²²¹ Trushkina, Mikhailov, Mogil’nyi, *Eda*, 15-16.

²²² L. Petrova, “Chto na vashem stole?” [What is on Your Table?], *Rabotnitsa* no.5 (1990): 21. For response to “virtual” sausage consumption advice, see P. Tolstoy, “Nu i nu. Dyshite glubzhe: Pakhnet kolbasoy” [What the?! Inhale Deeply: It Smells Like Sausage], *Komsomol’skaya Pravda*, August 3, 1990.

²²³ Mikhail Zhvantesky, “Byla eda (Zima 91-go)” [Once There was Food (Winter 1991)], in *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh* [Collected Works in Four Volumes] (Moscow: Vremia, 2001), 3:72-75; Sergei Karnaukhov, “Pokhorony edy: zametki o prodovol’stvennoi korzine 1990 goda, [The Funeral of Food: Notes on the Consumer Basket in 1990]” *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* no.84 (2007): 635-636.

blaming the increasing lack of sausage to outright theft or unscrupulous store clerks (see figs. 1.24 and 1.25). The reformist and hugely popular magazine, *Ogonek*, published articles and exposés bemoaning the terrible conditions of the food industry, illustrating them with images of cow bones and sausages that were manufactured for exhibitions but not for the stores (see fig. 1.26). Only partially tongue-in-cheek articles correlated the rise in reports of UFO encounters to the reports of sausage absence and described the constant bickering between Moscow and out-of-town shoppers as the “Sausage war.”²²⁴ In *Ogonek* and elsewhere, fictional and non-fictional stories were published in which descriptions of sausage from old Soviet books were cited verbatim like epic poetry or the scriptures.²²⁵

Soviet consumers and the press also began to directly connect sausage – rather than bread or vodka – to politics. Assessing the work of the Soviet Union’s first democratically elected legislature, the Congress of People’s Deputies, one *Rabotnitsa* reader wrote, while “the deputies talk a lot” nothing had improved. Her “city had no sausage and still has none.” “So how can we believe in *Perestroika* now,” she asked the editors. An economist interviewed by the magazine agreed that this was a serious issue. People who did not care about politics before, now began to care “via sausage.” “The demand for a good life,” the economist explained, “the demand for that same sausage, is a political demand.”²²⁶ When the Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991, and Mikhail Gorbachev resigned his post of president, the *Komsomol’skaia pravda* assessed his inability to improve the Soviet economy while also liberalizing society, writing that Gorbachev

²²⁴ “NLO pibyvaiut so skorost’iu ubyvaniia kolbasy” [UFOs Arrive with the Speed of Sausages Leaving], *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, May 29, 1990 and “Peremirie v kolbasnoi voine?” [A Peace Treaty in the Sausage War?], *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, June 10, 1990.

²²⁵ See for example Fridrikh Gorenshtein, “S koshelehekoi” [With a Shopping Bag], *Ogonek* no.35 (1990): 14 and Arkadii Spichka, *Kuhnia kholostiaka* [A Bachelor’s Kitchen] (Leningrad: Chas pik-Lenizdat, 1991), 28-29.

²²⁶ Tamara Virkunen, “Bogach – bedniak. Beseda s Tatianoii Koriaginoii” [Rich Man – Poor Man. A Conversation with Tatiana Koriagina], *Rabotnitsa* no.5 (1990): 16.



— Сын весь в тебя, игрушки из детсада приволок!

Рисунок У.ГАЙФУЛЛИНА.

Figure 1.24. “Our son is just like you, bringing toys home from the kindergarten!” The thieving father brought home a ham and a sausage. *Krokodil*, no.29 (1985): 13.



Figure 1.25. The front view of the store shows boring canned fish, the back shows a stash of luxury goods hidden from regular customers. *Krokodil* no.14 (1986): 12.

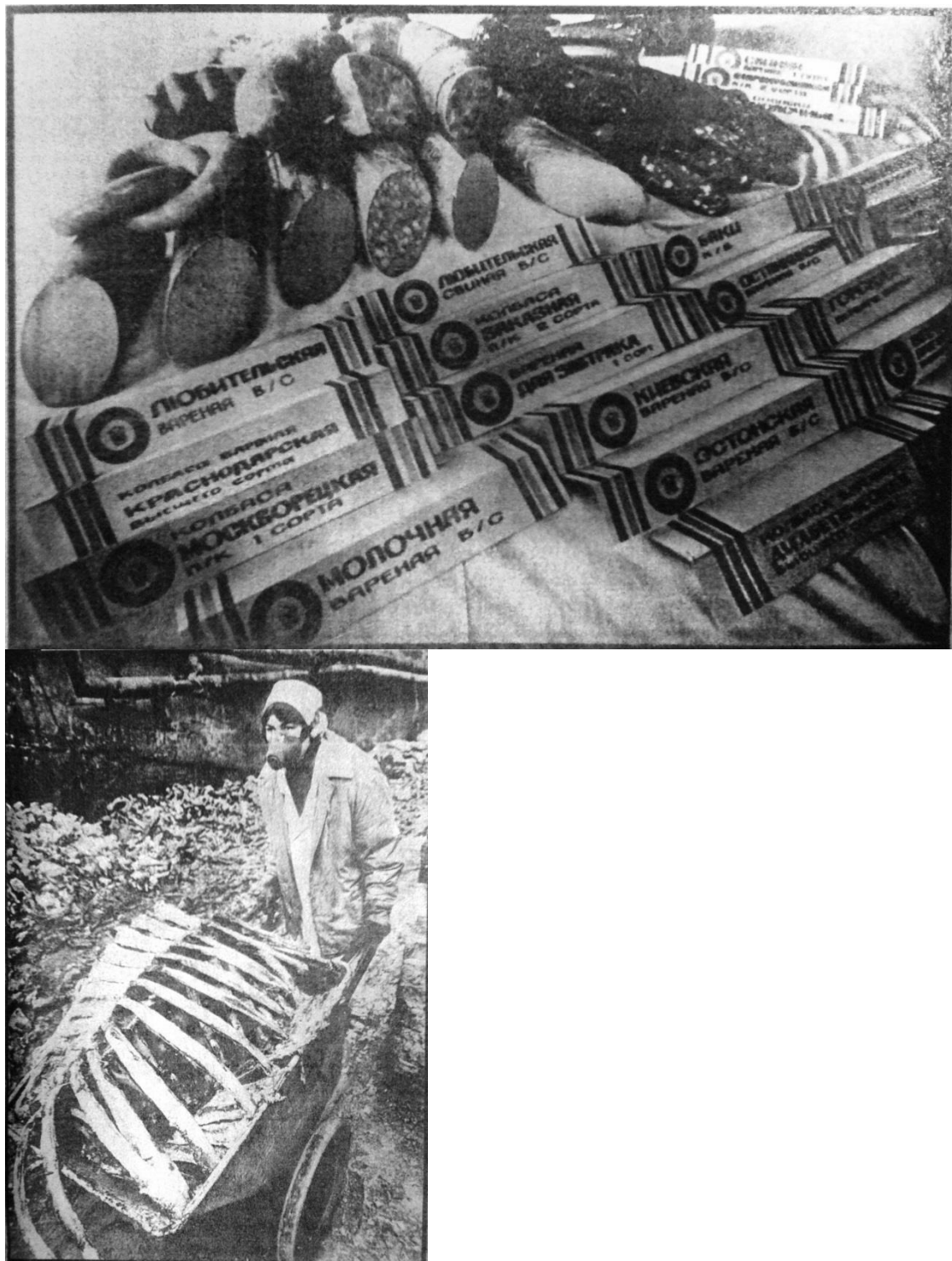


Figure 1.26. Contrasting photos. “Proza zhizni. Miasokombinat. [The Prose of Life. A Meat Plant.]” *Ogonek* no.7 (1990): 14, 15.

“did not know how to make sausage but he did know how to give freedom.”²²⁷

Conclusion

The symbolic role that sausage played for the Soviet consumers was not unique. The rarity of bananas in the socialist East Germany compared to their plentitude in the western Federal Republic, led to the banana acquiring a deep symbolism. East German posters warning their citizens of Western trickery pictured a mousetrap baited with a banana. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Unter den Linden, East Berlin’s main street was covered in banana peels and the last exhibit hall of the Museum of German History had former displays covered by a pile of bananas.²²⁸ In Germany, banana fever calmed down after a few years and is not the primary focus of the East German nostalgia for the socialist period, or *Ostalgie*, today. In the former Soviet Union, and especially Russia, the obsession with bread, vodka and sausage remains. To many Russians, even those who were children only in the last years of the USSR, bread just “doesn’t taste right” anymore. Multiple vodka brands compete for being the original Soviet recipe.²²⁹ But only sausage, powerfully mythologized as the sign of abundance under Stalin and like Soviet society itself never really living up to its promise, retains a universally understood symbolism. Soviet citizens did not starve under the rule of Stalin’s successors. Yet the caloric improvements in their diet did not adequately fulfill opulent Stalinist blueprints for a good and prosperous life. Nikita Khrushchev’s 1954 question of what kind of Communist society would have no sausage became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

²²⁷ D.Muratov, V. Fronin, “Gorbachev ukhodit i ostaetsia” [Gorbachev Leaves and Remains], *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, December 24, 1991.

²²⁸ Ann Nesbet and Eric Naiman, “Berlinskii dnevnik 1990 goda” [Berlin Diary of 1990], *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* no.2 (2007), accessed October 7, 2011, <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2007/84/ne32.html>. The hard copy of this publication was abridged.

²²⁹ The Kristall Moscow vodka plant, for instance, invites visitors to its exhibit of authentic, traditional vodkas, see “O vystvochnom zale” [On the Exhibit Hall], *Moskovskii zavod Kristall*, accessed November 1, 2011, http://www.kristall.ru/catalog/item.php?id_item=116; For examples of complaints that bread no longer tastes right see Narakeshvara, February 11, 2010, comment on bread_matters, <http://bread-matters.livejournal.com/4956.html>.

Despite Vladimir Putin's assertions that Russia had essentially achieved the late Soviet dream – there was plenty of sausage and freedom for all – across the former USSR nostalgia for *proper* sausage remains, and it is still unsatisfied.²³⁰ As early as 1989, Soviet consumers complained that “only 10-15 years ago, sausage was incomparably tastier.”²³¹ Now, the post-socialist meat processing companies advertise that their sausage, unlike that of their competitors, is “real” and “pure,” just like that in the Soviet time of their childhood, “the epoch of authentic frankfurters and sausage for 2.20 [rubles].”²³² Post-Soviet citizens happily crowd meat companies' promotional events at which “Soviet” sausage is sold at Soviet prices, for Soviet currency, resulting in very Soviet queues.²³³ Just as they marched towards a dawn of Communism that never rose, former Soviet citizens continue craving a phantom sausage that they, somehow, still cannot get.

²³⁰ V.V.Putin, *Vystuplenie v MGU 1 sentiabria 1999 goda* [Speech in the Moscow State University on September 1, 1999], Polit.ru, accessed February 17, 2011, <http://old.polit.ru/documents/109823.html>. For detailed discussion of post-Soviet sausage nostalgia see Klumbyte, “The Soviet Sausage,” 22-37.

²³¹ “Vopros – Otvet” [A Question – An Answer], *Argumenty i fakty*, June 3, 1989.

²³² See Ostankino-Bol'shaia Sosiska [Ostankino-Big Sausage], accessed February 17, 2011, <http://www.sosiska.ru>, www.mikoyan.ru. The Ostankino “big sausage” promotional website has gone down.

²³³ For examples see “Novost' ot 26 iulia 2011 [News from 26 July 2011],” Kemerovo: Gorod horoshikh novostei, accessed November 11, 2011, <http://www.kemerovo.ru/news/?id=15324>; “Padkie na khaliavu” [Easily susceptible to freebies], YouTube video, 2:28, from a report televised by “Moi gorod,” posted by “CoralRus,” July 18, 2011, accessed July 31, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoZKP7GeZOA>; “Doktorskaia kolbasa za 2 rublia 20 kopeek v Riazani [Doctor's sausage for 2 rubles 20 kopeks in Rizan'], YouTube video, 2:13, posted by “silviodanterus,” December 18, 2009, accessed July 31, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxibdAUKkMw>.

Chapter 2 Food for Heroes

Writing in 1934, at the beginning of the Second Five-Year Plan, Pavel Nilin concluded an article “On Luxurious Life” by arguing that “the builders of Magnitka and Kuznetsk, Dneproges and Uralmash... have a right to a luxurious life.”²³⁴ While the entire Soviet people were engaged in a heroic project of remaking the world, some of them, to paraphrase Orwell, were “more heroic than others.” In the same article, Nilin, quoting a Party official who was organizing a remarkably well-appointed dormitory for miners, wrote that a particular room needed much more attractive lamps, since “Shock-workers [*udarniki*] are going to live here, after all.”²³⁵ The shortages of all goods and, most importantly, food, led to the natural question of how to share it and on what basis. This chapter argues that while the rationing system divided goods according to how useful a person, an organization, or a locale was to the goals of the Soviet government, in official discourse this was often explained in terms of heroism. Those who worked in key industries, overcoming incredible hardships, surely deserved better goods and more of them. What kinds of material benefits were reasonable for heroes and who could be considered a genuine hero constantly came under question. In the “hierarchy of poverty” of the 1930s, as Elena Osokina called it, and even in the much more prosperous post-Stalin years, the unequal distribution of goods forced Soviet society to explain to itself who deserved more and why.²³⁶

This chapter looks at people who received better provisioning within the Soviet system and how their claims to heroism were evaluated by the Soviet public. It first looks at the explorers of the North Pole, aviators, and cosmonauts as people who were widely acknowledged as heroic and deserving of better food. The second section examines how food was used to

²³⁴ Pavel Nilin, “O roskoshnoy zhizni” [On the Luxurious Life], *Nashi dostizheniia* no.6 (1934): 61.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

²³⁶ Elena Osokina, *Za fasadom “stalinskogo izobiliiia:” Raspredelenie i rynek v snabzhenii naseleniia v gody industrializatsii. 1927-1941* [Behind the Façade of “Stalinist Abundance:” Distribution and the Market in the Provisioning of the Populace. 1927-1941] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2008), 155.

reward high-productivity workers, such as *udarniki* or Stakhanovites. Since their feats simply consisted of doing their jobs rather than exciting adventure, their right to better food was questioned by other workers. The third section is devoted to foreigners in the USSR who enjoyed great privileges over native Soviets. The final section explores the heroic claims and food access of the most privileged yet least respected group of Soviet consumers – members of the Party and state elite, as well as citizens of the “model socialist cities” of Moscow and Leningrad.

Heroic Explorers – the “real” heroes.

Of all Soviet heroes, explorers – of the Far North, of the air, and of space – were uniquely and almost unquestionably respected.²³⁷ Stalin lavished public attention on his heroes, often to the bemusement of the Western press (see fig. 2.1). When Soviet refugees were interviewed by the Harvard Project after World War II they, despite doing their best to prove their hatred of the Soviet Union and loyalty to the West, spoke of their admiration of these heroes. Unlike bluntly political events discussed in the news, one respondent claimed, the “scientific explanations, like the expedition to the North-pole...we trusted.”²³⁸ In films, “the courage of the [Revolutionary] heroes was exaggerated,” another interviewee declared, but he “was more interested in modern films, like the film about [the polar explorer] Papanin.”²³⁹ Multiple responders of the Harvard project also did not have qualms expressing their admiration for and childhood desire to become

²³⁷ See John McCannon, “Positive Heroes at the Pole: Celebrity Status, Socialist-Realist Ideals and the Soviet Myth of the Arctic, 1932-39,” *Russian Review* 56 (1997): 346-365. For aviators see Scott W. Palmer, *Dictatorship of the Air: Aviation Culture and the Fate of Modern Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²³⁸ Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, Schedule A, Vol. 1, Case 6 (interviewer A.P., type A3), [Male, less than 30 years old, Student and laboratory technician], Widener Library, Harvard University, 65. All Harvard Project interview materials are in English.

²³⁹ Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, Schedule A, Vol. 18, Case 351 (interviewer A.P., type A4), Male, 44, Ukrainian, Turner, Widener Library, Harvard University, 39.

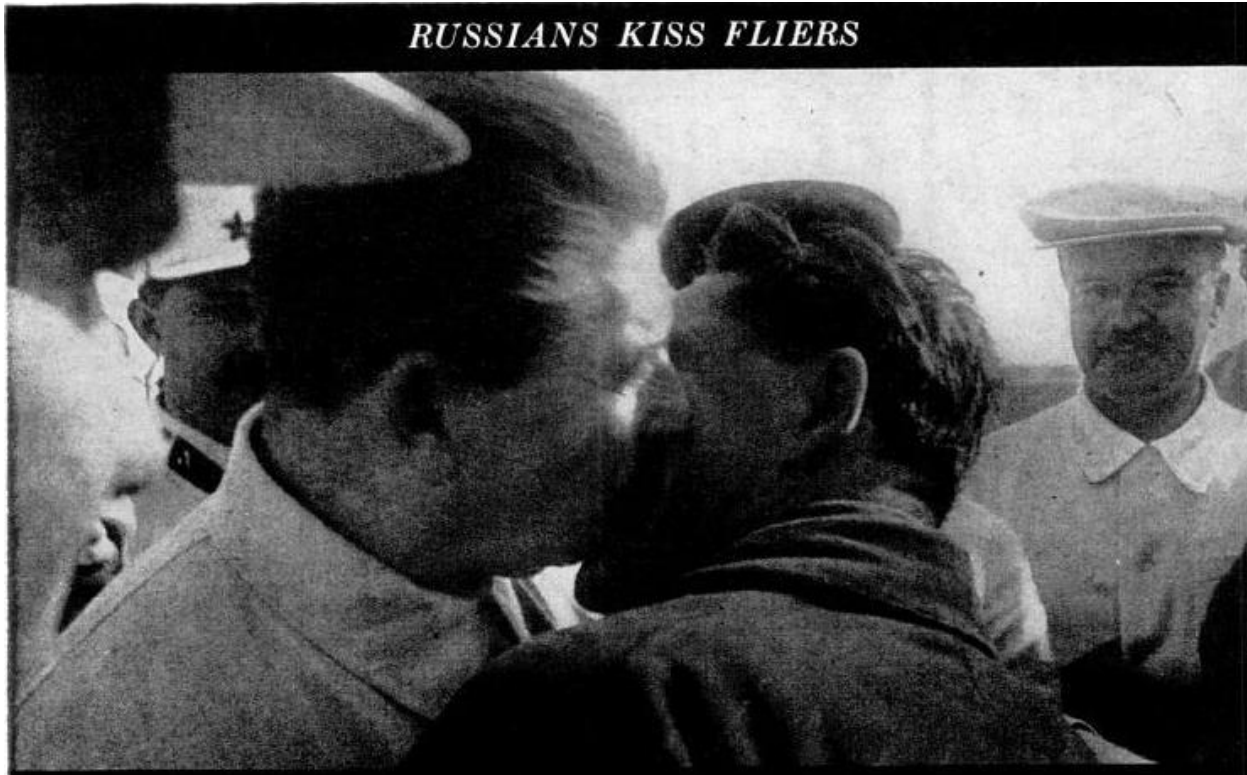


Figure 2.1. "Joseph Stalin, the usually impassive ruler of Soviet Russia, affectionately greets I.T. Spirin, pilot of the expedition to the North Pole." "Speaking of pictures...these are Europe's greatest kissers," *Life*, January 10, 1938, 6.

aviators.²⁴⁰ Newspapers may have been “very boring” but another respondent remembered “reading with interest [about] Papanin's trip to the North [and] also about the flight to the United States by Chkalov.”²⁴¹ These heroic men essentially “possessed a certain superstar quality that made them genuinely popular as well as famous” which, it has been suggested, even made them immune to the Great Purges of the late 1930s.²⁴²

American society, the primary foreign audience of Soviet feats, also sponsored and idolized heroic explorers. Americans were just as interested in what their explorers ate since it was an easy way to connect to them on a human level. However, the symbolic role that food played for the heroes was the crucial difference between the two societies. American pilots, polar explorers, and astronauts were portrayed as rugged survivalists, continuing the mythic exploration of the Frontier. Their foods were utilitarian rations, simple nourishment for a hardy explorer separate from his society of luxury and plenty. Charles Lindbergh, the “very embodiment of fearless, kindly, cultivated American youth—unspoiled, unspoilable,”²⁴³ to supply his 1927 trans-Atlantic flight famously “bought five sandwiches from a restaurant, remarking: ‘If I get to Paris, I won't need any more, and if I don't get to Paris, I won't need any more either.’”²⁴³ John Glenn's first meal in space was plain apple sauce.²⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Soviet heroes came from a society of shortage, yet one desperately trying to prove that it was a society of plenty. Therefore, the food given to Soviet explorers was not an afterthought or a way to demonstrate their hardiness, but a reward for their heroism and as important to demonstrating the advantages of

²⁴⁰ See for example Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, Schedule A, Vol. 30, Case 644 (interviewer R.S., type A4), Female, 30, Ukrainian, Journalist, Widener Library, Harvard University, 44; Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, Schedule A, Vol. 3, Case 27 (interviewer H.D., type A2), Male, 26, Great Russian, Kolkhoznik, Widener Library, Harvard University, 30; Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, Schedule A, Vol. 2, Case 20 (interviewer H.D., type A3), Male, 31, Great Russian, Metal lathe worker, Widener Library, Harvard University, 24.

²⁴¹ Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, Schedule A, Vol. 7, Case 95 (interviewer M.L., type A4), Female, 43, Ukrainian, White-collar file clerk, Widener Library, Harvard University, 30.

²⁴² John McCannon, “Positive Heroes at the Pole,” 355.

²⁴³ “Lindbergh: The Way of a Hero,” *Time*, May 26, 1967.

²⁴⁴ Jane Levi, “An Extraterrestrial Sandwich: The Perils of Food in Space,” *Endeavour* 34 (2010): 7.

Socialism as were their airplanes, rockets and scientific discoveries. Therefore, the foods with which Soviet explorer heroes were equipped were those that were considered rare, special, and celebratory.

The two particularly famous explorer-hero teams were the “Papaninites,” participants of the first manned drifting station expedition (May 1937-February 1938) led by I.D. Papanin, and the three aviators who flew non-stop between Moscow and Vancouver, WA in June 1937 under the command of V. Chkalov. While both feats had technological and scientific value, their political value had tremendous importance in popularizing Soviet feats to the mass audience at home and abroad.²⁴⁵ These aviators and explorers published diaries and memoirs of their trips in mass printings and were followed by journalists. The mass audience read not so much about the scientific discoveries but about the Papaninites’ reading interests, families, and, perhaps most prominently, their menu.

Because of the multiple articles devoted to the Papanin expedition featured photos of food or cooking equipment and mentioned Papanin’s personal involvement in feeding his “bros” (*bratki*), the Papanin expedition ended up firmly associated not so much with scientific exploration but with food. An entire book devoted exclusively to the development and use of food by the Papaninites was published in 1939.²⁴⁶ These associations were so deeply ingrained that a Harvard Project respondent could mix up all heroes and claim that “when three Soviet pilots made a polar-flight, only one of them was glorified as a hero (certain Papanin.) In fact, that

²⁴⁵ The Papaninite polar expedition resulted in the publication of E.K. Fedorov, ed., *Trudy dreifuiushchei stantsii "Severnyi poliis"* [The Works of the “North Pole” Drifting Station] (Leningrad-Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Sevmorputi, 1940-1945). Chkalov’s record of the flight was immediately published by the State Publisher of Political Literature as V.P. Chkalov, *Nash transpoliarnyi reis: Moskva-Severnyi poliis-Severnaia Amerika* [Our Transpolar Flight: Moscow-North Pole-North America] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1937).

²⁴⁶ M.F. Beliakov, *Pitanie papanintsev na dreifuiushchei l'dine* [Nutrition of Papaninites on an Ice Floe] (Moscow: Gostorgizdat, 1939).

Papanin, who was a Communist, only prepared meals for his two friends.”²⁴⁷ Years later, a book devoted to encouraging boys to be more helpful around the home encouraged boys to learn cooking using Papanin’s cooking skills at the North Pole as an example.²⁴⁸

There were, of course, plenty of good reasons to be concerned about food for an expedition of four men who were supposed to spend as much as 18 months on an ice floe, living in a tent. M.F. Beliakov, the director of the Moscow Institute of the Public Catering Engineers was asked by Papanin to provide the expedition with all the necessary foods during 1936.²⁴⁹ Taking into account the difficulties of the previous attempts to reach the North Pole, Beliakov formed a goal to provide foods that were lightweight, resistant to temperature changes, easy to prepare and pack.²⁵⁰ The foods would have to be rich with vitamins to avoid scurvy and be tasty, or at least not be pemmican, the food of choice for previous expeditions.²⁵¹ The primary difference from previous failed attempts to reach the Pole, Beliakov argued, was that the Papanin group was “a Soviet expedition” and unlike those of capitalist nations it was “assured the help and caring support of the entire Soviet nation, the Party, the government, and the personal care of comrade Stalin.”²⁵²

What this meant was that the “heroic foursome of Papaninites”²⁵³ was supplied with “the best of everything that could be imagined, the best that could be found.” The “four heroes floating on ice through the Polar Sea”²⁵⁴ were equipped with 46 kinds of foods with plenty of

²⁴⁷ Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 35, Case 131/(NY)1497 (interviewer J.F., type A4). Male, 41, Great Russian, Engineer. Widener Library, Harvard University. page 59 (seq. 59).

²⁴⁸ Anatolii Markusha, *A ia sam!* [Me, Myself!] (Petrozavodsk: Karelia, 1988), 104. Incidentally, Markusha was himself a fighter pilot.

²⁴⁹ Beliakov, *Pitanie*, 8-9.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 24-25. Pemmican is a mixture of dried meat and solid fat that originated from Native Americans. While highly caloric and hard to spoil it is neither high in vitamins nor especially delicious.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

meat and other luxuries: smoked pork, hunter's sausages, pressed caviar, dried wild strawberries, coffee, chocolate, and chocolate with chicken powder, white bread rusks with meat.²⁵⁵ The daily personal ration was calculated to be, on average, 1,574 grams of food providing 6250 calories.²⁵⁶ The Papaninite menu took in thousands of tons of fresh vegetables which had to be delivered from as far as Ukraine and the Caucasus by special couriers.²⁵⁷ There was plenty of brandy, lemon juice, candy, ham, and butter for multiple celebrations – monthly anniversaries of arriving to the Pole, Stalin's birthday, and even the election of the Papaninites to Soviet parliament.²⁵⁸ Since Papanin was described as the “master,” “first administrator,” and the “Party organizer” at the North Pole, while his enterprise “placed the service of the common interest above the personal” he and his colleagues deserved a life that became better and happier.²⁵⁹ Indeed, the aviators who dropped the team off were astonished by the “plenty and abundance of Papanin's ice floe.”²⁶⁰

Yet, therein lay the problem for “the Pole experienced a ‘crisis of plenty.’”²⁶¹ The main complaint from the team after their return was that they had “too many tasty things.”²⁶² They “wanted some herring, a sour pickle, and not pressed caviar or chocolate.”²⁶³ Theodore Krenkel, the expedition's radio operator and co-cook explained that caviar and chocolate were good only when “eaten during big holidays and in small amounts” but for the Papaninites these were “a

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 68-70. Chocolate with chicken powder was meant to be extra nutritious, but it disgusted Papaninites who gleefully referred to it as “chocolate with chicken droppings.”

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 34.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 65

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 106-107.

²⁵⁹ Evg. Kriger, “Khoziain Severnogo poliusa” [The Master of the North Pole], *Izvestiia*, March 16, 1938 and “Narodnye geroi” [People's Heroes], *Izvestiia*, February 21, 1938.

²⁶⁰ Beliakov, *Pitanie*, 103.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 128.

²⁶² Ibid., 126

²⁶³ Ibid.

substantial source of food.”²⁶⁴ After three months, they “couldn’t look” at caviar as extra cans of it “stayed untouched...covered in snow.”²⁶⁵ During an earlier winter in the Arctic, Theodore Krenkel sent a radioed message via *Pravda* that he and his colleagues were willing to “exchange a kilo of chocolate for a kilo of potatoes.”²⁶⁶ Similarly, the group of aviators led by Valerii Chkalov in their June 1937 flight from Moscow to Vancouver was equipped with the best food possible, despite their insistence that the weight of supplies be kept to an absolute minimum. Just a month earlier, another polar pilot V. Makhotkin sent a note to Anastas Mikoyan praising the emergency supplies of pemmican, lard, and chocolate, which he and his team actually had to use after an emergency landing, as being lightweight and tasty.²⁶⁷ G.F. Baidukov, one of the pilots flying with Chkalov, later remembered that Chkalov tried to argue that taking 100 kilos of emergency “grub” (mostly the same concentrates that Papaninites took with them) was a waste of gasoline space, but was forced to relent.²⁶⁸ In addition to the emergency supplies, the pilots ended up with 3 kilograms of food per person daily, including sandwiches made with ham, butter, beef, veal, Swiss cheese, and even the more luxurious fresh-grain caviar; they also took cabbage pies, chocolate, pound cake, lemons, oranges, apples and hot tea.²⁶⁹ Before their flight, the pilots breakfasted on butter and caviar sandwiches and strong tea.²⁷⁰ This tendency to equip heroes with “the best” as opposed to the most useful remained in the last great Soviet exploration project – that of space – and was especially clear when compared to the foods issued to American astronauts.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 128.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ M. Beliakov, “Obed na poltora goda” [A Year and A Half of Dinners], *Pravda*, June 6, 1937.

²⁶⁷ RGAE f.8543, o.1, d.380, l.203. Mikoyan’s note on the page indicates that he read the document.

²⁶⁸ G.F. Baidukov, *Chkalov*, 4th ed., (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1986, 1975), 176.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 175-176.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 187.

The Soviet space program was in many ways connected to exploration of the Arctic and the long-distance air flights of the 1930s.²⁷¹ Nikolai Kamanin, the chief of the cosmonaut training program, was himself a heroic Polar aviator during the 1930s. A noted rocket engineer and memoirist Boris Chertok compared the enormous and emotional welcome parades of the Arctic explorers and aviators of the 1930s to those that greeted Yuri Gagarin in 1961.²⁷² Along with the mantle of unimpeachable heroism, the cosmonauts inherited from their predecessors the duty to test new foods and the right to take the best foods with them during the early, most attention-getting flights. Unlike American explorers engaged in similarly high-profile exploration projects, these three groups of Soviet heroes were not equipped with foods already tested by the military but instead were the testers of foods with future military uses. In the conclusion to his book on the development of food for Papaninites, Beliakov declared that the employees of his institute were ready to provide the members of the armed forces with necessary foods, including individual long-lasting rations similar to what Papaninites took along.²⁷³ Similarly, Soviet cosmonauts' tube foods were issued to fighter pilots, unlike the pureed and sippable foods that were issued to American astronauts *after* they have been used in the US air force for some time.²⁷⁴ This divergent approach can also explain the high interest of the central Soviet government in the food issued to iconic explorers, and the relative indifference of the American government to astronaut foods.

The first Soviet space missions' planners took the question of food very seriously. In their publications, they included detailed discussions of how they applied the latest discoveries of

²⁷¹ Boris Chertok devoted a chapter to the arctic exploration in his memoir. See B.E. Chertok, *Rockets and People* (Washington, DC: NASA History Series, 2005), 1:117-138.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 3:59.

²⁷³ Beliakov, *Pitanie*, 130; RGAE f.8543, o.1, d. 381, l.1.

²⁷⁴ I.G. Popov, V.P. Bychkov, "Crewmember Nutrition," in *Space Biology and Medicine*, F.M. Sulzman and A.M. Genin, eds. (Washington, DC : American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, 1994), 2:226.

nutrition science to space menus.²⁷⁵ However, when it came to actually issuing food to the cosmonauts, the menu was remarkably similar to that of the Papaninitses or the Chkalov long-distance flight team. Gagarin was issued futuristic tubes of purees and pates containing plenty of meat, along with fruit juices, chocolate sauce, and coffee with milk.²⁷⁶ All these foods and even the packaging were “deficit” goods back on earth. To test the possibility of including solid foods for space flights, Gagarin was issued the two most symbolic Soviet foods – bread and sausage, along with sweets, vitamins, lemon slices, and jam.²⁷⁷ Once back on earth, Gagarin was delivered to a local Party summer rest home, fed specially made *borsch*, and coddled by the matronly cooks who cooed tenderly when they saw that Gagarin and his comrade Titov “even ate caviar together from the same dish – like schoolboys after a hard exam!”²⁷⁸

The later flights were even better equipped. While American astronauts on Mercury missions (1962-64) were issued what were essentially space versions of military mess-hall menu items such as “aluminum toothpaste-type tubes included semiliquid meat (beef and vegetables, beef with gravy) and fruits (applesauce and peaches),”²⁷⁹ cosmonauts were equipped with “various meat products: fried meat, meat patties, tongue, veal, chicken filet” as well as “sandwiches with pressed caviar....pies with anchovies, fruit: apples, oranges, lemons,” and

²⁷⁵ I.G. Popov, “Food and Water Supply,” in *Foundations of Space Biology and Medicine*, Melvin Calvin and Oleg G. Gazenko, eds. (Washington, DC: National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 1975), 3:22-56.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 3:25.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.* and “Podgotovka izdeliia idet normal’no” [Preparation of the Object is Proceeding Normally], *Kommersant Vlast’*, April 17, 2001.

²⁷⁸ RGANTD f. 211, o.6, d.259, l.10, 11 in *Dorogoi Gagarina. Internet-proekt k 50-letiiu poleta v kosmos Iu.A. Gagarina* [On the Path of Gagarin. An Internet Project for the 50th Anniversary of Iu.A. Garin’s Spaceflight], accessed April 12, 2011, http://rusarchives.ru/12april/pages/02_86.php.

²⁷⁹ Popov, “Food and Water Supply,” 3:26. These essays were not Soviet political criticism of US space food. I.G. Popov was selected to write the essay on crewmember nutrition in a definitive joint USSR-USA publication on space exploration.

“even dried roach [fish].”²⁸⁰ This last item may perhaps seem paradoxically proletarian but by 1960s this salty dried fish became a highly sought after and pricy delicacy.²⁸¹

When the American Gemini 3 mission crew sneaked a non-regulation corned beef sandwich into space their practical joke was widely condemned. American astronauts were expected to tough it out in space after the US government had “spent a great deal of money and time,” on them, so “to have one of the astronauts slip a sandwich aboard” was “frankly... just a little disgusting.”²⁸² The space programs’ foods again took opposite paths once they launched orbital space stations. The NASA Spacelab menu began to take the astronaut complaints about the quality of food seriously and included a much more varied and elaborate menu, while the lengthy Soviet Soyuz missions were issued a still fairly varied, flavorful (it included Ukrainian borsch and spicy Georgian *kharcho* soups) and protein-rich selection, but no longer included caviar sandwiches as a standard part of the space food.²⁸³

The amazing and unique feats performed by the explorers of the arctic, of air and of space made the enormous investment of money and actual food in their trips seem acceptable to the Soviet public. Articles published to commemorate the heroic explorers argued that unlike the individual Western explorers who failed to reach their objectives, whether the North Pole or a long-distance flight because of their individualism, Soviet explorers succeeded because they were a part of a collective.²⁸⁴ Yet it appears that when it came to privileges and especially the privileged access to food, the Soviet people were less accepting of group claims to heroism, especially when the heroic actions seemed more mundane than exotic exploration. The unique,

²⁸⁰ Iu. Gagarin and V. Lebedev, *Psikhologiia i kosmos* [Psychology and Space] (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1968), 18.

²⁸¹ On the disappearance of dried roach from regular stores see Alexandr Levintov, *Kniga o vkusnoi zhizni* [A Book of a Tasty Life] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Ol'gi Morozovoi, 2008), 21-23.

²⁸² Senator George E. Shipley as quoted by Levi, “An Extraterrestrial Sandwich,” 9.

²⁸³ Popov and Bychkov “Crewmember Nutrition,” 2:230.

²⁸⁴ See for example “Stiag SSSR na Severnom poliuse” [The Banner of the USSR at the North Pole], *Sovetskaia Sibir'*, May 23, 1937.

individual achievement of Papaninites, the Chkalov crew, and the cosmonauts made them special. Group claims to heroism by hyper-productive miners or by politicians were of a more dubious nature.

Labor heroes: Familiarity breeds contempt

Unlike specific individuals who did the unimaginable – flew through the air, lived on an ice floe or left the planet altogether – it was harder to claim heroism and preferential treatment simply for being more productive in the familiar setting of a mine, a factory or a collective farm field. The high-productivity “shock-workers” (*udarniki*) and the subsequent Stakhanovite movements encouraged workers to become more productive as a policy to battle *uravnilovka* (thoughtless/baseless equalization) and, of course, to encourage higher labor productivity. The rewards for these highly productive workers were openly material, and usually food-based. Official publications tied both groups (and Stakhanovites especially) to heroism and portrayed the rewards of labor heroics through gifts and images of food – as a material sign of inner socialist grace. Thus, when a highly-productive Magnitogorsk shock-worker Kalmykov got a whole issue of the richly-illustrated propaganda journal *SSSR na stroike* (USSR in Construction) devoted to him, he was prominently portrayed in his new apartment surrounded by all the trappings of a “cultured” life, while his wife served him a large lunch (see fig. 2.2). A.G. Man’kov angrily wrote in his diary about the creation of a new dining hall for *udarniki* by cutting off half of the regular dining hall where the remaining workers lined up for a spot to eat at a “long, narrow table marred with food.” while right next to them the chosen diners ate at individual tables covered with white napkins.²⁸⁵ In Moscow’s Kaganovich Ball-bearing Plant the shock-workers’ dining hall was similarly well-decorated and was the first to be equipped with

²⁸⁵ A.G.Man’kov, *Dnevnik tridtsatykh godov* [Diaries of the Thirties] (St. Petersburg: Evropeiskii dom, 2001), 113.



Figure 2.2. The shock-worker Klamykov's food is notable for its quantity rather than quality. *USSR in Construction*, no. 1 (1932): 35.

knives and forks, presumably leaving the rest of the plant to wait their turn to eat the main dish with proper cutlery and not a spoon or bare hands.²⁸⁶

Stakhanovites, even more than *udarniki*, were immediately lauded as heroes. According to the resolution of his mine's Party committee passed after he mined 140 tons of coal instead of the usual 7 tons, Alexei Stakhanov, the titular founder of the movement, "would be followed by the appearance of new heroes, . . . who decided with their actions [and] honest labor to fulfill the directions of the Party."²⁸⁷ They were referred to as *bogatyri* (mythic knights of Russian epic poems) and tied to other heroes, or the "notable people" of the Soviet Union (see fig. 2.3).²⁸⁸ Like the *bogatyri* who feasted in their epics, Stakhanovites were lavished with food. It was to them that Stalin addressed his speech about Soviet life becoming better and happier. While visiting Stakhanov's new apartment, the writer Aleksandr Avdeenko saw "Sausages and layers of lard on the table. Bagels. Loaves. Hams. Crates with beer [and] vodka."²⁸⁹ Aleksandr Busygin, a Stakhanovite autoworker, received a present of a crate apples, three kilos of meat, ten kilos of flour, packages of butter, sausage, sturgeon, pies, and chocolate.²⁹⁰ Like Kalmykov, Stakhanovites were often pictured during rich meals. Stakhanovite Ivan Korobov was pictured having tea with a friend and having a picnic with his family (see fig. 2.4). In the images, Korobov's tea dishes can barely contain cream puffs, cookies, jam, and lemons, while the family picnic contains a pile of white bread slices, eggs, fruit, and a bottle of alcohol. Yet, the heroic

²⁸⁶ Kollektiv rabotnikov fabriki-kukhni zavoda "Sharikopodshibnik," *Vkusno i sytno* [Tasty and Filling] (Moscow: Profizdat, 1934), 13.

²⁸⁷ A. Avdeenko, *Nakazanie bez prestupleniia* [Punishment Without a Crime] (Moscow: Sovetskaia rossia, 1991), 165.

²⁸⁸ Lewis Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 148.

²⁸⁹ Avdeenko, *Nakazanie*, 162.

²⁹⁰ V. Lel'chuk, "Aleksandr Busygin" in *Novatory* [Innovators], L. Rogachevskaia, ed. (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1972), 153-154. For further discussion of this episode see Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism*, 187-188.



Figure 2.3. Notable people in a socialist country, from left to right: Alexei Stakhanov, Dussia Vinogradova (Stakhanovite of the textile industry), Valerii Chkalov, Mariia Demchenko (Stakhanovite of sugar beet farming), Iakov Yussim (Director of the Kaganovich Ball bearing plant), Kulyash Baiseitova (Kazakh Actress). *USSR in Construction*, nos. 9/10/11/12 (1937): 86-87.



Figure 2.4. The Korobov family has good furniture and a car but these are just background to their meals. *USSR in Construction*, no. 6 (1939): 2.

Stakhanovites like Korobov's were also referred to as "an ordinary Soviet family of workers."²⁹¹

Images that were meant to demonstrate that all can strive to do heroic work actually made the claims of heroism and, therefore, claims to a much greater share of food and drink so much harder for the general public to accept. Stakhanovites and *Udarniki* were, for the most part, ordinary men and women who simply did regular jobs better than others.

The familiarity with the task bred contempt for their privileges. The criticism of the Stakhanovites offered by the Harvard Project respondents was rooted in familiarity with the tasks they performed or personal knowledge of them, something that would be impossible for most Soviet citizens to claim about aviators or polar explorers. One respondent claimed not to believe Soviet economic records because of his familiarity with how they were produced. "Take, for instance, Maria Demchenko who was a Stakhanovite collective farmer," he said, "she raised beets but I knew her myself. And I knew that she had a whole brigade helping her. Yet she received all of the credit."²⁹² "There was one stakhanovka on [sic] our kolkhoz who had maintained this position only through favoritism," another respondent told his interviewers, "she was a milk-maid and a poor one at that but she slept with the brigadier and was made a stakhanovka."²⁹³ A.G.Man'kov, whose duty it was to issue ration cards to the shop foremen of a rubber factory and to tell them to single out a small group for high-productivity rations was angrily confronted by one foreman demanding how he would make the choice when "everyone works about the same?"²⁹⁴ While one could accuse Papaninites or cosmonauts of multiple

²⁹¹ "The Korobov Family," *USSR in Construction*, no. 6 (1939): 2.

²⁹² Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, Schedule A, Vol. 5, Case 61 (interviewer K.G./J.R., type A3), Male, 40, Great Russian, School director, Widener Library, Harvard University, 36.

²⁹³ Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 30, Case 640 (interviewer R.S., type A4), Male, 28, Great Russian, Kolkhoznik, Widener Library, Harvard University, 6.

²⁹⁴ Man'kov, *Dnevnik*, 62.

transgressions, sleeping with a flight controller or drinking at the North Pole would not make going to space or the Arctic any less impressive.²⁹⁵

On the other hand, with some notable exceptions, such as the especially well-publicized stakhanovites described above, the food that labor heroes got was not all that different from those of regular workers. In a number of cases, as productivity rose, there were more shock-workers than regular employees, which meant that crowding and queues in their cafeterias and stores were just as long or longer than ones for their less productive colleagues.²⁹⁶ John Scott noted that getting enough food in Magnitogorsk dining halls was hard since many workers were rewarded with extra ration cards to encourage productivity but that did not mean that the kitchen could or would prepare extra food.²⁹⁷ This did not occur because the planners were cruel. Rather, it reflected the competition for resources that characterized the relations between all Soviet institutions.

Foreigners

Foreigners - industry specialists, workers, political exiles, and tourists received significant food privileges in the Soviet Union through multiple organizations with overlapping jurisdictions, of which the best known was the Insrab (*Foreign Provisioning Administration*). All foreigners had, in addition to more direct, practical reasons for receiving superior food supplies, a heroic claim that could be used by the Soviet government and population to explain the inequality. The best supplied were the exiles, who were portrayed and often actually were victims of political repressions for their revolutionary activities abroad. Aided by the International Organization for Aiding Revolutionaries (MOPR), the suffering of these men and

²⁹⁵ There were indeed some rumored and actual transgressions of the heroes. N.P. Kamanin, the commander of the cosmonauts worried about their heavy drinking and occasionally rocky marriages. See for example, N.P. Kamanin, *Skrytyi kosmos* [Hidden Space] (Moscow: Infortekst, 1995), 1:57-59, 89,374,376-377.

²⁹⁶ Osokina, *Za fasadom*, 165.

²⁹⁷ John Scott, *Behind the Urals* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1973): 78-79.

women was always emphasized, especially since MOPR depended on (most likely only partially) voluntary donations, and desired to create more popular support (see fig. 2.5).²⁹⁸ These exiles formed a subgroup within the Party elite and were placed on par with them both in terms of food privileges (which are discussed at length in the section below) and the risks of suffering from political repressions of the mid to late 1930s.

Foreign white-collar specialists and tourists were probably the next best-supplied groups of foreigners. These groups did not generally need to claim a heroic status to explain their benefits. The former had contracts promising them conditions which would be as close as possible to those in the West in exchange for their expertise, and the latter were short-term visitors bringing in valuable foreign currency and ideally bringing back a positive view of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, even these groups were endowed with a certain aura of heroism, since they were assumed, not entirely incorrectly in some cases, to have taken some risk to their reputation to visit the "land of the Bolsheviks."²⁹⁹ Native white-collar specialists seem to have been allowed to use Insnab facilities, at least by the local Party and state elites, who also "attached" (*prikrepili*) themselves to these sources of better provisioning. In both Novosibirsk and Magnitogorsk, the official elites used the Insnab facilities.³⁰⁰ In Novosibirsk the Insnab restaurant was "a club for the technical and cultural elite of the city."³⁰¹ In the eyes of one Russian visitor to this restaurant, the foreigners acquired a kind of a heroic, fairy tale status as

²⁹⁸ Even works published in the Soviet Union emphasized donation gathering as one of the primary functions of MOPR. See for example B.P. Shiferson, "Leningradskaia organizatsiia Mezhdunarodnoi organizatsii pomoshchi bortsam revoliutsii (MOPR)" [The Leningrad Branch of the International Organization of Aid to the Revolutionary Strugglers] in *Dobrovol'nye obshchestva v Petrograde-Leningrade v 1917-1937 gg* [Voluntary Organizations in Petrograd-Leningrad, 1917-1937], A.P. Kupaiigorodskaia, ed. (Leningrad: Nauka, 1989), 58-59, 62-63.

²⁹⁹ For example see Robert Robinson and Jonathon Slevin, *Black on Red: My 44 Years Inside the Soviet Union* (Washington, DC: Acropolis Books, 1988). Robinson, a naturalized US citizen from Jamaica, lost his US citizenship and with it a way out of the USSR where he was forced to stay until 1974.

³⁰⁰ Galina Telegina, "Nostal'giia" [Nostalgia], in *Moi Novosibirsk. Kniga Vospominanii*. [My Novosibirsk. A Book of Memories.] (Novosibirsk: SO Detskaia literatura, 1999), 86 and Scott, *Behind*, 87.

³⁰¹ Telegina, "Nostal'giia," 86.



Figure 2.5. The barbaric treatment of foreign revolutionaries that made them potentially heroic was graphically portrayed in MOPR fundraising materials such as this poster telling Central Asian laborers to remember their “foreign brothers” and to join MOPR. Red-Avant-Garde, <http://www.redavantgarde.com/ru/shop/goods-37.html>.

well. They were “*all* happy, strong, and enjoyed life,” or, in other words, were like the Soviet people in Soviet propaganda films.³⁰² The working-class foreigners who came to participate in the Soviet project were not as privileged as the professionals but were still much better fed than their Russian colleagues.

Despite demands from government officials such as Pavel Postyshev who in 1930 asked that foreign worker privileges should be curtailed, workers recruited in the West enjoyed fewer but still genuine advantages over their Russian counterparts, at least as long as they could retain their primary citizenship and were therefore able to leave easily.³⁰³ Until 1932, foreign workers had no limits on the purchases at the Insnab stores and could import large amounts of food duty-free. When the food shortages reached their peak in 1932-1933, rationing limits were imposed on foreign workers as well but these were much higher than those issued even to the most privileged native workers, especially for meat. Foreign workers ate at their own tables and often had special food prepared for them. While some tried to hold out as long as possible without resorting to taking advantage these measures of inequality, others complained about the food in the manner that can be summarized in the words of the old comedy routine – the food was terrible and the portions were small. As has been noted by recent Russian researchers, these complaints were usually due to ignorance of what the food was like for an average worker.³⁰⁴ The privileges resulted in considerable grumbling on the part of the foreigners’ Russian colleagues who, as was the case with *udarniki* and *stakhanovtzi*, could not see why someone who was doing essentially

³⁰² Ibid. Emphasis is mine.

³⁰³ P. Postyshev, “O rabote sredi inostrannykh rabochikh” [On Work Among the Foreign Workers], *Pravda*, October 26, 1930.

³⁰⁴ This account is based on Sergei Zhuravlev, “*Malen'kie liudi*” i “*bol'shaia istoriia*:” *Inostrantsy moskovskogo Elektrozavoda v sovetskom obshchestve 1920-x – 1930-x gg.* [“Little People” and “Big History:” Foreigners of the Moscow Electroplant Within Soviet Society of the 1920s-1930s] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2000), 218-222 and Osokina, *Za fasadom*, 144-148.

the same work deserved more food.³⁰⁵ Yet ideologically, there was an explanation. Foreign workers could enjoy their benefits because they were both useful *and* heroic.

Though it was not a secret that foreign workers came to make money, as well as aid in the construction of the first “worker’s state,” only the latter was emphasized, and foreign workers privileges could also be ascribed to their heroic struggle to overcome the resistance of their society and to come to the USSR. While the text of a 1930 poster gave the sober instructions that Western workers came to the USSR to aid in socialist construction and that the Russian workers must learn from their expertise, the images told a far more exciting and heroic story. The poster showed a Western worker stepping onto a Soviet construction site while still being chased in the literally-black capitalist world by a policeman with a club and a bourgeois holding a knife in his teeth, shaking a paper entitled “Bolshevik terrors” with one hand and trying to catch the worker with the claws of the other (see fig. 2.6). This more romantic view of the difficulties that the foreign workers had to overcome was also shared by Masha Scott, the Russian wife of the well-known American participant of the construction of Magnitogorsk. When she first heard of him, she was excited to see John Scott, the American “who had, no doubt, come from the land of capitalist oppression to find a home in the land of Socialism.”³⁰⁶ This naïve view faded after the death of Joseph Stalin (1953) as more foreigners were able to visit the Soviet Union and more Soviets went abroad. By 1970s even tour-guides, whose jobs included many privileges, grumbled about not being able to use nice coffee shops set up only for foreigners and dreamt of escaping to the West with their tourists.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁵ Zhuravlev, “*Malen'kie liudi*,” 219-220. In some cases, however, Russian workers actually encouraged foreign colleagues to apply for Insrab benefits, as did one of John Scott’s colleagues, in order that they both could benefit. See Scott, *Behind the Urals*, 42.

³⁰⁶ John Scott, *Behind the Urals*, 119.

³⁰⁷ See for example Yelena Gorokhova, *A Mountain of Crumbs* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 192-196.



Figure 2.6. G.A. Roze, *Proletarii Zapada, na lesa sotsiolisticheskogo stroitel'stva*, [Proletariat of the West – Come to the Scaffolding of Socialist Construction] (1930). Red-Avant-Garde, <http://www.redavantgarde.com/shop/goods-3548.html>.

The Best Supplied and Least Respected: Party, State, NKVD, Moscow

Besides the high-productivity, foreign workers and veteran heroes there were other groups in the Soviet Union for whom the privileges were even greater, and whose claims to heroism would have to be greater and yet harder to demonstrate. These were the political police, the Communist Party, and the state elites.

The secret police that changed its name multiple times since its foundation in 1917, retained for its members the moniker of its first days (*chekisty*) and through it, the claims to a heroic past and present.³⁰⁸ According to the press on the 20th anniversary of its founding, the NKVD was “the avenging arm of the Soviet people” whose employees “continue[d] the struggle of” their founder, the “fearless knight of the Revolution,” Felix Dzerzhinsky.³⁰⁹ All the great achievements of the Soviet people were made possible “only thanks to the attentiveness of our Soviet intelligence service,” which “under the guidance of the Party leads an unending, successful struggle with the enemies of the people, vigilantly guarding the peaceful labor of our motherland.”³¹⁰ Its then leader, the notorious executor of the Great Terror, Nikolai Ezhov was described by Dzambul, the national poet of Kazakhstan, as “the eyes of the nation, brighter than

³⁰⁸ The secret police, known originally as the All-Russian Extraordinary Committee (*Vserossiiskaia chrezvychainaia kommissiia* or simply CheKa, hence *chekisty*), became State Political Administration (*GPU* or *Gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie*) in 1922, the United State Political Administration (*OGPU* or *Ob'edennionnoe gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie*) in 1923, the Peoples Commissariat of Internal Affairs (*NKVD* or *Narodnyi kommissariat vnutrennikh del*) in 1934, Ministry of State Security (*MGB* or *Ministerstvo gosudarstvennoii bezopasnosti*) in 1946, and finally a much more innocent sounding Committee of State Security of the USSR (*KGB SSSR* or *Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti SSSR*) in 1954.

³⁰⁹ “K dvadtsatiletii VChK-OGPU-NKVD” [For the Twentieth Anniversary of the VChK-OGPU-NKVD], *Pionersakaia pravda*, December 20, 1937; “Delo vsego naroda” [The Affair of the Entire People], *Pionersakaia pravda*, December 20, 1937; “Pervyi chekist” [The First CheKa Officer], *Pionersakaia pravda*, December 20, 1937. Most newspapers of the time published exactly the same information on this day. The *Pioneers' truth* cited here was aimed at children from 9 to 14, and so presented the official slogans much more succinctly.

³¹⁰ “Rukovoditel' sovetskoi razvedki” [The Leader of Soviet Intelligence], *Pionersakaia pravda*, December 20, 1937 and “Ostryi mech revoliutsii” [The Sharp Sword of the Revolution], *Pionersakaia pravda*, December 20, 1937.

a diamond” and a “batyr” (a legendary knight like the *bogatyri* of the Russian epics) receiving popular adulation.³¹¹

The rewards for the NKVD members were also, literally, legendary. As analysis of European folktales has demonstrated, poor living conditions often created tales in which powerful fairies granted the heroes’ seemingly modest wishes of, for instance, getting some bread and butter.³¹² The stories told of the legendary and seemingly all-powerful NKVD appear to be the Soviet version of such tales, down to the language. “Their closed stores were the best in the whole Soviet Union,” one Harvard Project respondent asserted.³¹³ Another claimed “that people of the NKVD lived best of all, because they had a special store where they could buy everything they wanted at state prices, without having to use any kind of graft at all.”³¹⁴ The NKVD employees were “the best paid people in the world. I knew one man...while other people were getting 400 grams of bread a day in 1940 he had eight rooms, two automobiles and two telephones...He could buy in a special store where he could get two kilograms of white bread a day and all the sugar he wanted.”³¹⁵

For men and women born and living in a society of shortage, the NKVD largesse could easily appear magical. Invited to tour the White Sea Canal with other writers, a twenty-five year old former homeless street child, Aleksandr Avdeenko, was astonished. At a dinner organized by the NKVD for the writers, Avdeenko “went bonkers from previously unseen abundance” which

³¹¹ Dzambul Dzhabaev, “Narkom Ezhov,” *Pionerskaia pravda*, December 20, 1937. See also James Von Geldern and Richard Stites, eds., *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays, and Folklore, 1917-1953* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 298-301.

³¹² Robert Darnton, “Peasants Tell Tales: The Meaning of Mother Goose,” from *The Great Cat Massacre And Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Press, 1984).

³¹³ Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, Schedule A, Vol. 19, Case 385 (interviewer R.F., type A4), Male 39, Great Russian, Supervisor of children’s affairs in State institutions, Widener Library, Harvard University, 47.

³¹⁴ Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, Schedule A, Vol. 9, Case 118 (interviewer H.D., type A4), Male, 40, Ukrainian, Administrator in sanatorium, Widener Library, Harvard University, 21.

³¹⁵ Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, Schedule A, Vol. 23, Case 472 (interviewer S.H., type A4), Female, 34, Georgian, NKVD agent, jurist, journalist, Widener Library, Harvard University, 14.

so shocked him, that he remembered and described it in detail in the late 1980s. Dishes of sturgeon and piglets in aspic, slices of smoked fish, fresh vegetables, and “a countless number of plates heaped with slices of sausage, ham, [and] cheese,” among other appetizers, were followed by soups, fresh fish, piles of various grilled meats, poultry, and finally, “ice cream and skinless pitted peaches.” It was “as if paintings,” which he just saw in the Hermitage for the first time, “came alive.” Even the waiters were as “magnificent as lords.”³¹⁶ The high-ranking NKVD members, such as S.N. Mironov, could take “frozen hams, chickens, lamb, and cheese” to the famished parts of northern Kazakhstan in 1931 and once there, feast on sliced roast piglet, oranges, grapes, and ice cream.³¹⁷

The rank and file NKVD personnel had much more than their prisoners or even the surrounding population but made up in quantity what they lacked in quality. Natalia Bekker, an author of an unpublished émigré memoir, described that her husband, an engineer who was assigned to manage the building of a prison camp, was issued a room in the best (and only) house in the area which had “piles of unopened cans of all kinds of sweet and savory food, chocolate bars, [and] bottles of wine.”³¹⁸ Even the writer Valentin Kataev who after the official writers’ tour of the White Sea Canal was permitted to go back independently, was issued only a bottle of vodka and sausage “for the road,” in contrast to the previous NKVD spread.³¹⁹

³¹⁶ Avdeenko, *Nakazanie*, 18-19.

³¹⁷ M.M. Iakovenko, *Agnessa: Ustnye rasskazy Agnessy Ivanovny Mironovoi-Korol' o ee iunosti, o shchast'e i gorestiakh trekh ee zamuzhestv, ob ogromnoi liubvi k znamenitomu stalinskomu chekistu Sergeiu Naumovichu Mironovu, o shikarnykh kurortakh, priemakh v Kremle i o tiur'makh, etapakh, lageriakh, - o zhizni, prozhitoi na kacheliakh sovetskoi istorii* [Agnessa: Oral Tales of Agnessa Ivanovna Mironova-Korol' About Her Youth, Joys and Sadness of Her Three Marriages, of Her Great Love for the Famed Stalinist CheKist Sergei Naumovich Mironov, of Chic Resorts, Kremlin Receptions, and of Prisons, Marches, Camps – of a Life Lived on the Swings of Soviet History] (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1997), 58.

³¹⁸ N.B. Bekker, *Stroitel'stvo "osobogo naznacheniiia,"* Natalia Borisovna Bekker Memoirs, ca. 1968-1970, General Manuscripts Collection, Box 6 Bakhmeteff Archive, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University in the City of New York, 15.

³¹⁹ Avdeenko, *Nakazanie*, 34.

Nonetheless, given the extremes of deprivation around them and their fearsome reputation, *chekisty* needed their claims to heroism, along with their claims to mass support and “a great connection” to “the laborers of...[the] Motherland.”³²⁰ The food from the Central Committee sanatorium kitchen had to be transported by a police officer (*militционер*) to the special cottage where S.N. Mironov and his family were staying.³²¹ Natalia Bekker, Agnessa Mironova-Korol’, the wife of S.N. Mironov, and Aleksandr Avdeenko all felt that they needed to include episodes of personal generosity to those who suffered while they enjoyed the NKVD-provided abundance. Bekker claimed to have made arrangements to slowly give the piles of foods given to her husband to the starving exiles who came to ask her for some bread.³²² Mironova-Korol’ told of how generously she and her husband shared the food from their Central Committee sanatorium tables with their waitress and her daughter and her own family from the famine-stricken areas.³²³ Avdeenko, just before he described the NKVD feast, mentioned how he passed starving people on his way from Magnitogorsk to Moscow and felt bad that he did not claim three-days’ worth of his bread ration so he could share the bread with the poor along the road.³²⁴ Yet even the political police access to food and claims to collective heroism originated from the group with the biggest and most disputed claims to heroism – the Party and government elite of whom they were but a part.

That the Party and state needed claims to heroism and therefore *deserved* privileged treatment can be seen in the euphemistic treatment of the special food privileges in official discourse. Tamara Kondratieva draws attention to the medical discourse that led to special Party and government food and vacation privileges being euphemistically budgeted to and described as

³²⁰ S. Tazin, “Neznakomets so svertkom” [A Stranger With a Package], *Pionerskaia Pravda*, December 20, 1937.

³²¹ Iakovenko, *Agnessa*, 69.

³²² Bekker, *Stroitel'stvo*, 16-17.

³²³ Iakovenko, *Agnessa*, 69-70.

³²⁴ Avdeenko, *Nakazanie*, 13.

“sanitary” or “medical” expenses.³²⁵ Yet, this very need to have access to special food and rest facilities stemmed not only from efforts to rationalize daily life or a futuristic discourse but from the Party’s role as a heroic group, engaged in an epic, mythic, and physical struggle with those opposing the forces of good that the Party represented.³²⁶

Indeed, the Communist Party, the Soviet Government, the cities and places associated with them were described in terms that sound like epopoetic epithets and, just like the NKVD, claimed to have a close relationship with the Soviet people. The Party itself was said to possess a “heroic history.”³²⁷ It was the “ideological and political vanguard,” “of the working class and the entire Soviet people” and counted as its members “the most advanced, most conscious part of the working class, the kolkhoz peasantry and the intelligentsia of the country.”³²⁸ “Kremlin the fighter, Kremlin the leader, Kremlin the directing builder of a life unique in world’s history,” was “the fortress of the revolution, where the will, the thought and the enthusiasm of its ruling class is concentrated.”³²⁹ While “in the ... Kremlin, gather the congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, about which great Lenin said [that it was] ‘the mind, honor, and conscience’ of our epoch...here, the best people of our Motherland plan the paths of future development ...whose implementation will make the Soviet Union an even more powerful, even more prosperous state.”³³⁰ And, as the common slogan of the Soviet period claimed, “the Party

³²⁵ Tamara Kondratieva, *Kormit` i pravit`: O vlasti v Rossii XVI-XX veka* [Feed and Rule: On Power in Russia in the XVI-XX Centuries] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2006), 118-119.

³²⁶ For the rationalization and futuristic origins of the medical discourse see Kondratieva, *Kormit`*, 119-122. For mythic role of the party as a force for universal good see Olga Edel'man, “Legendy i mify Sovetskogo Soiuza” [Legends and Myths of the Soviet Union], *Logos* no.5 (1999): 5-15.

³²⁷ *Istoriia vsesoiuznoi kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov): Kratkii kurs* [The History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik): A Short Course] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1938), 4.

³²⁸ A.M. Rumiantsev, ed., *Nauchnyi kommunizm: Slovar'*, [Scientific Communism: A Dictionary.] 4th edition, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1983), 107.

³²⁹ T. Kholodny, *Moscow Old and New* (Moscow and Leningrad: Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR, 1933), 13.

³³⁰ E. Dvinskii, *Moskva. Sputnik turista* [Moscow. A Tourist's Companion] (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1964), 80-81.

and the people were united.”³³¹ The city of Moscow, where the leadership sat, was described as a Valhalla, “a meeting-place of the country’s most outstanding people, its men of mark, the city in which its heroes are received in triumph...whose glorious celebrations resound all over the U.S.S.R.”³³² “The entire history of the heroic struggle for the victory of socialism,” the official explanation went, “the greatest trials and noted victories of the Soviet people...are closely connected to Moscow.”³³³ From Moscow, “the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Soviet government direct the will and the efforts of all Soviet people to the struggle for a great cause – the construction of Communism.”³³⁴

As the *Gastronom* stores were supposed to be models of Soviet prosperity, so was Moscow, as the city bore “all the traits characteristic of the entire Soviet land.” Examining the city would “give an idea of the life of the entire Soviet Union.”³³⁵ The Soviet people, in the official discourse at least, recognized Moscovite superiority. The city was “filled with the spirit of the Soviet people’s pride and affection for their capital” and “its very name... [was] precious to the people of the Land of the Soviets.”³³⁶ To the people of the Soviet Union and the “brotherly peoples of socialist lands,” Moscow was supposed to be a favorite, a “beloved, native city,” and “any Soviet person...is touched and gladdened by a meeting with Moscow” because “the lives of our peoples are inseparably connected” to it.³³⁷ It would therefore not be surprising to claim that the Soviet people “have acquired a wonderful tradition to bring the best of everything that is created by our people to Moscow, the heart of the nation.”³³⁸ Leningrad was permitted to be the second city after Moscow in the pantheon of heroic places as it was “the cradle of the Great

³³¹ A late Soviet quip added a corollary – “only their shops are different.”

³³² *Moscow* (Moscow and Leningrad: State Art Publishers, 1939), leaf 8, obverse.

³³³ D. Diaghilev, *Moskva stolitsa SSSR* [Moscow: The Capital of the USSR] (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1962), 7.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

³³⁵ *Moscow*, 7 obverse.

³³⁶ *Moscow*, 8 obverse.

³³⁷ Diaghilev, *Moskva*, 2, 5.

³³⁸ N. Marni, “Chudesnaia strana” [A Wondrous Country], *Obshchestvennitsa* no.7 (1939): 22.

October Socialist Revolution” and “hand in hand with Moscow...developed Russian...culture...and became one of the most significant hearths of Russian revolutionary thought.”³³⁹ So closely was food attached to heroic claims that when the city of Tula, famous for its citizens’ frequent food shopping commutes to Moscow, suddenly received the title of a Hero-City in 1977, the decision was explained in the dissident and the Western press as a way to end a recent food riot that supposedly occurred in the city, since Hero-Cities were presumed to be entitled to a priority share of food and goods.³⁴⁰

If heroism was the official justification of Party and State elite privileges, there was a practical reason not to maintain the brusque egalitarianism of the early 1920s and 1930s. The Soviet Union was already seen as a fairly drab place in spite of the discursive abundance of the Stalinist period from 1935 to 1953. If the Soviet explorer-heroes could not be allowed to pack a simple sandwich for the flight for fear of demonstrating a lack of prosperity, the Soviet leadership could not play up folksy modesty as the Roosevelts did by serving the King and Queen of England hot dogs and beer at a picnic.³⁴¹ Instead, serving fresh caviar at an embassy became a matter of “exceptional political significance” and failure to fulfill the order for it correctly led to an internal investigation.³⁴²

Furthermore, the pre-Khrushchev leadership could lay serious claims to actually being physically damaged by the ideological struggle – which had nothing to do with the Great

³³⁹ “Iz tezisov o 250-letii Leningrada Leningradskogo obkoma KPSS” [From the Leningrad Regional Committee of the CPSU Theses on the 250th Anniversary of Leningrad] in N.Ia. Borisov, ed., *Gorod velikogo Lenina* [The City of Great Lenin] (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1957), 5-6.

³⁴⁰ *Food Shortages at the Root of Soviet Car Strike*, Produkty pitaniia: Obshchee [Food: General], HU OSA 300-80-1 Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, Soviet (‘Red’) Archives, Old Code Subject Files, container no. 723 and David Satter, “Togliatti Strike: A Rare and Risky Last Resort,” *Financial Times*, June 13, 1980 in Produkty pitaniia: Obshchee [Food: General], HU OSA 300-80-1 Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, Soviet (‘Red’) Archives, Old Code Subject Files, container no. 723. I am yet to find confirmation of either the food riot or the priority of hero-cities in non-dissident Soviet sources.

³⁴¹ For the details of the picnic and the American public’s reaction see “Hot Dog Diplomacy, June 10-11, 1939” in Will Swift, *The Roosevelts and the Royals: Franklin and Eleanor, the King and Queen of England, and the Friendship that Changed History* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, 2004), 128-152.

³⁴² RGAE, f. 7971, o.16, d.42, ll.21-21rev.

Purge.³⁴³ Lenin's death at a fairly young age was explained by extreme over-work.³⁴⁴ That Lenin's minister for provisioning, Aleksandr Tsuriupa, suffered from a hunger faint was especially symbolic of heroism since he was in charge of distributing food but sacrificed his needs for those of others.³⁴⁵ As the Soviet press gave "Party members an identity as warrior heroes battling for socialism," deaths of multiple other Party leaders such as Dzerzhinsky and Ordzhonikidze were ascribed to selfless over-work.³⁴⁶ Like frontline soldiers of the revolution they "burnt with a flame of activity at...the most responsible posts" and, making the ultimate sacrifice, they were said to have "burnt up at [their] post[s]."³⁴⁷ However, after Khrushchev's report criticising Stalin's cult of personality (the so-called Secret Speech delivered to the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956), the heroic, epic claims of Party leadership were harder to accept. As society liberalized, the leaders could no longer claim to be physically engaged in an epic ideological struggle. The most visible of the Party leaders did not creatively engage in the formation of ideological Marxist thought, with Brezhnev disappointing his ideological consultants by telling them that no one would believe that he read Marx.³⁴⁸ Unwilling to play the role of a "philosopher-king" last held by Stalin, the political leadership became too understandable and human and their claims to epic heroism and special nutritional needs were

³⁴³ This claim was much more easily made by foreign political exiles who were privy to the same privileges, but were often escaping from actual bodily danger.

³⁴⁴ According to a speech of G.E. Zinoviev, Lenin "had burnt up, he gave his brain, his blood to the working class entirely." G.E. Zinoviev, "Pamiati V.I. Lenina" [In Memory of V.I. Lenin], *Pravda*, February 13, 1924.

³⁴⁵ For Tsuriupa's selfless reputation see Nadezhda A. Joffe, *Back in Time: My Life, My Fate, My Epoch: The Memoirs of Nadezhda A. Joffe* (Oak Park, MI: Labor Publications, Inc., 1995), 80.

³⁴⁶ Matthew E. Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses: Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 7-8.

³⁴⁷ "Pravitel'stvennoe soobshchenie" [A Government Notice], *Pravda*, July 21, 1926. For similar remarks on the death of Sergo Ordzhonikidze see "Skorb' naroda" [The Grief of the People], *Pravda*, February 20, 1937 and M. Shkiriakov, *Sergo v bor'be za edinstvo partii* [Sergo in the Struggle for Party Unity], *Pravda*, February 20, 1937.

³⁴⁸ G.L. Smirnov, *Uroki minuvshego* [Lessons From the Past] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1997), 119.

much less acceptable.³⁴⁹ Food was no longer a reward to rebuild strength after a mighty ideological struggle but the most obvious point of criticism for the visibly well-fed leadership.

Of course, food has been used as a source of criticism of the Soviet political and government elites for many years, and perhaps especially during the Purges of the second half of the 1930s. Just as it was easier to demonstrate the rewards of a *Stakhanovite* through a groaning table, so it was easier to show official abuse of power through the immodesty in food and drink, especially when the state (and therefore the people) paid the bill. The *Pravda* published a satiric piece by Il'f and Petrov *Shirokii razmakh* (A Generous Sweep) in which Semion Semionovich, an executive of a large plant, plans yet another banquet featuring twenty cans of crabs and five kilos of caviar and accusing his budget-conscious assistant of not having a properly generous “socialist breadth.”³⁵⁰ At home, where his own money is at stake, Semion Semionovich tells his wife to buy a bottle of vodka and a 150-gram can of herring for the first party they've held in years because “it is time to end the thoughtless...[and] limitless scattering and squandering of the socialist kopek.”³⁵¹ The authoritative *Pravda* published the piece since real officials throughout the USSR acted as Semion Semionovich, in what was termed a *Banquetomania*.³⁵² In the Tartar autonomous republic, the state dachas were used to provide “breakfasts, dinners, suppers, snacks and drinks.” “Everything was given out for free,” since “the hospitable hosts” were “generous at the expense of the state” and charged the enormous sum of 225, 000 rubles as a single “dacha use” expense.³⁵³ *Pravda* in turn, criticised the pervasive and “systematic drinking sessions [p'ianki] that are known as banquets,” hosted by the top officials of the Communist Party of

³⁴⁹ For Stalin's successors' inability to change socialist discourse see Alexei Yurchak, “Hegemony of Form: Stalin's Uncanny Paradigm Shift” in *Everything was Forever Until it was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 36-77.

³⁵⁰ Ilya Il'f and Evgenii Petrov, “Shirokii razmakh” [A Generous Sweep], *Pravda*, April 12, 1935.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

³⁵² “Retsidiv banketomanii” [A Recidivism of the Banquetomania], *Pravda*, March 26, 1937.

³⁵³ *Krasnaia Tataria*, April 21, 1938 as cited in Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 104.

Uzbekistan.³⁵⁴ Those accused of overindulging at state expense in the 1930s were essentially portrayed as betraying the heroic ideals of the Party, but the crucial difference in the post-war era was that the leadership still had a claim to heroism to begin with.

Nikita Khrushchev could perhaps dismantle Stalin's cult of personality but, even if he wanted to, could not claim to have been at Lenin's side in 1917. Unlike Stalin who was extremely widely read and unafraid to shape the very tenets of Marxism-Leninism, the fairly uncouth Khrushchev did not contribute anything new to the philosophical underpinnings of his own power.³⁵⁵ In spite of Khrushchev's confrontational actions and hot temper, he was simply not especially scary or awe-inspiring.³⁵⁶ Even the book about Khrushchev's visit to the United States whose title, *Face to Face with America*, alluded to ideological confrontation, featured largely peaceable and occasionally comic images of the leader, and the frontpiece image of the rather portly Khrushchev could attest to the lack of any serious physical toll that the struggle was taking on his frame (see figs. 2.7 and 2.8). As was noted in chapter one, Khrushchev's fatness and Party access to better foods drew derisive comments from consumers tired of shortages and the apparent imposition of corn as a major foodstuff.

Leonid Brezhnev was even less plausible as a hero engaged in an epic struggle that required special foods to regain his strength. At his best he had a warm and genial presence, and when he began to suffer ill health he could only inspire pity, but neither fear nor awe. His policy of détente moved the Soviet Union even further from any actual confrontation with the West. His ideological pronouncements were essentially recycled and could, according to a recent

³⁵⁴ "Pokroviteli i soobshchniki burzhuaznykh natsionalistov" [The Sponsors and Accomplices of Bourgeois Nationalists], *Pravda*, September 3, 1937.

³⁵⁵ For Stalin's intellectual prowess, see R.A. Medvedev, "Lichnaia biblioteka 'Korifeia vsekh nauk'" [The Personal Library of the "Luminary of All Sciences"], *Vestnik Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk* 71 (2001): 264-267.

³⁵⁶ For Khrushchev's confrontational and hot temper see William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2003), 411-412, 511, 589-592; on Khrushchev's not inspiring fear see Petr Vail and Aleksandr Genis, *60e. Mir Sovetskogo cheloveka* [The 60s. A Soviet Man's World.] (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2001), 218-228 and Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 649.



Figure 2.7 (left). Khrushchev is giggling at the sight of the American corn seed dealer Roswell Garst falling into a hole. *Litsom k litsu s Amerikoii* [Face to Face with America] (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1959).

Figure 2.8 (right). Khrushchev facing America. *Litsom k litsu s Amerikoii* [Face to Face with America] (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1959).

study by Alexei Yurchak, have been read back to front without loss of meaning.³⁵⁷ While his status as a veteran of WWII was never questioned, the heroic feats ascribed to him, especially after he was made the Hero of the Soviet Union four times and awarded the Order of Victory, only made him a subject of jest, especially for the younger generation.³⁵⁸ The primary criticisms of the Party-government elite (the so-called *Nomenklatura*) of the Brezhnev government as a corrupt, self-perpetuating class of bureaucrats should be unsurprising to anyone who has ever heard the criticism of what goes on within “the Beltway,” if not for the old heroic claims used by this bureaucracy to explain its privileged status in what was supposed to have been an egalitarian society, that was *unlike* everywhere else.³⁵⁹

Grumbling and Menu-watching

What mattered most was that despite numerous promises of improvement over many decades, access to food remained a privilege for the average Soviet consumer. Meanwhile the Soviet concept of heroism changed. Claims of heroism were increasingly applied to average people, very often in connection with their heroic attempts to secure food. In Evgenii Evtushenko’s 1956 poem, *In the Store*, the narrator sees women, Russia’s “conscience and court” with “hands tired from [carrying] bags” lining up in a food shop as if going to “a heroic feat” or “labor” (*kak na podvig, kak na trud*).³⁶⁰ The poem was even used as text for one of the movements of Shostakovich’s 13th symphony. Under Brezhnev, Soviet citizens who like himself were veterans of World War Two, began to receive privileges including special food presents,

³⁵⁷ Yurchak, *Everything*, 49-50.

³⁵⁸ For the bored, skeptical view of the war myth under Brezhnev see Catherine Merridale, *Ivan’s War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939-1945* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 8, 374-376, 385.

³⁵⁹ *Nomenklatura* were the officials in the executive positions of the party, state, educational, press, and other institutions who were nominated by the central party apparatus due to being considered especially sensitive. The material privileges of their positions were usually also granted to their family members. For its formation see Graeme J. Gill, *Origins of the Stalinist Political System* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism As a Civilization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 292-298. Kotkin provides a succinct account of the formation of this Soviet political elite.

³⁶⁰ Yevgenii Evtushenko, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy* [Poems] (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1987), 1:145.

ability to skip long queues, and a general sense of entitlement which was not questioned by most Soviet citizens until late Perestroika.³⁶¹ By the 1980s food shortages became even more common and “the ‘hunting up’ of (deficit) foods was associated with...everyday ‘valor and heroism.’”³⁶² A songwriter, Vladimir Vystosky, captured the popular sentiments as early as 1966 by writing a song in which a long line to the restaurant is passed by privileged groups such as foreign visitors and delegates. Despite the management explanations, “The people, they still grumbled... ‘we were the first in line, – but those who stood behind us are already eating!’”³⁶³

Intelligentsia, dissidents, satirists, and, perhaps counterintuitively, the KGB appealed to the common Soviet man by criticising Party authorities with undeserved access to superior food. Food-themed rumours circulated among the general public in whose imaginations the Soviet elite lived like “multi- billionaires.”³⁶⁴ Naturally, by the 1970s, sausage played a major part in these stories. The gist of one especially popular story, told as genuine occurrence, rather than a political joke, involved two elite women one of whom complained of a stomach ailment, while the other wisely diagnosed her companion as having eaten “City sausage.”³⁶⁵ The sausage manufactured for the *Nomenklatura* members themselves was said to have been “a delicacy,” that “melted on the tongue” and was “the height of all dreams,” the obtainment of which “was joy” itself, while the bratwurst (*sardel’ki*) would “perfume the entire neighborhood when cooked.”³⁶⁶ These

³⁶¹ Mark Edele, “Entitlement Community,” in Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of World War II: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society, 1941-1991* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2009), 185-214.

³⁶² Anna Kushkova, “Sovetskoe proshloe skvoz’ vospominaniia o prodovol’stvennom defitsite” [The Soviet Past through the Memories of the Food Shortages], *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* no. 2(2009): 182.

³⁶³ Vladimir Vystosky, *Sobranie sochinenii v 4-kh knigakh* [Collected Works in 4 Books] (Moscow: Nadezhda-1, 1997), 4:334.

³⁶⁴ Osokina, *Za fasadom*, 172-173.

³⁶⁵ See for example Anatolii Rubinov, *Istoriia trekh moskovskikh magazinov* [The History of Three Moscow Shops] Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2007) 244. Rubinov’s version names specific women whom he claimed to know and the sausage was “City” brand (*gorodskaia*). In other versions the women can be a mother and a daughter and the sausage may be simply “sausage from the city.”

³⁶⁶ “Vy liubili mikoianovskuiu kolbasu?” [Did You Like the Mikoyan Sausage?], *Kommersant* August 8, 1998. See also Kondratieva, *Kormit’*, 144-145.

popular rumours were not unique in retaining the fairy-tale language of the earlier, pre-war stories about elite foods as it also appeared in the exposés published abroad.

Exposés of the corrupt nature of the *nomenklatura* came most strongly from their former members who defected to the West.³⁶⁷ Mikhail Vozlensky, a long-time member of the Academy of Sciences and the research apparatus of the Central Committee, specialized in West German studies and authored exposes such as *The Secret Connections Between USA and Germany. The Imperialist Bloc Against October (1917-1919)*.³⁶⁸ A demand that he return to the USSR after relative freedom to travel, led him to stay in West Germany and to write a major exposé of the Soviet system, *Nomenklatura: the Ruling Class of the Soviet Union* (the Russian-language first edition was published in London, in 1984) claiming that he was inspired by Solzhenitsyn's call to "live not by lies."³⁶⁹ In his quest to prove that the members of this ruling class were not "self-denying heroes, servants of the people, [and] martyrs for its benefit" but rather "the Judas-class, the Tartuffe-class," he used detailed descriptions of their privileges and especially their food.³⁷⁰

Voslensky used the language familiar to the Soviet reader – a mixture of the "unmasking the enemy" and the magical language of the fairy-tale.³⁷¹ The cafeteria of the Moscow Central Committee buildings had, in Voslensky's account, "the best of everything, things that an average Soviet consumer can even dream of," things "which have not been in regular shops since [the end of the NEP in] 1928," and every item was "of the highest quality, immaculately fresh, and

³⁶⁷ See for example Lidia Shatunovskaia, *Zhizn' v Kremle* [Life in the Kremlin] (New York: Chalidze Publications, 1982); Victor Kravchenko, *I Chose Freedom: The Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official* (London: Robert Hale Ltd, 1947) and many others.

³⁶⁸ M.S. Voslenskii, *Tainye sviazi SShA i Germanii, Blok imperialistov protiv Oktiabria (1917–1919)* [Secret Connections of the USA and Germany. The Imperialist Bloc against October (1917-1919)] (Moscow: Nauka, 1968).

³⁶⁹ M. Voslenskii, *Nomenklatura: Gospodstvuushchii klass Sovetskogo Soiuzu* [Nomenklatura: The Ruling Class of the Soviet Union], 2nd ed. (Moscow: Zakharov, 2005, 1990), 517.

³⁷⁰ Voslenskii, *Nomenklatura*, 516-517.

³⁷¹ For the rich Soviet tradition of "unmasking" hidden enemies, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Take off the Masks!: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

very cheap.”³⁷² Sounding like a literal land of milk and honey, the Central Committee cafeteria sold yoghurt (*prostokvasha*) that was “hard to differentiate from sour cream” and farmer’s cheese with sugar that “smelled of freshness and melted in the mouth.”³⁷³ The Kremlin employees’ canteen was a place where “birds’ milk”, the Ambrosia of Russian fairy tales, became real in the form “Birds’ milk” chocolates “sold usually only in the *nomenklatura*-cafeterias.”³⁷⁴

To further drive the point home, Voslensky created a composite typical *nomenklatura* member Denis Ivanovich Vokhush, a character who was laden with symbolic references. His very name was the mirror image of Ivan Denisovich Shukhov, the GULAG prison camp internee character of Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in Life of Ivan Denisovich*. The fictional Denis Ivanovich, like the Three Fat Men of Yurii Olesha’s revolutionary fairy tale familiar to most Soviet readers, is corpulent and his weight is pointed out three times.³⁷⁵ His menu is discussed in detail with special attention paid to exotic sounding dishes such as “steamed veal with rice” and “cream of carrot soup with croutons.”³⁷⁶ At home, just like the soon-to-be defeated bourgeois of a Vladimir Mayakovsky poem written in 1917, Vokhush dines on roasts and pineapples.³⁷⁷ Voslensky was joined by *The Country and the World*, an the émigré journal that published two Party menus also lovingly dissecting the rarity of the foods, their low prices, and the grease stains on the paper.³⁷⁸

Such pointed, food-based criticism was planted onto fertile ground. A Moscow Party

³⁷² Voslensky, *Nomenklatura*, 299-300.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 304-305.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 534, 543, 548.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 548.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 558; For Mayakovsky’s couplet see V.V. Mayakovsky, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos’mi tomakh* [Collected Works in Eight Volumes] (Moscow: Pravda, 1968), 1:234. The text is simple and was known to almost anyone in the Soviet Union: Eat pineapples, chew on the larks/Your last day is coming, bourgeois (Yesh’ ananasy, riabchikov zhuii./Den’ tvoi poslednii prikhodit, burzhuii).

³⁷⁸ “Plody perestroiki” [The Fruits of Perestroika], *Strana i mir* 8 (1986): 44 and “Doska pocheta” [The Honor Roll], *Strana i mir* 3 (1988): 12-13.

member wrote to the Central Committee after he noticed that during major Red Square events such as parades in honor of cosmonauts, Party leadership acted disrespectfully by smoking and eating on top of that “which is most dear (sacred) for us all” – the Lenin mausoleum. He demanded that “the snack bar be removed from the grandstand of the mausoleum. If certain comrades could not live for 2-3 hours without smoking and chewing – create that snack bar for them outside of the Mausoleum grandstand (so it wouldn’t be even visible).” Perhaps some of these comrades should not be admitted to the mausoleum at all, he wondered, since if they can’t offer proper respect to the Mausoleum “perhaps they are putting on airs?”³⁷⁹

Food as an object of political corruption makes the Soviet Union stand out among other developed nations. While corrupt American politicians are often wined and dined by prospective “clients,” restaurant meals normally serve as a setting for bribery rather than the bribe itself.³⁸⁰ In the Soviet Union, according to the testimony at the corruption trial of the executives of Moscow’s main supermarkets such as the “Eliseevski” (officially Gastronom No.1), bribes given to Party officials could seem to be relatively modest. But in a nation of chronic shortages, three kilograms (just over six pounds) worth of high quality produce including rare bananas, good quality liquor, and processed fish could be worthy gift. The same could be said of being able to pack a luxury “doggy bag” to take home the leftovers of a lavish banquet given at the expense of the supermarket officials.³⁸¹ The trials of the corrupt officials were supposed to set an example and “Eliseevsky’s” director was very harshly sentenced to death. Yet, since the stores were known to offer special treatment to the elites, the general population greeted the investigation

³⁷⁹ "Ubrat' s mavzoleia bufet" [Remove the Snack Bar from the Mausoleum] *Istochnik* 6 (1995): 85.

³⁸⁰ See for example Michael Wilson, “Steak for Two, Please, With a Side of Bribes,” *The New York Times*, April 5, 2013 and Emily Heil, “Tom DeLay, Jack Abramoff seen dining together,” *The Washington Post*, December 5, 2012.

³⁸¹ Luc Duhamel, *KGB Campaign Against Corruption in Moscow* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 32, 34.

and the verdict with glee.³⁸² A sociological survey conducted in 1988 demonstrated that even the already somewhat privileged Soviets (the survey was conducted among those who actually owned a private telephone in Moscow) while reasonably tolerant of other privileges of the elites, were firmly opposed (84% of all respondents) to the continued existence of special shops and cafeterias.³⁸³

With the heroic myths unveiled, Russian consumers were taught not only to expect official corruption but to also watch the menus of the powers that be. Even Lenin's meal choices became fair game. Remembering her life with Lenin, his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya wrote that Lenin's food in exile was "rather simple:" a ram was slaughtered and chopped into hamburger "in the same trough as was used to prepare food for the cattle" to be eaten by Lenin over the week. What was "rather simple" for Krupskaya sounded extravagant on the background of late Soviet shortages. Commenting this information in 1992 with indignation, a popular biographer asked "who would have been bothered... by the tsarist regime, if...the most vicious revolutionaries were cheaply fed in exile, as if for slaughter? Where are those rams now?"³⁸⁴ Meanwhile the newly democratic parliament's menus were (and still are) periodically sneaked out and published in newspapers or in internet blogs, along with snide comments about servants of the people enjoying caviar at old Soviet prices. It is perhaps especially ironic that it is now the Communist Party that appeals to the populace, by comparing the luxurious yet inexpensive menus of the current residents of the Kremlin and Parliament as well as suggesting that the

³⁸² For the discussion of the "Gastronom Affair" see Duhamel, *KGB campaign* and Anatolii Rubinov, *Istoriia trekh moskovskikh magazinov* [A History of Three Moscow Shops] (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2007).

³⁸³ Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power: The Post-Stalin Era* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990), 14.

³⁸⁴ Larisa Vasil'eva, *Kremlevskie zheny* [The Kremlin Wives] (Moscow: Vagrius, 1992), 45.

government menus should be limited to the survival minimum proposed for the rest of the country.³⁸⁵

Addressing Russia's liberals who reviled Soviet Party and state privileges, recent Russian restaurant critics compared the ease of access to current luxury restaurants in Russia as opposed to the Soviet period when "getting into one was problematic for a simple mortal."³⁸⁶ While one does not need special connections to enter many of the elite establishments of modern Russia, the diner should be fairly well-to do. Even with the relative growth of the middle class, the average monthly salary in Moscow is about \$1300.³⁸⁷ The price of the cheapest hot entrée in the luxurious Café Pushkin would cost a would-be aristocratic diner just over \$31 – 2.3 percent of the average monthly salary.³⁸⁸ The same ratio would apply to the priciest hot entrée at Leningrad's luxury Europa restaurant compared to the *lowest* salary (60 rubles a month) in 1969.³⁸⁹

The questions of heroism and its material rewards remain important in Russian society. Who qualifies to be a hero and what actions can be considered heroic are still common subjects of high-school essays.³⁹⁰ The privileges of heroism are also under continued discussion. Russian

³⁸⁵ V.Vasil'ev, "Kormezhka 'na-uboiu'" [Feeding As If For Slaughter], Vladimirovskoe oblastnoe otdelenie Kommunisticheskoi Partii Rossiiskoi Federatsii [Vladimir Regional Division of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation], accessed May 22, 2013, <http://www.kprf33.com/%D0%B3%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%8F/%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%85%D0%B8%D0%B2-%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%B9-3/%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%B6%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%83%D0%B1%D0%BE%D0%B9>. In their appeal to the masses, the party lists its websites in Russian, which results in the unwieldy address seen here.

³⁸⁶ Mariia Mikeli, "Delo vkusa. Restoratsiia vlasti" [A Matter of Taste. The Restauration of Power], *Profil'*, January 20, 2003.

³⁸⁷ Yandex rabota [Yandex Work], accessed May 23, 2013, <http://rabota.yandex.ru/salary.xml>.

³⁸⁸ Menu zala "Apteka," Goriachie bliuda [Menu of the "Pharmacy" Dining Room, Hot Dishes], Kafe "Pushkin," accessed July 31, 2013, <http://cafe-pushkin.ru/menu.php?s=js867hnb>.

³⁸⁹ Hotel Europe, Los Angeles Public Library Menu collection, accessed July 31, 2013, <http://dbase1.lapl.org/images/menus/fullsize/c/rb01407-02.jpg>. For minimal Soviet salaries see Alexander Simirenko, *Professionalization of Soviet Society* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1982), 33.

³⁹⁰ "V zhizni vseгда yest' mesto podvigam" [In Life, There is Always A Place for a Heroic Feat] Litra.ru, accessed October 12, 2011, <http://www.litra.ru/composition/get/coid/00800721223555680301/woid/00077701184773070634>.

retirees' and war veterans' social benefits are discussed in terms of both merit and ability to buy food.³⁹¹ In a society still haunted by recent shortages and great sacrifice, eating well still appears to be a privilege, not a right.

³⁹¹ The question of whether retirees can survive on their pensions is commonly discussed in terms of food. See for example, "Svoimi glazami: Kak prozhit' na stoimost' 'minimal'nogo produktovogo nabora'" [With One's Own Eyes: How to Survive on the Cost of the 'Minimal Food Selection'], accessed August 1, 2013, <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/svoi-glaza/502776-echo>.

Chapter 3 The Soviet Melting Pot

The two generalized competing views of the relationship between the Soviet ethnicities, present the USSR as either the “last empire” and a “prison of nations” or as a more legitimate multi-ethnic state, if one perhaps uncomfortably similar to a “communal apartment.”³⁹² Reflecting this dichotomy, scholarly works and popular opinion present the relationship of a general Soviet cuisine to those of Soviet ethnicities in one of two ways. Some present Soviet cuisine as one open to multiple ethnic influences, a happy hybrid of multiple traditions.³⁹³ Others claim that it was a dictatorial imposition of an imperialist government, unnaturally interfering with the development of authentic local cuisines.³⁹⁴ While some miss “the incredible diversity and tolerance” of a unified pan-Soviet cuisine, others recall “a period of destruction of culinary traditions” and hope that these traditional foodways “lost during the Soviet occupation will somehow be revived.”³⁹⁵ This chapter argues that these views arise by erroneously conflating two different versions of pan-Soviet cuisine, each confined to a specific era. While both versions were cosmopolitan and eclectic, the first, developing from 1917 to 1941 was outwardly oriented, supplementing the cuisine of the pre-Revolutionary Russian urban middle-classes with rationally

³⁹² Since the end of the Cold War, the interpretations of the nature of the Soviet state have become more nuanced. Francine Hirsch and Terry Martin see a paradoxical, anti-imperialist empire, that attempted to resolve its contradictions through internal nation-building and affirmative action programs. Yuri Slezkine further argued for the sincerity of Soviet nation-building efforts, seeing the ethno-territorial division of the Soviet Union as a communal apartment. Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Terry Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Cornell University Press, 2001); Yuri Slezkine, “The Soviet Union as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” in *Stalinism: New Directions*, Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed. (London: Routledge, 2000).

³⁹³ Catriona Kelly, “Leningradskaia kuhnia/ La cuisine leningradaise —Protivorechie v terminakh?” [Leningrad Cuisine/La Cuisine Leningradaise — A Contradiction in Terms?], *Antropologicheskii forum* no.15 (2011): 241-278.

³⁹⁴ Joyce Toomre, “Food and National Identity in Soviet Armenia” in *Food in Russian History and Culture*, Musya Glants, Joyce Toomre, ed., (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 195-214. Edward Geist sees Soviet cuisine as being an example of Soviet totalitarian impulse, see Edward Geist, “Cooking Bolshevik: Anastas Mikoian and the Making of the *Book about Delicious and Healthy Food*,” *Russian Review* 71 (April 2012): 309, 312.

³⁹⁵ Anna Ianina, “Kukhnia, kotoroi bol’she net...” [A cuisine that now longer exists...], *Nezavisimaia Moldova*, November 30, 2007; Irina Novakova, “Vkus oschutimyi na gennom urovne” [A Taste Sensed at the Genetic Level], *Sovetskaia Belorussia*, December 17, 2011; Parker Bosley, letter to the editor, *Gastronomica* 3 (2003), 2.

selected “modern” foods from abroad. As a part of the civilizing mission of “acculturation,” the first pan-Soviet cuisine was largely suspicious of the traditional ethnic cuisines of Soviet nationalities. The second pan-Soviet cuisine, originating in the late 1940s, was inwardly oriented, embracing the foods of the Soviet constituent republics and those of Socialist allies, while approaching foreign foodways with great caution. As Soviet citizens’ acceptance of socialist values waned, the voices criticizing the second pan-Soviet cuisine in favor of purely national culinary cultures grew louder as the USSR headed towards collapse. Ultimately, the multi-ethnic, second pan-Soviet cuisine proved stronger than the system that created it. When they were free to cook anything in emigration and after the collapse of the USSR, former Soviet citizens missed and strove to recapture favorite dishes from the second pan-Soviet cuisine that they rebelled against back at home.

The First Pan-Soviet Cuisine

Despite the common perception that an all-embracing Soviet cuisine existed from the signing of the Union treaty that created the USSR in 1922 until its collapse in 1991, early Soviet culinary plans did not set out to honor and embrace the ethnic culinary heritages of its population. Soviet leadership of the interwar era combined Russian and Western middle-class practices, moderated when necessary by political needs and scientific discoveries, as cultural (that is, civilized) norms of everyday behavior. For both Lenin and Stalin, the goal of the Soviet state was to modernize and acculturate the masses, to share the treasures of civilization with the workers and peasants. It should therefore be unsurprising that the first pan-Soviet cuisine was based primarily on the Imperial urban Russian cuisine. By the early twentieth century, this culinary tradition was already fairly cosmopolitan. On the eve of the October Revolution, a restaurant menu could include, to the disappointment of old-timers, “chaud froid, sauce

provencale, ...filet Portuguese...and...Caucasian shish kebab made of English lamb.”³⁹⁶ In addition to these French and Caucasian influenced dishes, one of the most common pre-Revolutionary cookbooks, *The Gift for Young Housewives* by Yelena Molokhovets listed dishes that were not only Russian but also Jewish in origin.³⁹⁷ Though Molokhovets listed opulent dinner menus for special occasions, her suggestions for everyday meals were quite moderate. Her recommended menu sets could combine, for instance, pickle soup (*rassol'nik*), a roast with a side of pasta, and waffles for desert.³⁹⁸ Upper and middle-class reformers before the revolution, such as Leo Tolstoy and Natalia Nordman, were also critical of contemporary excesses, advocating moderation in eating and living, seeing these as signs of a “cultured life” and modernization.³⁹⁹ Bolshevik leadership including Lenin came out of the same milieu. Lenin and his wife ate simply and rationally, for sustenance rather than enjoyment.⁴⁰⁰ Anastas Mikoyan, though coming from a prosperous peasant background along with the Soviet leadership adopted the moderate and modernizing style of eating.⁴⁰¹ With an occasional addition of scientifically-approved foods or by those that came from Western Europe and America, this would also be the standard cuisine for the prewar Soviet Union.

³⁹⁶ V.Giliarovskii, *Moskva i moskvichi* [Moscow and the Moscovites] (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1981), 240-241.

³⁹⁷ Elena Molokhovets, “Oglavlenie pervoi chasti” [The Contents of the First Part] in *Podarok molodym khoziaikam ili sredstvo k umen'sheniiu raskhodov v domashnem khoziaistve* [The Gift for Young Housewives or a Method for Lowering Expenditures in the Home Economy] (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia N.N. Klobukova, 1901), XII, XIII, XV, XXIII.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

³⁹⁹ Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia: Advice Literature, Polite Culture, and Gender from Catherine to Yeltsin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 180-181, 194-195; Alison K. Smith, *Recipes for Russia: Food and Nationhood Under the Tsars* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), 77-78 and Darra Goldstein, “Is Hay Only for Horses? Highlights of Russian Vegetarianism at the Turn of the Century,” in *Food in Russian History and Culture*, Musya Glants, Joyce Toomre, eds., (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 114.

⁴⁰⁰ See Carter Elwood, “What Lenin Ate,” in *The Non-Geometric Lenin: Essays on the Development of the Bolshevik Party, 1910-1914* (New York: Anthem Press, 2011).

⁴⁰¹ Mikoyan's family remember him as a moderate, even ascetic diner. See Nami Mikoyan, *S liuboviu i pechaliu. Vospominiia* [With Love and Sadness. A Memoir] (Moscow: TERRA-Knizhnyi klub, 1998), 166 and Vladimir Mikoyan quoted in Irina Glushchenko, *Obshchepit: Mikoian i sovetskaia kukhnia* [Public Catering: Mikoyan and the Soviet Cuisine] (Moscow: Izdatel'skii dom Gosudarstvennogo universiteta – Vysheii shkoly ekonomiki, 2010), 24-25.

On the other hand, ethnic foods, Russian included, were the foods of peasants, a group that for the Bolshevik revolutionaries, was “unenlightened,” uncouth, and subject to modernization and reform. While often non-Russian themselves, Soviet food policy makers were eager to civilize and Westernize Soviet cuisine rather than incorporate into it more ethnic foods. Besides the Armenian Anastas Mikoyan and Georgian Joseph Stalin, another major contributor to the creation of a pan-Soviet cuisine was the Baku-born Armenian Artashez (or Artemii) Bagratovich Khalatov (see fig. 3.1). Far from extoling the virtues of ethnic cuisine, Khalatov passionately advocated reforming the “semi-asiatic” lifestyle inherited by all former subjects of the Russian empire.⁴⁰² The culinary practices of Soviet ethnic republics would have to become “cultured.” If Soviet culinary books published after the death of Stalin extolled the virtues of traditional culinary practices, a 1926 journal of the public catering union used images of an Uzbek kitchen to show the transformative power of modern scientific reforms (see fig. 3.2). As illustrated, the traditional Asian kitchen featured dishes made from a head of a lamb, was located in a dirty outbuilding, and equipped with only a clay oven and wooden implements. Meanwhile, the modern, “cultured” chef of a teahouse (*chai-khana*) wore a white smock and cooked using a hotplate and enameled pans.

Soviet food specialists at times followed Russian 19th-century ethnographers, who judged the development of the many ethnicities within Russia by the similarity of their food preferences to those of the ethnic Russians, including properly baked bread.⁴⁰³ In an article assessing the progress brought by Soviet power to the Kyrgyz and their capital city Frunze (present-day Bishkek), bread and culinary hygiene played a major role. If the pre-revolutionary city did not have a single industrial bakery and the Kirgiz wore no shirts, modern (1935) Frunze had a bakery

⁴⁰² Art. Khalatov, *Za pereustroistvo byta* [For the Reconstruction of Daily Life] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vsenarpita, 1930), 7.

⁴⁰³ Smith, *Recipes for Russia*, 83-88.



Figure 3.1. A.B. Khalatov (1894 or 1896-1938).

http://miit.ru/content/%D0%A5%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B2.jpg?id_wm=6185.

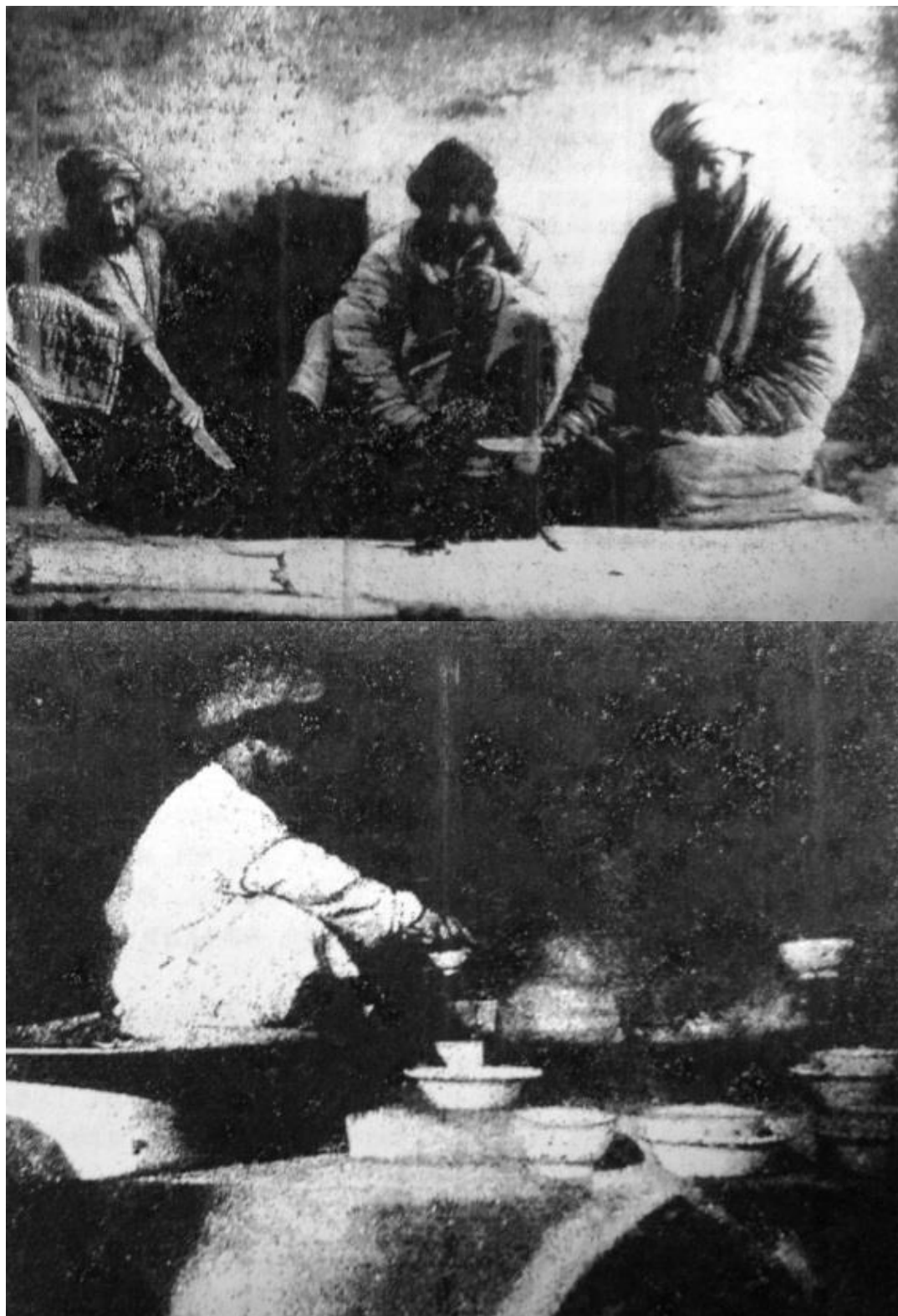


Figure 3.2. Traditional kitchen (above) and a “cultured” kitchen (below). *Rabochii narodnogo pitaniia* [The Public Catering Worker] no.6 (1926): 7,8.

and comrade Diushembinov, one of its employees, was proud of baking delicious white bread as well as wearing “an **absolutely clean robe.**”⁴⁰⁴ *Balamyk*, a Kirgiz national dish consisting of flour, millet, or rye fried in lard and diluted with water, was mentioned as an example of the dark past, rather than that of a proud national heritage. Diushembinov’s translator Mamad-Aliev, a delegate to the All-Union Congress of the Soviets, was described as someone whose “father ate balamyk” but who now was “a consumer...happy with the bread” baked by Diushembinov.⁴⁰⁵ The few times that the food of the ethnic minorities of Siberia and the Northern Pacific was mentioned, it was only to underline their primitive lives before the Revolution when they “danced around fires, drunk with raw meat” or their gradual advancement to civilized modernity as symbolized by the consumption of manufactured foods like cookies (see fig. 3.3).

Nor was the criticism of traditional diets limited to Central Asian republics. Russian cuisine of the rich and poor was also uncivilized, characterized by extremes. Gone was the time when the rich, the “Ye Olde Russian” (*rasseiskie*) fans of medieval behavior (*domostroevtsy*) or Francophile dandies could dine on a “learned pig” at a tavern or eat imported asparagus in a restaurant. Gone too were the desperately poor subsisting on offal and *tiuria*, a soup of crumbled bread and water.⁴⁰⁶ A 1930 brochure, *What do you eat?*, argued that correct eating could occur only in an urban, scientifically planned factory-kitchen canteen. The traditional Russian peasant meal was described in depressing tones, with the whole family grimly subsisting on overcooked cabbage and potato soup without meat or milk, supplemented with enormous amounts of dark, heavy bread. Workers “who still maintain[ed] ties to the countryside” were seen as eating

⁴⁰⁴ A. Doronin, “Belyi khalat Diushembinova” [Diushembinov’s White Robe], *Za pishchevuiu industriiu*, January 24, 1935. The text is bolded in the original.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ K. Komarov, “Ushedshee... [The Long-departed...],” *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.1 (November 1935): 9.

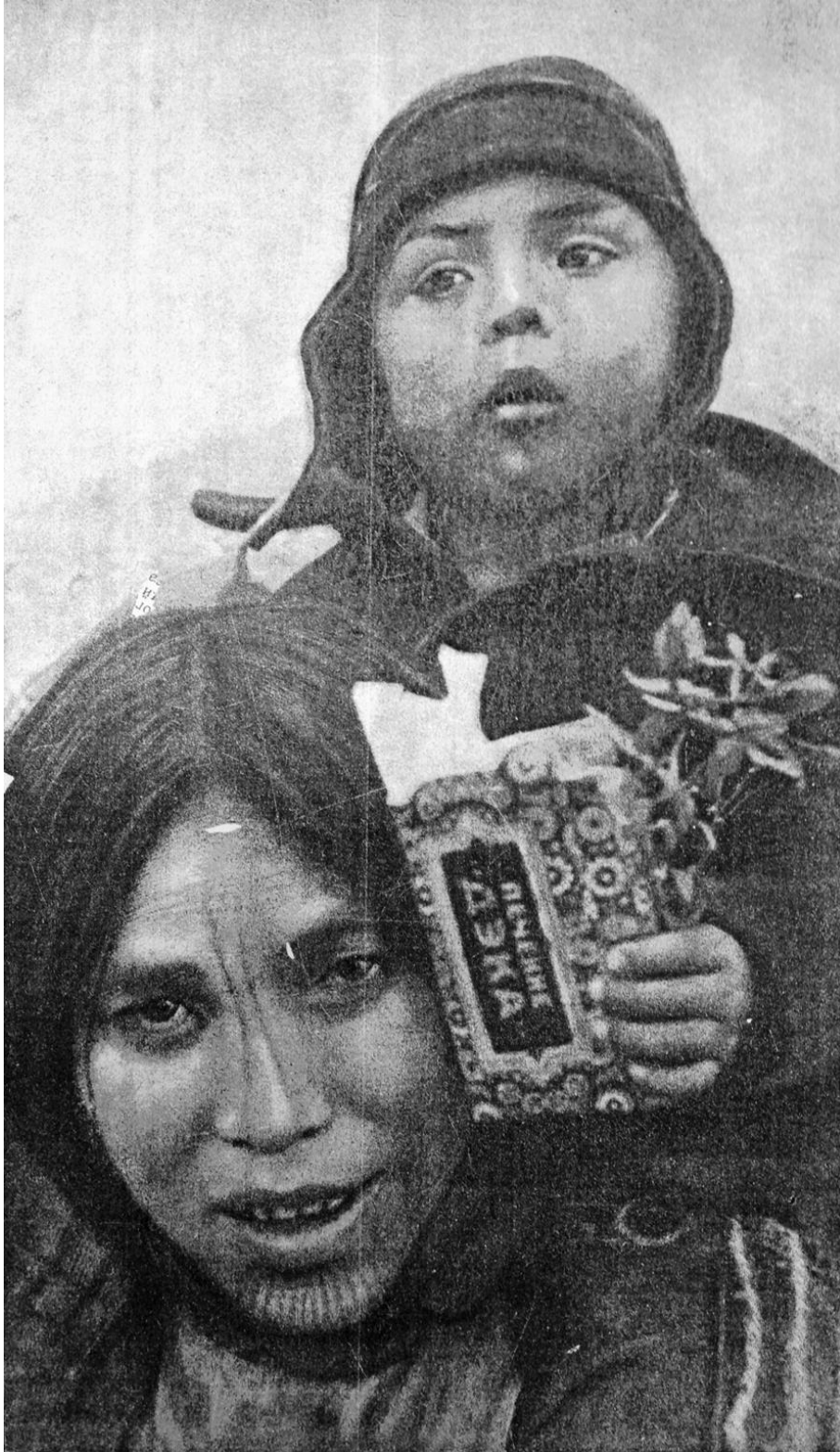


Figure 3.3. D. Debabov, “Anau the Eskimo and her son Nini.” Nini prominently holds an opened package of “Deka” cookies – the first token of “civilized” modernity. *Ogonek* no.6 (1937):15.

incorrectly and inadequately.⁴⁰⁷

Thus, Soviet cuisine as it was conceived by the mid-1930s adopted the moderate cuisine of the urban middle classes to civilize “the tastes of the masses” while avoiding excesses. Though critical of the imperialist past, to Soviet revolutionaries, simplicity mattered, as chefs were told to replace fancy French dish names with simple utilitarian ones, but the familiar menu remained largely the same.⁴⁰⁸ In 1936, the head of the restaurant administration, Ia. K. Ol’skii, suggested that public diners and restaurants should introduce variety to their menus by including more dishes of the “*Russian* cuisine...renowned around the world” such as “Siberian pel’meni dumplings, Caucasian kebabs, Ukrainian borsch,... [and] Russian schi.”⁴⁰⁹ While seemingly ethnically diverse these foods were already familiar to a pre-Revolutionary urban diner. Among notable absences, when compared with post-Stalinist Soviet cuisine, were the foods of the Central Asian republics, Belarusian cuisine, or the division of the “Caucasian” cuisine into individual culinary traditions. The same conservatism could be seen in the menu of the Soviet restaurant at New York’s World’s Fair (1939). While the exhibit glorified the development of all Soviet peoples, the restaurant served essentially the same dishes as those highlighted by Ol’skii (see fig. 3.4). A far greater emphasis was made on the systemic differences between socialism and capitalism. The menu noted that the wait staff was adequately paid and would not accept tips, and the managers claimed that black and white patrons would be seated and served

⁴⁰⁷ E. Mikulina, *Chem vy pitaetes’?* [What Do You Eat?] (Moscow: Narpit, 1930), 10, 4,28, 30.

⁴⁰⁸ See for example Knyi, “Menu-zagadka” [A Puzzle of a Menu], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.12 (1935): rear cover and E.Vladimirova, “Nekotorye zamechaniia o prepodavanii kulinarii” [Certain Remarks on the Teaching of Cookery], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.1 (1936): 21.

⁴⁰⁹ Ia. Ol’skii, “Obshchestvennoe pitanie [Public Catering],” *Pravda*, October 18, 1936. Italics are mine.

A La Carte

COLD APPETIZERS (Zakuski Holodnye)			
Fresh Beluga Giant Caviar	1.50	Marinated Mushrooms	50
Pressed Black Caviar	1.25	Assorted Moscow Salami	50
Herring with Garniture	50	Stuffed Green Peppers	50
Zakuski, Assorti	1.25	Sturgeon in Tomato Sauce	50
Cold Sturgeon	1.00		
		Cod Liver in Tomato Sauce	50
		Mackerel in Olive Oil	50
		Kefal in Olive Oil	50
		Sprottes in Olive Oil	50
		Celery and Mixed Olives	50
HOT APPETIZERS (Zakuski Goriatchye)			
Mushrooms in Sour Cream	1.00	Fish Selianka a la Volga	1.50
Moscow Meat Selianka	1.25	Blini with Beluga Caviar	2.00
		Blini with Pressed Caviar	1.75
		Blini with Sour Cream	1.00
COCKTAILS			
Jumbo Shrimp	85	Sea Food, Baltic	1.00
Fresh Lobster	1.25		
		Tomato Juice	35
		Grapefruit Supreme	75
HOT SOUPS			
Borsch Ukrainsky, Pirojok	50	Onion Soup au Gratin	75
Selianka Moscow, Volga	1.25	Soup Du Jour	50
		Consomme with Pirojok	50
		Borschok (Beet Consomme)	50
		Side Order of Pirojok (4)	50
COLD SOUPS			
Botwinia (Spinach, Sorrel Puree, Dice Cucumber, Green Onions, Parsley, Dill, Sturgeon, Crawfish) 75		Cold Borsch (Beet Consomme with Sour Cream)	50
		Okroshka (Mixed Vegetables, Assorted Meats)	75
FISH AND SHELL FISH			
Sturgeon, Moscow-Volga	1.75	Lobster Newburg	1.75
(Steamed - Rolled - Stuffed with Salmon, Crawfish, Mushrooms, Eggs, Rice, Crawfish Sauce, Croutons)		(En Casserole. Lobster Meat in Cream Sauce with Sherry Wine)	
Sturgeon Shashlik	1.75	Lobster Thermidor	2.00
(Grilled on Skewer with Rice and Garnish)		(Stuffed Shell with Lobster Meat, Mushrooms, Mornay Sauce)	
Sturgeon, Champagne Sauce	1.75	Filet of Pike, White Wine Sauce	75
(Steamed, Champagne Sauce)		Fried Filet of Pike, Lemon Butter	80
Sturgeon, Russian Style	1.75	Salmon a l'Azov Sea	1.50
(Poached. Garni: Julienne Carrots, Mushrooms, Olives, Capers in Tomato Sauce)		(Steamed. Garni: Chopped Eggs, Crawfish; Crawfish Sauce)	
Broiled Whole Live Lobster	2.25 up	Broiled Salmon, Maitre d'Hotel	1.00
RUSSIAN SPECIALTIES			
BEEF STROGANOV	2.00	COILETTE A LA KIEV	2.50
(Sliced Tenderloin, Mushrooms in Sour Cream Sauce en Casserole)		(Breast of Chicken, Stuffed with Butter)	
ANTRECOT, VILLAGE STYLE	2.00	COILETTE DE VOLAILLE	2.00
(Prime Rib Steak, Fried Onion Rings)		(Fried, Breaded Breast of Chicken)	
TARTAR STEAK	2.00	GEORGIAN SHASHLIK	2.00
(Chopped Raw Tenderloin, Raw Egg)		(Broiled Marinated in Caucasian Wine Baby Lamb on Skewer. Rice and Garnish)	
FILET MIGNON, CAUCASIAN STYLE	2.50	SHASHLIK KASKY	2.25
(Red Wine Sauce, Mushrooms, Onions, Green Beans)		(Grilled Saddle of Spring Lamb on Skewer. Rice and Garnish)	
BEEF COTELETTES	1.00	COTELETTES POJARSKIA	1.35
(Chopped Beef Cutlets, Brown Gravy)		(Chopped Chicken Cutlets)	
BITKI, SOUR CREAM SAUCE	1.15	CHAHOBILI	1.75
(Chopped Beef Cutlets)		(Spring Chicken Saute, Tomato Sauce with Onions, Green Pepper, Mushrooms en Casserole)	
COTELETTE MARESHALE	2.50		
(Breast of Chicken Stuffed with Truffles, Mushrooms in Beshamel Sauce)			
EPICURE SUGGESTIONS			
Sirloin Steak 1.75 (for two)	3.00	Breaded Veal Cutlets	1.10
Filet Mignon, Mushrooms	2.25	Lamb Chops, Vert Pres	1.50
Schnitzel a la Holstein	1.35	Schnitzel, Vienna Style	1.25
Half Broiled or Fried Spring Chicken	1.50	Scalopine of Veal, Marsala	1.50
Half Spring Chicken, Diable	1.75	Chicken au Chasseur	1.75
Steak a la Minute	1.50		

Figure 3.4. Soviet World's Fair Menu, Box 1558, Folder 1 (USSR Pavilion), New York World's Fair 1939 and 1940 Incorporated Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

A La Carte

FRESH VEGETABLES (In Season)

New Peas in Butter 40	Fresh String Beans 40	Cauliflower 40
Fresh Lima Beans 40	New Spinach 35	Carrots in Cream 35

POTATOES

Saute 30	Julienne 40	Boiled New 30
Lyonnais 40	Hashed Brown 35	Au Gratin 40
French Fried 35		Cottage Fried 50

EGGS and OMELETTES

Fried Eggs, Georgian Way (with Sliced Cheese) 75	Omelette, Kolkhoze Way (with Bacon, Fried Onion) 80	
Ham and Eggs, American Style 75	Poached Eggs, Moscovite (with Creamed Spinach, Croutons) 90	
Two Boiled, Fried or Scrambled Eggs 60		
Omelette, Plain 75		

COLD DISHES

Assorted Cold Meats, Potato Salad 1.50	Sliced Chicken with Garnish 1.50
Assorted Cold Fish, Potato Salad 1.50	Smoked Ham or Tongue 1.25

SALADS

Kolkhoze (Potatoes, Carrots, Beets, Onion, Bacon, Mustard Sauce) 75	Chicken 1.50
Georgian (Cucumber, Tomato, Leek, Grilled Onion, Decor Eggs, Mustard Sauce) 90	Lettuce and Tomatoes 70
Olivier (Chicken, Potatoes, Cucumbers) 1.75	Crabmeat or Shrimp 1.25
	Fresh Lobster 1.75

SANDWICHES

Pressed Black Caviar 90	Chicken 1.00	Sturgeon 75
Fresh Beluga Caviar 1.25	Swiss Cheese, Imported 60	Ham or Smoked Tongue 60
Moscow Salami 50	Smoked Salmon 60	Steak Sandwich 1.75

DESSERTS

Blinchiki with Preserves 1.00	Assorted Cookies 35	Assorted Pastries 35
Fresh Fruit Compote 40	Cream, Leningrad 60	Fruit Jell-o 30
Russian Torte 40	Kissel, Siberian 30	Gourievskaya Kasha 1.00
Fresh Fruit Slice 35	Plombier Moscow 50	Ice Cream or Sherbet 40

CHEESE

American 40	Swiss Imported 50	Roquefort 50
Camembert 50	Swiss Gruyere 40	

BEVERAGES

Tea (Pot) 25	Coffee (Pot) 25	Iced Coffee 25
Demi Tasse 15	Coffee Sovetsky 50	Borjom (Bottle) 15
Iced Tea 25	Narzan (Bottle) 15	

OUR EMPLOYEES ARE ADEQUATELY COMPENSATED, FOLLOWING
SOVIET CUSTOM. PLEASE DO NOT GIVE TIPS.

Figure 3.4. Continued.

together.⁴¹⁰ A reporter reviewing the restaurant for the *New York Times* was clearly impressed by the well-dressed waitresses having lunch “right next to the paying guests,” and noted enviously that “you know none of the [waitresses’] money is going to buy scrap-metal for Japan.”⁴¹¹ When it came to cuisine and lifestyle, “cultured” socialist behavior mattered more than ethnic variety.

While recent research has demonstrated that the Soviet Union was a “creator of nations,” whose leadership was genuinely interested in instilling ethnic pride and a sense of identity in the various nationalities of the USSR, not all forms of national culture were equally valued. If, according to Stalin’s slogan, ethnic cultures were to be “national in form and socialist in content,” the national forms were normally expressed through performing arts and literature.⁴¹² Tourist pamphlets indicated ethnic particularity of a given national republic through images of the local ethnic group in traditional clothing, though even this was supposed to be soon a feature of the past.⁴¹³ A traditional lifestyle was not an acceptable form of cultural expression. Clothing and food were supposed to become “cultured” – urban, middle-class and Western – as an important indication of progress brought by socialism. According to a report by Anastas Mikoyan, people in the Russian countryside “no longer wore bark shoes nor ate just stale black bread and kvass.”⁴¹⁴ Since life was “becoming more cultured” Uzbeks would soon no longer

⁴¹⁰ Restaurant of the Pavilion of the U.S.S.R. menus, Box 1558, Folder 1 (USSR Pavilion), New York World’s Fair 1939 and 1940 Incorporated Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library; N.Drozdo, “Sovetskii restoran na Niu-Iorkskoi vystavke [A Soviet Restaurant at the New York Fair],” *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.8 (1940): 18.

⁴¹¹ Charlotte Hughes, “From the Gourmet and Others: Russian Food in the Soviet Style,” *New York Times*, July 16, 1939, 42.

⁴¹² See for instance “Dekady natsional’nogo iskusstva” [Decades of National Arts], in *Muzykal’naia entsiklopediia* [The Musical Encyclopedia], ed. Iu.V.Keldysh (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1973), 2:186.

⁴¹³ Anne E. Gorsuch, *All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad After Stalin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 40.

⁴¹⁴ Anastas Mikoyan, “Pishchevaia industriia Sovetskogo Soiuz. Doklad na vtoroi sessii TsIK SSSR VII sozyva (1936)” [The Food Industry of the Soviet Union. A Report to the Second Session of the Seventh Central Executive Committee of the USSR (1936)], in Anastas Mikoyan, *Pishchevaia industriia Sovetskogo Soiuz* [The Food Industry of the Soviet Union] (Moscow: Pishchepromizdat, 1941), 161.

“dress Uzbek- style” but dress “in the same clothing as Muscovites,” a process that was already said to have occurred in the lives of most Russian peasants.⁴¹⁵

Ethnic cuisine, when it appeared, was generally regarded as a curiosity. Plans for the construction of a Park of Culture and Rest that was to open in Moscow in July 1928, called for an educational, open-air “Ethnopark.” There, homes of various peoples of the Soviet Union would be exhibited and populated, if possible, by actual members of the various ethnic groups, while the park would offer “open kitchens [serving] dishes of various ethnicities.”⁴¹⁶ Food exchanges could also symbolize interethnic friendships made possible by socialism. At a 1936 “harvest celebration” by a multiethnic collective farm in the Crimea, “favorite national dishes of the Tartars – cheburkeki, shalma, and shish-kebabs, as well as those of the Greeks – fau, pite, baklava [were] served.”⁴¹⁷ Meanwhile a largely Tartar collective farm treated their neighboring Bulgarian collective farm “most touchingly” to traditional Bulgarian foods of “zel’nik and buretsi.”⁴¹⁸ There was no indication, however, that these foods were meant to become a part of the collective farmers’ daily menu.

Practical concerns did lead Soviet food professionals to become more conscious of ethnic preferences. Soviet authorities were interested not only in instilling modern tastes but also in broader inculcation of modern values. In traditionally Moslem areas such as Uzbekistan they were concerned that the local population was turning away from Soviet institutions when served culturally inappropriate or even insulting foods such as pork sausage, borscht, and cutlets.⁴¹⁹ Conversely, public catering facilities that served locally popular ethnic foods were publicized as

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 162.

⁴¹⁶ F. Lavrov, “Moskovskaia zhizn’. Park Kul’tury i otdykha” [Moscow Life. A Park of Culture and Rest.], *Izvestiia*, April 28, 1928.

⁴¹⁷ Dm. Rud’, “Doroga velikoi druzby” [The Path of Great Friendship], *Izvestiia*, August 28, 1936.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 169-170, 170n15.

exemplary, since they actually cooked foods desired by their clientele and regularly fulfilled their share of the Five-Year Plan. A canteen of a Baku technical school was praised for responding to calls of the Azeri worker's union for the preparation of more "Asiatic dishes," with similar initiatives started in other plants by homemaker activists (*obshchestvennitsy*).⁴²⁰ A Tiflis (Tbilisi) canteen of the "26 Communards" machine building plant won an all-Union contest for best service not only with its tidiness but a varied menu as well, serving Georgian national specialties in addition to borsch and ragout.⁴²¹ Jewish settlers arriving at the Far-Eastern Jewish Autonomous Region were welcomed by stuffed (*gefilte*) fish prepared by the Stakhanovite chef Khaia Sheinfel'd.⁴²² For Jewish and Russian customers in Moscow, a centrally-located canteen no.18 was renowned across the USSR for serving Jewish dishes such as "stuffed fish, Jewish roasts, chopped liver with goose fat, and sweet-sour meat [essig-fleisch]."⁴²³ Of all the open (non-institutional) canteens in Moscow it was the only one that fulfilled their plan, thanks to their responsiveness to consumer demands.⁴²⁴ After serving up to 4000 meals daily it was mourned in Moscow newspapers when it closed for expansion in 1937 and not reopened on time due to a "high-handed" bureaucrat (*samodur*).⁴²⁵ The efforts to offer more ethnic dishes were largely limited to the places frequented by the titular ethnicities themselves, a token to the old habits, rather than a sign of inclusion into the first Pan-Soviet cuisine.

⁴²⁰ Vartan Begijan, "Stakhanovskimi metodami k vypolneniiu plana" [Towards Fulfilling the Plan with Stakhanovite Methods], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.6 (1936): 20 and Z. Poliakova, "Park na dikom kamne" [A Park on a Rock in the Wilderness], *Obshchestvennitsa* no.17-18 (1937):16.

⁴²¹ G. Shkol'nik, "Opyt luchshikh – vsem stolovym. Tiflis vyshel na pervoe mesto" [The Experience of the Best – for All Canteens. Tiflis Gained First Place], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.1 (1935):10.

⁴²² O. Neg, "Khaia Sheinfel'd," *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.5 (1936): 15.

⁴²³ *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.4 (1936): Back Cover.

⁴²⁴ Evg. Aegin, "'Uchites' u etoi malen'koi stolovoi..." [You Should Learn From This Little Canteen...'], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.5 (1935): 30-31 and P. Horst, "'Ya predpochitaiu obedat' zdes'!..." [I Prefer to Dine Here!..'], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.5 (1935): 31-32.

⁴²⁵ N.Ellin, "Istoriia odnoi stolovoi" [One Canteen's Story], *Vecherniaia Moskva* June 10, 1937.

Though increasingly aware of ethnic culinary preferences, Soviet culinary planners were not interested in offering ethnic dishes of all Soviet republics to every Soviet diner. The first general-audience Soviet cookbook, *The Book of Tasty and Healthy Food (Kniga o vkusnoi i zdorovoi pishche*, henceforth *KVZP*, 1939), the emblem of pan-Soviet cuisine did not stray far from the dishes included in the pre-revolutionary works of Elena Molokhovets. There was one key difference – the inclusion of Western, and especially American dishes. When the *KVZP* was published along with first four specialized ethnic cookbooks aimed at culinary professionals, only the Armenian (1939), Jewish (1939), Azeri (1939), and Georgian (1940) cuisines were selected for separate volumes and for inclusion in the pan-Soviet cuisine of the general cookbook. Within the *KVZP*, the majority of dishes were Slavic with just a few dishes from the Caucasian and Jewish cuisine. Even the clearly non-Russian dishes such as *chikhirtma*, *chorba*, and *khartcho* soups were not labeled with their ethnic origins.⁴²⁶ Jewish sweets such as *strudel* and *tsukeralkh* were included along with those of the Caucasian republics under the label of “Oriental Sweets.”⁴²⁷ Only one country besides the Soviet Union as whole was consistently referred to as a source of culinary novelties and useful examples – The United States of America.

Meant to be *the* Soviet cookbook, *KVZP* had its pages filled with explicitly American foods, many retaining their untranslated names and unchanged packaging. The editors highlighted American love of tomato juice, fish filets, whisky, and convenient breakfast cereals such as “kornfleks,” and “greyp-nots.”⁴²⁸ Soviet producers and consumers were supposed to “catch up and overtake” Americans in the production and consumption of these convenient, healthy, and most importantly, civilized foods. Soviet popular press was also filled with

⁴²⁶ *Kniga o vkusnoi i zdorovoi pishche* [A Book about Tasty and Healthy Food] (Moscow-Leningrad: Pishchepromizdat, 1939), 53-54.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 282-283.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 70, 80, 135, 389-392.

American food references and advertising. A 1936 *Ogonek* advertisement for canned corn before mentioning anything about the product itself, informed the readers that “In 1934, America manufactured 267 million cans of canned corn” (see fig. 3.5). A ketchup advertisement retained the same strategy by stating above all, in the largest font, that “In America, on every restaurant table and in every housewife’s pantry there stands a bottle of **KETCHUP**” (see fig. 3.6). A 1936 advertisement for pork and beans portrayed a can labeled in English and in Russian (see fig. 3.7), while a 1939 photograph in *KVZP* showed pork and beans cans that essentially copied the “keystone” trademark label of the same product made by Heinz (see fig. 3.8). Since the Soviet Union in the 1930s continued to experience shortages of even the most basic goods, few of these American-origin foods could actually be tasted. Paradoxically, it was not until World War Two most Soviets actually tasted modern American foods. Thanks to the Lend-Lease program, Russian armed forces and civilians had access not only to American wheat and sugar, but also to SPAM, which was usually called “stewed meat” (*tushenka*).⁴²⁹ However, the breakdown in relations after the war put an end to the active introduction of American foods and foodways as the means of modernizing Pan-Soviet cuisine.

The Foundation of the Second Pan-Soviet Cuisine (1947-1953)

Between 1947 and 1953 Soviet discourse turned “inward” as the “permissible world” of the Soviet citizens “shrank” when cooperation between the USSR and the West broke down and turned into the tense rivalry of the Cold War.⁴³⁰ While the tensions of the late Stalin period mellowed after his death, the Soviet relationship with the West, political and discursive, had changed significantly since the 1930s. These changes had a powerful effect on Soviet food

⁴²⁹ For more on *tushenka* see Jenny Leigh Smith, “Tushonka: Cultivating Soviet Postwar Taste,” *M/C Journal* 13 (2010), accessed March 26, 2013, <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/299>.

⁴³⁰ Anne E. Gorsuch, ““There’s No Place like Home”: Soviet Tourism in Late Stalinism,” *Slavic Review* 62 (2003): 760.

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Figure 3.5 (upper left). Canned corn advertisement. *Ogonek* no. 8-9, (1936): inner rear cover.

Figure 3.6 (upper right). Ketchup advertisement. *Ogonek* no. 16 (1936): inner front cover.

Figure 3.7 (lower left). Pork and Beans advertisement, detail. *Ogonek* no. 13 (1936): inner rear cover.

Figure 3.8 (lower right). *Kniga o vkusnoii i zdorovoi pishche* (Moscow-Leningrad: Pishchepromizdat, 1939), 169. Compare with Heinz advertisement, *Life*, December 21, 1936.

discourses and practices. While the USSR treated the capitalist West with suspicion before the war, the West remained a valid source of emulation not only for its technological know-how but also daily practices including diet. But in the post-war period, Soviet culinary discourse no longer encouraged the adaptation of an American diet. Instead, it drew attention to the variety of Soviet ethnic cuisines. The post-war pan-Soviet cuisine arose from the inward turn of the late Stalin years. Unlike the first pan-Soviet cuisines, the postwar version was inwardly, rather than outwardly cosmopolitan. Its focus was on the greater inclusion and popularization of the native cuisines of Soviet ethnic groups. Foreign and especially Western cuisines were treated as exotic, often incomprehensible sets of practices. As official discourse made Soviet cuisine more and more inclusive, the gradual rise of nationalism led to claims that Soviet cuisine was polluting and destroying “genuine” ethnic culinary practices. Like the official ideology of “people’s friendship” of which it was a part, the second pan-Soviet gradually became a symbol of Soviet oppression. Yet such was its power, that its ostensible victims missed and continued to prepare the dishes of the pan-Soviet cuisine even when freed from its official dominance either by emigration or the Soviet collapse in 1991.

The “inward turn” of Soviet cuisine can be easily seen in the monumental 1952 edition of the *Book of Tasty and Healthy Food* from which all American labels and names almost completely disappeared. Unlike the first (1939) edition of *KVZP*, the United States was mentioned only twice – as a place where 80% of the population earned less than the living wage and as a notorious manufacturer of adulterated foods.⁴³¹ The readers of this standard cookbook were no longer offered “*kornfleks*” but rather the translated “corn flakes” (*kukuruznye khlop’ia*),

⁴³¹ *Kniga o vkusnoi i zdorovoi pishche* [A Book about Tasty and Healthy Food] (Moscow: Pishchepromizdat, 1952), 179.

without any indication of their foreign origins (see fig. 3.9).⁴³² Ketchup became “Spicy Tomato Sauce.”⁴³³ The glorification of Russia and its “Great People,” one of the notable features of late Stalinist culture also found their way into the *KVZP*.⁴³⁴ Beer, one of the products common to almost all ethnicities on earth, was defined as “an old Russian beverage.”⁴³⁵ If one were to go by this cookbook alone, all foods and drinks were developed in the Soviet Union.

Like its main cookbook, the late Stalinist Soviet Union no longer had much to learn from the rest of the world, least of all the United States. Instead of the earlier glorification of the great American spirit of invention that should be copied by the USSR, late Stalinist publications now claimed that most great technological innovations were created by Russians.⁴³⁶ Some publications like the youth-oriented *Smena* were not afraid to claim that baseball’s reputation as an American national sport should be ignored since “as is known, baseball is copied from *lapta*, which was played in Russian villages before the USA was even on the map.”⁴³⁷ A brief study by V.N. Cherkassov, *On the History of Potatoes* (1953) made a claim that the potato made its way into Russia first (or even was native to Russia) and then spread into Western Europe, designating all evidence to the contrary as falsifications emanating from the Tsarist Interior ministry “due to reasons which remain unclear.”⁴³⁸ As silly as these claims were, it is unsurprising that openly

⁴³² Ibid., 239, 244.

⁴³³ Ibid., 203.

⁴³⁴ For a detailed discussion of the cult of the “Great Russian People” see David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁴³⁵ *Kniga o vkusnoi*, (1952), 121.

⁴³⁶ Especially important in this effort was V.V. Danilevskii, *Russkaia Tekhnika* [Russian Technology] (Leningrad: Leningradskoe gazetno-zhurnal’noe i knizhnoe izdanie, 1947). Danilevsky claimed that most major inventions were first created by Russians, often of humble origins, whose work was unknown through the ineptitude of or direct interference by the Tsarist regime or foreigners.

⁴³⁷ A. Kuleshov and M. Kremnev, “‘Beisbol – bol’shoi ketch’” [‘Baseball is Just a Rigged Wrestling Match’], *Smena* no.17 (1952): 23.

⁴³⁸ V.N. Cherkassov, *Ob istorii kartofelia* [On the History of the Potato] (Moscow: Sel’khozgiz, 1953) as cited in I. Khalifman, “Rodina kartofelia” [The Motherland of Potatoes], *Novy mir* no.7 (1954): 274. Cherkassov apparently based his argument on the supposed impossibility of cold weather-loving potato coming from South America. That not all points south of Russia are necessarily warm seems to have evaded his reasoning.

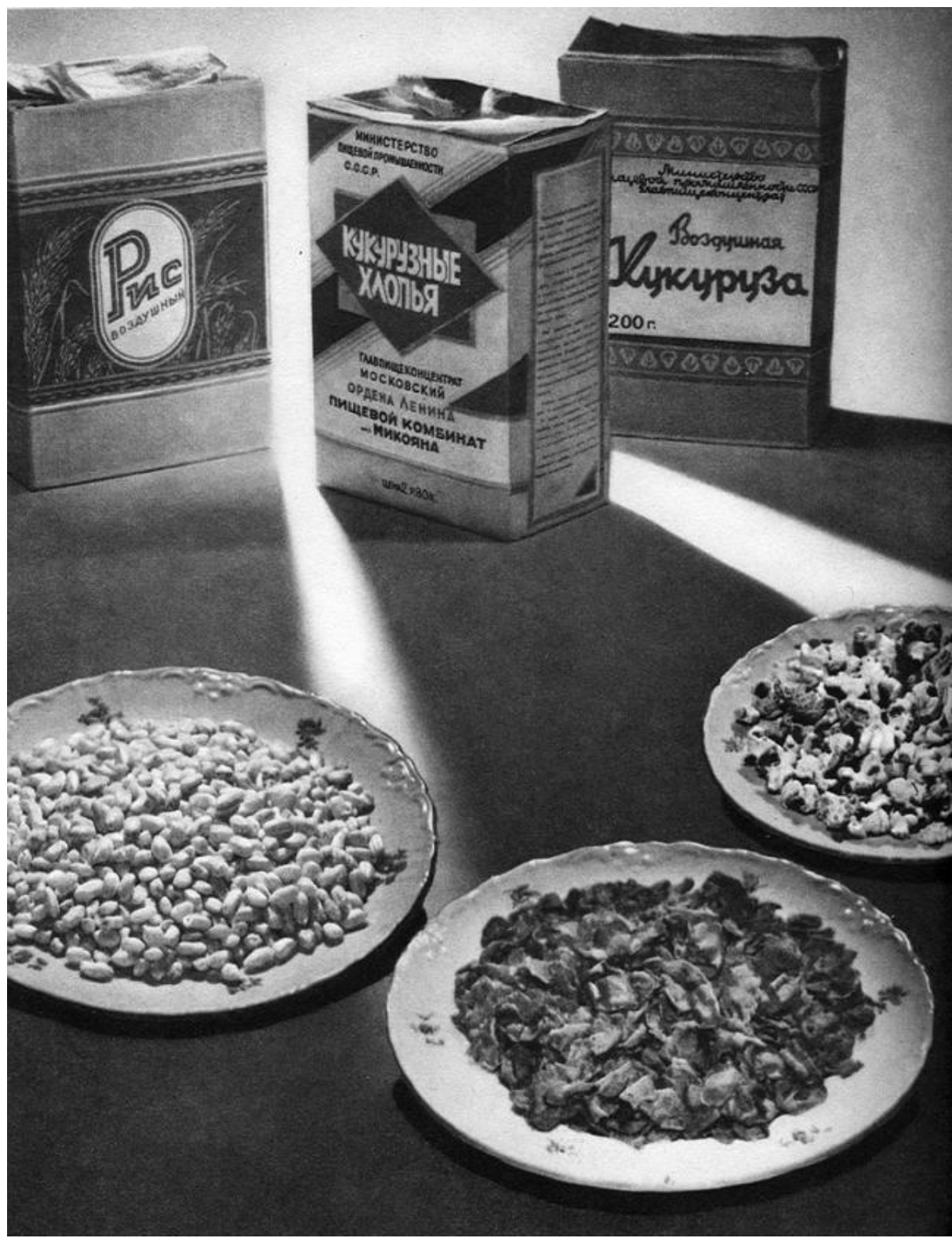


Figure 3.9. *Kniga o vkusnoi i zdorovoii pishche* (Moscow: Pishchepromizdat, 1952), insert between pages 288-289.

claiming to learn from the West or to adopt its culinary practices would be a poor move in the tense ideological climate of the early Cold War. Like other mental habits of late Stalinism, they were remarkably long-lived. A claim that a Russian named Kriakutnoi, rather than the French Montgolfier brothers, made the first balloon flight or that a Siberian peasant Artamonov was the first creator of a functional bicycle were repeated in authoritative publications such as the Large Soviet Encyclopedia well into the 1970s – despite their sources becoming known as forgeries notorious even to Soviet scholars.⁴³⁹

Instead, the new source of innovative variety in Soviet life and cuisine would be its own member republics. In the 1952 edition of the KVZP there were now five recipes for pilafs, including a “Uzbeki” and a “Gurian” version.⁴⁴⁰ Discussions of conveniently packaged national meat products of the Caucasian and Central Asian republics replaced glowing reports of the American meat industry.⁴⁴¹ Unlike the previous mentions of simply “oriental” foods, these meats were now labeled with the specific republic of origin. A 1949 official collection of recipes for public catering establishments across the Soviet Union now included national cuisine chapters for not only the three Caucasian republics (Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan) but also one for Central Asian Turkmenistan.⁴⁴²

One other ethnic influence that lost its presence in culture and pan-Soviet cuisine was that of the Soviet Jews. Exiling or condemning entire ethnic groups for “excessive nationalism” was

⁴³⁹ *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia*, 3rd edition, s. vv. “vozdukhoplavan'e,” [aeronautics] and “velosiped” [bicycle]. For a discussion of these myths see Anne Nesbet, “In Borrowed Balloons: The Wizard of Oz and the History of Soviet Aviation,” *Slavic and Eastern European Languages* 45 (2001): 80-95; V.S. Virginskii et al, “Kak tvoriatsia mify v istorii tekhniki. K istorii voprosa o ‘velosipede Artamonova’” [How Myths are Created. On the History of the ‘Artamonov Bicycle’ Question], *Voprosy istorii estestvoznaniia i tekhniki* no.1 (1989): 150-157; David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 35-37.

⁴⁴⁰ *Kniga of vkusnoi*, (1952), 238-239.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 164-165, 169.

⁴⁴² *Sbornik raskladok dlia predpriiatii obshchestvennogo pitaniia* [A Collection of Recipes for Public Catering Institutions] (Moscow: Gostorgizdat, 1949), 548.

already practiced by Stalin's government. Considered especially dangerous to Soviet stability were ethnic groups that had homelands outside of the Soviet Union, such as Germans and Koreans who were repressed and relocated before World War Two. The creation of an independent and not fully pro-Soviet Israel made Soviet Jews a target for similar treatment. The last years of Stalin's life have become infamous for the often openly anti-Semitic "Campaign Against Rootless Cosmopolitanism." Once one of the most influential ethnic groups in Soviet government, culture, and cuisine, Jews were now mistrusted.⁴⁴³ Coming in the wake of the Holocaust, the destruction of the Soviet Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and coinciding with the case against the (mostly Jewish) "Doctor's Plot" to supposedly kill off Soviet leaders, the campaign had a powerful effect on Soviet Jews. Pervasive, if unsubstantiated, rumors of preparations for a 1953 mass expulsion of Soviet Jews to Siberia or the prison camps persist to the present day.⁴⁴⁴ The reasons for the late Stalinist anti-Semitic campaign remain debatable, but even when it was quickly ended after Stalin's death, it changed the position of Jews in Soviet society. Varying levels of official anti-Semitism, though disavowed, became widely tolerated. Openly Jewish ethnic or culinary identity was considered to be best kept out of public view. Jewish cuisine remained but dared not speak its name. While the *KVZP* still listed stuffed fish and recommended canned "Sweet and Sour Meat" it never identified their ethnic associations – while doing so for a number of other ethnic groups.⁴⁴⁵ Though Jewish canteens actually managed to remain open, they would mask their authentically Jewish dishes with neutral descriptive labels

⁴⁴³ Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 221-226, 254-255. According to Slezkine, in 1937, 37% of the top NKVD leadership was ethnically Jewish, higher than any other ethnic group. In 1939, 14.1% of upper-level university staff was Jewish, while in Belarus the number was 32.7%.

⁴⁴⁴ For a discussion of the rumors and their scholarly evaluation see David Brandenberger, "Stalin's Last Crime? Recent Scholarship on Postwar Soviet Anti-Semitism and the Doctor's Plot," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6 (Winter 2005): 187-204.

⁴⁴⁵ *Kniga o vkusnoi*, (1952), 136, 166.

that turned matzo into a “national cracker.”⁴⁴⁶ This became especially problematic and noticeable for Soviet Jews and other ethnicities who felt that their culinary heritage was overlooked at a time when Soviet cuisine was becoming more standardized and inclusive under Stalin’s successors.

The Standardization of the Second Pan-Soviet Cuisine

Within months of Stalin’s death the Soviet government and the Communist party issued a decree “On the Measures for Further Development of Soviet Trade” which, among other points called for greater awareness of consumer demands.⁴⁴⁷ The decree came out accompanied by calls published in the central press to be more aware of national traditions and popular tastes, of making sure that local specialties could be made and tasted in the national republics.⁴⁴⁸ In 1955, two new works came out that would define the basic framework for the new pan-Soviet cuisine: the 911-page long *Collection of Recipes for Dishes and Culinary Goods for Public Catering Enterprises* and the even longer *Culinary Arts*.⁴⁴⁹ The *Collection of Recipes* was a fairly dry list of all the basic dishes that could be prepared in Soviet public dining establishments and carried the force of law – though it did not preclude the creation of other recipes as long as they met official approval. Its main innovation was that its “National Cuisines” section now assigned a standard set of dishes to each Union Soviet republic. Each member state of the USSR now had its own, established cuisine that would be made known to every Soviet chef. In each subsequent

⁴⁴⁶ Natalia Rubenstein, “‘Saigon’ i drugie...” [“Saigon” and others], *Ezhednevnik*, March 26, 2008, <http://inphuzoria.livejournal.com/50073.html?thread=669849>.

⁴⁴⁷ “O merakh dal’neishego razvitiia sovetskoi torgovli” [On the Measures for the Further Development of Soviet Trade], *Izvestiia*, October 23 1953.

⁴⁴⁸ See for instance Marietta Shaginian, “O vkuse i potrebnosti” [On Taste and Need], *Pravda*, September 11, 1953.

⁴⁴⁹ *Sbornik retseptur bliud i kulinarykh izdeliĭ dlia predpriatii obshchestvennogo pitaniia* [Collection of Recipes for Dishes and Culinary Goods for Public Catering Enterprises] (Moscow: Gostorgizdat, 1955) and *Kulinariia* [Culinary Arts] (Moscow: Gostorgizdat, 1955).

edition of the *Collection of Recipes*, the “National Cuisines” section of 1955 remained unchanged and in force.⁴⁵⁰

It was left to the more detailed *Culinary Arts* to explain the reasons behind the changes in the approach to Soviet cookery. This “manual not only of the Russian, but the entire Soviet cuisine,” claimed to have the “modest goal” to “give all Soviet cooks an impression of the national cuisines of the Union republics, so that it would be possible to prepare the most typical and characteristic national dishes in every corner of the Soviet Union.”⁴⁵¹ In spite of the accusations by “enemies, who slander socialism,” the authors argued that “socialism does not presuppose a leveling of tastes.”⁴⁵² “Therefore in such an important task as the feeding of a people,” they, as Communists believed that their “first duty [was] to guarantee a necessary variety of food, the development of individual tastes,...demands, and their complete satisfaction.”⁴⁵³ National cuisines, in the Soviet view, were an important part of national culture that would “continue to exist and develop as long as the nation exists and develops.”⁴⁵⁴ Cuisines could retain individuality and yet have some things in common allowing one to speak of individual national as well as regional and “finally of a common Soviet cuisine.”⁴⁵⁵ This entity was “formed from dishes that...[Soviets held] in common; it [was] in equal measure enriched by Russian pies, Ukrainian borsches, Uzbek pilafs, Georgian kebabs, Armenian tolma, Azeri piti, and many other excellent national dishes and appetizers of our country.”⁴⁵⁶ Though multi-ethnic, this cuisine was firmly national, rooted in Soviet territory unlike that of “old Russia” when “for

⁴⁵⁰ See for instance *Sbornik retseptur bliud i kulinarykh izdelii dlia predpriatii obshchestvennogo pitaniia* [Collection of Recipes for Dishes and Culinary Goods for Public Catering Enterprises] (Moscow: Ekonomika, 1981). For an example of the continued use of the 1955 edition well into 1980s, see Alan Davidson, *North Atlantic Seafood*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 2003), 341.

⁴⁵¹ *Kulinariia*, 791.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

the satisfaction of their obviously abnormal tastes some lords not only sent for French chefs, but also [for] exclusively French foods.”⁴⁵⁷

Over the next three decades the second pan-Soviet cuisine expanded. Speaking in 1961 to a multiethnic audience in Kazakhstan’s Virgin Lands, Khrushchev confessed to his own taste for horsemeat sausage and pointed out that “one cannot ignore the traditional foods of different ethnicities.”⁴⁵⁸ Soviet restaurants at international exhibitions expanded their menus and began to invite chefs from across the Soviet Union to present a fuller picture of Soviet food. There was a restaurant representing the “national cuisines of the peoples of the Soviet Union” at the Brussels World Fair of 1958.⁴⁵⁹ The Soviet restaurant kitchen at the Montreal Expo (World Fair) of 1967, as remembered by one of the participants, was the site for a debate by the Azeri, Georgian, Armenian, Uzbek, and Tajik chefs on whose shish kebab was better.⁴⁶⁰ The diversity of chefs and Soviet dishes was a point stressed in Soviet promotional literature at the Expo 67. The multi-ethnic dishes were listed on the same menu together, allowing for an impression that this combination was a common Soviet meal.⁴⁶¹ Unlike the 1935 article that applauded a Kirgiz baker’s white robe and consumption of Russian-style industrially baked bread, a 1980 *Pravda*

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴⁵⁸ N.S. Khrushchev, “Osvoenie tseliny – bol’shaia pobeda leninskoi politiki partii” [The Reclamation of the Virgin Lands is a Great Victory of the Leninist Politics of the Party], in N.S. Khrushchev, *Stroitel’stvo kommunizma v SSSR i razvitie sel’skogo khoziaistva* [The Construction of Communism in the USSR and the Development of Agriculture] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1962), 5:220.

As was discussed earlier, despite Khrushchev’s enthusiasm, horsemeat sausage not especially welcome outside of Central Asia.

⁴⁵⁹ D.Ryzhkov, “Sovetskii Soiuz na vsemirnoi vystavke” [The Soviet Union at the World’s Fair], *Pravda*, April 17, 1958. Despite a more representative menu, the restaurant was called “Russia.”

⁴⁶⁰ Stanislav, Komarov, “Anatolii Davtian: ‘Kiurek-kiuftu’ ia gotovil dlia Khrushcheva iz buiivolinogo miasa” [Anatolii Davtian: I Made the Buffalo-Meat ‘Kiurek-Kiufta’ for Khrushchev], *Moskovskii komsomolets*, April 24, 1998.

⁴⁶¹ Rhona Richman Kenneally, “Food, Nationalism and Authenticity at Expo 67,” in *Expo 67: Not Just a Souvenir*, Rhona Richman Kenneally and Johanne Sloan, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 37.

profile of Ularbek Dikanov honored him for learning the finer points of Kirgiz cuisine from his mother and serving it during the “Days of Soviet Culture” in Brussels.⁴⁶²

One of the most common places to experience ethnic foods in the Soviet Union was at ethnic restaurants and food shops. A trip through central Moscow in 1959 could be a tour of culinary embassies from the Soviet world: the Georgian “Aragvi,” Czech “Praga,” Central Asian “Uzbekistan,” and Slavic “Ukraina” that were opened in the 1940s were now joined by the “Armenia” grocery, the Azeri restaurant “Baku,” as well as the Bulgarian “Sofia” and the Chinese “Peking.”⁴⁶³ By the 1970s Moscow had the Armenian “Ararat,” the Belorussian “Minsk,” German “Berlin,” Hungarian “Budapesht,” Lithuanian “Palanga,” Polish “Varshava,” and Roumanian “Bukharest.”⁴⁶⁴ The Exhibit of National Economic Achievements (VDNKh, formerly VSKhV) hosted ethnic culinary competitions and exchanges of information between the culinary professionals representing Soviet member republics. There, Georgian, Turkmen, Russian, Estonian, Kazakh, and other cuisines were demonstrated and tasted, and recipes and techniques exchanged.⁴⁶⁵ Ethnic recipes were regularly provided on the pages of *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, the culinary professionals’ union publication.⁴⁶⁶

Public catering establishments within the ethnic republics were expected to serve their own dishes as well. In 1954, the Tajiki trade network was criticized in *Pravda* for not selling enough ethnic sweets, baking low-quality ethnic breads, and serving only a “narrow assortment

⁴⁶² B. Prokhorov, “Iz reporterskogo bloknota. Retsepty masterstva” [From a Reporter’s Notebook. Recipes of Mastery], *Pravda*, January 14, 1980.

⁴⁶³ S. Rudenko, “Ot sebia, no khorosho!” [On Her Own, but Wonderful, Initiative!], *Izvestiia*, July 29 1959.

⁴⁶⁴ Lynn and Wesley Fisher, *The Moscow Gourmet* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1974), 153.

⁴⁶⁵ See for example N.Korshunova, “Mastera vkusnykh bliud” [Masters of Delicious Dishes], *Pravda*, August 17, 1965 and “Medali za vkusnyi obed” [Medals for a Tasty Dinner], *Izvestiia*, November 24, 1965.

⁴⁶⁶ See for example A. Usmanhodzhaev, “Osobennosti Uzbeksoi kukhni” [Special Features of the Uzbek Cuisine], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* 2 (1983): 40-41 and P. Paitykov, “Osobennosti Turkmenskoi kukhni” [Special Features of the Turkmen Cuisine], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* 2 (1983): 42-43.

of national dishes” in its cafes and restaurants.⁴⁶⁷ In 1958, a Georgian hostel was criticized by Moscow officials for not serving local foods or, for that matter, not having anything “Georgian” about it except the location.⁴⁶⁸ Similar complaints were made at the All-Union conference of public catering professionals in 1965.⁴⁶⁹ Conversely, improvements in the quality of public catering systems were demonstrated by the increase in serving local ethnic foods.⁴⁷⁰ This did not, of course, mean that one should have been eating only Kazakh foods while in Kazakhstan. Variety and culinary diversity were encouraged as a demonstration of the “Friendship of the Peoples.”

Republican capitals, other large cities outside of Moscow, as well as important construction sites and factories served as places where culinary ethnic diversity was encouraged. Leningrad had its Central Asian “Oriental,” pan-Caucasian “Kavkazskii,” and Azeri “Baku” restaurants.⁴⁷¹ Kiev had the “Abkhazia” and “Leipzig,” while Riga had “Tallinn,” “Kavkaz,” and “Russe.”⁴⁷² Major projects labeled the “All-Union Shock-work Construction Sites” by the Brezhnev government in an attempt to recapture the political enthusiasm of the 1930s were also especially important for culinary encounters. Multi-ethnic workers of the oil fields of Tartarstan and coal mines of northern Kazakhstan were offered regular “Days” and “Weeks” of ethnic

⁴⁶⁷ A. Rumiantsev, “Bez ucheta zaprosov pokupateley” [With disregard for the demands of consumers], *Pravda* January 14, 1954.

⁴⁶⁸ Gorsuch, *All This is Your World*, 40.

⁴⁶⁹ RAGE f. 465, o.1, d.203, l.61. Baku public catering establishments were criticized for not serving a variety of dishes greater than three kinds of kebabs.

⁴⁷⁰ For instance, Tartar cuisine being served in Tartarstan was discussed in “Novye stolovye [New Canteens], *Izvestiia* April 10, 1959; “Vkusnaia vystavka” [A Tasty Exhibit], *Izvestiia* April 11, 1963 discussed Kyrgyz cuisine in Kyrgyzstan.

⁴⁷¹ L.N. Belova et al, ed., *Putevoditel’ po Leningradu* [A Travel Guide for Leningrad] (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1957), 772.

⁴⁷² *Kiev: Putevoditel’-spravochnik* [Kiev: A Reference Guide] (Kiev: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1962), 334-335; P.P. Eran, ed., *Riga-entsiklopediia* [Riga – An Encyclopedia] (Riga: Glavnaia redaktsiia entsiklopedii, 1989), 603.

cuisines. *Izvestiia* carefully listed their offerings, identifying each dish by its ethnic origin.⁴⁷³ The Latvian VEF electronics plant, often mentioned in the press due to the high quality of facilities offered to its employees, served multi-ethnic dishes in its cafeteria, which also had an entire section devoted to Caucasian cuisine.⁴⁷⁴ Similarly, thanks to its tremendous symbolic importance during World War Two and therefore Soviet national mythology, Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad) had fifteen enterprises refurbished and repurposed by each of the Union Republics. Among them, Belorussia and Georgia opened food stores, while Uzbekistan and Armenia opened up restaurants, all in honor of the fortieth anniversary of victory in 1985.⁴⁷⁵

Whether or not they ate out, urban Soviet citizens' diet was fairly multi-ethnic. Migration and urbanization within the USSR, especially after World War Two, led multiple culinary encounters and exchanges, without any special government interference. By the time the Soviet Union collapsed, Russian urbanites ate modified versions of Central Asian and Caucasian pilafs and kebabs, loved Georgian beef soup (*kharcho*) as well as Tartar meat pies (*beliashi* and *chebureki*).⁴⁷⁶ Caucasian grilled sausages (*kupaty*) and lamb stew (*chanakhi*) were served in simple diners and delicatessens (*domovye kukhni*).⁴⁷⁷ When they were transferred to work outside of their home area, Soviets ate local dishes and often adopted them into their home cooking, even after being transferred to other areas. Nuclear specialist Yegor Grebeniuk ate Kazakh national dumplings and noodles to escape the below average food at the city canteen in

⁴⁷³ E. Matskevich, "Prazdnichnyi stol yezhednevno" [A Holiday Meal Every Day], *Izvestiia*, July 26, 1971 and "Priglasenie k stolu" [An Invitation to the Table], *Izvestiia*, January 2, 1966.

⁴⁷⁴ E. Vostrukhov, "Rabochaia stolovaia" [A Workers' Canteen], *Izvestiia*, October 29, 1981.

⁴⁷⁵ A. Chemonin, "Stanet krashe gorod-geroi" [The Hero City Will Be More Beautiful], *Izvestiia*, April 4, 1985.

⁴⁷⁶ T.A. Voronina, "Traditsii v pishche russkikh na rubezhe XX-XXI vekov" [Traditions in the Food of Russians at the Turn of the XX-XXI centuries], in *Traditsionnaia pishcha kak vyrazhenie etnicheskogo samosoznaniia* [Traditional Food as an Expression of Ethnic Identity], S.A. Arutiunov and T.A. Voronina, eds. (Moscow: Nauka, 2001), 49-54 and S.A. Artunov, "Osnovnye pishchevye modeli i ikh lokal'nye varianty u narodov Rossii" [Primary Nutrition Models and Their Local Variants in Russia], in *Traditsionnaia pishcha*, 17.

⁴⁷⁷ Mikhail German, *Slozhnoe proshedshee* [The Complex Past] (Sankt Peterburg: Iskusstvo-SPB, 2000), 412; Valerii Popov, *Zapomnite nas takimi* [Remember Us Like This] (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal Zvezda, 2003), 172.

1961 Semipalatinsk.⁴⁷⁸ O.V. Kuratov, another nuclear specialist, retained Siberian culinary practices even after he returned to live in European Russia and also incorporated foods from ethnic Soviet and Eastern European cuisines. His celebrations at home in Moscow featured juice of the Siberian sea-buckthorn berries, Georgian bean lobio, satsivi, steamed pumpkin as well as Siberian dumplings, Estonian minogues, and Czech beer.⁴⁷⁹ For many others, the encounter with other ethnicities came in college, including the journalist Matveii Ganapol'skii who was invited to dine on “authentic” pilaf by his Uzbeki classmates who kept a gigantic pilaf cauldron, passed from one group of Uzbek students to the next, hidden in the woods of suburban Moscow.⁴⁸⁰

Non-Russian ethnic Soviets also borrowed heavily from the other ethnicities. The popularity of mayonnaise and potato based salads as a holiday dish made them into one of the most universal pan-Soviet dishes.⁴⁸¹ Formerly migratory Kalmyks began to eat other common Soviet-Russian foods such as a chopped herring and vegetable salad (*seledka pod-shuboi*), preserved vegetables, and drink instant coffee in addition to their traditional milky tea.⁴⁸² Similar changes occurred for the Arctic Chukchi, and other ethnicities due to improvements in transportation and education, and wider cultural encounters.⁴⁸³ Government-sponsored migration, whether voluntary or forced also led to major changes in everyday diets. Ethnic

⁴⁷⁸ Oleg Konstantinovich Gavrikov, “Put' v ispytately: nachalo puti. Podpiska” [The Path to Becoming an Investigator: The Beginning. The Subscription], *Vospominia o semipalatinskoi iadernoi poligone* [Memories of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Testing Ground], October 25, 2011, accessed July 31, 2013, ogolovok.livejournal.com/25189.html.

⁴⁷⁹ O.V. Kuratov, *Khroniki russkogo byta (1950-1990). Neofitsal'naia faktografiia* [Chronicles of Russian Life (1950-1990. An Unofficial Factography)] (Moscow: DeLi print, 2004), 140-143.

⁴⁸⁰ “Kukhonnye taiiny: ‘Vostochnaia kukhnia’” [Kitchen Secrets: Oriental Cuisine], Ekho Moskvy, accessed May 1, 2012, <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/cook-secret/40553>.

⁴⁸¹ See for example, Darra Goldstein, “Turkmenistan on a Plate,” *Saudi Aramco World* (January-February, 2006):16.

⁴⁸² E.B. Guchinova, “Pishcha kalmykov v Rossii i v SShA: opyt sravnitel'nogo analiza” [Food of the Kalmyks in Russia and the USA: An Experiment in Comparative Analysis], in *Traditsionnaia pishcha*, 232.

⁴⁸³ For changes in Chukchi diet see G.S. D'iachkova, “Traditsii i innovatsii v pitanii chukcheii-olenevodov v XX veke” [Traditions and Innovations in the Nutrition of Chukchi Reindeer Herders in the XX Century] in *Traditsionnaia pishcha*, 266-268. One especially radical change occurred when Chukchi began to gather mushrooms, a food that was either ignored or ritually proscribed until 1960s. See Sveta Yamin-Pasternak, “How the Devils Went Deaf: Ethnomycology, Cuisine, and Perception of Landscape in the Russian North,” (PhD diss., University of Alaska Fairbanks, 2007).

Russians and their local neighbors in the Caucasus and Central Asia adopted each other's recipes, culinary practices and even names for foods over a few generations.⁴⁸⁴ Forced dislocation of Koreans from the Pacific coast to Central Asia and of the Kalmyks from southern Russia to Siberia and Central Asia led to the unexpected culinary consequences. Traditional Korean side dishes were adapted to local ingredients and were absorbed into the native diet, especially in Uzbekistan.⁴⁸⁵ Kalmyks introduced the common use of pressed (instead of loose leaf) tea into Siberia, while those who ended up in Central Asia adopted local pilafs.⁴⁸⁶

The diversity of foods that made up the Soviet cuisine, at least in its discursive variant, was quite significant. The lines to get into the popular ethnic restaurants were quite long and there was never a stable supply of all the ingredients to prepare ethnic (or any other) dishes. But the constant discussions of what other ethnicities ate allowed an average Soviet diner or cook, especially in the urban areas, to become familiar with the diverse dishes that made up the second pan-Soviet cuisine. Though quite cosmopolitan, this cuisine largely remained within the acceptable boundaries of the Soviet Union and its allies. As Caroline Humphrey noted, there was a difference between being cosmopolitan and being condemned for "Rootless Cosmpolitanism" or *kosmopolitizm*. The latter implied that the accused crossed the boundary from "friendship of the peoples" to overt admiration (*nizkopoklonchestvo*) of foreign, especially Western values.⁴⁸⁷

The Soviet Union was eager to expand its international influence and contacts and an increasing

⁴⁸⁴ For culinary exchanges in the Caucasus see, N.I. Grigulevich, "Pitanie kak vazhneiisnyi mekhanizm etnoecologicheskoi adaptatsii" [Nutrition as the Most Important Mechanism of Ethno-Ecological Adaptation] in *Traditsionnaia pishcha*, 178-181. For culinary exchanges in the Central Asia see O.I. Brusina, "Osobennosti pitaniia slavian-starozhilov Srednei Azii v XX veke" [The Characteristics of Nutrition among Old-Resident Slavs in Central Asia] in *Traditsionnaia pishcha*, 197-198, 200-202.

⁴⁸⁵ For Korean food in Uzbekistan, see "Kukhnia koryo saram v Uzbekistane" [Cuisine of Koryo-Saram in Uzbekistan], Azu.uz, accessed March 26, 2013, http://www.azu.uz/assorty/obryad/obryad_detail.php?ID=1500 and Dave Cook, "Cafe 'At Your Mother-in-Law'," *New York Times*, July 13, 2010.

⁴⁸⁶ Guchinova, "Pishcha kalmykov," 243, 246. My family similarly adopted pilafs as a regular dish after living in Uzbekistan during World War Two.

⁴⁸⁷ Caroline Humphrey, "Cosmopolitanism and *Kosmopolitizm*," *Focaal* 44 (2004):145.

number of Soviets and foreigners crossed each other's borders, yet the world outside of Soviet influence was still viewed as one of "alien unpredictability."⁴⁸⁸

Rediscovery of Foreign Food

In a reversal from the first Pan-Soviet Cuisine, Soviet citizens and cooks, though much more comfortable with the foods and eating practices of the people within the Soviet Union, were apprehensive about the food outside their borders. Before World War Two, Soviet citizens and the government were comfortable learning from the West, knowing that they would soon catch up and overtake it. After the war, the isolation of late Stalinism and the desire to present the best face to the Cold War rivals made views of foreigners and their food more ambivalent. Khrushchev, along with his fellow citizens yearned to be a part of the wider world, but opened up to it gingerly and with mixed success. The Soviet leadership tried to present the Soviet Union as the welcoming center of the new civilization and attract new "converts" to the socialist camp, while keeping Soviet citizens from being "polluted" by foreign capitalist propaganda and preventing foreigners from encountering the "the temporary difficulties" that were not part of the triumphant Soviet narrative. In his memoirs, Nikita Khrushchev summarized the attitudes towards the outside world after Stalin's death. While he and his colleagues were eager to establish direct contacts with the outside world, to personally "see...and touch" it, they felt that they were completely unprepared for it, having almost literally never seen a "genuine *ameriken*," remembering Stalin's warnings that the "imperialists would smother" them.⁴⁸⁹ While increasing numbers of Soviet citizens went abroad, for most of them the meaning of "world travel" was limited by the national frontier as late as the mid-1980s. The life of "someone whose work calls for much traveling *around the world*," Anatolii Markov wrote in the popular weekly *Nedelia*, is

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁸⁹ N.S. Khrushchev, *Vremia. Liudi. Vlast'*. [Time. People. Power.] (Moscow: Moskovskie Novosti, 1999), 3:319.

forever enriched by “Leningrad’s white nights, the sea...in Odessa,...the wooden blocks of New Urengoi and the minarets of ancient Khiva.”⁴⁹⁰ Markov’s world did not include New York, Tokyo, or even Warsaw. This ambivalence was also transferred to the gradual rediscovery of food and foodways from beyond the Soviet comfort zone.

While the second pan-Soviet cuisine was exclusively inwardly-oriented, the Soviet leadership and chefs had to reacquaint themselves with foreign eating habits as Moscow prepared to host the 1957 International Festival of Students and Youth. As the Soviet Union opened its borders to greater numbers of foreign visitors after 1953, Soviet planners encountered a problem that can be best described as the “care and feeding of foreigners,” who seemed to be almost different species in the Soviet imagination and discourse. The “foreign tourist” became an odd, rarely encountered creature in the first post-war decade. Memoirists recalled their excitement in meeting their first foreign visitor, especially one from the West.⁴⁹¹ Culinary encounters would not only be the most common but also the most dangerous, since both the Soviet Union and the United States increasingly staked their success on superior material culture.⁴⁹² The combined desire to present the best possible face of the USSR to foreign visitors and the need to study their habits in order to know them as well as those of Soviet ethnicities led to massive preparations and monitoring of the ways to feed the crowds converging on Moscow in 1957.

One major way to study foreigners in their natural setting was a study trip abroad similar to those taken by professionals in the 1930s. By this point, however, the Soviet Union did not

⁴⁹⁰ Anatolii Makarov, “Ne tol’ko dlia pitaniia” [Not Just for Eating], *Nedelia* no.12 (1984): 7. Italics are mine.

⁴⁹¹ See for example German, *Slozhnoe proshedshee*, 234-235.

⁴⁹² Among recent accounts of Cold War material competition, see Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996) and *Cold War Kitchen: Americanization, Technology, and European Users*, Ruth Oldenziel, Karin Zachmann, eds. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).

want to present itself as needing any advice from the West. As Khrushchev told American journalists in 1959, while the Soviet Union welcomed visitors and international trade, foreigners would do well to remember “that the Soviet Union...[was] not a colony but a great industrial power,” able to “produce all the industrial and consumer goods needed.” “So if there is any intention to sell sausages or shoes to the Soviet Union,” Khrushchev concluded, “you would not find a market for those goods in our country.”⁴⁹³ Therefore, the trip by two public catering officials to study the catering arrangements at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics took on a semi-clandestine character. Despite the benign nature of their inquiry, A.A. Nevezhin’s report of the trip was filled with unintentionally comic cloak-and-dagger details. Nevezhin and his colleagues were instructed not to enter into any contacts with official organizers or commercial organizations but to come to Melbourne as “technical assistants to the Soviet Olympic delegation.”⁴⁹⁴ They did not know English and complained that their status made their task more difficult as they lacked a translator.⁴⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the men took their task very seriously bringing back a detailed report on every detail of the arrangements in Melbourne, including the materials of which the tables were made, as well as hand-drawn sketches of coffee cups, salt shakers, and ice buckets.⁴⁹⁶ They even included a plan of one of the dining halls that was “obtained with great difficulty,” and menus with penciled translations; they emphasized the usefulness of consuming beverages not out of cups, but directly from small bottles via “a waxed paper straw (sample attached).”⁴⁹⁷ All of these innovations were impressive enough for

⁴⁹³ “Transcript of Khrushchev’s News Conference on His Talks with President,” *New York Times*, September 28, 1959.

⁴⁹⁴ RGAE, f.7971, op.5, d.469, l.7.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, ll.10-11.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, ll. 9; 62-80; 17.

Nevezhin's team to recommend that they be implemented for the catering of the 1957 festival in Moscow.⁴⁹⁸

While many of the suggestions of the research mission to Melbourne remained on paper, the Ministry of Trade kept copies of menus developed to serve various ethnic groups on board trains coming to Moscow, with exact amounts and prices for each meal. The opinions about the food and service received by the international youth delegations on the trains or in Moscow were also collected and carefully analyzed. Despite trying to adapt the food served to the tastes of various ethnicities, Soviet planners still tended to serve foods in a way that was more suited for the Soviet diner. The menus were heavy on proteins and carbohydrates, with plentiful “chopped steaks,” sausages, eggs, and cheese as well as bread. Almost a pound of food in addition to the main dish was served for breakfast and over three and a half pounds of food for lunch, per person.⁴⁹⁹ Chinese, Japanese, and Korean delegates coming from the Far East got rice in every meal, but in a Soviet way – as filling for a pie served at breakfast and as a side dish to goulash and roasted chicken for lunch and dinner.⁵⁰⁰ Understandably, one of the primary complaints of the delegates about food was that they were given more food than they could finish, but not enough foods that they craved, such as fruit.⁵⁰¹

As more tourists began to visit the USSR, the concern with what to feed them grew, further demonstrating the discomfort with facing foreigners and their foodways. Many foreign tourists and students came to Kiev, a local chef wrote to the main caterers' journal in 1960, but the “public catering employees are not yet able to prepare national dishes for them.”⁵⁰² To solve

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid. ll.29-30.

⁴⁹⁹ See for instance RGAE, f.791, o.5, d.461, ll. 95, 99-100.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., l.107.

⁵⁰¹ RGAE, f.791, o.5, d.462, l.131.

⁵⁰² N.Maslak, “O bliudakh innostrannoi kukhni” [On the Dishes of Foreign Cuisines], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.4 (1960): 46.

the problem of not having “chefs who knew [recipes] for foreign dishes,” the letter suggested that the public catering research institutes prepare recipe collections and that ministries of trade offer specialized training courses for the chefs.⁵⁰³ Reflecting the form of this request for specific instructions for dealing with the seemingly alien groups of visitors, Soviet culinary textbooks began to feature recipes for non-Soviet ethnic dishes as well as firm feeding guidelines for each type of foreigner. These descriptions and suggestions at times resembled not so much culinary advice as instructions to a zoo keeper. Future Soviet chefs were instructed that they must remember that the English tourists “are reluctant to eat fish in aspic [or] pressed caviar,” and “do not like bologna sausages [or] flour-based sauces.”⁵⁰⁴ “Macaroni is a beloved food for Italians,” another chapter taught, and “all dishes made from them are called “pasta.”” For Italian tourists, “Dry grape wine *must* be served.”⁵⁰⁵ Scandinavian tourists required even more precise instructions. For breakfast they were to be offered “cold milk or buttermilk, a double portion of butter,” as well as “jam, coffee (hot milk for it must be served separately), and a fresh roll.” Scandinavians “should not be offered dishes with farmers’ cheese or mutton,” while Finns specifically did “not like French fries.”⁵⁰⁶ This approach to foreigners tellingly resembled the trouble given by space aliens to an administrator in the Strugatsky Brothers’ satiric science fiction novel, the *Tale of the Troika* (1969, published 1987). The harassed administrator of the Colony of Unexplained Phenomena complained that a recent alien arrival “mumbles something not-in-Russian, doesn’t eat porridge, doesn’t eat meat but, as it turns out, prefers toothpaste.”⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ A.I. Titiunnik and Iu. M. Novozhenov, *Sovetskaia natsional’naia i zarubezhnaia kukhnia* [The Soviet National and Foreign Cuisines] 2nd ed. (Moscow: Vysshiaia shkola, 1981), 385.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., 424. Italics are mine.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., 450.

⁵⁰⁷ Arakadii Strugatsky and Boris Strugatsky, “Skazka o troiike” [A Tale of the Troika], *Smena* no.12 (1987): 26.

For Soviets who visited foreign lands, meals and mealtimes were also fraught with ideological and culinary danger. If the Soviet travelers of the 1930s approached Western dining as respectful, if critical students, the post-war Soviets felt uncomfortable and afraid to lose face. The process for leaving the Soviet Union, even to the nearby countries such as Poland or Bulgaria (not to mention France or the US), was quite discouraging. For those few who managed to secure passports and exit visas, there was also a mandatory briefing about how to behave abroad and once out of the country, there was always expectation of monitoring by the tour group leader and the KGB-connected fellow tourists. Beyond the borders lay a strange world. The briefings' main point, as it was satirically summarized by Vladimir Vysotskii, was that "there they have a special lifestyle, one we can't easily understand...there they have different standards, if you don't get it – they'll eat you alive."⁵⁰⁸ One of the touchiest issues was the matter of meals. A noted art historian, Mikhail German, recalled that he was instructed how to behave at the table before leaving for Poland, Czechoslovakia, and France in the mid-1960s. He and his trip companions were also instructed not to ask for seconds in a restaurant and not to buy too much or nothing at all while abroad.⁵⁰⁹ Authorities were afraid that Soviet travelers, allowed to exchange only very small amounts of rubles for foreign currency, might try to save on food in order to shop.⁵¹⁰ The concern that the Soviet traveler might make embarrassing culinary errors while abroad was shared by at least some of the travelers. Numerous references exist to travelers mistakenly drinking water from fingerbowls (or washing fingers in a water glass), as well as

⁵⁰⁸ Vladimir Vystostkii, *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh knigakh* [Collected Works in Four Volumes] (Moscow: Nadezhda-1, 1997), 1:154.

⁵⁰⁹ German, *Slozhnoe*, 407, 426.

⁵¹⁰ Gorsuch, *All This is Your World*, 95-97. Vysotskii's song also alluded to this: "Live in comfort, save but don't play a fool/Watch out, don't pull a stunt – don't die off from undereating." Vystostkii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 1:151-152.

eating pet food, either by error or out of cheapness.⁵¹¹ In their memoirs, well-known actors and dancers recalled that in order to save money they and their colleagues ate pet food, or scared off other hotel guests with “the smell of cabbage soup and onions,” or made fish soup on a campfire inside an asbestos-lined toilet bowl.⁵¹² If foreign food experiences caused Soviet eaters difficulties, the boundaries of the pan-Soviet cuisine to which they returned were also far from clear.

Whose cuisine is Soviet?

While the second pan-Soviet cuisine was increasingly inclusive, it did not guarantee a place for every Soviet ethnic group. In a federation organized on the ethno-territorial principal that had strict but impermanent hierarchies, the fates of cuisines was closely tied to the fate of their ethnicities. There were no set rules for these flights and downfalls. They depended on the needs and goals of the Soviet party and state, as well as individual Soviet leaders.

Two of the sixteen republics featured in the 1955 editions of the definitive *Collection of Recipes and Culinary Arts*, the Karelian and the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republics, along with their cuisines, followed opposite trajectories. The Karelian Autonomous Republic within Russia was led by Communist Finnish refugees after that country’s own civil war (1918). Under their influence, modern Finnish became the official language of Karelia, along with Russian. By 1938, the Finnish Communist elite was thoroughly purged and, fearing Finnish claims to the sensitive border area adjacent to Leningrad, the Soviet government forbade the use of the “fascist language,” replacing it, with a new Karelian language written in Cyrillic. In 1940, after the Winter War with Finland (1939-1940), the Soviet Union wanted to retain “a convenient means

⁵¹¹ See for instance “O kormakh” [On Dog Food], Zookomfort, accessed March 22, 2013, <http://www.zookomfort.ru/?page=articles&id=20> and Dmitrii Travin, “SSSR: ot mifov k faktam” [USSR: From Myths to Facts], *Zvezda* no.2 (2012): 168.

⁵¹² Travin, “SSSR,” 168.

for facilitating the possible incorporation of additional Finnish territory” and created the sixteenth member state of the Soviet Union: the Karelo-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic.⁵¹³

This, despite a majority of ethnic Russians in the republic, necessitated a rapid return to the recently abandoned Finnish, until the short-lived KFSSR was dissolved as a gesture of goodwill to Finland in 1956.⁵¹⁴ The official elevation of Karelo-Finnish cuisine was even briefer, as it first appeared along with other Soviet cuisines in 1955 on the pages of the fundamental Soviet culinary guides, but after the dissolution of the KFSSR it lost its prominence, not reappearing outside of specialized books until 1978 as “Karelian cuisine” of the RSFSR in a volume on Soviet cuisines.⁵¹⁵

Meanwhile, the Moldavian SSR also grew out of an autonomous republic (as a part of the Ukraine), underwent similar language transformations, and was enlarged with territories annexed from Romania in 1940, when it became, like the KFSSR, a full-fledged union republic.⁵¹⁶ Unlike the KFSSR, its titular ethnicity formed the majority of the population and it bordered socialist Romania, rather than a capitalist nation like Finland. Furthermore, Leonid Brezhnev spend a part of his career as the head of the Moldavian Communist Party, and Moldavia, unlike Karelia, was thoroughly incorporated and feted as a valued member of the USSR. Its cuisine was prominently

⁵¹³ Ronald Arthur Helin, *Economic-Geographic Reorientation in Western Finnish Karelia: A Result of the Finno-Soviet Boundary Demarcations of 1940 and 1944* (Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council, 1961), 101.

⁵¹⁴ The account of the language situation in Karelia is based on Paul M. Austin, “Soviet Karelian: The Language that Failed,” *Slavic Review* 51 (1992): 16-35.

⁵¹⁵ See V.V. Pokhlebin, *Natsional'nye kuhni nashikh narodov* [National Cuisines of Our Peoples] (Moscow: Pishchevaia promyshlennost', 1978), 274-277; see also T.V. Reutovich, ed., *Kukhni narodov SSSR* [Cuisines of the People of the USSR], 2nd ed. (Minsk: Polymia, 1983), 253-254.

⁵¹⁶ The similar paths of Karelia and Moldova as Soviet nations are discussed in Mark Lawrence Schrad, “Rag Doll Nations and the Politics of Differentiation on Arbitrary Borders: Karelia and Moldova,” *Nationalities Papers* 32 (June 2004): 463-475.

featured in most editions of the *KVZP* and it had its own “culinary embassy,” the “Moldavia” restaurant in Moscow.⁵¹⁷

Similar fates could befall cuisines of Soviet allies. As a part of the blossoming “unbreakable friendship of the Chinese and Soviet peoples” after the proclamation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the two countries established restaurants of each other’s cuisines. Beijing had its “Moscow” restaurant, while the USSR opened its “Peking” restaurant in 1953. The restaurant moved into the massive eponymous hotel in central Moscow in 1955. Within “Peking,” Russian and Chinese cooks worked “in complete friendship,” the Russians learning “the specialties of Chinese national cuisine,” while the Chinese learned Russian cooking techniques.⁵¹⁸ An article in *Izvestiia* pointed out that among many delegations coming to Moscow, “Chinese chefs helped Moscow culinary specialists learn the specialties of Chinese cuisine.”⁵¹⁹ “Peking” could boast opulent dining rooms, was staffed by professional chefs from China, and required highly unusual ingredients (see fig. 3.10). In 1959, *Two Hundred and Fifty Chinese Dishes*, “the first attempt to acquaint culinary professionals and readers interested in cooking,” was published in a six-figure run.⁵²⁰ It praised “one of the many cultural heritages of the great Chinese people” in the bilingual introduction and referenced traditional Confucian culinary principles without even a hint of the old references to “backward orientalism” that pervaded Soviet discourse in the 1920s and 30s.⁵²¹ For visitors, the exoticism of the preserved “wondrous black eggs with translucent yolk” and “snake-like seaweed” was tempered by the presence of large bottles of “Stolichnaya” vodka. Yet after a rapid breakdown in the Sino-Soviet

⁵¹⁷ *Information Moscow—Western Edition* (San Francisco: Information Moscow, 1987), 70.

⁵¹⁸ F. I. Vasil’ev, *Dvesti p’iatdesiat bliud kitaiaskoi kukhni* [Two Hundred and Fifty Dishes of the Chinese Cuisine] (Moscow: Gostorgizdat, 1959), 5.

⁵¹⁹ “‘SSSR, Moskovskii Sovet...’” [USSR, The Moscow City Council...], *Izvestiia*, October 25, 1958.

⁵²⁰ Vassil’ev, *Dvesti*, 6.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

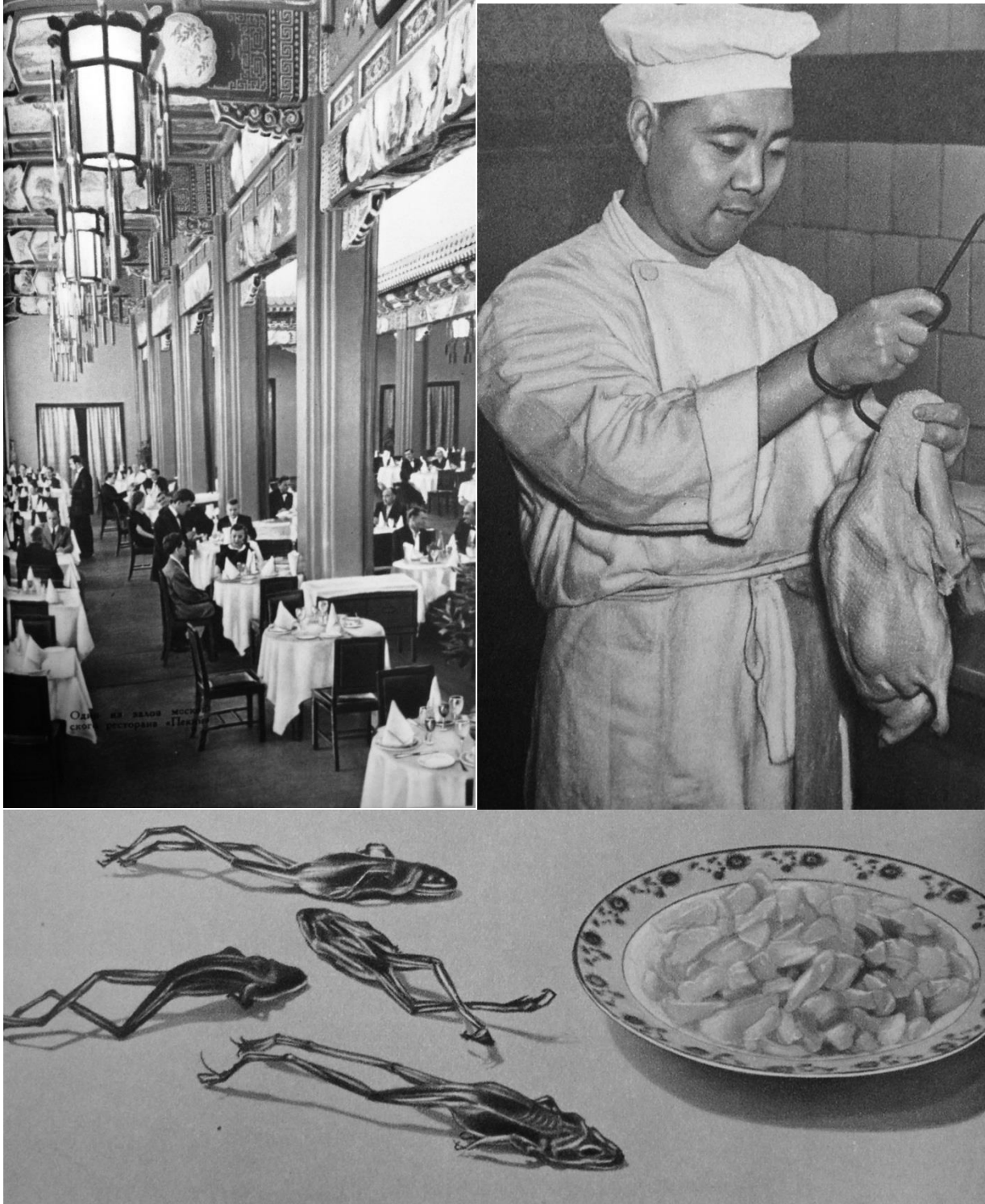


Figure 3.10. F.I. Vasiliev, *Dvesti p'iadesiat bliud kitaiskoi kikhni* (Moscow: Gostorgizdat, 1959). The chef is preparing a duck for roasting. Lower image shows dried and reconstituted frog meat as one of the “authentically exotic” ingredients used at “Peking.”

relationship in 1961 the restaurant quickly closed, with its Chinese staff sent home as “spies.”⁵²² Though the restaurant soon reopened and remained popular with Moscow bohemians and their elite sponsors, it served mostly Russian food with Chinese specialities moved to the appetizers section and prepared out of Russian ingredients.⁵²³ Western “kremlinologists” and “China watchers” waited for the return of Chinese staff to “Peking” as a sign of change in the Sino-Soviet relationship.⁵²⁴ The assessment turned out to be correct in 1989 when, in connection with Mikhail Gorbachev’s summit meeting with his Chinese counterparts in Moscow, “Peking” welcomed its first Chinese staff in almost thirty years.⁵²⁵ Meanwhile, the once untouchable Yugoslavia, after the normalization of relations in 1955, was represented by the “Belgrad” restaurant in Moscow.⁵²⁶ Moscow’s “Praga” restaurant, founded in the nineteenth century and once served an essentially continental menu, but once Czechoslovakia became socialist it began to specialize in Czech cuisine.⁵²⁷

The fate of cuisines whose ethnicities did not possess a Union republic was especially uneven. While they were not exiled like the Kalmyks, the Koreans, and the Chechens, the status of Soviet Jews within the USSR fell significantly after the “anti-cosmopolitan” campaign of the early 1950s. If their cuisine was one of the very few to have its own cookbook before World War Two (unlike the much more numerous Uzbeks or Ukrainians), even after Stalin’s death, explicitly Jewish cuisine did not regain prominence. Zeev Vol’fson, a Russian-Israeli filmmaker,

⁵²² Gennadi Nikolaev, “Moi mnogolikii atom. Cherez vsiu zhizn” [My Many-Faced Atom. Through a Lifetime.], *Zvezda* no.8 (2006): 82-83.

⁵²³ Sergei Iurskii, “Probely” [Blank spaces], *Oktiabr’* no.11 (2000): 124; Lynn Fisher, Wesley A. Fisher, *The Moscow Gourmet: Dining Out in the Capital of the USSR*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1974), 61.

⁵²⁴ Seth Mydans, “Moscow Fare: Chopstick Diplomacy?” *New York Times*, April 3, 1985.

⁵²⁵ Francis X. Clines, “Moscovites Welcome Peace but Lament Lack of Desert” *New York Times*, May 19, 1989; N. Andreev, “Moskva, ‘Pekin’ . . .,” [Moscow, “Beijing”], *Izvestiia*, September 1, 1989.

⁵²⁶ *Information Moscow*, 63.

⁵²⁷ M.Pol’skii, “Chest prates!” [Glory to Labor!], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.10 (1959): 49. While they were sources of imported exotic foods, Cuba and Vietnam made relatively little impact on Soviet cuisine or restaurant scene, an odd situation that requires further research.

wrote that he never heard anyone speak of a “national Jewish cuisine” before meeting the best-known Soviet culinary writer, William Pokhlebkin, in 1974 who eventually added the first explicit mention of Jewish cuisine since 1939 to his *National Cuisines of our Peoples* (1978).⁵²⁸ Yet, as “camouflaged” Jewish canteens and restaurants remained well-known and popular, so did Jewish recipes, though never identified as such. Eastern European Jewish cookies, under their Yiddish language names of *Kikhelakh* and *Mandelakh* were sold in bakeries across the Soviet Union including central Moscow and the provinces.⁵²⁹ Unlike Koreans, whose exiled cuisine was incorporated by the surrounding Central Asians, Soviet Jews did have an official ethno-territorial unit – the Jewish Autonomous Region in the Far East. Though it did not have a large Jewish population, especially after the events of the early 1950s, the JAR was one place in the USSR where Jewish Cuisine could be (relativley) openly displayed, and discussed, and its recipes published.

When the Soviet Jews began to demand emigration rights in the 1970s and to offset the often justified accusations that the Soviet anti-Zionist propaganda often veered into anti-Semitism, the USSR began to pay more attention to the Jewish character of the Jewish Autonomous Region. Publications devoted to the Jewish Autonomous Region included references to Birobidzhan’s best chef Iakov Blekman and his award-winning, specifically

⁵²⁸ Zeev Vol’fson, “Pokhlebkin i evreiiskaia kukhnia” [Pokhlebkin and the Jewish Cuisine], *Samizdat*, February 17, 2009, http://81.176.66.169/a/am_i/071007_volfson_pohlebkin.shtml; “Sovetskii soiuz. Evrei v Sovetskom Soiuze v 1967-85 gg.” [The Soviet Union. Jews in the Soviet Union in 1967-85], *Elektronnaia evreiiskaia entsiklopediia*, accessed November 3, 2012, <http://www.eleven.co.il/article/15420>.

⁵²⁹ Moiseii Teiif, “Vozle bulochnoi na ulitse Gor’kogo” [By a Bakery on Gorky Street], in *Rukopozhatie: stikhi i poëma* [A Handshake: Poems] (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1964), 8-10 and Dvojra, June 13, 2011 (9:12 a.m.), comment on Victoria Orti, “Slovarik pitertsia” [A St.Petersburger’s Dictionary], *Chudo smeheniia teneii* [The Miracle of Mixing Shadows], June 13, 2011, accessed July 30, 2013, <http://ortivika.livejournal.com/1188022.html?thread=7926198#t7926198>.

Jewish cuisine. Current and former Birobidzhaners fondly recall his cooking today.⁵³⁰ Blehman moved to Birobidzhan in the mid-1930s and was the primary chef in its first restaurant (opened in 1936). Since the 1930s, Blehman had been collecting traditional Jewish recipes, including them in his menus, and gaining fame by feeding visiting Soviet dignitaries. In the 1970s he introduced special Days of Jewish Cuisine at the “Central” restaurant of Birobidzhan.⁵³¹ A reinvigorated Yiddish-language *Birobidzhaner Shtern* newspaper began to publish Jewish recipes, though, perhaps because it was supposed to be a Party newspaper first, it was told to stop these publications by Aron Vergelis, the hardliner editor of the Soviet Union’s only Yiddish-language literary magazine.⁵³²

If Soviet post-war policy seems to have given the privilege of having a prominent cuisine only to its union republics, social groups within the USSR could also privilege some sections of Soviet cuisine over the others. In the mental world of the liberal Russian intelligentsia, for instance, Georgian food had a special place. While Georgia had retained its loyalty to the memory of Stalin well into the twenty-first century, Soviet Russian liberals saw Georgia as the “antithesis” of everything Soviet, a place where “everything there was the reverse [of normal Soviet life]: generous, spicy, worry-free.”⁵³³ For the dissident Raisa Orlova, Georgia was “freedom, holiday, [and] love.”⁵³⁴ Food was especially important for this vision of Georgia. Georgia meant “friends” and a “generous Georgian feast” was “a ritual of friendship” that Orlova

⁵³⁰ Tatiana Kosvintseva, “Lish’ semero iz mnogih” [Only Seven Out of Many], *Birobidzhantsy* [The Birobidzhaners], December 29, 2008, <http://shkolnik08.livejournal.com/30424.html> and Evgenii Bugaenko, *Na beregu Amura* [On the Shores of Amur] (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Agenstva pechati Novosti, 1984), 49-50.

⁵³¹ Bugaenko, *Na beregu*, 50.

⁵³² Zisi Veitsman, “400 bliud dlia ‘glavnogo povara’” [400 Dishes for the ‘Main Chef’], *My zdes’!* [We are Here!], accessed July 30, 2013, <http://www.newswe.com/index.php?go=Pages&in=view&id=1964>.

⁵³³ Aleksandr Genis, “Gruziia” [Georgia], in *Kolobok. Kulinarye puteshestviia* [Kolobok. Culinary Journeys] (Moscow: AST: Astrel’, 2006), 49.

⁵³⁴ Raisa Orlova, *Vospominaniia o neproshedshem vremeni* [A Memoir of Time Unpassed] (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1983), 266.

felt “we” (the non-Georgians) couldn’t possibly reciprocate.⁵³⁵ This romantic, Orientalized vision of Georgia and its cuisine was also present in the poems of Osip Mandel’shtam, himself a victim of Stalinist purges and read mostly in *samizdat* (unofficial, homemade copies). His Tbilisi (*Tiflis*) is a romantic city filled with taverns (*dukhany*) serving endless glasses of Kakhetian wine and pilaf, all underneath a “wiry crescent moon” in a cloud of “pinkish wine steam” and “the smoke of kebabs.”⁵³⁶ In the 1970s and 1980s, with the publication of more ethnic cookbooks, more Soviet people embraced Caucasian and Central Asian foods in their own kitchens to “do battle with a faceless and tasteless life.”⁵³⁷

Other ethnic cuisines were also embraced or rejected by a variety of Soviet social groups and subcultures. Offering plain Ukrainian white table wine amid the Georgian abundance of reds was the evidence of the “careless paw” of the planned economy.⁵³⁸ Meanwhile, Baltic cuisines, common in pre-Revolutionary St. Petersburg and pre-war Leningrad, which used to be considered fairly tasteless and boring, after World War Two suddenly became symbols of civilized life.⁵³⁹ Since the Baltic republics retained many markers of Western European life, at least for Soviet citizens, they seemed an internal West. Their baked goods, cozy cafes, and pork-heavy restaurants became the epitome of “good dining” for many Soviet people.⁵⁴⁰ Since India enjoyed a warm relationship with Soviet Union for many years, an Indian restaurant, Dzhaltarang was opened in Moscow in 1983, and was soon embraced by the local hippie

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 269

⁵³⁶ O. Mandel’shtam, “Mne Tiflis gorbatiyii...” [I Dream of the Hunchbacked Tiflis...], in *Sochineniia* [Works] (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990), 1:128.

⁵³⁷ See for example “O nas” [About Us], *Vkus i tsvet* [Taste and Color], accessed March 25, 2013, <http://www.vkusitsvet.ru/o-nas>.

⁵³⁸ Orlova, *Vospominaniia*, 268.

⁵³⁹ For reputation of tastelessness see German, *Slozhnoe*, 21 and Glushchenko, *Obshchepit*, 63; for commonness of Baltic foods see Molokhovets, *Podarok*, 1: xvi, xvii, xxxiii.

⁵⁴⁰ For popularity of Estonian dining see Gorsuch, *All this*, 63-64; for Latvian cuisine see M. Dubra, “Na ulitsakh Rigi” [On the Streets of Riga], *Obshchestvennoe pitaniie* no.9 (1985): 13-15 and M. Valin, “Malen’kie rizhskie kafe” [Riga’s Little Cafes], *Obshchestvennoe pitaniie* no.9 (1985): 14-15.

subculture.⁵⁴¹ While small, this group, like their counterparts in the West, had embraced Indian culture, and the centrally located Dzhaltarang was popular enough to become a part of their slang as “Dzhang.”⁵⁴²

Along with a strong sense of internationalism and rhetoric of “people’s friendship,” the Soviet Union produced a traditionalist, nationalist discourse, which also strongly affected Soviet ideas about cuisines. This discourse was rooted in a number of factors. The ethno-territorial division of the Soviet Union and the nationalist policies of the late Stalin era had played a part in its formation. Ethnic divisiveness was strengthened by the Soviet anthropological concept of “Etnos,” which claimed that ethnicities were not mere social constructions, but actual, knowable, and very specific formations.⁵⁴³ Finally, as Soviet political rhetoric became progressively more moribund in the years after Stalin’s death, nationalism rather than socialism grew in importance as a marker of identity. The power of local, ethnic politicians grew in the union republics and ethnicity became a major factor in Soviet networks of power. In a word, starting in the 1960s, the Soviet Union had gradually become more ethnicized.⁵⁴⁴

Reclaiming “authentic” ethnic cuisines

One of the most talked about features of modern dining is authenticity. Whether a given dish or food product is “authentic” or not is subject to arguments among diners, scholars, and

⁵⁴¹ On the opening of Dzhaltarang see M. Eshkind, “Dzhaltarang na Chistykh prudakh, ili rasskaz o restorane indiiskoi kukhni s illustratsiiami i istoricheskim otstupleniem” [Dzhaltarang at the Chistye Prudy or a Tale of an Indian Restaurant with Illustrations and a Historic Digression], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.7 (1983): 40-42. On Dzhaltarang as a popular hippie gathering spot see Leonid Kostiuikov, “Gosti na shokoladnoi fabrike” [Guests at the Chocolate Factory], Polit.ru, accessed March 25, 2013, <http://www.polit.ru/article/2011/06/18/guests>.

⁵⁴² On Western hippies’ embrace of India, see Mari Korpela, “A Postcolonial Imagination? Westerners Searching for Authenticity in India” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36 (September 2010): 1300, 1307. On Dzaltarang in hippie slang see F.I. Rozhansky, *Sleng hippy* [Hippie Slang] (Saint Petersburg-Paris: Izdatel’stvo evropeiskogo doma, 1992), in High.ru, accessed March 25, 2013, <http://www.biometrica.tomsk.ru/ftp/dict/slang/hipp.htm>.

⁵⁴³ On the concept to “etnos” see Serguei Oushakine, “The Russian Tragedy,” in *The Patriotism of Despair: Nation, War, and Loss in Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 79-129.

⁵⁴⁴ Hosking, *Rulers and Victims*, 331, 337, 345.

governments.⁵⁴⁵ The concept of authenticity of cuisine was played with rather loosely in the Soviet Union. On the one hand, it was perfectly plausible to create “authentic” new ethnic dishes for a particular cuisine and chefs all around the Soviet Union were praised for doing so.⁵⁴⁶ On the other hand, Soviet cookbooks began to reflect the growing interest in individual ethnic cuisines as a reaction to the multi-ethnic, pan-Soviet cuisine. As the philosopher Lisa Heldke pointed out, authenticity is often a political tool, strategically deployed to reassert authority over one’s culinary and, by extension, national heritage from the perceived outsiders.⁵⁴⁷ The greatest concern seems to have come from ethnic Russians. In their paradoxical role as “rulers and victims,” Russians were the default, “unmarked” ethnicity of the USSR, identified at home and abroad with the entire Union, rather than the RSFSR.⁵⁴⁸ The combination of the late Stalinist ideology of the “Great Russian People,” the growing attention paid to the non-Russian ethnic groups, and the gradual waning of the importance of ideology led to a renewed interest in all things specifically Russian.

This development came especially early to the culinary discourse. In 1958, the “Suggestions to the Chef” (*Sovety povaru*) section of *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, the country-wide public catering journal, featured an article on Russian recipes, with an unusually lengthy introduction. “When discussing Russian cuisine,” it is “the dishes prepared by the peoples of the Soviet Union [that] are usually implied,” it began. Yet the article wanted to draw attention to the

⁵⁴⁵ For authenticity debates see Shun Lu and Gary Alan Fine, “The Presentation of Ethnic Authenticity: Chinese Food as a Social Accomplishment,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 36 (Summer, 1995): 535-553; Arjun Appadurai, “How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30 (January, 1988): 3-24, and Panikos Panayi, *Spicing Up Britain: The Multicultural History of British Food* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008).

⁵⁴⁶ See for instance praise to author rediscovering lost Tartar dishes and inventing new ones S.Vostrova, “Liubiteliam natsional’nykh bliud” [For the Lovers of Ethnic Dishes], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.5 (1970): 55; praise for new Ukrainian dishes “Kaloriino i kaloritno” [Caloric and Colorful], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.9 (1969): 31.

⁵⁴⁷ Lisa Heldke, *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 194-195.

⁵⁴⁸ Hosking, *Rulers and Victims*, 2.

cuisine that had “historically formed” among the Russian people (*u russkogo naroda*). While well-known abroad, the article pointed out, many dishes of Russian cuisine were “unfortunately forgotten, especially in the last few years.” At the time when the Soviet Union had many restaurants serving the cuisines of other Soviet ethnicities or those of Eastern European “people’s democracies,” there was “not one restaurant serving Russian cuisine,” or “decorated in the Russian style.”⁵⁴⁹ The same issue of the journal reported that the Culinary Council of the Russian Federation, held in January 1958 had “warmly approved” the publication of a specifically Russian cookbook and the creation of Russian specialty restaurants.⁵⁵⁰ One such restaurant, “Svetlana” opened the same year in the resort city of Sochi, developed a menu with the aid of chefs with pre-revolutionary experience, euphemistically referred to as “chefs from an older generation.” It dressed its staff in the “Russian style” and set out to “propagandize Russian dishes... to the populace.”⁵⁵¹

Russian culinary nationalism could also appear in more radical forms. “Pancakes [*bliny*]” one article declared, “are a purely Russian national dish.”⁵⁵² A new section in the *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* journal, “Leafing through the old pages...” highlighted the career of Katerina Avdeeva, the Slavophile author of “The Handbook of an Experienced Russian Homemaker” (1842) who “had earned the gratitude of her descendants” because she “collected and popularized many old recipes of the Russian national cuisine.”⁵⁵³ Ignoring the rather large number of non-Russian dishes presented in her book, the Soviet journalist instead highlighted

⁵⁴⁹ “Russkaia kuchnia” [Russian Cuisine], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.5 (1958): 12.

⁵⁵⁰ M. Maslova, “Zasedanie kulinarnogo soveta RSFSR” [The Meeting of the Culinary Council of the RSFSR], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.5 (1958): 40.

⁵⁵¹ K. Nemchinov, “Bliuda russkoi kuchni” [Dishes of the Russian Cuisine], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.12 (1959):24. Here too, the issue of authenticity was somewhat vague, as the menu included “33 new recipes of Russian cuisine.”

⁵⁵² A. Markov, “O blinakh” [On Pancakes], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.2 (1959): 29.

⁵⁵³ S. Engel’, “Avtor ‘Ruchnoi knigi russkoi opytnoi khoziaiki’” [The Author of the ‘Handbook of an Experienced Russian Homemaker’], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.6 (1959):61.

Avdeeva's claim that "without condemning either German or French cuisine,...what is the healthier and better for us...is our own, dear Russian [cuisine], that which we are used to" and that which Avdeeva thought "should always be the basis for everything."⁵⁵⁴

Other ethnic groups began to draw attention to the unique nature of their cuisines, as well as seeking to distinguish themselves from the rest of the Soviet culinary family. A short note about the newly published K.Makhmudov's *Uzbek Dishes* (1959) urged the readers of *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* to "Read This Book," and quoted the authors who pointed out that while Uzbek cuisine was popular "among many peoples" of the Soviet Union, "not one book or brochure on Uzbek cuisine" had been published so far.⁵⁵⁵ When a special *Chaikhana* (a Uzbek tea house) was built for the elders of the town of Anidzhan, the republic's Ministry of Trade invited a local chef specializing in less common dishes of Uzbeki cuisine, as opposed to those "available in every canteen."⁵⁵⁶ New editions of ethnic cookbooks still included statements about mutual respect and connections among ethnic cuisines but also laid greater claims to ancient traditions and originality. Kazakh, Uzbeki, and Armenian cookbooks published in the early 1980s now differentiated between old and new ethnic dishes, and included more of the former after consulting with elders, housewives, and archives.⁵⁵⁷ The Armenian publication made special emphasis on the ancient and almost unchanging character of the Armenian cuisine, while the Kazakh text emphasized "the spring heads of national cuisine" and the "uniqueness..., distinctiveness..., [and] originality" of its dishes.⁵⁵⁸ Even small Zionist groups, formed mostly of

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid. According to Catriona Kelly, Avdeeva's recipes were not even predominantly Russian. Kelly, "Leningradskaiia kukhnia," 262.

⁵⁵⁵ "Prochite etu knigu" [Read This Book], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.6 (1959): 35.

⁵⁵⁶ L. Grishin, "Chaikhana starikov" [A Tea House for the Elders], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.10 (1959):15, 14.

⁵⁵⁷ See I.S. Saryev et al, *Kazakhskaiia kukhnia* [The Kazakh Cuisine] (Alma-Ata: Kaiinar, 1981); K.M. Makhmudov and Sh.G. Salikhov, *Bliuda uzbekskoi kukhni* [Dishes of the Uzbek Cuisine] (Tashkent: Izdatel'stvo TsK Kompartii Uzbekistana, 1983); and A.S. Piruzian, ed., *Armianskaia kulinariia* [The Armenian Cuisine] 3rd ed., (Yerevan: Aiastan, 1984).

⁵⁵⁸ Piruzian, *Armianskaia kulinariia*, 16, 19; Saryev et al, *Kazakhskaiia kukhnia*, back matter, author's summary note.

Moscow and Leningrad intelligentsia, not only taught Hebrew and Jewish history, but also held Jewish cuisine contests.⁵⁵⁹ Paradoxically, the greatest aid to culinary nationalism came from a book that gathered all Soviet ethnicities on its pages – Villiam Pokhlebkin's *National Cuisines of Our Peoples* (1978).

A retired political scientist specializing in Scandinavia, Pokhlebkin was a noted and rather abrasive eccentric. His interest in culinary arts led him to a regular column in the popular weekly *Nedelia* and as one of the consultants for the *Book of Tasty and Healthy Food*. His highly opinionated and didactic style appealed to the Soviet readership in general, while his interests in the “original” and “proper” culinary traditions, often rooted in pre-Revolutionary recipes, made him (to his great surprise) extremely popular with the Russian liberal intelligentsia.⁵⁶⁰ His *National Cuisines* was in high demand and withstood multiple editions.⁵⁶¹ The book was unusual in a number of ways. It included cuisines that were usually ignored but which he considered to be a part of “the basic culinary specialties” of Soviet cuisine, including those of the northerly Chukchi, Mongolians, and Jews.⁵⁶² Seeking to cater to the interest in “finding the original features” of ethnic cuisines, he excluded all “borrowings, remakes, and repeats” from other cuisines, describing only those foods that “could be called indigenously national in origin.”⁵⁶³

Pokhlebkin emphasized the individuality of each ethnic cuisine, even if acknowledging some similarities. The “impression that Belorussian cuisine” is a variant of Russian cuisine was “far from the truth;” the opinion that Moldavian cuisine was “poor [and] monotonous” was

⁵⁵⁹ “Sovetskii soiuz. Evrei v Sovetskom soiuze, 1967-85gg.”

⁵⁶⁰ A good summary of Pokhlebkin's life in English, on which this account is based is Ronald F. Feldstein, “An Introduction to William Pokhlebkin and his Contributions to Russian Culture,” *Glossos* 11 (Fall 2011), accessed March 27, 2013, http://slaviccenters.duke.edu/uploads/media_items/issue-11-feldstein.original.pdf. While not a fan of Brezhnev, Pokhlebkin was a Soviet conservative, perhaps similar in his outlook to the Marxist dissident Roy Medvedev.

⁵⁶¹ First published in 1978, the book was most recently republished in 2004, in addition to multiple pirated copies of various editions found online, all attesting to its undying popularity.

⁵⁶² Pokhlebkin, *Natsional'nye*, 3.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, 4, 3.

caused by unfamiliarity with its riches, nor could one speak about a single “Transcaucasian cuisine.”⁵⁶⁴ According to Pokhlebkin, one could “very directly state that each of the peoples of Transcaucasia possesses its own national cuisine.”⁵⁶⁵ His descriptions and judgments of these cuisines would not bear disagreement. Ukrainian borscht, if it were to be “authentic,” *had* to be “seasoned with sour cream after serving;” potato dishes were a “necessary, indispensable, [and] significant” part of Belorussian national cuisine; and a *real* Georgian *kharcho* (soup) had to be made with beef but no other meat.⁵⁶⁶ In his final publication, *Cuisine of the Century* (2000) he recalled with indignation that an award-winning chef from Kyrgyzstan did not know a single authentically (according to Pokhlebkin’s own categories) Kyrgyz dish.⁵⁶⁷

Pokhlebkin’s “aura of scholarship seduced” his readers and he became an essentially unquestioned authority on cuisine.⁵⁶⁸ It appealed to those who like Raisa Orlova were appalled by the intrusion of Ukrainian wine in a Georgian restaurant. The intelligentsia saw in him a “natural enlightener” and a re-discoverer of the art of “living beautifully and tastefully” for the “generations raised on the inarticulate Stalinist-Mikoyanian texts” of the *Book of Tasty and Healthy Food*.⁵⁶⁹ Though the reference to “Our Peoples” in the title of Pokhlebkin’s book did not appeal to many non-Russian intelligentsia members, its declarative, didactic tone and clear demarcation of cuisines continues to provide arguments for culinary nationalists online.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., 82, 103, 119.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 119.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 66, 83, 124.

⁵⁶⁷ V. V. Pokhlebkin, *Kukhnia veka* [Cuisine of the Century] (Moscow: Poligraf, 2000), 456.

⁵⁶⁸ Marcus Warren, “Email from Russia” *Electronic Telegraph*, February 27, 2001, accessed March 25, 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1324355/Email-from-Russia>.

⁵⁶⁹ Peter Vail, “Veselyi stol” [A Joyous Cuisine], in Pokhlebkin, *Kukhnia veka*, 7.

⁵⁷⁰ Natalia Riazantseva, “Adresa i daty” [Addresses and Dates], *Znamia* no.11 (2011): 61. Online discussions of which dishes are Armenian or Azeri seem to be especially heated and attract many Pokhlebkin references. See for example Samaia schastslivaia, “Dolma – armianskaia ili azerbaidzhanskaia kukhnia?” [Dolma – is it Armenian or Azeri cuisine?], *Otvety@mail.ru*, accessed March 25, 2013, <http://otvet.mail.ru/question/34693556> and El’khan, January 26, 2012 (05:46 a.m.), comment on Dr. GONZO, “Strasti po armianskoi kukhne” [Passions Over the Armenian Cuisine], *Poligon Kavkaz*, June 11, 2011, <http://poligonkavkaz.info/topic/2009-strasti-po-armjanskoi-kuhne>.

When writing on Russian cuisine, Pokhlebkina had placed special emphasis on cultural loss, a theme already present in Russian culinary post-war discourse.⁵⁷¹ Though present in earlier publications, this theme became especially powerful thanks to the popularization of Chingiz Aitmatov's concept of *mankurt*, a person enslaved by completely removing his or her memories, national traditions, and values. Aitmatov's concept, as it was embraced by Soviet society, placed "authentic" tradition in the past and suggested that to be truly human, one needed to constantly struggle to regain that past.⁵⁷² Russia's "village prose" writers also argued for the need to reclaim a national past that they situated in the countryside and the peasantry.⁵⁷³ The subject of loss and return of tradition became a major theme of the late Soviet culinary discourse, sometimes as a part of "people's friendship" and at times emphasizing only ethnic particularity and tragedy.

As early as 1958 K.Makhmudov wrote of the ancient Uzbek culinary and medical heritage and attempted "to reclaim and revive traditional dishes and methods of cooking" in *Uzbeki Dishes*.⁵⁷⁴ By the 1970s, the discourse of reclamation became much more common in culinary texts, and by the last years of the Soviet Union culinary pride could become outright nationalism. N.I.Kovalev's *Russian cuisine* (1972) set out to "describe certain forgotten dishes of the Russian national cuisine"⁵⁷⁵ Leningrad's Public Catering Trust turned to his expertise when they decided to build more ethnic-themed restaurants, similar to those already operating in the

⁵⁷¹ For instance, Pokhlebkina emphasized his own "complete reconstruction" of *kundiumpy*, "antique" mushroom-filled dumplings. See Pokhlebkina, *Natsional'nye*, 37.

⁵⁷² Sergei Shtyrkov, "Sovetskie korni etnicheskogo traditsionalizma: sluchai Severnoi Osetii" [The Soviet Roots of Ethnic Traditionalism: The Case of Northern Osetia], *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* no.4 (2011): 66-68.

⁵⁷³ On village prose see Geoffrey Hosking, "The Twentieth Century: In Search of New Ways, 1953-80," in *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, ed. Charles A. Moser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 560-571.

⁵⁷⁴ Glenn Mack, "The Chicken or the Egg? Creating a Central Asian Cuisine for Uzbekistan," *Repast: Quarterly Publication of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor* 21 (Summer 2005): 9.

⁵⁷⁵ N.I. Kovalev, *Russkaia kulianriia* [Russian Culinary Arts] (Moscow: Ekonomika, 1972), 2.

Baltic republics and Moldavia.⁵⁷⁶ In order to “restore” long-forgotten dishes of a cuisine that was both “remarkably rational” and “developed in fairly independent way” from those of its neighbors, Kovalev turned to the very same sources that were criticized by the culinary writers of the 1930s – the peasantry and pre-Revolutionary texts.⁵⁷⁷ He surveyed villagers, happily cited *Domostroii*, a sixteenth-century homemaking guide more commonly used as the symbol of Russia’s “dark ages” rather than a source of rational knowledge, and repeated claims of Russian priority in introducing potatoes to Europe.⁵⁷⁸ He also theorized that “[national] habits, ... the collective experiences” of an ethnic group, have “developed over millenia into the concept of ‘national taste.’”⁵⁷⁹ Therefore, Kovalev concluded, “a Russian person deems schi and okroshka as tastier than the exquisite French consommés” while to a “Uzbek, the pilaf is more precious than the most delicate European dishes.”⁵⁸⁰ Yet Kovalev tempered his nationalist assertions by adding that one should not, out of a false sense of patriotism, “resurrect long forgotten primitive...dishes” that “reflected the impoverished lifestyle of the [prerevolutionary] peasant” nor “artificially ‘cleanse’” the Russian cuisine of “borrowed foreign dishes” that have become Russian long ago, such as “frankfurters with cabbage, cutlets, languette [sliced filet mignon], [and] scaloppine.” “Is it possible to imagine a canteen menu without these dishes?” he asked.⁵⁸¹ Kovalev also had no problem with adopting Russian cooking techniques to modern ingredients such as mayonnaise or oceanic fish, but such practical considerations would not satisfy culinary nationalists. A later edition of Makhmudov’s *Uzbeki Dishes* (1976), for instance, insisted that due to the specificity of Uzbeki ethnic culinary techniques, pilafs must only be prepared on an

⁵⁷⁶ M. Medvedev, *Strana Kulnariia* [The Nation of “Culinaria”] (Leningrad: Lenizdat, 1977), 71, 75 and Kovalev, *Ruskaia*, 4.

⁵⁷⁷ Medvedev, *Strana*, 77, 80.

⁵⁷⁸ Medvedev, *Strana*, 79, 77 and Kovalev, *Ruskaia*, 7, 16. On *Domostroii* see Simon Karlinsky, “Domostroi as Literature,” *Slavic Review* 24 (1965): 497-502.

⁵⁷⁹ Kovalev, *Ruskaia*, 3.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 4. See also Medvedev, *Strana*, 81.

open fire and provided recipes for dishes that would be difficult to prepare such as sparrow soup.⁵⁸²

In the last years of the Soviet era and the early years of Russian sovereignty, culinary discourse became openly nationalist and alarmist, no longer needing to moderate its claims with lip service to internationalism. The authors of *Russian Cuisine: Traditions and Customs* (1990) argued that unlike the Italians, Chinese, the French or “even the British [who] glorify their oatmeal...the Russians somehow” did not “know what” they could “be proud of” since “hundreds” of dishes were forgotten and their place on the “table has been taken by alien foreign dishes [*bliuda-chuzemtsy*].”⁵⁸³ The “precious gift” of tradition was being lost as restaurants moved “further and further from a truly people’s cuisine [*istinno narodnoi kukhni*]” by serving their “tired languettes, cutlets, overfried potatoes.” Taking almost literally the opposite viewpoint from the 1972 *Russian Cuisine*, the authors wrote that while they were “not against internationalization of dining,” they wondered “why should entrecote [rib steak] and bifshteks [beefsteak] be the favorite dishes of a Russian when their names themselves point to their overseas origins?”⁵⁸⁴

For the less nationalist Soviet intellectuals, the theme of cultural loss was shared by all ethnicities, not just their own and the blame fell on the USSR rather than on some foreign threat. In a preface to his fellow émigrés’ book *Russian Cuisine in Exile* (1987), Lev Losev wrote that the Russian culinary imagination had suffered a great loss by the introduction of “vulgar utilitarianism” to the literature and cuisine of the “authors and characters from a common

⁵⁸² Medvedev, *Strana*, 81; K. Makhmudov, *Uzbekskie bliuda* [Uzbeki Dishes] (Taskent: Uzbekistan, 1976), 21, 97, 63.

⁵⁸³ V.M. Kovalev and N.P. Mogil’ny, *Russkaia kukhnia: traditsii i obychai* [Russian Cuisine: Traditions and Customs] (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1990), 5, 4.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 6, 7.

background [*raznochinnnoi sredy*].⁵⁸⁵ Losev blamed Turgenev's nihilist Bazarov and Tolstoy's peasant-loving Levin, so beloved by Soviet educators for allowing Russia to become "a nation of empty skies and shelves," losing the poetic approach to cookery as exemplified by Elena Molokhovets.⁵⁸⁶ Writing in the 1990s, Aleksandr Genis saw the works of Pokhlebkina as aiding the "rebirth of national consciousness" and having "*cleansed* [Russian cuisine] from seven decades of culinary barbarism."⁵⁸⁷ According to Genis, these seven Soviet decades were a threat to traditional cuisines, not only Russian but also Armenian, whose supposedly "antediluvian" recipes have survived the Soviet onslaught, and the Ukrainian whose culinary "national imagination" was finally "freed from imperial yoke."⁵⁸⁸ These opinions are echoed by the recent culinary writings in the Baltic states as well.⁵⁸⁹ In 1994, *Izvestiia* wrote about non-Russian Moscovites's "obsessed" with trying to "return...the lost ancestral heritage," an effort which included introducing their children to ethnic cuisine.⁵⁹⁰

The two paths of culinary discourse of the late Soviet Union – either embracing a multi-ethnic second pan-Soviet cuisine or an ethnically pure one – were visible on the pages of the national press. When Moscow bakeries began to offer a Caucasian-style flat bread, it was dubbed

⁵⁸⁵ L. Losev, "Poetika kukhni" [The Kitchen Poetics] in Peter Vail and Aleksandr Genis, *Russkaia kukhnia v izgnanii* [Russian Cuisine in Exile] (Los Angeles: Al'manakh, 1987), 17.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 17, 6-7. See also Aleksandr Arkhangel'skii, *1962* (St.Petersburg: Amfora, 2007), 80. Arkhangel'skii also sees Molokhovets as a chronicler of "what would be soon lost."

⁵⁸⁷ Genis, "Pokhlebkina [To Pokhlebkina]" in *Kolobok.*, 206, 212. Italics are mine. There seems to have been a tendency by Soviet exiles to equate Soviet values with culinary barbarism. Lev Losev cited an event in which Lenin's grandfather, a rationalist doctor, supposedly cooked and fed his guests a meal made from the family dog, to demonstrate that all sources of nutrition are equally valid, see Losev, "Poetika," 17-18. Konstantin, the main character of Zinovii Zinik's satiric *Russofobka i fungofil* obsessively accuses Russian and Soviet cuisines of plagiarism and inevitable descent into cannibalism. See Zinovii Zinik, *The Mushroom Picker* (New York: St.Martins Press, 1987).

⁵⁸⁸ Genis, "Armenia: Dary Urartu" [Armenia: The Gifts of Urartu], in *Kolobok*, 99, 100 and "Ukraina: Barokko borshcha" [Ukraine: The Borsch Baroque], in *Kolobok*, 172.

⁵⁸⁹ Birutė Imbrasienė, "Lithuania: Rituals and Feasts," in *Culinary Cultures of Europe*, Darra Goldstein and Kathrin Merkle, eds. (Strasbourg : Council of Europe, 2005), 267. Imbrasienė writes that "during the fifty years of Soviet occupation...Lithuanian food culture experienced destructive transformations."

⁵⁹⁰ Irina Ovchinnikova, "Kogda ot natsional'nosti ostalas' tol'ko familia" [When the Surname is All that is Left of Ethnicity], *Izvestiia*, December 28, 1994.

lavash. After the weekly *Nedelia* published a series of articles on how other cities could introduce *lavash* to their bakery assortment, enough readers wrote indignantly to the newspaper questioning the *lavash* recipe's provenance that the editors responded with a clarification. *Lavash* baked in Moscow, they explained, was not the thin Armenian bread but rather the name given by Moscow consumers to the puffier Georgian *mrgvali* bread. To avoid the error it was officially named "Caucasian," rather than "Armenian," *lavash*.⁵⁹¹ Yet, the bread was so popular that the very same page of *Nedelia* featured articles on how to mechanize the *lavash* baking process and its introduction to other Soviet cities, including the Ukrainian Dnepropetrovsk.⁵⁹² Soon after the collapse of the USSR, the newly created Russian army was planning to focus on Russian food when feeding its troops, but understood "Russian cuisine" to include the food of non-Russians living in Russia as well, adhering to the second model of the pan-Soviet cuisine.⁵⁹³

Re-embracing the Soviet Yoke? The Survival of the Second Pan-Soviet Cuisine.

This duality of Soviet culinary views after World War Two continued to play out for those who left the Soviet Union and for those who still live within its borders after its collapse. Russian emigrant cooks who left Russia before World War Two generally preserved what I have called the first pan-Soviet cuisine, similar to the urban cuisine of the late Russian Empire. While readily admitting that Russian cuisine was a mixture of ethnic, and especially French influences, they were not supporters of the ethnically "pure" cuisine that interested so many Soviet authors

⁵⁹¹ "Daem spravku [We note]" *Nedelia* no.39 (1984): 14.

⁵⁹² Irina Petrosian, "Khochu ispech' lavash," [I want to bake *lavash*], *Nedelia* no.39 (1984): 14 and Eva Sergeeva, "Novosel is Gruzii," [The Newcomer from Georgia], *Nedelia* no.39 (1984): 14.

⁵⁹³ Valerii Usol'tsev, "Chto budem yest', boiitsy?" [What shall we eat, soldiers?], *Krasnaia zvezda*, June 19, 1993. The economic conditions of the army were so dire, that even this article, published in the very conservative *Krasnaia zvezda*, was written in a very ironic tone.

during the late Soviet period.⁵⁹⁴ N.N. Selivanova, writing in 1933 cited *Domostroy* as an example of the unrefined and gluttonous, rather than glorious, past of Russian cuisine before refinement was introduced by French cooks in the 19th century.⁵⁹⁵ As postwar Soviet cookbooks began to spread in the United States, Russian culinary authors became concerned that Russian cooking might get lost and mixed up under Soviet influence. Lynn Visson, the author of *The Complete Russian Cookbook* (1982), emphasized the French-influenced Russian cuisine rather than the pan-Soviet one incorporating that of non-Russian nationalities and wanted to make sure that her book was purely Russian rather than one combined with Ukrainian cuisine or any other “Soviet and nationality junk.”⁵⁹⁶ This “junk” would influence a later generation Soviets despite their seeming commitment to “pure,” “independent” cuisines.

For all the vitriol spilled by the later waves of Russian emigrants to the US about Soviet interference with national cuisines, most of them chose to cook and eat the multi-ethnic Soviet cuisine and only to further diversify their culinary preferences. In the very popular *Russian Cuisine in Exile* (1983) its intellectual émigré authors did not stick to any pure cuisine but instead offered an entertaining collection of recipes of which the majority came from major Soviet culinary regions and added a few Russian takes on various international dishes such as the Spanish paella and bouillabaisse. Most restaurants in New York and California owned by immigrants from the Soviet Union offer a broadly Soviet menu, rather than that of their own titular Soviet ethnicity. Present day New York’s “Baku Palace” serves salt herring, *okroshka*, and

⁵⁹⁴ For mixed cuisine see Nina Nikolayevna Selivanova, *Dining and Wining in Old Russia* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1933), 15-16; Alexandra Kropotkin, *How to Cook and Eat in Russian* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1947), 4; Marie Alexandre Markevitch, *An Epicure in Imperial Russia* (San Francisco: The Colt Press, 1941), 1-5.

⁵⁹⁵ Selivanova, *Dining and Wining*, 12-16.

⁵⁹⁶ Lynn Visson, *The Complete Russian Cookbook* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1982), 18-19; Lynn Visson to Marysie Adams, November 8, 1980 and Lynn Visson to Marysia Ostafin, ND, Correspondence, 1980-1991, Box 9, Ardis Records, Special Collections Library, University of Michigan.

blintzes in addition to Azeri specialties.⁵⁹⁷ In the 1980s, the Los Angeles Armenian restaurant “Anoush” featured an almost purely Armenian menu but mixed in Soviet favorites such as herring, boiled ham (*buzhenina*), and beef stroganoff.⁵⁹⁸ Finland’s “Šašlik” restaurant had bear meat, pelmeni dumplings, pike-perch à la Tallinn, and Armenian lamb chops on its menu.⁵⁹⁹ American, Israeli, and German grocery stores serving emigrants from the former USSR stock products from most of the former Soviet republics.⁶⁰⁰ No one stopped emigrants from leading an exclusively ethnic lifestyle, but their cultures were simply too cosmopolitan.

In Israel, where Soviet emigrants form one-fifth of the population, their eating habits presented a great confusion to the local population. The plight of the Soviet Jews was usually described as a lack of access to their religious and cultural traditions.⁶⁰¹ Zionist groups in Russia studied Hebrew, tried to hold worship services, and prepare Kosher foods, but once in Israel, large numbers of Soviet Jewish emigrants seemed to be unwilling to act as Jews. Cookbooks addressed to the Russian-speaking immigrants admonished them that while “for now,” they “preferr[ed] the foods and dishes to which ... [they] have become accustomed abroad” but “the new conditions of life, an abundant selection of foods will sooner or later force ... [them] to change ... [their] former habits.”⁶⁰² Since most Russian Jews embraced the revolutionary Soviet state, many of them abandoned Jewish religious practices voluntarily. As immigrants, they saw Israel not as a Jewish homeland to which they were returning, but as a Western, capitalist country which allowed them to leave the Soviet Union. Their identity, like that of other Soviet

⁵⁹⁷ See for instance “Our Menus,” Baku Palace, accessed November 3, 2012, <http://www.bakupalace.com>.

⁵⁹⁸ Anoush Family Restaurant, Los Angeles Public Library, Regional History, Menu Collection, accessed November 3, 2012, <http://dbase1.lapl.org/images/menus/fullsize/b/24721-inside1.jpg> and <http://dbase1.lapl.org/images/menus/fullsize/b/24721-inside2.jpg>

⁵⁹⁹ Restoran Saslik, , Los Angeles Public Library, Regional History, Menu Collection, accessed November 3, 2012, <http://dbase1.lapl.org/images/menus/fullsize/a/14216-01.jpg>.

⁶⁰⁰ Julia Bernstein, *Food for Thought* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2010), 258.

⁶⁰¹ For an example of this view see “The Harsh Plight of the Soviet Jews,” *Time*, January 25, 1971.

⁶⁰² N. Zeigarik, ed., N. Pogorelski, tr., *Povarennaia kniga. Izrail'skaia kukhnia* [A Cookbook. The Israeli Cuisine] (Giv'atayim-Ramat Gan: Masada, 1975), 7.

ethnicities, became essentially racial. No longer bound by dietary strictures, pork became for them what it was for their Gentile neighbors – a favorite source of protein.⁶⁰³ While the Russian-speaking immigrants absorbed some Israeli culinary practices, their mass immigration in the last decades of the 20th century led to a change in Israeli eating practices and made eating pork (locally known as “white meat”) a relatively normal practice for secular Israelis.⁶⁰⁴ In fact, for some former Soviet Israelis, local foods such as pitas and falafel, which are often eaten with bare hands, are symbols of “oriental barbarism,” as opposed to “civilized” Soviet norms.⁶⁰⁵

In Russia, cuisine choices remain politicized and heated, due in part to the unsettled issue of a post-Soviet Russian identity. Some seek membership in Moscow’s popular “café-club Petrovich” which claims serve “food familiar to all from childhood” in atmosphere of “ironic nostalgia for the good old Soviet times, for our collective past.”⁶⁰⁶ Others, like Maksim Syrnikov, “a self-appointed guardian of authentic Russian fare,” seem to follow Pokhlebkin in their obsessive attempts to recapture “authentically Russian” foods, going so far as excluding potatoes since they are a foreign fashion introduced by Peter the Great a mere three hundred years ago.⁶⁰⁷ For Syrnikov, the traditional cuisine that he is recapturing will reintroduce young Russians to “the country's agrarian roots, torn up during seven decades of Soviet rule, and to convince them that their national cuisine can be just as flavorful as anything they might find in a sushi bar.”⁶⁰⁸

Indeed, greater exposure to foreign foods has been vexing both for proponents of Russian culinary patriotism as well as Soviet culinary nostalgia. In addition to Western fast-food outlets

⁶⁰³ For an extensive discussion of these matters see Bernstein, *Food for Thought*, 222-243.

⁶⁰⁴ See for example Ronit Vered, “Prescribing Pork in Israel,” *Gastronomica* 10 (Summer 2010): 19-22 and Jeff Yoskowitz, “How the Holy Land Got a Pork Habit,” *The Jewish Chronicle Online*, August 14, 2008, accessed November 3, 2012, <http://www.thejc.com/lifestyle/food/how-holy-land-got-a-pork-habit>.

⁶⁰⁵ Bernstein, *Food for Thought*, 237-238.

⁶⁰⁶ “Sud’ba cheloveka” [The Fate of a Man], Klub-Restoran Petrovich, accessed July 31, 2013, <http://www.club-petrovich.ru/rus/about>.

⁶⁰⁷ Julia Ioffe, “The Borscht Belt,” *The New Yorker* 16 April, 2012, 56.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

that began to open in the late 1980s, increased contact with the United States led to the introduction of sushi restaurants which have become wildly popular since the early 2000s. The restaurants are closer to the American form of the Japanese restaurants, adapted to the local palate.⁶⁰⁹ The obsession with sushi was especially perplexing to Russian observers since eating raw fish was seen as exotic and uncommon.⁶¹⁰ For many consumers old enough to have seen the extreme shortages of the last Soviet years, seaweed, rice, and soy sauce were first encountered as weird foods that remained on the otherwise empty store shelves.⁶¹¹ By now sushi has become an important cultural reference for any “self-respecting Russian urbanite.”⁶¹² For those who have not tried it yet, local sushi restaurants often serve a Russified version of sushi such as the “Tsar’s Roll with Bacon.”⁶¹³ The foreignness of the concept is underlined with creative irony by Russian sushi lovers themselves. The slogan of a Nizhni Novogord sushi restaurant is “Japanese traditions, with Russian sweep [*razmakhom*]” and features a vodka glass with two sushi rolls inside (see fig. 3.11). Artemii Lebedev, a popular designer created a tongue-in-cheek pair of chopsticks patterned after birch-bark, referencing the birch as a traditional symbol for Russian patriots (see fig. 3.12). Their purpose is to “impart patriotism to the process of consuming of sushis, rolls, sashimis, and teriyakis.”⁶¹⁴

Sushi’s popularity has been surprising to the Russian government as well. Along with seemingly politicized decisions by Russian health authorities to ban foods of nations that have

⁶⁰⁹ See for example Sabrina Tavernise, “Russians, Newly Prosperous, Go Mad for Sushi -- With Mayo,” *New York Times*, September 30, 2001.

⁶¹⁰ Andreas Renner, “Watching Foreign Neighbors: Russian and Soviet Travel Writing About Japan in the First Half of the Twentieth Century,” *Journal of Tourism History* 3 (2011): 49.

⁶¹¹ O.Nazarova and K. Kobrin, *Puteshestvie na kray tarelki* [A Trip to the Edge of the Plate] (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2009), 87. Nazrova describes desperate shoppers in Nizhni Novgorod (then Gorky) who made meals out of the unlikely ingredients in the late 1980s. In the same period I have also encountered Moscow stores that carried nothing but canned seaweed salad, sometimes mixed with sea cucumber – both common sushi restaurant dishes today. Both were considered to be completely inedible by my entire family.

⁶¹² Marina Koroleva, “Sushi, susi...” *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, May 6, 2010.

⁶¹³ “Menu-Rolly,” Sushniak, accessed March 27, 2013, <http://su-sushi.ru/rolly>.

⁶¹⁴ “Palochki dlia iiedy ‘Natalis’” [“Natalis” Chopsticks], Studiia Artemiia Lebedeva, accessed March 30, 2013, <http://www.artlebedev.ru/everything/natalis>.



Figure 3.11. Sushi rolls and chopsticks arranged inside a Russian vodka glass. <http://su-sushi.ru>.



Figure 3.12. Artemii Lebedev's Patriotic "birch" chopsticks. <http://www.artlebedev.ru/everything/natalis>.

not gone along with Russian diplomatic goals, such as Georgia and the Baltic states, a 2012 press conference by Dr. Genady Onishchenko, Russia's chief sanitation authority, singled out sushi as unique threat. Commenting on a recent inspection of fifty-five Moscow sushi restaurants that were found to have sanitary violations, Onishchenko said that Russians, as a "people with formed eating traditions," ought to eat that which their "genetic memory is used to," rather than swallowing "a slice of something incomprehensible that already began to rot."⁶¹⁵ Given that the violations were comparatively minor, Russian observers have suggested that Onishchenko and the Ministry of Agriculture that claimed that traditional mead could replace beer were under the influence of the "Russian lobby."⁶¹⁶ And yet, one journalist asked, could this "lobby" be right since "Soviet cuisine has happily been forgotten, a Russian cuisine has not taken a place of honor on the market" and the readers would have to "struggle to remember" where to treat a foreigner to "authentic Russian cuisine."⁶¹⁷

A Resemblance to Imperial Cuisine?

This chapter has highlighted the constant tension among modernization, traditionalism, authenticity, innovation, nationalism and cosmopolitanism as the major features of debates about the Soviet cuisine. In a society where almost every choice could have political implications, the meaning and ethnic identity of what one ate had acquired symbolic values that reflected the tense considerations of what it meant to be Soviet. The relative success of the efforts expanded by Soviet authorities to make the second Pan-Soviet cuisine inclusive and popular suggests that the

⁶¹⁵ Anna Bokk, "Letnie sovety Gennadiia Onishchenko: o fontanakh, konditionerakh, sushi, i shkol'nom raspisanii" [Gennadii Onishchenko's Summer Advice: On Fountains, Conditioners, Sushi, and School Schedules], *Argumenty i fakty*, June 29, 2012 and "Onishchenko prizyvaet rossiian ne uvlekat'sia bliudami iaponskoi kukhni" [Onishchenko calls on Russians not to indulge in Japanese cuisine.], RIA-Novosti, accessed March 27, 2013, <http://ria.ru/society/20120609/669290808>.

⁶¹⁶ Irina Rybnikova, "Spasite nashi sushi" [Save Our Sushi], *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, June 21, 2012; Polina Anisimova, "Pochemu Genadii Onishchenko protiv sushi?" [Why is Genadii Onishchenko Against Sushi?], *Sobesednik.ru*, June 9, 2012, <http://sobesednik.ru/print/83540>.

⁶¹⁷ Anisimova, "Pochemu."

Soviet Union was not an empire in the traditional sense. It was certainly not culinarily totalitarian as has been asserted by its critics. By describing the USSR as having a “family resemblance” to an empire, Mark Beissinger had perhaps come up with the best formulation of the contradictory nature of the Soviet State.⁶¹⁸ If the Soviet Union had damaged traditional cuisines in any way beyond an average modern state, it was because of unintentional but continual shortages of almost all foods. Though the first pan-Soviet Cuisine and its high-handed application could have been described as imperialist, the second Pan-Soviet cuisine attempted to extend the ethno-national particularism and pride to the culinary realm. It is therefore best described as bearing a “family resemblance” to an imperial cuisine while retaining uniquely Soviet features.

While the Soviet approach to cuisine had changed over time, there was a general consensus on the ideal setting in which food would be served. Somewhat counterintuitively, American-style fast food was selected as the ideal form of Soviet dining, no matter which form of Soviet cuisine would be served there. From the Stalinist modernizers who attempted to build a system of American self-service cafeterias to the first Soviet McDonald’s that opened in 1990, during the increasing ethnic tensions on the eve of Soviet collapse, the ideal form of food service largely remained the same. The next chapter attempts to explain this seeming paradox as a result of Soviet views on gender roles, domesticity, and Fordist efficiency.

⁶¹⁸ Mark R. Beissinger, “Soviet Empire as ‘Family Resemblance,’” *Slavic Review* 65 (2006): 294-303.

Chapter 4 The Soviet Quest for Fast Food

Western coverage devoted to the first McDonald's restaurant in the Soviet Union saw it as a weapon of capitalism and an indication of Western triumph in the Cold War. It was "the sweet dream of capitalism" and "a triumph of capitalist determination."⁶¹⁹ McDonald's was the obvious antithesis of everything Soviet. According to *The New Republic*, it was "a gleaming spacecraft from some distant alien civilization" and "a *real* Lenin's tomb," a sentiment echoed by the *Washington Post* which asserted that unlike the pro-Western Peter the Great and Mikhail Gorbachev, "Lenin...was not a Chicken McNuggets sort of guy."⁶²⁰ Yet, far from being the ultimate sign of the demise of the Soviet dream, McDonald's was in many ways its culmination. Gorbachev's government actively sought its opening and saw it not as a victor in the struggle against socialism but as a model for its reform. McDonald's was admired not so much because it was a Western corporation but because it represented so many *Soviet* ideals – efficiency, rationality, and Fordism – an industrial system combining standardization and mass-production.

McDonald's appealed to the Soviet imagination because it reflected a number of specifically Soviet factors that have been present in the USSR since its inception. Their development over the seventy years following 1917 made the Soviet Union predisposed to favor McDonald's not as an enemy but as a tool of reform, finally fulfilling the goals which were already in place before World War Two. This chapter will trace the development of the relationship among Soviet women, domestic kitchens, the public catering system, the Soviet love

⁶¹⁹ David Remnick, "Moscow's Big Mac Attack; McDonald's Gets Official Nod to Bring Fast Food to the Motherland," *Washington Post*, April 30, 1988 and Bill Keller, "Of Famous Arches, Beeg Meks and Rubles," *New York Times*, January 28, 1990. Multiple other articles that year also had "Big Mac Attack" in their titles. See for example "Starch Wars? -- Moscow's Big Mac Attack," *Seattle Times*, February 3, 1990 and "50,000 McCustomers a Day Join Moscow's Big Mac Attack," *Financial Post*, August 2, 1990.

⁶²⁰ Hendrik Hertzberg, "Moscow Diarist," *The New Republic*, July 9 and 16, 1990 and Remnick, "Moscow's Big Mac Attack."

affair with the Fordist productivist ethos, American efficiency, and conveyor belts.⁶²¹ These seemingly divergent factors combined in the Soviet quest to create a Western-style fast food system that appeared to be especially suitable to the ideal Soviet way of life.

Soviet Women: From Kitchen Slavery to Freedom in the Kitchen

The Soviet state did not just concern itself with the increased production of sausage, heroism-based food distribution, or the ethnic origins of foods. Its new society had to answer two other fundamental questions – who would prepare this food and where it would be served and eaten. Lenin’s solution, in his 1918 draft of the Party program would be taking “unrelenting, systematic measures” to replace individual household eating with a “collective feeding of large groups of families,” or, to use Lenin’s own preferred term, *Massenspeisung* (mass feeding).⁶²² Expanding this idea in his 1919 essay “A Great Beginning,” Lenin wrote that despite great strides made in promoting her legal emancipation, the Soviet woman remained a “*domestic slave*,” crushed by “*petty domestic economy*” which “stole her labor” and chained her to “the kitchen and the nursery.” Only when housework would be transformed into “a great socialist enterprise” including “public canteens” would “female inequality with men” be “lessened and destroyed.”⁶²³

Between 1917 and 1931, Soviet official discourse and actions aimed at the reconstruction of everyday lifestyle (*byt*), making it modern, efficient, and communal. The liberationist ethos was perhaps best expressed in a contemporary poster, *Down With Kitchen Slavery! Let’s Have A New Lifestyle!* (1931, fig. 4.1). The poster shows a housewife sitting in the darkness, surrounded

⁶²¹ Though “Fordist” is a clumsy adjective, I use it following other scholars of the Soviet industrial culture. See, for example, Mark R. Beissinger, *Scientific Management, Socialist Discipline, and Soviet Power* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 105 and Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 11, 35.

⁶²² V.I.Lenin, “Chernovoi nabrosok proekta programmy” [A Preliminary Draft of the Projected Program] in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [Complete Collected Works] 5th ed., (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1963), 36:75.

⁶²³ V.I.Lenin, “Velikii pochin” [A Great Beginning] in *Polnoe sobranie*, 39:24. Italics are Lenin’s.



Figure 4.1. Down with Kitchen Slavery! Let Us Have A New Life Style! (1931). Plakaty.ru, <http://www.plakaty.ru/posters?id=30>.

by the symbols of her enslavement, including the most common kitchen implement – the *primus* hotplate – in the lower right corner. Awaiting the old-world housewife in the light of the open door are the solutions: the crèche, the club, the canteen and the factory-kitchen. The latter was “called upon to free women” and was seen as being “at the root opposed to the bourgeois ideal of the domestic hearth” and the “monstrous waste” of resources that surrounded “the historic tradition of a home meal.”⁶²⁴ The same ethos pervaded the desires of a “new man,” Andrey Babichev of Yuri Olesha’s novel *Envy* (1927). Babichev declares a “war on kitchens,” which will be replaced by the likes of “The Quarter,” his factory-kitchen where every meal would cost only 25 kopeks. There, instead of handing over “half her life” to the kitchen for “a puddle of soup,” the woman would be offered “shining seas” and “oceans” of soups in “lily-pure” plates to feed her family.⁶²⁵ Babichev’s opposite is his arch-bourgeois philistine brother Ivan, who dreams of telling the female masses that Bolsheviks like Andrey “want to take away...[their] principle wealth” – “home and hearth!”⁶²⁶

Women themselves were usually blamed for their own enslavement. Just as the “unenlightened” (*temnaia*) woman was blamed for retaining religious prejudices and corrupting her family with the icon, she was also blamed for clinging to the old ideal of the hearth.⁶²⁷ Writing in 1925, Lenin’s widow Nadezhda Krupskaja wrote that female workers themselves should focus closely on expanding the network of public catering. They were to set up committees to monitor the work of the factory canteens, establish new ones, and sign up to eat

⁶²⁴ Adol’f Prints, “35000 obedov” [35,000 dinners], *Nashi dostizheniia* no.10-11 (1931):143; V. Liak, “Budet inaiia zhizn’...” [This Will be a Different Life...], *Nashi dostizheniia* no.3 (1931):82.

⁶²⁵ Iurii Olesha, *Zavist’* (Moscow: Zemlia i fabrika, 1927), 12.

⁶²⁶ Yuri Olesha, Marian Schwarz, tr., *Envy* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2004),121.

⁶²⁷ For a succinct discussion on the association of women with religion in the USSR see John Anderson, “Out of the Kitchen, Out of the Temple: Religion, Atheism and Women in the Soviet Union” in *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, Sabrina Petra Ramet, ed., (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 206-230.

there along with the men – in a word, each one was to transform herself from being a “mistress of the house to a mistress of the common good [iz ‘domashneii khoziaki prevratit’sia v ‘obshchestvennaiu’].”⁶²⁸ Yet housewives seemed too conservative and unappreciative of attempts to liberate them.⁶²⁹ When female workers toured a new Moscow apartment building into which they were about to move, instead of appreciating the communal dining facilities and around the clock supply of hot water, they shocked the managers with demands for a place to bake traditional meat pies (pirogi) and refused to leave their enormous, old-fashioned tea urns (*samovars*) behind. Unconvinced by the argument that pies were a mere “belch of tsarism” and that the samovars were not needed to boil water in a modern building, the women won access to the communal ovens for pie baking.⁶³⁰

For all the revolutionary calls to liberate women from their enslavement to the *primus*, few if any exhortations clarified *who* would prepare the food in the kitchen factories. Nor did they ever mention the possibility that men might be able to cook as well. Sharing the burden of the household was never really brought up and the concept of the “separate spheres” of the sexes was still commonly accepted. In one expert’s opinion, placing a bed against the wall was a “relic of the stone age” since it prevented the circulation of air, but his proposal for a “most rational” and hygienic workers’ apartment was divided into a “common room for the woman and child,” featuring “a bed,...and a round dining table” while the smaller room “for the work of the man” had “a bed and work desk.”⁶³¹ A 1931 article on Leningrad’s Vasileostrovskaiia factory-kitchen described it as one of four models for future establishments to “free female working hands for

⁶²⁸ N.K. Krupskaiia, “Zhenshchina rabotnitsa i delo obshchestvennogo pitaniia” [The Female Worker and the Cause of Public Catering] in N.K. Krupskaiia, *Zhenshchina strany sovetov – ravnopravnyi grazhdanin* [Woman of the Land of the Soviets – An Equal Citizen] (Moscow: Partizdat TsK VKP(b), 1938), 29.

⁶²⁹ Liak, “Budet inaiia,” 82.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁶³¹ E. Zagorskaia, “Oformlenie rabochikh zhilishch” [The Décor of Workers’ Residencies], *Nashi dostizheniia* no.3 (1931):88. The expert was Hannes Mayer, the communist former director of the German Bauhaus school.

industry” in the city, yet mentioned only female employees.⁶³² By the mid-1930s the public catering union congratulated itself on the enlightened attitudes of its industry that had fulfilled its “important role in the rebuilding of the old lifestyle and the liberation of women from concerns of housework” through the “broadest use of female labor,” since 70% to 80% of its kitchen workers were female.⁶³³

Between 1930 and 1931 state directives systematically removed the social experiments of the earlier era as too distracting from the immediate plan for industrialization and collectivization. Just as the anti-alcoholism campaign was essentially abandoned in order to raise state revenue, the active lifestyle reform was also curtailed as “baseless, half-fantastic...attempts” to “jump over...the obstacles” on the road to a future socialist life.⁶³⁴ The state would continue improving material conditions but the workers themselves would eventually settle into a new lifestyle, once they understood its rational value, rather than be forced to adopt it by overly enthusiastic reformers.⁶³⁵ Kitchens would not be abolished (though a number of model apartment buildings were already constructed without them) since there were not enough public facilities to replace them yet.⁶³⁶ There was a practical side to these changes as well. For the workers, the “hearth” was perhaps one of the few stable elements in a world that had been rapidly changing, while for the upwardly mobile specialists and administrators, allowing their wives to stay home was an important status symbol.⁶³⁷ If the previous model of female liberation essentially saw the woman as primarily an industrial worker, the new concept that would remain

⁶³² Prints, “35000 obedov,” 142.

⁶³³ “Samye schastlivye v mire” [The Happiest in the World], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.5 (1936):1.

⁶³⁴ Cited in Vladimir Paperny, *Kul'tura 2* [Culture 2] (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1985), 122.

⁶³⁵ Victor Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 60-61.

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*, 34-35, 53-54 and Paperny, *Kul'tura 2*, 122.

⁶³⁷ Buchli, *An Archaeology*, 33.

dominant well into 1990s, saw the ideal Soviet woman as a “working mother.”⁶³⁸

The “double-burden” of employment and domestic work in this conceptualization was supposed to be liberating. Instead of being limited *only* to the role of the housewife, according to the new concept of Soviet womanhood, the Soviet woman could say “I am a wife... a mother... but at the same time I am an equal citizen who works along with her husband for the benefit of the motherland.”⁶³⁹ In addition to her duty to keep the household running and her husband productive, the ideal Soviet woman had a duty to improve her education and to engage in socially useful volunteer work or paid labor. Unlike the women of the capitalist West who had to worry whether their husband would have a job and told to maintain the strictest frugality, the Soviet woman was said to have been provided with a working husband and material abundance and thus only had to think “how to more rationally use her time” to “do less concocting in the kitchen” and be more engaged in public life.⁶⁴⁰ For some Soviet women this meant a class-based division of labor. Like many other professional Soviet women, Masha Scott, the Russian wife of the American memoirist John Scott, saw nothing wrong with delegating housework to a hired servant who lacked her education so that Scott could devote her free time to self-improvement.⁶⁴¹

The mid-1930s mantra of abundance adopted not only the American efficiency but also the American standard of living as models. The seeming social backwardness of the woman remaining in the kitchen would be outweighed by the modernization of the domestic hearth. The *new* “New Soviet Woman’s” progress would be measured in providing her with the very things

⁶³⁸ E. Zdravomyslova and A. Temkina, “Vvedenie” [Introduction] in *Gendernoe izmerenie sotsial'noi i politicheskoi aktivnosti v perekhodnyi period: sbornik nauchnykh statei* [The Gender Dimension of the Social and Political Activity in the Period of Transition: A Collection of Scholarly Articles], E. Zdravomyslova and A. Temkina, eds., (St. Petersburg: Tsentr nezavisimyykh sotsial'nykh issledovaniy, 1996), <http://cisr.ru/publications/gendernoe-izmerenie-sotsialnoy-i-politicheskoy-aktivnosti-v-perekhodny-period>.

⁶³⁹ G.K. Ordzhonikidze “Rastet i shirit'sia dvizhenie zhen inzhenerov i tekhnikov” [The Movement of the Wives of Engineers and Technologists is Growing Ever Wider], *Obshchestvennitsa* no.2 (1937):17.

⁶⁴⁰ B. Vilenkin, “Uluchshim obshchestvennoe pitanie” [Let Us Improve Public Catering], *Obshchestvennitsa* no.5 (1937): 21.

⁶⁴¹ John Scott, *Behind the Urals* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1973), 132-133.

that up to 1931 were emblematic of the wastefulness of domestic cookery: efficient, well-equipped kitchens, good cookbooks, and time-saving convenience foods. Her contribution to society would be measured not only by professional work but also by her adoption of modern nutritional knowledge and keeping her family healthy and well-fed.

In the post-war period, Soviet women could move closer to the ideal but the double-burden of being a fully-employed mother who could not expect any help from her husband did not become any lighter. Servants were out of the question and neither the state nor families could afford to allow many women to choose to be housewives.⁶⁴² The situation was perhaps best described by Natalya Baranskaia's *A Week Like Any Other* (1969). When professional women are asked to fill out a survey to help government statisticians understand why Soviet women aren't having more children, the narrator goes over her average week. She has two children, a loving husband, an interesting job, and even her own apartment but she is expected to take care of her household in every way from sewing to cooking to nursing – all the while hoping to retain the job which still interests her as a scientist. The social implications of her plight, so emblematic of many other Soviet women, were not questioned, but her complaint about the lack of time was one that interested the Soviet government. Among the solutions was the increased efficiency of the food and public catering industries as well as flexible work schedules. Yet these problems continued to fester to the very end of the Soviet state – when McDonald's was presented as the solution.

⁶⁴² The fact that many modern Russian women reject Western feminism and its perceived goals has been compared to the experience of Third-World Feminists, since like them, Russian women have not been given a choice on how to balance family and public life. They did not have to fight for the right to work, but were forced to work by socio-economic circumstances, without the benefit of either equal pay or adequate social services. Both burdens were thrust on them, and by the time Perestroika came many Soviet women found the suggestion of being simply housewives quite attractive. For the complex Russian and Eastern European women's response to Western feminism, see Kornelia Slavova, "Looking at Western Feminisms through the Double Lens of Eastern Europe and the Third World," in *Women and Citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe*, Jasmina Lukic, Joanna Regulska, and Darja Zavarisek, eds. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006) and Ann Snitow, "Cautionary Tales," in *Women and Citizenship*.

“Shop Floors of Nutrition” – Industrial Dining

In his 1993 critique of the increasing homogenation of modern society the American sociologist George Ritzer proposed that this process is best described as the *McDonaldization* of a society which has embraced the inhuman values of the modern chain restaurant. Ritzer’s five elements of McDonaldization – Efficiency, Calculability, Predictability, Increased Control, and the Replacement of Human by Non-human Technology – were precisely what the official discourse in the Soviet Union valued and felt it lacked, especially in the public catering sector.⁶⁴³ Far from seeing this hyper rationality as a problem, the Soviets saw in it a solution to what ailed them.

During the 1930s, because public catering feared being associated with the backward and feminine kitchen, it tried to emphasize that it had become a genuine, modern industry ready to serve the new man-machine, with top technology and top scientific nutritional research. Factory-kitchens or massive commissaries were an especially attractive solution. “A kitchen-factory is a genuine factory,” argued one article defensively, “it has shops – the boiling, the meat, the cold – and machines at every step.”⁶⁴⁴ Its function to serve food and benefit diners at times seemed forgotten when it was favorably compared to “a medium-size plant” and was said to have among its machines soup kettles big enough “to drown an adult”⁶⁴⁵ Like the later twentieth-century McDonald’s restaurants, this factory-kitchen featured an electrified sign on its roof with the ever-growing number of dinners made and served.⁶⁴⁶ In some plants, the canteen was literally called “A Shop Floor of Nutrition” (*tsekh pitaniia*) (see fig. 4.2). It further equated eating with mechanical processes, an approach worthy of the future “man-machine.”

⁶⁴³ George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1993).

⁶⁴⁴ Prints, “35000 obedov,” 141.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 143, 142.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.



Figure 4.2. “Tsekh Pitaniia [Shop-Floor of Nutrition]” in S. Dzuibinskii, “Tsekh Kadrov” [The Shop Floor of Human Resources], *Nashi dostizheniia* no.3 (1931): 23.

The concept of the mechanical man was close to Russian Taylorist and Fordist labor reformers such as A.K. Gastev and P.M. Kerzhentsev who called for combining “the whirlwind of the Revolution in the USSR” with the “American pulse of life,” and hoped that a Fordist factory with its conveyor belt precision would transform careless Russian peasants into cultured, Americanized workers.⁶⁴⁷ Their rhetoric bled into the efforts to reform Soviet interactions with food so that a collectively organized canteen could feature, as its only decoration, a poster of the “Man-Machine,” showing the “processes of digestion and circulation as the work of giant plant.”⁶⁴⁸ Babichev’s fictional “Quarter” was going to feed a man of the future, a “man-machine” who would have “not a single extraneous cipher.”⁶⁴⁹ A new circular conveyor belt-based automated bakery was supposed to inspire the “conveyorization” of a new Soviet life.⁶⁵⁰ The endless rush-hour stream of bodies that stopped only to refuel was the symbol of the “American pulse of life.” Visiting the United States in 1926, Vladimir Mayakovsky was especially impressed with New York on rainy workdays when workers “start up the body machines [and] stuff into their mouths the first fuel – a hurried glass of...coffee and a donut” made on the spot “in hundreds of copies by a donut machine.”⁶⁵¹ Soon these machines would serve those motivated by enthusiasm, rather than the profit motive.

There was no doubt that Western technology could solve all Soviet problems, especially in the food industry, whose American counterparts seemed to be almost miraculously successful. The image of “the magic table cloth” was extremely influential within the Soviet discourse of the

⁶⁴⁷ See Gastev’s poster from A. Gastev, *Iunost’, idi!* (Moscow: VTsSPS, 1923) in René Fülöp-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism: An Examination of Cultural Life in Soviet Russia* (London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1927), 20. For a detailed discussion of the ideas of Gastev and Kerzhentsev see Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁶⁴⁸ E.Z. “Stolovaia-kolkhoz,” 84.

⁶⁴⁹ Olesha, *Envy*, 59.

⁶⁵⁰ “Khlebozvod-avtomat” [An Automatic Bakery] *Nashi dostizheniia* no.3 (1931): 143-144.

⁶⁵¹ Vladimir Mayakovskiy, “Moe otrkytie Ameriki” [My Discovery of America] in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [Complete Collected Works] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo khudozhestvennoii literatury, 1958), 7:300.

1930s.⁶⁵² For all the Marxist rhetoric about the base and the superstructure, it was assumed that technology was not a system-dependent tool but was instead a sort of a magic spell, universally and instantly applicable once its secret was learned. It was magic used by capitalists for evil, and once in the hands of the Soviets, it would be implemented to do good. In a telling 1931 essay, after thoroughly criticizing German capitalists for inventing ersatz products and techniques to mask the impoverishment of the workers' diets, the *Pravda* journalist Mikhail Kol'tsov suggested that the Soviet Union ought to *copy* their methods. "Western food technology," Kol'tsov wrote, "contrives to use every food...to the end, mining all of its nutritive and flavor qualities."⁶⁵³ "Chef-engineers, who mastered European technology" would be able to transform even the simplest foods into tasty dishes, resolving the (unmentioned) shortages of many goods with skill and versatility.⁶⁵⁴

Though the plans for the radical transformation of men and women into machines were over by the mid-1930s, along with the rationing that in part inspired them, Western efficiency and mechanization continued to make the United States an object of Soviet pilgrimage.⁶⁵⁵ Stalin's 1924 claim that true Soviet, "Leninist style of work" combined the "Russian revolutionary sweep" with "American efficiency" was still commonly cited, often in relation to the new Soviet men, such as Stakhanovites or the Engineering-Technological (*ITR*) management

⁶⁵² Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism : Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 89.

⁶⁵³ Mikhail Kol'tsov, "Sadias' za stol..." [Coming to the Table...] in *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v trekh tomakh* [Selected Works in Three Volumes] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoii literatury, 1957), 1:426.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁵ Germany was already considered only as a second-best source of new technologies, but the coming of Hitler to power in 1933 made it into the primary political enemy, rather than any sort of a role model. Coincidentally the United States recognized the Soviet Union the same year and further established itself as the primary source of Soviet inspiration.

who still had to learn how to value their time.⁶⁵⁶ Their wives too might want an occasional break from cooking at home. With Stalin's 1935 proclamation that life had become better and happier, being acquainted with the modern (as opposed to pre-Revolutionary Russian) trappings of a "good life" became especially important. With these factors in play, the public catering system needed to continue to develop and provide not only good food but to serve it quickly as well.

The United States had, by the mid-1930s, been home to multiple solutions for eating quickly which became one of the symbols of the modern, American "pulse of life." Even in 1888, *Harper's Weekly* could write that "the most distinctive of all American institutions... is our Lunch-Room" which answered the need "of appeasing hunger in the shortest possible time."⁶⁵⁷ One of the key features of the Lunch-Room were the tall counters at which people could eat sitting on stools or even standing up at a bar (fig. 4.3). The speed of American quick-service restaurants led to them being called "rapid-fire" establishments.⁶⁵⁸ By the 1930s, there were quick-service options for all income levels.⁶⁵⁹ These factors fascinated Soviet planners and consumers for whom these unusual methods of rapidly feeding large numbers of people seemed like the perfect answer to the long lines and inefficient service of an average Soviet canteen.

Pre-War Soviet Fast-Food

The first establishments to offer quick service to standing customers in the USSR were actually the "American-style bars" (*Amerikanki*) that proliferated in the 1920s and remained in some Soviet cities well into the 1940s. Their primary purpose was rapid consumption of alcohol rather than food though they remained "snack bars" in theory. What made them American was

⁶⁵⁶ J.V. Stalin, "The Foundations of Leninism" in *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), 6:194. See for instance I.Bardin, Sol' zemli sovetskoi" [The Salt of the Soviet Earth], *Izvestiia*, November 7, 1938.

⁶⁵⁷ "A Down-Town Lunch-Room," *Harper's Weekly*, September 8, 1888.

⁶⁵⁸ See for example "Green-eyed Monster Invades Restaurant," *The New York Times*, August 13, 1904 and Wendell Ware, *Gems of Expression* (Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing, 1947), 12.

⁶⁵⁹ See John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, "The Rise of the Quick-Service Restaurant," in *Fast Food: Roadside Restaurants in the Automobile Age* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 20-39.



Figure 4.3. "A Down-Town Lunch-Room," *Harper's Weekly*, September 8, 1888.

the speed of service and the standing customers.⁶⁶⁰ The term also began to be applied to establishments “built according to the principle of American cafeterias.”⁶⁶¹

Soviet interest in the American cafeteria and the Automat piqued in the 1930s. As more people worked in the industrial plants, feeding them efficiently became an enormous problem. The queues that plagued every Soviet establishment also proliferated at factory canteens, making it difficult for workers to obtain and consume their meal within the allotted lunch hour. Getting a quick meal at an open-access canteen when not at one’s workplace was an even more difficult task. Through the entire decade, with or without rationing, many Soviet canteens suffered from the same problems.

Many barriers stood between food and the diner’s mouth. The most common complaint was slow service.⁶⁶² There were often not enough places, silverware, plates – in many cases the diner would have to wait for some or all of these to free up and even individually bring them to be washed.⁶⁶³ There were long lines at the cashiers since, in many cases, diners had to get an individual receipt for each dish and the cashiers would have to individually date and stamp each receipt.⁶⁶⁴ Many waitresses had a “habit” that was both “irrational and inexcusable from the sanitary-hygienic point of view” of taking as many plates as possible and then stacking them on their trays in an attempt to save time.⁶⁶⁵ The food was crushed, plates were broken, and soup was

⁶⁶⁰ Reportedly, the NKVD had specially flooded cells called *Amerikanki*, where prisoners were tortured by standing for lengthy periods of time. See Harvard University - Slavic Division, Widener Library, HCL / Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 8, Case 107 (interviewer A.D., type A4). Female, 57, Great Russian, Peasant, housewife, unskilled worker. Widener Library, Harvard University.

⁶⁶¹ Harvard University - Slavic Division, Widener Library, HCL / Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule B, Vol. 17, Case 381 (interviewer H.B.). Widener Library, Harvard University.

⁶⁶² I. Pantelev, “Ratsionalizatsiia raboty obednogo zala” [Rationalizing the Work of a Dining Hall], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.20 (1939): 21.

⁶⁶³ S. Pil’shchikov, “V kol’tse ravnodushiia” [In the Ring of Indifference], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.6 (1938):13; “Na temy dnia. O zavodskoi stolovoi” [On the Day’s Topics. On a Factory Canteen.], *Pravda*, July 25, 1940.

⁶⁶⁴ G. Filippov “Rabotaem chetche, obsluzhivaem bystree” [Working With Greater Precision, Serving Faster], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.4 (1939): 15; E. Krashennikov, “Kak my uskorili obsluzhivanie potrebiteli” [How We Sped Up Customer Service], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.23-24 (1940): 18.

⁶⁶⁵ I. Pantelev, “Ratsionalizatsiia,” 22.

spilled on customers.⁶⁶⁶ Self-service establishments seemed like a good solution to many of these practices.

Moscow authorities had been toying with building a fast-service American cafeteria for a few years. In 1932, *Izvestiia* reported that the kitchen-factory of the Moscow Ball Bearing plant would be reconstructed as an American self-service cafeteria with two chafing tables, a light-board menu, a fully-mechanized kitchen, and a staff of twenty-five American specialists invited by the Moscow Public Catering Administration.⁶⁶⁷ If this experiment proved a success, the Moscow authorities promised to expand it to other kitchen-factories, but with the rationing system still in place, it seems that the experiment was not implemented. It also appears that the Moscow public catering authorities had short institutional memories, since in 1936 they asked a group of foreign workers' wives to assist in the organization of Moscow's "*first* quick-service snack bar."⁶⁶⁸ Centrally located, the snack-bar would offer the dishes that characterized American cafeterias including a salad station, hot dishes cooked to order, fruit juices, and even "the so-called "three-floored" sandwiches." The staff would consist of the foreign workers' wives and Soviet public catering employees who would "learn American methods of organizing the work of a snack bar."⁶⁶⁹

Starting with its very name, the Automat also appealed to many Soviet caterers and officials. Here too their memory had proved short since there already were a few branches of the

⁶⁶⁶ Sem. Shcherbakov, "Privlechtem tekhnicheskuiu mysl' k obshchestvennomu pitaniuu" [Let's Connect Technical Thought to Public Catering], *Pravda*, April 14, 1930.

⁶⁶⁷ "Amerikanskii kafeterii na 'Sharikopodshibnike'" [An American Cafeteria at the "Sharikopodshibnik"], *Izvestiia*, December 9, 1932.

⁶⁶⁸ A. Zuevskii, "Skoraia zakusochnaia" [A Quick-service Snack Bar], *Trud*, June 29, 1936. Italics are mine. Of course, in a period characterized by experimentation and mass purges, short institutional memory is not altogether surprising.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

German and Austrian automatic “Quisisana” cafeteria in Russia before the Revolution.⁶⁷⁰ Yet, in 1930, *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* claimed that the engineer A.M. Kukelianskii had “finally moved the question [of an automated canteen] from standstill” by inventing an automated canteen of “ingenious simplicity.”⁶⁷¹ This genuine example of a Rube Goldberg machine had the visitor placing a purchased token into a slot in the middle of a table which turned on a numbered lamp in the kitchen, where an operator would inform a cook of the order. The cook would “hermetically seal” the dish and place it on a conveyor belt running under the floor and continuing into a pipe connected to the table top. Within a minute of placing the token into the slot, the dish would appear in the middle of the table “in the very same way that Mephistopheles appears on the stage of the Bolshoi theatre.”⁶⁷² While Kukelianskii’s Automat was not implemented, the interest in quick-service solutions remained high and by the mid-1930s, the central government began to be more interested in the practical implementation of American-style quick service establishments.

In 1936, the entire country was introduced to American eating practices thanks to the publication of *Oдноэтажная Америка* (One-Storeyed America), a travelogue of two enormously popular Soviet humorists. Ilya Il’f and Evgenii Petrov, the authors of the *Twelve Chairs* and the *Golden Calf*, extensively toured the United States for two months between 1935 and 1936, and the record of their trip, thanks to multiple republications, “was arguably the most important popular source of information about the United States for Soviet readers.”⁶⁷³ While criticizing

⁶⁷⁰ See for example “Moskovskie Starosti,” February 13, 2011, Ekho Moskvyy, accessed July 31, 2013, <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/oldmsk/2400>; “Chego izvolite-s?” [What Would You Like?], *Nevskoe vremia* July 8, 2006, accessed July, 31, 2013, http://www.nvspb.ru/stories/chego_izvolites; Don Aminado, *Poezd na tret’em puti* [The Train on the Third Platform] (Moscow: Vagrius, 2000), 51.

⁶⁷¹ BEV, “Avtomat-stolovaia” [An Automatic Canteen], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no 17-18 (1930): 12.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

⁶⁷³ E. Wolf, “The Author as Photographer: Tret’iakov’s, Erenburg’s, and Il’f’s Images of the West” *Configurations* 18 (2010): 399. For the publishing history of the *Single-Floored America* see Karen L. Ryan, “Imagining America: Il’f

American society, they were almost relentlessly positive in their “assessments of...services, behaviors or habits that might be useful in the building of socialism.”⁶⁷⁴ Especially detailed were their descriptions of the conveniences and comforts of American *byt*, including the cafeteria and the Automat. What they saw was a “process of eating as magnificently rationalized as the manufacture of automobiles or typewriters.” They admired how “very bright and very clean” the cafeteria was, and how comfortable it was to simply push a tray on metal tubes along the counter and fill it with a multitude of dishes, which were also described.⁶⁷⁵ The Automat seemed to them a much too rational invention, likely meant to fire waitresses, and they found a lot of American food very attractive but largely tasteless. They blamed this on the “very essence of the American economy” that forces consumers to eat as if they were “filling themselves with food as they would fill a motor with benzine.”⁶⁷⁶

The criticisms of American food made by Il’f and Petrov led some researchers to assume that they were not impressed with American fast food.⁶⁷⁷ Ironically, though they claimed that the food situation was bad enough for them to complain to the “Party control and the TsK [Central Committee],” their actual letter to Stalin, written immediately after their return, suggested implementing American-style dining in the Soviet Union. The writers feared that the USSR was not doing enough to offer every Soviet “American cleanliness, American service, [and] the American level of everyday life (*byt*).”⁶⁷⁸ Working for the main Party newspaper, *Pravda*, Il’f and Petrov self-censored their published works, but though carefully worded, their letter to Stalin

and Petrov's ‘Odnootazhnaia Amerika’ and Ideological Alterity,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 44 (September-December 2002): 265.

⁶⁷⁴ Ryan, “Imagining America,” 266.

⁶⁷⁵ Ilya Il’f and Evgenii Petrov, “Odnootazhnaia Amerika” [Single-Floored America] in *Sobranie sochinenii* [Collected Works] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo khudozhestvennoii literatury, 1961), 4: 35.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 4:38-39.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 40. For Il’f and Petrov disliking American food see Irina Glushchenko, *Obshchepit, Mikoyan i sovetskaia kukhnia* (Moscow: Izdatel’skii dom Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta Vysheii shkoly ekonomiki, 2010), 98

⁶⁷⁸ Cited according to Evgenii Petrov, *Moi drug Il’f* [My Friend Il’f] (Moscow: Tekst, 2001), 275.

was more indicative of their feelings. They wanted to apply everything they saw to “Soviet life” and argued that the “American level must be witnessed” not only by specialists but by “the engineers of the Party – secretaries of the regional committees.” Since every region’s development depended on the “taste” of the Party secretary, the writers suggested that the quality of everyday life would rise with great speed once the officials could “see with their own eyes” and understand what “mass consumer service” really was and, among many other useful things, “what...a cafeteria...looks like.”⁶⁷⁹

The letter, which Stalin forwarded to his close associates, may have had some effect. In August 1936, Stalin surprised Anastas Mikoyan, a Politburo member and the Minister of Food Industry, with an assignment to go to the United States and study its food industry, instead of going on his summer vacation.⁶⁸⁰ For two months, Mikoyan travelled across the country with a small staff of Soviet food executives who were not allowed to criticize capitalism as Mikoyan thought it was a waste of time and a distraction from the educational purpose of the trip.⁶⁸¹ His interest in fast food, especially hot dogs, were already known to American journalists who were amused by Mikoyan’s official praises sung to a food they associated with “mystery meat” and sport stadiums. According to H.I. Phillips’s 1935 column in the *Daily Boston Globe*, once the “Soviet Commissar of Foods, Lord High Commissioner of Quick Lunches and Headman of the Red Bureau in charge of indigestion” lauded a hot dog, it was “only a step...to hamburger on white...and the three-decker ‘rost biff’ sandwich with dill pickle.”⁶⁸² The satirist turned out to be largely correct in his assessment of Mikoyan’s goals.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., 269, 277.

⁶⁸⁰ A.I. Mikoyan, “Dva mesiatsa v SShA” [Two Months in the USA], *SShA Ekonomika Politika Ideologiya* no.10 (October 1971): 68.

⁶⁸¹ A.I. Mikoyan, “Dva mesiatsa v SShA” [Two Months in the USA], *SShA Ekonomika Politika Ideologiya* no.11 (November 1971): 74.

⁶⁸² H.I. Phillips, “The Once Over,” *Daily Boston Globe*, November 22, 1935.

Writing about the trip at the end of his life, Mikoyan still remembered how impressed he was by hamburgers and self-service cafeterias. Mikoyan made a detailed study of a commercial cafeteria in New York as well as touring one at a General Motors plant. Impressed by the latter's ability to serve 1500 diners in one hour, Mikoyan thought that he finally found a "form" of service that was "born in the bowels of capitalism, but [was] better suited to the needs of communism" and should therefore be rapidly "adapted and developed as a socialist form of serving the populace."⁶⁸³ Hamburgers, as "a good food for mass consumption like our frankfurters," were another source of inspiration for Mikoyan. Seeing their preparation and thinking that such a simple hot sandwich would be "very convenient for a busy person," Mikoyan purchased 25 machines capable of making 2 million patties per day and samples of hamburger stands.⁶⁸⁴

Upon his return, Mikoyan immediately and personally began to implement the innovations that he saw in the United States. By April 1937, hamburgers, renamed as "Hot Moscow Cutlets," were supposed to be served in 13 stores, 14 stands, and two factory snack bars.⁶⁸⁵ The experiment was possible because Mikoyan was personally following the success of this pet project and strictly forbade stores from trying to sell any other hot foods to avoid overwhelming the stores and "sabotaging the primary goal" of introducing the standardized "Moscow cutlets" to the consumers.⁶⁸⁶ Hamburgers were also sold in the stands of the Moscow Meat Works (see fig. 4.4) and advertised through posters (see fig. 4.5).⁶⁸⁷ In his memoir,

⁶⁸³ Mikoyan, "Dva mesiatsa," *SSha* 11(1971): 79.

⁶⁸⁴ Mikoyan, "Dva mesiatsa," *SSha* 11 (1971): 77.

⁶⁸⁵ RGAE, f.8543, o.1, d.379, l.33.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, l.47. Unlike American hamburgers, the meat in the Soviet version was usually the more commonly available pork, stretched by adding breadcrumbs.

⁶⁸⁷ *Chto gde na vystavke* [What's Where at the Exhibit] (Moscow: Sel'khozgiz, 1939), 12.

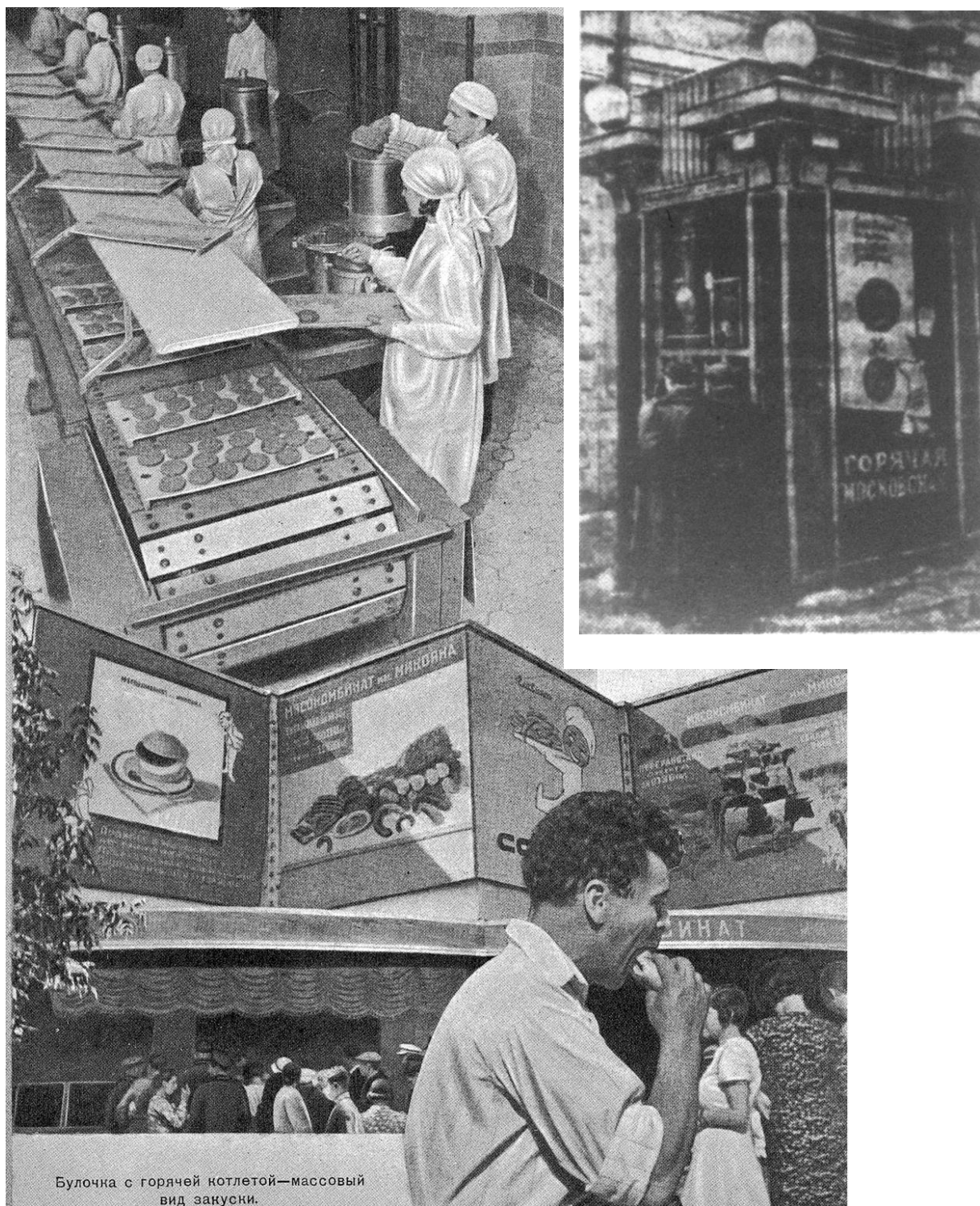


Figure 4.4. Hamburger production line, kiosk, and customer. *Miasnaia industriia SSSR* [Meat Industry of the USSR] (Moscow: Pishchepromizdat, 1941), between pp.40&41. Upper-right: A Soviet hamburger kiosk. *Sovetskaia trgovlia*, February 10, 1938.



Figure 4.5. Hot Moscow cutlets with a bun. 50 kopeks. (1937). Plakaty.ru, <http://www.plakaty.ru/posters?id=204>.

Mikoyan blamed the war for preventing “a firm inculcation of this initiative in our country,” but shortages of meat and even buns had made this task difficult as well.⁶⁸⁸ In a *Vecherniaia Moskva* article appropriately entitled “A Cutlet Without a Bun,” working-class clients of the Stand # 42 voiced their complaints that the stand tried to sell bun-less hamburgers since no bread was delivered until late mid-day. While the trade in “Moscow cutlets on a bun” was brisk, the newspaper commented: “How can commerce be organized in such a way, that the stand is left without bread until noon?”⁶⁸⁹ Similar difficulties of introducing American techniques to an economy plagued by shortages befell Soviet self-service cafeterias set up soon after Mikoyan’s return.

The building of American-style cafeterias began in earnest by 1938. This project, started by Mikoyan and continued by I.Ia. Veitser, M.P.Smirnov, and A.V. Liubimov, his successors as Ministers of Trade, was described as “a tremendously important question.”⁶⁹⁰ Over 1938, more than 100 cafeterias were supposed to be opened, covering every Union Republic. Out of the capital expenditures budget of 50 million rubles assigned to public catering, 19 million were supposed to go towards equipping cafeterias.⁶⁹¹ Coming at the tail end of the series of purges, cafeterias were supposed to be a part of the reconstruction of the public catering system dismantled by “the enemies of the people.”⁶⁹² They would be the means of introducing the latest developments in Western technology and foreign “expertise” to the Soviet public catering industry.⁶⁹³

⁶⁸⁸ Mikoyan, “Dva mesiatsa,” *SSha* 11 (1971): 77.

⁶⁸⁹ A. Zal’tzman, “Kotleta bez bulochki” [A Hamburger Without a Bun], *Vecherniaia Moskva* April 7, 1939.

⁶⁹⁰ N.Gorbunov, “Vместо кафетериев – заседание скаиа суетниа” [Instead of Cafeterias – A Scurry of Meetings], *Sovetskaia torgovlia* July 5, 1938.

⁶⁹¹ K. Tomilin, “Khorosho podgotovit’sia k otkrytiiu kafeteriev” [Be Well Prepared for the Opening of Cafeterias], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.6 (1938): 9.

⁶⁹² Almost every article on the subject mentioned the activities of the “enemies of the people.” See for example “Uluchshit’ rabotu stolovykh” [Improve the Work of Canteens], *Izvestiia*, February 4, 1939.

⁶⁹³ N.Zverev, “Kafeterii” [Cafeterias], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.6 (1938):10.

The cafeterias were to encourage American-style business-like behavior on the part of both employees *and* consumers. It was the duty of all cafeteria employees to “take all measures to raise the respect for this new type of enterprise.”⁶⁹⁴ The cooks, working in front of the customer would feel a greater sense of their “responsibility for the quality” of their food.⁶⁹⁵ Since the “clockwork precision” of the cafeteria operation was expected from day one, even the bussers needed to be well-trained since “the precision of the operation of the cafeteria” depended on how quickly they could clean an empty table.⁶⁹⁶ Despite the “cultural growth of the broad working masses” of the consumers, cafeteria planners thought it was important to remind them that unlike a regular canteen, “strict adherence to the established rules and a greater discipline” were “demanded from the visitor” to “aid the precise and quick work of the cafeterias.”⁶⁹⁷

While at every opportunity it was asserted that the Bolsheviks could do anything and that the various organizations had “all the means” to make cafeterias successful, the project began to sink under the weight of the same problems that it was supposed to resolve. By September 1938, only two cafeterias were open, one in Moscow and one in Leningrad. So many organizations were in charge of planning, finding space for, building, equipping and operating cafeterias that there was little real planning or coordination.⁶⁹⁸ The Research Institute of Trade did not have the cafeteria blueprints it claimed it had. Different cities had different electrical currents, which would require special retooling of all the machines.⁶⁹⁹ The equipment manufacturing agency did not have the right to request building materials without going through the ministry first. As a

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁵ K. Tomilin, “Khorosho,” 9-10.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁶⁹⁷ Shorin, “Leningradskie kafeterii” [The Cafeterias of Leningrad], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.7-8 (1938): 44.

⁶⁹⁸ “Pochemu sryvaetsia stroitel'stvo kafeteriev i stolovykh” [Why is the Construction of Cafeterias and Canteens Breaking Down], *Sovetskaia torgovlia*, October 11, 1938; M. Vinogradov, “Prepiadstviia k otkrytiiu kafeteriev ustranimy” [The Obstacles to the Opening of Cafeterias are Surmountable], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.17 (1938):

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⁶⁹⁹ Gorbunov, “Vmesto kafeteriev”; Vinogradov, “Prepiadstviia,” 7.

solution, they were simply encouraged to work hard and to “secure” that right from the Ministry of Trade.⁷⁰⁰ Meanwhile, many of the imported machines bought for use in cafeterias broke down before anyone explained their proper use to the management.⁷⁰¹ In many cities, the very space for the cafeterias was either not yet even sought or the organizations using the space refused to be evicted.⁷⁰²

The cafeterias that did open in Moscow and Leningrad suffered from multiple problems rooted in rushed and unplanned construction. In Leningrad, the cafeteria management was accused of turning it into a “plain canteen with self-service” instead of a place to “quickly grab a bite in a cultured atmosphere.” It had no way to chill its display case or have any means to prepare quick hot dishes to order. The conveyor-like rails for the trays, the key feature of the cafeteria, were too small for the trays and the trays had to be large so that plates could fit on it.⁷⁰³ Moscow’s first cafeteria did not have a mechanized kitchen, served cold food, and admitted that it took its visitors at least half an hour to eat there.⁷⁰⁴ This may have been due to both cafeterias recording purchases with large cards from which coupons were ripped off instead of punched, making the process more akin to using a Soviet ration card than an American cafeteria ticket.⁷⁰⁵ In Moscow’s second cafeteria, the foods, and especially the sauces, were not tasty and there was no place to wash hands. The bussers, however were so well prepared to keep the cafeteria

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁰¹ RGAE, f. 7971, o. 1, d.394, ll.173-173, 212.

⁷⁰² See for example, B. Bronfman, “Budet li v Khar’kove kafeterii?” [Will there be a Cafeteria in Khar’kov?], *Sovetskaia torgovlia*, July 23, 1938; L.Bykhovskaia, “V stolovykh Magnitogorska” [In the Canteens of Magnitogorsk], *Sovetskaia torgovlia*, July 26, 1938; and A.Stepanov, “O voronezhskom kafeterii” [About the Voronezh Cafeteria], *Sovetskaia torgovlia*, August 21, 1938.

⁷⁰³ L.Zenin, “Kafeterii prevratili v stolovuyu” [A Cafeteria Was Turned Into a Canteen], *Sovetskaia torgovlia*, September 14, 1938.

⁷⁰⁴ A. Grebnev, “Stroitel’stvo kafeteriev i stolovykh v Moskve” [The Construction of Cafeterias and Canteens in Moscow], *Sovetskaia torgovlia*, November 3, 1938; A. Bernatskii, “V moskovskom kafeterii” [In the Moscow Cafeteria], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.23-24 (1938): 32-33.

⁷⁰⁵ “Pervyi kafeterii v Leningrade” [The First Cafeteria in Leningrad], *Sovetskaia torgovlia*, July 20, 1938; “Pervyi kafeterii” [The First Cafeteria], *Sovetskaia torgovlia*, August 23, 1938. For the standard of punching out the sum on a cafeteria ticket see Blanche Geary, *Handbook of the Association Cafeteria* (New York: National Board of The Young Women's Christian Association, 1917), 74-75.

operating “with clock-like precision” that they would remove the bread and the dishes from tables when a diner got up to get some more food.⁷⁰⁶ Nor could the cafeterias effectively aid homemakers with takeout foods, since chronic shortages of both food and paper prevented both stores and cafeterias from consistently offering packaged goods.⁷⁰⁷

Crucially, self-service cafeterias were not built in work-place canteens where they would have made the most sense. As lunch breaks were reduced to twenty minutes in 1940, workplace canteens scrambled to adapt. While occasionally attempting self-service, they mostly focused on pre-selling meal tickets, performing bureaucratic operations before meal times, and creating regimented seating arrangements. Even these attempts commonly failed. Diners could have had presold meal tickets in hand but what if they sat there “for thirteen minutes but the...[waitress] in a white cap did not even look at them yet?”⁷⁰⁸ Like other innovations of the 1930s, cafeterias and automats were largely model showpieces, and could succeed only thanks to personalized attention of the top leadership, which often picked the spectacular over the practical.

The most important reason for the lack of viable fast-food options in Stalinist Soviet Union was the lack of serious investment. For all the time spent researching the most up to date forms of American quick-service dining, the Soviet government did not put the rubles where its mouth was. As vast amounts of funding went into heavy industry and defense, very few consumer oriented establishments were built and functioned well, though as discussed earlier, this did not prevent Soviet leadership from punishing officials for not fulfilling their impossible directives.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁶ S. Zlochevskii, “Poterbitel’ o kafeterii” [A consumer writes about a cafeteria], *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* no.9-10 (1939): 31.

⁷⁰⁷ Mikoyan, “Dva mesiatsa,” *SSha* 11(1971): 75.

⁷⁰⁸ V. Khandro[?], “Oдна smena” [One Shift], *Pravda*, June 30, 1940.

⁷⁰⁹ Alec Nove points out that the second Five-Year Plan started out with relatively high investments planned for the consumer goods industries and trade, but was readjusted every year, transferring more and more resources to heavy industry. Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR* (London: Penguin, 1969), 227-228.

Most notably, one show-piece, model enterprise – the “Moscow” Hotel, built near the Kremlin – was selected as a priority project and had consumed the entire budget for all similar establishments.⁷¹⁰ Not surprisingly, one of the few cafeterias that continued running with some success even in 1941 was the “real American cafeteria with steam and a shelf along which you slide your trays” located in the basement of the “Moscow” Hotel.⁷¹¹ “Born in the bowels of capitalism,” built by socialists, it ended up serving a mostly capitalist clientele that stayed at the premier hotel of America’s new war-time ally.

The unique, demonstrative samples of Western-style fast-food establishments that were set up in the late 1930s played the same role as the abundant garlands of sausage on the pages of Soviet magazines. True to their purpose, they became the goal and the standard of a good life for the Soviet consumers, whetting their appetites for the better future. While that future did not arrive as promised, it prepared the way for the surprisingly powerful embrace of McDonald’s by the Soviet public, government, and press.

Unfulfilled Promises – Fast-Food under Khrushchev and Brezhnev

When self-service cafeteria construction was once again taken up under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev, it was presented as a countermeasure to the aesthetic opulence of late Stalinism, an efficient and democratic system of food delivery for a modern nation. The experiments left from the prewar era were few and even the self-service establishments that were built during the late Stalin era were overly luxurious (see fig. 4.6). After Stalin’s death, Nikita Khrushchev’s approach was to remove Stalinist influence not simply from the political but also from the quotidian life of the Soviet union. During his 1959 trip to the United States, besides marveling at the Iowa corn fields of Roswell Garst, Khrushchev visited an IBM plant. While

⁷¹⁰ Jukka Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 115.

⁷¹¹ Ralph Ingersoll, “Foreigner in Moscow Just an ‘Outsider’ to Orthodox Russians,” *The Leader-Post*, November 7, 1941.



Figure 4.6. This model of a self-service automatic cafeteria featured marble and ornate chandeliers. *Kulinariia* [Culinary Arts] (Moscow: Gostorgizdat, 1955).

claiming that Soviet computers were no worse than those of IBM, Khrushchev was “staggered” by the cafeteria where he was taken for lunch. Pushing his tray “with enthusiasm” he was happy to see fellow spoiled government officials having to do some manual work for a change.⁷¹² Impressed that the workers and management ate in the same facility, he recalled that he “liked...very much” this “demonstration of democracy” and the efficiency of bare plastic table tops that only had to be wiped clean.⁷¹³ Later, while touring India, Khrushchev encountered the same efficient and democratic dining arrangement there. This was a great contrast to Soviet factories where there were “separate lunchrooms” supported by a “huge staff of personnel” that only led to “worse” service, “long waiting lines” and workers who “mutter their dissatisfaction.”⁷¹⁴ Upon his return, Khrushchev “promoted and encouraged” this “American system” to Party and union leadership.

Combined with much greater attention that the Soviet leadership began to pay to the availability of at least basic foods to all Soviet citizens, the self-service, American-style cafeteria system finally began to take root. Officially, 94.1% of all Soviet public catering establishments were transitioned to self-service. By 1965, 70% of these were supposed to start charging customers upon exit rather than before the meal.⁷¹⁵ In some cases, cafeterias were encouraged to adopt an honor system, 300 snack bars had opened in Leningrad that had neither waitstaff nor cashiers.⁷¹⁶

These innovations had a deeper meaning than simple efficiency. *Public* catering, *self-service*, and *democratic* formica table-tops rather than exclusive white tablecloths acquired a

⁷¹² Sergei N. Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 334.

⁷¹³ Nikita Khrushchev, *The Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, Sergei Khrushchev, ed., George Shriver, tr. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 3:126.

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:127.

⁷¹⁵ RGAE, f.195, o.1, d.374, l.121.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*, l.122,

new importance thanks to the simultaneous promulgation at the 1961 Party Congress of the “Moral Code of the Builder of Communism” and the promise to achieve full communism by 1980. If for Stalinist self-service cafeteria enthusiasts their introduction was supposed to mean that the USSR was modernizing, in the 1960s they assumed a “great character building role” to play.⁷¹⁷ While some officials were reluctant to implement self-service due to the “baseless fears of the weakened control over the preservation of valuable material goods,” Soviet people were supposed to “value the trust” shown to them and pay for food even when there was no cashier.⁷¹⁸

Khrushchev’s claim to return to Leninist values also meant an attempt to ease domestic “women’s work.” “House kitchens,” delicatessens selling prepared and convenience foods were supposed to be built at a ratio of one per every 10,000 people as well as setting up a system of take-out foods at already existing public catering facilities.⁷¹⁹ Unfortunately, once Khrushchev was forced to resign in 1964, these features of Soviet public catering again began to wane, with some “house kitchens” closing within a year.⁷²⁰

This does not mean that the Brezhnev government was not interested in serving food quickly, but it did not hold quite the same ideological weight as it did to Khrushchev. While self-service was firmly ingrained in Soviet eating establishments, and Brezhnev’s rule was accompanied by an unprecedented growth in material comfort for Soviet consumers, public catering still suffered from the same problems that had been said to be resolved “in the near future” before World War Two. Even in Moscow, finding prepared food in the morning or later at night was difficult. Getting served quickly in a Soviet restaurant was seen by visitors as

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

⁷¹⁸ RGAE, f.195, o.1, d.374, ll. 121-122.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., ll.123, 125.

⁷²⁰ RGAE, f.465, o.1, d.203, 1.7.

essentially an oxymoron.⁷²¹ Worse yet, many public canteens closed for lunch at lunch time.⁷²² When potential clients were asked why they did not visit public catering facilities, 22% of workers and employees said it was due to poor sanitation, while 44% felt the food was too expensive.⁷²³

At the same time, the ideological relaxation of *détente* allowed the Brezhnev government to expand trade and contacts with the West. In 1972, the USSR signed an exclusive contract with Pepsico to manufacture and distribute Pepsi-cola in the Soviet Union, while Pepsico got to distribute Soviet vodka in the West.⁷²⁴ Encouraged by these developments and by the acquisition of the status of the official Olympic sponsor, McDonald's Canada and its leader George Cohon began the negotiations to bring McDonald's to the Soviet Union. Originally meant to allow McDonald's to cater the 1980 Olympic games in Moscow, the negotiations would last over a decade.

McDonald's in Moscow

In 1976, George Cohon, the president of McDonald's Canada, approached the Soviet Olympic Organizing Committee which included the Russian minister of trade, Vsevolod Shimansky. He took them to visit the McDonald's restaurant that served the Olympic complex. The delegation, which was quite concerned with feeding the expected crowds, was "astonished at how precisely calibrated was the mechanism of the 'fast feeding' of tourists and the tens of

⁷²¹ See "The Great Wait and How to Raise a *Skandal*" in Lynn and Wesley Fisher, *The Moscow Gourmet* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1974), 36-38.

⁷²² RGAE, f.465, o.1, d.203, l.6.

⁷²³ *Ibid.*, l.11.

⁷²⁴ As the first American food to be made in the Soviet Union during the Cold War, Pepsi attracted the attention of the press. See, for example Ernest Holsendolph, "Russians to Get Pepsi-Cola Plant," *New York Times*, November 17, 1972.

thousands spectators.”⁷²⁵ After sampling the food, the delegation gave Cohon a copy of the Moscow Olympic facilities plan. Later, Cohon also spoke about his proposal with an acquaintance, the Soviet ambassador, Alexander Yakovlev, who “sent a few telegrams to Moscow.”⁷²⁶ Cohon’s proposal was meant to be a part of a long-term strategy to enter the potentially lucrative Soviet market and was therefore essentially a gift to the USSR.⁷²⁷ Cohon proposed building three restaurants serving ten to twelve thousand customers per hour; pay the Committee a sponsor’s fee of \$500,000 for each restaurant; train personnel; pay all salaries and taxes; and deliver supplies from West Germany. At the end of the games he would transfer profits to the Moscow government along with restaurants and staff.⁷²⁸ The proposal could save the Olympic Committee the “headache” of organizing the 35-40 temporary cafes to serve the same number of customers.⁷²⁹ Cohon, almost certain that his offer would be accepted, was already exploring the future potential of the McDonald’s toehold in the Soviet Union by visiting the resort city of Sochi.⁷³⁰

The proposal was taken in good faith and led to a “serious struggle” among the top political leadership. Unfortunately for Cohon, while the officials could agree that fast-food service was desirable, not all of them were ready to accept the proposal from a capitalist corporation. While the government officials, including the chair of the Moscow City Council, Vladimir Promyslov, and the Soviet Prime Minister Alexeii Kosygin, supported the project, Viktor Grishin, the head of the Moscow Communist Party and Mikhail Suslov, the powerful

⁷²⁵ Vladimir Koval’, *Zapiski olimpiiskogo kaznacheia: Ot Olimpiady-80 k Moskve-2012* [Notes of the Olympic Treasurer: From the Olympiad-80 to Moscow-2012] (Moscow: Sovetskii sport, 2004), 84. For Cohon’s recollection, see George Cohon and David Macfarlane, *To Russia With Fries* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1999), 14-17.

⁷²⁶ Aleksandr Yakovlev, *Sumerki* [Twilight] (Moscow: Materik, 2003), 343.

⁷²⁷ Youngme Moon and Kerry Herman, “McDonald’s Russia: Managing a Crisis,” *Harvard Business School Case 503-020* (2003): 2.

⁷²⁸ Koval’, *Zapiski*, 85.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

⁷³⁰ Cohon and Macfarlane, *To Russia*, 29-30.

Party ideologist firmly opposed it.⁷³¹ The opposition was concerned that the “corruption of youth” to lead “a destructive Western lifestyle” would begin, in part, “with the aid of a meat cutlet, fried potatoes, and a goblet of ‘Coca-Cola.’”⁷³² To Cohon’s dismay, after years of being strung along by Soviet officials, his proposals were rejected. In retrospect, this worked in his favor and prevented potential difficulties when the 1980 Olympics were boycotted by Western nations in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Despite the setbacks, Cohon was encouraged by Yakovlev to continue his quest.⁷³³ In 1983, Cohon’s luck began to change as Mikhail Gorbachev visited Yakovlev in Canada and transferred the ambassador back to Moscow. In 1985, when Gorbachev became the leader of the USSR, Yakovlev, George Cohon’s Soviet ally, also became the main advisor to the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party.

While McDonald’s was not yet seen as a solution to what ailed the Soviet public catering system, fast food increasingly was. To demonstrate modernity and progress at the Olympic Games, their trappings had to be largely imported from Finland, including two-thirds of disposable dishes and many of the foods.⁷³⁴ Pre-packed, take-out “One Ruble Meals” were sold along with single packs of butter, jam, cheese, and sausage that were introduced into the Soviet service industry, with hopes for Union-wide implementation in the future.⁷³⁵ The workers in the Moscow “Olympic” kitchens were astonished at the “normal” working conditions there and their first encounters with regular and plentiful supply lines of ingredients and equipment.⁷³⁶ Similarly, the VEF electronics plant in Latvia’s capital, Riga, was often discussed as a model for

⁷³¹ Yakovlev, *Sumerki*, 344.

⁷³² Koval’, *Zapiski*, 84-85.

⁷³³ Yakovlev, *Sumerki*, 344.

⁷³⁴ V. Bychkov, “Zakreplit’ dostignutiy uroven’” [To Fortify the Achieved Level], *Obshchestvennoe Pitaniye* no. 11 (1980): 15; David K. Willis, “Moscow Puts on Western Face for Olympics,” *Christian Science Monitor*, July 14, 1980.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷³⁶ M. Epshteyn, “My byli gordy za svoy trud” [We Were Proud of Our Labor], *Obshchestvennoe Pitaniye*, no. 11 (1980): 20, 23.

other industrial enterprises. In 1981, using their own technology and computers, the plant claimed to be the first in the USSR to automate and mechanize food preparation, dish removal, and calculation of a “scientifically-based menu” for the workers.⁷³⁷

Average Soviet dining experiences were also supposed to change. In language more familiar from the pre-war years, the Soviet leadership began to speak about the “acceleration” of Soviet economic development and improving labor discipline.⁷³⁸ In contrast to the pre-war years, Soviet planners did not need to look to the ideologically unpalatable American examples to offer accelerated feeding of the masses. Latvia’s VEF, and the practices of socialist nations in Eastern Europe and friendly Western European nations could serve as models. In 1984, *Obshchestvennoe pitanie* called for the creation of a system of quick service establishments, narrowly specialized establishments, similar to McDonald’s but modeled on the *Imbiss* (snack) stands of socialist East Germany.⁷³⁹ In 1985, the journal created a regular section devoted to fast-food matters.⁷⁴⁰ In 1986, these plans acquired an authoritative blessing as the new development program, issued by the XXVII Communist Party Congress, called for the creation of “Fast Service Enterprises” (*Predpriiatiia Bystrogo Obsluzhivaniia*) or PBOs.⁷⁴¹

The experience of opening the PBOs was remarkably similar to that of opening self-service cafeterias in the 1930s. Meetings were called to discuss their administrative structures and proper definitions.⁷⁴² A public contest was conducted to create a new logo for the new type of restaurant and out of 211 entries submitted, a clock in a chef’s hat with silverware as hands

⁷³⁷ Evgenii Vostrukhov, “Iz opyta sotsial’nogo planirovaniia” [One Practice of Social Planning], *Izvestiia*, January 24, 1981.

⁷³⁸ Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 122-123.

⁷³⁹ M. Epshteyn, “Imbis – eto: bystro, vkusno, vygodno” [Imbiss is Quick, Tasty, Advantageous] *Obshchestvennoe Pitanie* no.2 (1984): 35-37.

⁷⁴⁰ “Za 5 minut...” [In 5 Minutes...], *Obshchestvennoe Pitanie* no.7 (1985): 14.

⁷⁴¹ *Materialy XXVII s’ezda kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuzna* [Materials of the XXVIIth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union] (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1986), 305.

⁷⁴² “Za 5 minut...,” 15.

was selected.⁷⁴³ Small cafes with limited menus (selling sweet and savory pies, grilled chickens, pancakes, soup, and other similar foods) were opened in a number of Soviet cities including Kostroma, Minsk, Vinnitsa, and Ivano-Frankovsk.⁷⁴⁴

The motivation was not only the improvement of service but also the undoing of the sins of the previous administration, though no longer designated as “wrecking by the enemies of the people” but merely “stagnation.” This state of affairs was symbolized by empty cafes with employees doing and serving nothing and was supposed to be changed by enthusiasts clearing out old basements to build new cafes, such as the popular “Stoleshnikov” café in central Moscow.⁷⁴⁵ But those who tried to create PBOs faced the harsh reality of bureaucracy and institutional special interests. If a Soviet administrator wanted to open a few cafes on a busy twenty-block area in central Moscow near the Red Square, he or she would face not only the regulations of both the Union and the republican trade ministries, but also three different local administrative bodies governing clusters of eateries, since three different Moscow boroughs (*raiony*) covered a part of the area.⁷⁴⁶

When and if permissions were secured, the sites given to the PBOs tended to be undesirable (but therefore available). In at least one case in Moscow, the floor collapsed because of overcrowding.⁷⁴⁷ Electricity could not be connected since the electricity trust was given an

⁷⁴³ “Itogi nashih konkursov” [The Contest Results], *Obshchestvennoe Pitanie* no.4 (1987): 28.

⁷⁴⁴ M. Strimban, “V Tsentre Kostromy” [In the Center of Kostroma], *Obshchestvennoe Pitanie* no.5 (1986): 42; I. Krivenya, L. Anan’ko, and O. Sevkovskaya, “Kioski, Palatki, Pod’ezdy” [Kiosks, Stands, Entryways], *Obshchestvennoe Pitanie* no.5 (1986): 43; E. Mel’nichuk, “A esli bez metoda prob i oshibok?” [What About Not Using the Trial and Error Method?], *Obshchestvennoe Pitanie* no.7 (1986): 22; G. Mumrikova, “Direktsiia PBO sozdana v Ivano-Frankovske” [A PBO Directorate is Created in Ivano-Frankovsk], *Obshchestvennoe Pitanie* no.1 (1987): 14-16.

⁷⁴⁵ V. Tolstov, “Bystroe obsluzhivanie” [Quick Service], *Izvestiia* September 25, 1987.

⁷⁴⁶ M. Epshteyn, “Tsentr bol’shogo goroda: gde perekusit?” [The Center of a Large City: Where to Grab a Bite?], *Obshchestvennoe Pitanie* no.1 (1985): 12.

⁷⁴⁷ “Na boykom meste” [At a Busy Spot], *Obshchestvennoe Pitanie* no.11 (1987): 39.

assignment to save energy within the same government mandated plan.⁷⁴⁸ The ingredients supplied were of the lowest quality, since more powerful managers already took the choice pickings to fulfill *their* part of the development plan.⁷⁴⁹ By 1990, many were dismayed that the few successes in the public catering industry remained isolated exceptions rather than the rule.⁷⁵⁰

In contrast, Moscow's McDonald's was an instant success, able to acquire choice real estate, supplies, promotional television spots, and glowing press reports. Unlike its native Soviet competitors, McDonald's benefitted from the personal attention of the most powerful men in the Soviet Union, who saw in it the model solution to much more than the problem of grabbing a quick bite in central Moscow. Writing an introduction to George Cohon's memoir in 1997, Gorbachev wrote that McDonald's was "made possible by *perestroika*" and "demonstrated that new economic relations... were possible" between the USSR and the world. It was also a "symbol of good will" that would help "build a democratic society" as well as to learn "how a consumer-oriented enterprise is run in a market environment."⁷⁵¹ While Gorbachev pointed out that McDonald's was not "an exhibition but a real business," it was still a Soviet economic experiment which, like those that came before it, benefitted from the "untypically favorable treatment for those enterprises which were a part of the project."⁷⁵²

As the negotiations between Soviet authorities and McDonald's were renewed in the mid-1980s, the press began to change the way McDonald's was presented to the Soviet public. The last major article on the company was a 1979 exposé, seen as a signal that McDonald's was denied permission to cater the Moscow Olympics. Published in *Novoe vremia*, a popular current

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid., 40.

⁷⁵⁰ A. Salakhedinov, "My lenivy i nelyubopytny?" [Are We Lazy and Incurious?], *Obshchestvennoe Pitanie* no.3 (1990): 2.

⁷⁵¹ Mikhail Gorbachev, "A Word About the Author," in Cohon and Macfarlane, *To Russia*, x.

⁷⁵² Ibid; Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, 65.

affairs magazine, “The Cutlet Empire is Leading,” heaved all possible criticism on the company. The article accused it of using chemicals to disguise the low quality of its food, cited doctor’s claims that consumptions of “‘dzhank food’ – ‘slop food’” would lead to early heart disease, suggested that McDonald’s brainwashed American youths into accepting “dispiritingly boring and hard labor,” and even claimed that the founder, Ray Crock, evaded the front lines during World War One.⁷⁵³ The rare appearance of McDonald’s in the Soviet press before *perestroika* either criticised its corrupting sponsorship of sporting events or recalled it as the site of a major gun massacre.⁷⁵⁴

The coverage changed rapidly by the late 1980s. By then, the Soviet government and press began to use the West and especially the United States for “affirmative-didactic” purposes as positive images of the United States would be used to set an example to emulate and to demonstrate the potential benefits of Gorbachev’s economic and political reforms.⁷⁵⁵ Instead of accusing McDonald’s of all the symptoms of rotting capitalism, it suddenly became the key to reforming socialism. In 1986, the company was sympathetically profiled in a prime-time television broadcast.⁷⁵⁶ By 1987, *Argumenty i fakty*, the official newspaper for the Communist Party propagandists, cited McDonald’s interest in working with the Soviet Union as a sign of progress.⁷⁵⁷ In 1989, about a year after the agreement was signed between McDonald’s Canada and the Moscow public catering trust, *Pravda* demanded to know: “When will the *Big Mek* make its debut?” and rushed to reassure readers that despite rumors to the contrary, the McDonald’s

⁷⁵³ Iu. Malov, “Kotleinaia imperiia vykhodit v lidery” [The Cutlet Empire is Leading], *Novoe Vremia* no.1 (1979): 28, 29, 30, 27.

⁷⁵⁴ For sports sponsorship criticism see V. Ganiev, “Los-Andzheles – predolimpiiskii” [Pre-Olympic Los Angeles], *Argumenty i fakty*, February 14, 1984; for McDonald’s as the site of a massacre see G. Vasil’ev, “Plody nenavisti” [The Fruit of Hate], *Pravda*, July 22, 1984.

⁷⁵⁵ Jonathan A. Becker, *Soviet and Russian Press Coverage of the United States: Press, Politics, and Identity in Transition* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 123.

⁷⁵⁶ Philip Taubman, “Moscow Sees a Good Example in a Big Mac,” *New York Times*, November 4, 1986 and Ellen Mickiewicz, “Soviet Viewers are Seeing More, Including News of the U.S.,” *New York Times*, February 22, 1987.

⁷⁵⁷ “Vopros – Otvet” [A Question – An Answer], *Argumenty i fakty*, February 14, 1987.

project did not “crash on bureaucratic reefs.”⁷⁵⁸ Not forgetting future generations, McDonald’s sponsored “Flight 9:10,” a children’s television program about world travel and awarded McDonald’s food to the winners of its geography quiz.⁷⁵⁹

The tremendous popularity of McDonald’s defied all expectations. Twenty-seven thousand people applied for its 630 jobs.⁷⁶⁰ On the first day of operation, McDonald’s in Moscow stayed open from 9:30 am to 12 am the next day and received over 30,000 customers many of whom took their trash (with a McDonald’s logo) home.⁷⁶¹ The queue was recorded as the longest one ever at a fast-food restaurant by the Guinness Book of Records (see fig. 4.7).⁷⁶² The line was still there months after the opening of the restaurant, despite extremely high prices. Though Moscow McDonald’s proudly displayed a brass “Rubles Only Service,” making it much more accessible than the foreign-currency only Pizza Hut or Baskin Robbins cafes, its prices did not seem quite as universally affordable as the management promised.⁷⁶³ At a time when the average monthly salary hovered around 250 rubles, the Big Mac cost 3 rubles 75 kopeks, and a Big Mac meal about 5 rubles.⁷⁶⁴

McDonald’s: Soviet History Redux

The sudden change in press coverage and popularity of McDonald’s were not accidental. As *Pravda* itself pointed out, citing the French business magazine *L’Expansion*, in order to conduct business in the Soviet Union, a company had to secure the support of every level of

⁷⁵⁸ A.Liutyi, “Skoro li debiut ‘Big Meka?’” [How Soon Will the “Big Mek” Debut?], *Pravda*, March 9, 1989

⁷⁵⁹ See “Katalog – Telematerialy,” Gosteleradiofond, accessed July 31, 2013, <http://web.gtrf.ru/catalog/tele.aspx>. Quiz prize information is based on my own recollection – I am still unsure how the food prizes were delivered to the winners.

⁷⁶⁰ Cohon, *To Russia*, 193

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁷⁶² It has since been overtaken by the line to the McDonald’s outlet at the London Olympics in 2012.

⁷⁶³ V. Chebakov, “Tol’ko za rubli!” [For Rubles Only!], *Pravda*, January 31, 1990 and Primochkin and Rodin, “‘Big Mak’,” 9.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*



Figure 4.7. The front of the queue, January 31, 1990. Konstantin Poltev, “Bigmak po russki” [Big Mac in Russian], *Itogi* no.31 (2011), <http://www.itogi.ru/exclus/2011/31/167925.html>.

government, starting at the very top.⁷⁶⁵ When the restaurant finally opened on January 30, 1990, George Cohon told *Pravda* that the opening was made possible thanks to his numerous allies in Moscow.⁷⁶⁶ The attention given to McDonald's was likened to that given to a visiting American president.⁷⁶⁷ Cohon's memoir recalls all the high level officials who personally helped to establish McDonald's on Soviet soil. Not only was Yakovlev involved but Cohon had "frequent meetings" with Gorbachev, some of which were reported by *Pravda*.⁷⁶⁸ When the construction of a McDonald's food processing center stalled, a call to Yurii Dubinin, the Soviet ambassador to the United States, sped up the construction with the aid of Soviet army units.⁷⁶⁹ On the restaurant's opening night, a gala party and a fundraiser was held for the Soviet Children's Fund. The celebration included ceremonies conducted in the Palace of Congresses; entertainment by the Red Army Choir; the entrance of guests via the Grand Staircase to the Great Kremlin Palace; and a reception at the St. George Ballroom, the site of major diplomatic events.⁷⁷⁰ For all the money that McDonald's invested in winning the Soviet market, the Soviet government invested much more – not simply funds but a great deal of political capital and publicity.

In the same way that Stalinist leadership claimed that life had become happier and more joyous after the hardships of the First Five-Year Plan, the last generation of Soviet leaders needed some proof that the policies of *perestroika* were making life not simply freer but better.

⁷⁷¹ McDonald's became that proof. Not only did Gorbachev point to the connection in hindsight in his introduction to Cohon's book, but Eduard Shevardnadze, his foreign minister told the

⁷⁶⁵ "Raznolikaia stroka" [The Multifaceted Line], *Pravda* January 15, 1991.

⁷⁶⁶ Chebakov, "Tol'ko za rubli!"

⁷⁶⁷ Stanislav Kondrashov, "Nash sosed Makdonal'ds" [Our Neighbor McDonald's], *Izvestiia*, January 31, 1990.

⁷⁶⁸ Cohon and McFarland, *To Russia*, 129; "Vstrechi Prezidenta SSSR" [Meetings of the President of the USSR], *Pravda*, June 27, 1991.

⁷⁶⁹ Cohon and McFarland, *To Russia*, 177-178.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 220-221.

⁷⁷¹ Alan M. Ball, *Imagining America: Influence and Images in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 225.

Canadian Parliament that “after ‘McDonald’s’ introduced Muscovites to “Big Mac,” many felt the taste of a genuine business partnership.”⁷⁷² Soviet journalists realized the erroneous nature of their previous criticism of McDonald’s when “Perestroika put many things in their place,” wrote *Pravda*.⁷⁷³ Khamzat Khasbulatov, the first Russian manager of the Moscow McDonald’s was even more evocative, when he spoke about being able to “taste [his] perestroika...” in a Big Mac.⁷⁷⁴

Historian Alan Ball pointed out that in the late 1980s “Soviet pronouncements” that suggested “‘capitalist’ lands as a source of desirable expertise” came “with a frequency unequalled since the First Five-Year Plan.”⁷⁷⁵ Yet, he underestimated just how many similarities and echoes with the Soviet past filled all the articles praising McDonald’s and how many of the old Soviet goals McDonald’s was supposed to bring to fruition.⁷⁷⁶ According to the popular Soviet press, the solutions to all the difficulties that the Soviet Union was facing – inefficiency, apathy, elitism, overburdened women, even food shortages – could be seen in McDonald’s. It tapped deep into the Soviet cultural memory and brought out the language and boundless faith in Western technological miracles more typical of the 1930s.

Above all, McDonald’s meant industrial food production, conveyors, and cleanliness, all cherished goals in the Soviet Union, whose capital’s public catering system still had only 25 seats per 1000 residents, a budget of no more than 30 million rubles, and still, decades after Soviet modernist ideals appeared, depended almost entirely (88%) on manual labor, performed

⁷⁷² E.A. Shevarnadze, “Vystuplenie v parlamente Kanady” [Speech in the Canadian Parliament], *Pravda*, February 17, 1990

⁷⁷³ Liutyi, “Skoro li.”

⁷⁷⁴ Cohon and Macfarland, *To Russia*, 195.

⁷⁷⁵ Ball, *Imagining America*, 214.

⁷⁷⁶ Ball suggests that outside of “terms common in the 1920s...as praise for McDonald’s efforts” the “similarity with the early Soviet period” or “confidence in a socialist (or any other) vision was absent. See Ball, *Imagining America*, 197.

by a largely female staff.⁷⁷⁷ McDonald's, on the other hand achieved its records thanks to "a very high level of mechanization" at its "factory-kitchen" newly constructed in an outer Moscow neighborhood, where every step of production was "automated, subject to errorless computers."⁷⁷⁸ The "cleanliness and spaciousness" of McDonald's facilities could still "astonish" Soviet journalists in the same way that American cafeterias could in the 1930s.⁷⁷⁹ In a word, McDonald's was an example of a "normal, civilized system," a perfect "shop-floor of nutrition" that was, and in many ways remained, a Soviet ideal.⁷⁸⁰

Not only the language but the power ascribed to McDonald's technology seemed to hail from the early Soviet days. Some Soviet commentators worried that the superior technology would be made useless by Soviet workers who had a "weak interest...in the results of their work" since the "schools patiently train[ed]...adolescents to disdain labor."⁷⁸¹ Instead, as if they were sprung from Aleksei Gastev's works, McDonald's machines were supposedly transforming Soviet youth (see fig. 4.8). At the time when Western sociologists wrote that "McJobs" were "breeding grounds for robots working for yesterday's assembly lines, not tomorrow's high-tech posts," a Soviet youth magazine republished a 1924 Soviet collection of "Ford's Principles" as a learning model.⁷⁸² "You cannot make mistakes," young McDonald's employees told journalists, "because this is like a conveyor belt" but this was not a criticism.⁷⁸³ For these young Muscovites,

⁷⁷⁷ Aleksander Chizhevskii, "Makdonal'ds protiv obshchepita" [McDonald's Versus Public Catering], *Rabotnitsa* no.5 (1990): 32.

⁷⁷⁸ Liutyi, "Skoro li," Chizevskii, "Makdonal'ds," 31.

⁷⁷⁹ V. Chebakov, "Tol'ko za rubli!" [For Rubles Only!], *Pravda*, January 31, 1990.

⁷⁸⁰ "Rezonans: 'Obshchepit po Amerikanski'" [Resonance: Public Catering, American Style], *Obshchestvennoe Pitanie*, no.12 (1990): 14.

⁷⁸¹ B. Stanishev, "Nash obshchepit: Primenim li opyt SSha?" [Our Public Catering: Is the US Experience Applicable?], *Argumenty i fakty*, July 11, 1987; E. Matveets, "Podrostki iz restorana" [Adolescents From the Restaurant], *Pravda*, November 12, 1990.

⁷⁸² Amitai Etzioni, "The Fast-Food Factories: McJobs are Bad for Kids," *The Washington Post*, August 24, 1986; "Printsipy forda" [Ford's Principles], *Yunnyi tekhnik* no.2 (1990): 28.

⁷⁸³ Olga Lialina, "Moskva, Makdonalds, dobroe utro!" [Moscow, McDonald's, Good Morning!], *My* (1990) in *Spletnik*, accessed July 31, 2013, http://www.spletnik.ru/blogs/kruto/19640_moskva_makdonalds_dobroe_utro.



Figure 4.8. Work at McDonald's can transform a guitar-strumming ne'er-do-well into a professional. E. Matveets, "Podrostki iz restorana" [Adolescents from the Restaurant], *Pravda*, November 12, 1990.

the fast-food restaurant was “the only place...where income depends on how well you have worked” and not on “what connections you have or who your parents are.”⁷⁸⁴ “Yes, cadres do decide everything,” wrote a popular mechanics magazine, recalling Stalin’s slogan, as a graduate student confessed to a reporter that thanks to her job at McDonald’s she “began to value [her] time more,” while a mother of another employee spoke of how happy she “was...that...[her] son was working at McDonald’s” since “work shook him up” and “he became more responsible” and “pulled together.”⁷⁸⁵ No matter where its employees would work next, the “business-like qualities” and “skills that they acquired at the company...[would] always help them in any other place.”⁷⁸⁶ Their managers, after all, had been trained “at the world level.” “It is enough to say,” *Pravda* wrote, without the slightest irony, “that the restaurant director Khamzat Khasbulatov had finished the 1000-hour course at the Canadian Institute of Hamburgerology with ‘Excellence’”⁷⁸⁷

Just as American technology was ascribed powers far beyond those that it could realistically perform in the early days of Soviet industrialization, McDonald’s power of reform seemed boundless. Its work with Soviet state farms to make them into stable suppliers was said to “improve Soviet agriculture” generally and would “put the broken Moscow region collective and state farms back on their feet in a few years.”⁷⁸⁸ Helping McDonald’s was described as a matter of pride and even “patriotism,” since even Cohon turned out with his employees to help gather the potato harvest at the supplier farms.⁷⁸⁹ For women, fast-food could offer an occasional break from the kitchen, and McDonald’s itself could be the perfect aid to the Soviet working

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁵ B. Primochkin and V.Rodin, “‘Big Mak’ na Pushkinskoi” [‘The Big Mac’ At Pushkin Square], *Yunnyi tekhnik* no.5 (1990): 9,8. Though this claim was perhaps overoptimistic, McDonald’s did turn the state farms it had selected as its Russian suppliers into powerful agribusinesses. See Andrew E. Kramer, “Russia’s Evolution, Seen Through Golden Arches,” *New York Times*, February 1, 2010.

⁷⁸⁶ Matveets, “Podrostki.”

⁷⁸⁷ V. Chebakov, “Tol’ko za rubli!”

⁷⁸⁸ Chizhevskii, “‘Makdonal’ds’,” 31.

⁷⁸⁹ Liutyi, “Skoro li”; G.Batsanova, “‘Makdonal’ds’ vykhodit na polia” [McDonald’s Goes to the Fields], *Pravda*, October 11, 1990.

mother.⁷⁹⁰ “Moms who work in McDonald’s can be envied,” wrote an article in *Rabotnitsa*, the most popular Soviet women’s magazine, for unlike Soviet enterprises who for “years struggled with providing flexible schedules for women,” McDonald’s already offered them.⁷⁹¹ McDonald’s now was lauded as a sponsor and savior of some of the most cherished Soviet programs – Arctic exploration and even a Soviet bid to host the 1998 Winter Olympics in Sochi.⁷⁹²

The explanations for the popularity of the restaurant veered towards the spiritual. McDonald’s power seemed to be able to transform the very nature of the Soviet psyche, as it remained “a place of pilgrimage” to another world, where the masses could experience “service that...[was] still unusual for...[them],” the Soviet press argued.⁷⁹³ Its management reflected the late Soviet ideal by telling its young employees that “family and studies come first, work – second.”⁷⁹⁴ It was a supreme expression of the “democratic...form of Americanism, of American rationalism and pragmatism...”⁷⁹⁵ Its leaders were said to have been “preaching customer care” and having “created an entire...philosophy” to make the consumer feel welcome and to sense something “reciprocal,” attracting the Soviet crowds not with their food but with a chance to “sense their self-worth.”⁷⁹⁶ Those who were skeptical of the role of McDonald’s in Russian national consciousness also thought that the thousands who stood at “the brightly-lit wigwam of ‘McDonald’s’ in the very heart of the former superpower” were not waiting for “food” but “for holy communion.” That “scaled-down copy of the ‘sparkling temple’ upon a hill...[described by] Reagan” offered a chance “to commune with a Western lifestyle,... to feel as a part of that

⁷⁹⁰ V. Shelkov, “Kogda doma net uzhina...” [When There is no Supper at Home...], *Pravda*, July 4, 1988.

⁷⁹¹ Chizhevskii, “‘Makdonal’ds’,” 32.

⁷⁹² For McDonald’s arctic exploration sponsorship see “Vstrecha s pokoriteliami Arktiki” [Meeting With the Conquerors of the Arctic], *Pravda*, January 10, 1990 and D. Shparo, “Desant na polius” [Landing Party at the Pole], *Pravda*, April 9, 1991. For McDonald’s potential sponsorship of the Soviet Olympic bid see M.Lamtsov, “Budet li Sochi stolitseii Olimpiady?” [Will Sochi Become the Olympic Capital?], *Argument i fakty*, September 23, 1989.

⁷⁹³ Lialina, “Moskva, Makdonal’ds.”

⁷⁹⁴ Matveets, “Podrostki.”

⁷⁹⁵ Kondrashov, “Nash sosed Makdonal’ds.”

⁷⁹⁶ Chizhevskii, “‘Makdonal’ds’,” 31, 32.

civilized world, filled with freedoms, abundance, and plenty.”⁷⁹⁷ As if to illustrate the spiritual discourse about McDonald’s, Igor Babailov painted McDonald’s as one of the three possible lights dawning in the Soviet and Russian future, though in his painting the crowds seem to choose hamburgers over the church or a return to Communism (see fig. 4.9).

While the Western media assumed “that Ronald McDonald kicked Commies’ ass, leading one front of the charge that won the Cold War,” the Soviet side saw it as just another infusion of foreign technology to adjust, not reverse, its course.⁷⁹⁸ At worst, the Soviets saw it as a “call to action” and a “symbolic test...for...Perestroika.”⁷⁹⁹ Because it featured all the trappings of Fordist and Taylorist industrialism, McDonald’s became essentially irresistible to the Soviet government. Since Soviet ideals were still rooted in the Industrial era, McDonald’s could be seen as a successor to Western fast-food of the 1930s – not a threat to the traditional gender roles but rather as an aid to their perpetuation, making “less work for mother.”⁸⁰⁰ As McDonald’s principles enumerated by George Ritzer, were precisely those sought but never fully implemented by Soviet reformers of public catering since the revolution, Soviet consumers had their appetites whetted for its offerings for decades. It succeeded not despite Soviet history, but because of it.

⁷⁹⁷ Aleksandr Rutszkoi, “Prichastie u ‘Makdonal’ dsa” [Communion at McDonald’s], *Izvestiia*, February 1, 1992.

⁷⁹⁸ Joe L. Kincheloe, *The Sign of the Burger: McDonald’s and the Culture of Power* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 115. For McDonald’s being an aid to Perestroika, see Ball, *Imagining America*, 225.

⁷⁹⁹ Kondrashov, “Nash sosed.”

⁸⁰⁰ Sam Roberts, “Revisiting the Era of Automatic Dining,” *New York Times*, June 17, 2012.



Figure 4.9. Igor Babailov, *The Three Lights (The First McDonald's Restaurant in Russia)* (1990) Collection of George Cohon, McDonalds Corporation. Society Provocative Works, <http://babailov.homestead.com/1stMcDonalds.html>.

Conclusion

It may be safe to conclude that there was food in the Soviet Union after all. The trouble was that so much of it was imaginary, whether imagined by the state planners or by the poorly served consumers. But this is no reason to allow the food-related Soviet discourses to fade from memory. Because food was so scarce and references to it so common, food in the Soviet Union acquired an aspirational quality. It was something to look forward to and to think about. In 1964, a fairly optimistic moment of Soviet history, the Strugatsky brothers used *Monday Starts on a Saturday*, their science fiction novel, to satirize politically well-connected hack scientists. Their character, A.A. Vybegallo, adheres to a “simple-minded” theory that “if you give a man everything – bread, that is...then he wouldn’t be a man but an angel.” In other words, the Strugatskys were suggesting man does not live by bread alone. Yet, by the late 1980s Soviet citizens seem to have been transformed into one of the “anthropoid” models that Vybegallo constructs to demonstrate his theories – the New Soviet Man became “Man Gastrically Unsatisfied.”⁸⁰¹

Though democracy was in the air as the Soviet Union edged towards collapse, the newfound freedom was used to complain about food. Fazil’ Iskander’s satiric novel *Rabbits and Boa Constrictors* (1982, published in the USSR in 1987) used food to symbolize the unreachable promise of Communism. In the novel, the rabbits live in the hope that their rulers will one day fulfill the promise to provide everyone with “colored cabbage” instead of the plain green one.⁸⁰² In Vladimir Voinovich’s dystopian *Moscow 2042* (1986, published in the USSR in 1989), Communism is declared to be finally achieved, if only in the city of Moscow. Perfectly capturing the mindset of the time, Voinovich described how Moscow warehouses were fully stocked with

⁸⁰¹ Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, *Monday Starts on a Saturday*, Andrew Bromfield, trans. (London: Seagull Publishing, 2004), 99-100.

⁸⁰² Fazil’ Iskander, *Kroliki i udavy* [Rabbits and Boa Constrictors] (Moscow: Knizhnaia palata, 1988), 98-99.

Pepsi-Cola, various Italian pizzas, and American hamburgers in preparation for the Declaration of Communism.⁸⁰³ The *Literary Newspaper*, published by the Union of Soviet Writers, became the primary newspaper for consumer complaints. Its vast archive of letters complaining about the poor quality of sausage, along with evidence in the form of photographs of disgusted cats and discarded sausage casings has been preserved.⁸⁰⁴

Soviet food stopped being merely nourishment and became “food with ideas,” and it continues to live on in literature and the lifestyles of the formerly Soviet peoples even today, even outside the former Soviet Union. Attempting to describe Brighton Beach, the neighborhood of choice for Soviet emigrants in New York, a journalist described it as a “game preserve of ‘developed socialism.’” He was especially surprised that Russian-American grocery stores were filled with more sausage than he had ever seen, hanging from the ceilings “like Christmas ornaments” and still symbolizing the “dream of a good life.”⁸⁰⁵ In Lara Vapnyar’s short story *Broccoli* (2006), an immigrant’s aspirations for a better life, are symbolized by an American abundance of fresh vegetables. Though she never gets to cook them, she continues to buy them in the hope that things get better.⁸⁰⁶

Whether trying to provide enough sausage, distribute food fairly, modernize the diet, or embrace fast food, the Soviet Union managed to produce vast amounts of talk but very little substance. By constantly raising expectations and always disappointing, Soviet culinary discourse has made a major contribution to the collapse of the Soviet project to build an alternative modernity and needs to be studied further. When revising this manuscript for

⁸⁰³ Vladimir Voinovich, “Moskva 2042” [Moscow 2042], in Vladimir Voinovich, *Skazki dlia vzroslykh* [Fairy Tales for Adults] (Moscow: Vagrius, 1996), 205.

⁸⁰⁴ Box 48, Folder 110 A-B, Anatolii Zakharovich Rubinov Papers, European Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁸⁰⁵ Iaroslav Mogutin, “Nashi za bugrom. Braiiton bich – zapovednik ‘razvitogo sotsializma’” [Our People Abroad. Brighton Beach – A Game Preserve of “Developed Socialism”], *Argumenty i fakty*, January 10, 1996.

⁸⁰⁶ Lara Vapnyar, “Broccoli,” *New Yorker*, January 5, 2004.

publication, I would expand many of the topics discussed in the preceding chapters. A further consultation of regional archival collections would allow me to understand how individual stores and public catering facilities dealt with the shortages and consumer complaints. These collections would also help to trace the waxing and waning popularity of local restaurants and shops. Regional specifics, in the Baltics, Balkans, and Central Asia need to be further examined. I found very little evidence of the impact that non-European Soviet allies had on the Soviet diet and the influence, if any, that the Soviet food imports had on the local foodways. This topic also merits an extensive further study. Luckily, researchers interested in the topic are aided by the very lack of success of the Soviet food industries and planning. Food that has been consumed on a regular basis, without much difficulty, does not usually evoke passionate discussions or memories. But food that was promised and never delivered seems to leave plenty of evidence of the meals that never were, a Proustian madeleine in reverse.

Appendix A: Glossary of Unusual Culinary Terms

Balamyk: A basic Kyrgyz peasant dish of flour fried in fat and diluted with water or broth.

Beliashi: A common snack of Tartar origins. A meat and onion-filled savory round donut.

Borsch: A thick, vegetable soup made with meat broth. It is of Ukrainian origin but is now common throughout the former USSR. Often, but not always contains beets.

Buzhenina: A large Pork shoulder or ham, boiled or baked whole.

Caviar: Preserved fish eggs. Most commonly encountered in the former USSR as “black” (sturgeon family), “red” (salmon), and “paiusnaia” (heated in brine and pressed into a paste for better shelf life).

Chanakhi: A one-pot Georgian stew of lamb, potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant, and onion.

Chaikhana: A Central Asian tea house.

Chaud Froid: *Shaffrua* in bowdlerized Russian-restaurant French. Any dish served in aspic.

Cheburkeki: Large Tartar meat-pies made with thin dough and fried. Larger than beliashi.

Chikhirtma: A Georgian soup similar to the Greek egg-lemon chicken soup.

Chorba: A Balkan soup, associated with Moldavia in the Soviet context. Meat and vegetables are cooked in a liquid base of half meat broth and half *kvass*.

Cutlets: In twentieth-century Russian, *kotlety*. They are fried patties of ground meat mixed with softened bread and chopped onion. Most commonly made of pork and/or beef, can be made with other ingredients including vegetables or seafood.

Escalop: A thin cut of meat, similar to Scaloppini or schnitzel, fried without breading. Preserved from Franco-Russian prerevolutionary cuisine.

Eggs, Century eggs: Described in one of the cited memoirs as “wondrous black eggs with translucent yolk”. Eggs preserved in a alkaline environment that radically changes the color of the egg. Served in Moscow’s Pekin restaurant, they were popular as an especially exotic “oriental” dish.

Filet Portugese: A dish of French-Continental cuisine. Steak served with smoked ham.

Gefilte fish: Popular Jewish forcemeat dish. Fish flesh is mixed with bread, eggs and spices, stuffed back into the fish skin and boiled.

Khartcho: A Georgian soup, most commonly made of beef and rice, flavored with sour plums. One of the most common Georgian dishes in Soviet restaurants.

Kikhelakh: Jewish egg cookies, commonly sold by Soviet bakeries.

Kupaty: Fresh Georgian sausages for grilling

Kvass: A popular Russian and Eastern European drink similar to Latin American *malta* or English small-beer. The flavor is similar to stout beer. It is the most common traditional soft-drink and soup base.

Languet: Sliced fillet mignon. The name is preserved from the prerevolutionary Franco-Russian cuisine.

Lavash: Thin, flat, bread from the Caucasus baked in a Tanduri oven. Similar in texture and function to a pita or soft taco in Armenia. The Soviet commercial version was a thick, puffy bread more common in Georgia and Azerbaijan.

Mandelakh: Known as *mandlach* in Israel and the United States, these are small, baked or fried soup croutons. In Russia, the name was used for sweet, ball-shaped cookies.

Matzo: Crunchy, unleavened Jewish cracker associated with Passover meals. In the Soviet Union it became especially symbolic of Jews and their traditions.

Mayonnaise and potato salads: Many Soviet salads revolve around these two basic ingredients. The most common pan-Soviet variety is known as *Olivier* or *Stolichny* (Capital) salad – made with cooked meat, salted cucumbers, canned peas and boiled carrots. This dish has been adopted in every Soviet republic and is known as the Russian Salad in many cuisines around the world.

Pancakes: Traditional Russian blini are associated with Shrovetide but are now eaten on many occasions. The traditional recipe calls for use of yeast but today many are simply crepes.

Pel'meni: A meat-dumpling originating in Siberia. Made at home and commercially since the 1930s, they are kept frozen. They were one of the few commonly available convenience foods in the Soviet Union.

Pies (pirogi): The most common Russian versions are made with thick, yeast-raised dough and are a must for life-cycle occasions such as weddings and funerals. Fillings include meat, fish, jam, apples, and rice with hard-boiled eggs.

Pilaf: There are many regional variations of this fried meat and rice dish. The Soviet Uzbeki version was made with lamb and carrots, while the Gurian version also included raisins and honey.

Pite: A Crimean Greco-Russo-Tartar term for pita flat breads or even flat meat patties.

Piti: An Azeri one-pot stew similar to the Georgian *chanankhi*.

Ragout: In Russian, the term means any kind of stew. The Irish Stew, for instance, is known as “Irlandskoe ragout.”

Rassol’nik: A soup often made with poultry gibbets or offal. The key ingredient is salt cucumbers and brine used to counterbalance the pungent meat ingredients.

Samovar: A large hot-water urn, used for tea. A classic symbol of Russian domesticity and hospitality. A pipe is built into the center of the urn, so that a fire burning inside quickly heats the surrounding water.

Sauce Provencale: A nineteenth-century Franco-Russian herbed sauce similar to mayonnaise.

Sausage: The Russian term, *kolbasa*, is generic. The most common variety before World War Two was similar to soft cotto salami, while after the death of Stalin, the most common sausage variety was bologna.

Schi: A Russian traditional cabbage soup, traditionally stewed overnight in the oven. Aside from cabbage, this thick soup may contain any or no other ingredient.

Seledka pod-shuboi: Literally, herring under a fur coat. Chopped salted herring filet served under a layer of a potato, beet, and mayonnaise salad. The dish became popular in the 1970s.

Shashlyk, Shish Kebab: In Russia and the Soviet Union, kebabs were associated with Caucasian and Central Asia cuisines, often described simply as an “oriental” dish. It is also a common food to grill at a picnic or at a summer house.

Shtudel: This filled filo-dough pastry is common to Eastern and Central Europe, but in the Russian and Soviet context is seen as a Jewish dish.

Sweet-sour meat: Beef marinated and stewed in a sweet-sour sauce. Known in Yiddish as *essig-fleisch*, it is essentially a German dish called *sauerbraten*, but in the Soviet context was associated with Jews, not Germans.

Tiuria: Bread crumbled into water or *kvass*. This is the Russian version of the Kyrgyz *balamyk* and many other peasant dishes around the world.

Tolma: Stuffed grape leaves. Commonly associated with Armenian cuisine in the Soviet Union, it is prepared around the Caucasus and the Mediterranean.

Zel’nik: A Bulgarian version of a feta and spinach pie. Before Bulgarians, Tartars and other ethnicities were deported during World War Two, this dish also existed among Bulgarians in the Crimean peninsula.

Appendix B. Soviet Wages⁸⁰⁷

Soviet average wages have been notoriously difficult to calculate. The system was always fairly arbitrary. Until Khrushchev's reforms of the 1960s, most Soviet workers were paid a piece-rate, based on how much they produced, the difficulty of the task, and the skill level of the worker. While wages were simplified to a salary after the mid-1960s, they could be significantly raised by bonuses, social welfare funds and non-monetary benefits of powerful enterprises. The following is a rough, not especially systematic attempt to provide the reader with some wages to compare to the prices discussed in the dissertation.

In the mid-1930s, the average monthly Soviet wage was 189 rubles. An average household earned 923 rubles per month. At the low end of the wage system, rural service employees could earn less than 80 rubles per month. At the high end, an average miner's wages could be as much as 400 rubles per month. Thanks to high-productivity bonuses, Stakhanovites could earn over 1,000 rubles per month. In 1950, the national average monthly wage was 687 rubles per month, with garment workers earning on average 433 rubles per month, while coal miners earned 1223 rubles.

In 1961, a currency reform revalued the ruble, all salaries, and prices at the rate of ten to one. The new average salary was 80 rubles per month in 1960, 96 rubles in 1965, 145 rubles in 1975, 190 in 1985, and 202 in 1987. The minimum wage was 60 rubles per month in 1968 and 70 in 1977. A minimum pension was 10 rubles less per month than the average salary.

⁸⁰⁷ This account is based on Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917-1953* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 202, 210-211; Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 90; Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism: Labor and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 235; Stephen Rapawy, *Wage Trends in the Soviet Service Branches: A Research Note* (Washington, DC.: US Bureau of the Census, 1989), 1-3, 21-22; Raymond E. Zickel, *Soviet Union: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division Library of Congress, 1991), 819-820; and Linda J. Cook, *The Soviet Social Contract and Why it Failed: Welfare Policy and Workers' Politics from Brezhnev to Yeltsin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 35.

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