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FOOD -- OUR MOST FABULOUS SUCCESS

Amidst the extensive television coverage of the Solidarity demonstrations in Poland, the art of sloganeering on signs reached its quintessence of force combined with brevity. "Socialism = hunger" was the placard that told the biggest mouthful.

Newspaper headlines have been proclaiming that the "weather" has caused the third poor grain harvest in succession in the Soviet Union. Ever since we can remember, we have been hearing that "this year, the weather has caused the worst Russian harvest."

The plain fact is that the weather hasn't been good for agricultural production in the Soviet Union ever since the Bolsheviks took over in 1917. Under the Czars, Russia was a grain-exporting nation. Under Communism, Russian cannot feed itself.

Let's look at some comparative figures. In the United States, 2.3% of our population is involved in agriculture; 17.3 % of the Soviet population is involved in agriculture. The United States has a positive food trade balance of $18 billion; the Soviet Union has a negative food trade balance of $8.1 billion.

Americans spend 14% of their disposable income on food; the average Russian spends 34% of his disposable income on food. John Q. American works 16 minutes to buy a pound of beef, 4 minutes to buy a pound of bread, and 6 minutes to buy a dozen eggs. Poor Ivan Ivanovich works a full 60 minutes to buy a pound of beef, 8 minutes to buy a pound of bread, and 71 minutes to buy a dozen eggs.

The official Communist Party press has been carrying on a campaign urging a "more intelligent" use of bread. The Moscow newspapers thoughtfully provide helpful suggestions on how to use old or stale bread in tasty ways.

The Communist Party Central Committee has been calling for extra measures, such as the sending of industrial workers and students onto the collective farms in order to gather every kernel of grain that can be scrounged.

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It wouldn't be worth taking so much space to recite Russia's annual food failures except that so many news stories seem to express the same surprise every fall. It's hard to see how anyone could be surprised. Communism/Socialism always means shortages of necessities, hours spent standing in line every day (mostly by women), and ultimately rationing. The repressive Communist political system is matched only by the hardship of its economic system.

Before Castro took over Cuba, that country had the highest standard of living in Latin America. Today, Cuba is kept from total economic disaster only because the Soviet Union is willing to pay a high price to keep afloat that unsinkable aircraft carrier 90 miles off our coast.

In China, the disparity between Communism and freedom is even greater. Compared to our 2.3%, Red China has 60.6% of its population involved in agriculture, and has a negative food trade balance of $1.9 billion. The average Mainland Chinese spends 60% of his disposable income on food. He works 455 minutes for a pound of beef and 205 minutes for a dozen eggs.

Even more dramatic than the failure of Communist agriculture is the abundance of ours. We are almost the only nation in the world which has never had a famine or even a serious shortage of food. The potential market for U.S. food abroad is great now and shows no signs of diminishing in the near future.

We should consider the political and economic effects of our shipments of U.S. food to free and non-free nations around the world. Can't we use American agriculture to improve the quality of life for non-Americans as well as the quantity of their food?

Are we being fair to ourselves or to others when we send American food to the Communist elite to use as a political weapon to keep themselves in power and pour more resources into their military arsenal? Are we fair to third-world nations when we bail them out of their crises without requiring improved efficiency in their systems?

We have a great opportunity use use our abundant food as the key to protecting the Free World, deterring war, and leading nations into constructive relationships which would improve the lot of humanity.

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