

world market. While it is nearly impossible to estimate the effect of this food weapon upon the Japanese, it is clear that the Americans lost part of their market. The profits were uncertain, but the costs real.

Already, before this, there had been mention of "blackmailing the stomach," when under the law forbidding trade with an enemy, the Americans refused to sell grain to China, as well as Cuba and Vietnam. Whatever the intentions of this legislation, the results were not conclusive. This was thanks to Canada, which, as early as 1961, was taking advantage of the 'Cold war' climate by carrying on lucrative trade with China, although she did not recognize the Peking government.

CIA report

However, it was not until 1974 that the food weapon openly became a diplomatic tool. The CIA publicized this theme in its report entitled: *Potential Implications of Trends in World Population, Food Production and Climate*. Forecasting the worst, a cooling of the planet which would affect all agricultural areas except the United States, the CIA concluded that the rest of the world would become increasingly dependent upon America for food supplies: "This could give them a power that they never had before—perhaps a political and economic hegemony greater than the years immediately following the Second World War."

Americans, both the man in the street and the leader, began to dream again. They were already making Machiavellian plans. In 1975, *Business Week* contended that this was a powerful means to force other countries to trade. They had in mind titanium from India, chromium from the Soviet Union, and petroleum from Iran. Petroleum was the word on everyone's lips: America felt humiliated by what she considered to be a band of Bedouin fanatics from another age. Suddenly, the American dream of continuous material progress was collapsing. The United States saw itself as dependent upon a highly symbolic product (oil is energy; in other words, power) under the control of others. But, suddenly these others were in themselves becoming dependent upon the United States: oil against wheat. Could there be a better basis for exchange?

However, then Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, had a negative view on this. He considered that the Arabs should not be the only ones blackmailed. He had more distant and developed aims; in exchange for wheat, he attempted in the summer of 1975 to gain oil at a reduced price from the Soviets. The unfortunate official put in charge of this mission, undersecretary of State Charles Robinson, of course returned empty-handed from Moscow: never would the leaders in the Kremlin have accepted such a one-sided deal. And when the Americans that year stopped the shipments of grain to the Russians, they ultimately gained only an accord to formalize this trading link. This meant that now, while the Soviets were committing them-

selves to a minimal quantity of cereals per year, they concurrently were gaining permanent access to the American market.

This first attempt to use the food weapon against the Russian giant had been a failure, and had shaken the Administration of Gerald Ford. This is why, when the U.S.S.R. intervened during the Angolan crisis with its Cuban armies in order to push back the South Africans, Washington did not attempt to use this instrument of force which many considered formidable. Were they right?

Carter's awakening

In 1976, Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter promised never to use food as a weapon. To punish a population for the crimes of its leaders was unacceptable, particularly at a time where the President's electoral campaign was based on the necessity of renewed morality in international relations. But when Soviet troops descended on Afghanistan, he felt humiliated; he had wanted to put the relations of the two superpowers on a sounder basis than force, such as the policy pursued by Kissinger. It was at this precise moment that he attempted to have the SALT II treaty ratified by a very reticent Congress. One of the most fundamental objections of the American legislators was the weakness of means of surveillance under the agreement, particularly after the events in Iran. They felt strongly that it was impossible to trust the Russians, hungry for expansion; the Afghanistan affair seemed to justify their concern. Carter's arguments were collapsing, as were his hopes of a new basis for Soviet-American relations.

It was then, in a fit of anger, that he reconsidered his promise to never use the food weapon. He imposed an embargo on the massive quantities of grain which had been promised to the U.S.S.R.: 10 million tons over and above the 8 million already agreed to in 1975, an accord still respected in 1980.

There was immediate turmoil in the stockmarkets of Minneapolis and Chicago. For, in the preceding year Secretary of Agriculture Robert Bergland had, surprisingly, not imposed restrictions on areas under cultivation. To the contrary, he encouraged seeding on as wide a basis as possible, stating that there would be no difficulty in selling the extensive surplus, because of a predicted catastrophe in the Soviet harvest.

And indeed there was: 185 million tons of cereals instead of the projected 237 million. The Americans were very satisfied until the unexpected announcement of the embargo: Suddenly millions of tons of grain were pouring onto the market. The President created a last-minute program, by closing those grain markets for two days and by promising to buy part of the surplus directly. Reaction to the move came swiftly.