P.S. to the NEWS

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ANOTHER GRAIN RO-BBERY

It looks as though American farmers have been victimized again by a Soviet grain robbery. Our successful private-enterprise production has been forced once again to cover the losses of the unsuccessful state-controlled Communist economic system.

The Russian 1977 grain harvest turned out to be 19 million tons short. Apparently, to fill the gap, the Soviets secretly bought millions of tons of U.S. grain at depressed prices, in violation of their agreement with the United States to buy only openly.

At least since 1962 the Soviets have followed a nationally enforced policy of guns instead of bread. Soviet officials will not allow any diversion of resources from their nuclear weapons-building program even for such fundamental consumer essentials as grain. Anyway why should they -- if they can outsmart American capitalists into shipping them cheap food so the Soviets can spend all their money on weapons.

If the Soviets had openly admitted that their 1977 harvest would never reach its official goal and they were in the market for more grain, the present depressed world price would have risen. Instead, the Soviets secretly and quickly bought up large amounts of low-priced American grain through European agents who did not reveal the identity of the real purchasers.

Why should the Soviets have admitted what they were doing? Because they signed an agreement in which they promised to do exactly that. Apparently, some of the dewy-eyed devotees of detente in our Government thought that the Soviets would play fair and square.

The consistency of the Communists in breaking their international agreements

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is exceeded only by the consistency of U.S. State Department and other U.S. negotiators in falling into the trap of signing more agreements and then believing that the Soviets will honor them.

The expression "great grain robbery," originated by Senator Henry Jackson, has gone into the English language as the popular description of the highway robbery that the Soviets visited on American farmers, taxpayers and consumers in 1972.

That was the year when the Soviets, after a particularly disastrous harvest, secretly and rapidly bought up 18 million tons of U.S. grain. Much of it was paid for by loans from the U.S. Commodity Credit Corporation, some of it was subsidized by other Federal funds, and the rest was sold at bargain-basement prices cheaper than what Americans had to pay for our own grain.

The Soviet grain deal cost the U.S. taxpayers three-quarters of a billion dollars in loans and subsidies, and cost the American consumers a couple of billion dollars in higher bread and meat prices. The General Accounting Office later confirmed that the deal caused higher prices for bread, beef, pork, poultry, eggs and dairy products.

As a result of the way Americans were fleeced in 1972, the United States and the Soviet Union signed an agreement to prevent future secret purchases of American grain. The Soviets formally agreed to buy a minimum of six but no more than eight million tons of grain each year.

If the Soviets want to exceed this amount, they are obligated under the agreement to notify the U.S. Government directly rather than place orders with private firms. The agreement also calls for monitoring Soviet crops by satellite, accompanied by on-site inspection of major Soviet grain-growing areas by U.S. Agriculture Department experts.

Our 1977 grain experience with the Soviets should have a salutary effect on SALT II negotiations. If the multi-billion-dollar U.S. intelligence-gathering apparatus can't accurately locate and identify fields of growing wheat, how in the world can it possibly locate and identify Soviet mobile and reload missiles which are easily capable of being moved and camouflaged?

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