

## Food warfare underlies Bush aid pledge to Soviets

by Marcia Merry

In a hearts-and-flowers ceremony in the White House Rose Garden on Dec. 12, George Bush, flanked by Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, announced that he would mobilize credit for up to \$1 billion worth of U.S. food to the Soviet Union. He waived the Jackson-Vanik trade law (which demands Soviet emigration law changes) until next summer. Stumbling over the word, he said the food was to help "democratization."

It is tempting to see the announcement of the decision as a payoff for the support which the Soviets, through Shevardnadze especially, have given the Bush White House, in the administration's war drive in the Gulf. This the more so because any such idea was roundly rejected by Secretary of State Baker.

The United States under Bush has been embargoing food shipments to the Soviet Union since earlier this summer. The Soviets have insisted that, not having cash to pay, they need credits. The Bush administration, for its part, stipulated that so long as emigration law changes are not codified, the Soviet Union does not qualify for credit. The net effect of both was to dry up food shipments to a mere trickle, compared, for example, to just last year. The embargo was causing an uproar in the grain trading community, typified by Dwayne Andreas and his Archer Daniels Midland soybean giant, and among the farmers.

With the decision to offer food credits, the Bush administration ostensibly now joins an ongoing international effort, led by Germany and including other European nations, Japan, Canada, Australia, and even Israel, to ship food to Soviet destinations this winter. While others have been shipping, the volume of U.S. commercial sales to the Soviets has plummeted. The present rate of U.S. corn exports is at about 2 million tons a year, as compared with over 16 million tons last trade year.

### No humanitarian gesture

On both sides, there is some very disgusting, cynical maneuvering going on. Bush and company have used the matter of U.S. food shipments to push the nuclear-armed Soviet Union into a corner, over the unrest that is swelling internally within the Russian empire, driven by economic breakdown, disintegration of the transportation and distribution system, and acute shortages of food and other consumer goods. The Russians, as Shevardnadze implied, have their own battery of threats: "The fact is that there is a certain instability in the Soviet Union," he said at the press conference Dec. 12. "It would be a terrible thing if we were unable to assure the stability of the Soviet Union. It would be a terrible thing for Europe and the world." This type of language is not far short of what used to be called, during the Cold War, nuclear blackmail. But now, the Cold War is supposed to be over, isn't it?

Meanwhile, as the Bush decision was announced, the Russians have been in the midst of an internal reorganization, designed to strengthen presidential power over and against the independence movements in especially the food-producing Ukraine and Baltic republics. As part of the reorganization, the KGB internal security apparatus has been given charge both of food distribution, and tracking down those who allegedly have been withholding food. This indicates that food is not in any worse supply than usual—there was, in fact, a near-record grain harvest—but that distribution is being wrecked by black marketeers, profiteers, and speculators.

For example, the day before Bush met Shevardnadze, he also met President Vytautas Landsbergis of Lithuania (see article, page 36). Landsbergis asked for U.S. support in the event of a threatened, developing crackdown on the republic's independence movement. On Jan. 1, unless Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia submit to continued Russian hegemony

in the economic, and therefore political spheres, those three republics are facing the shutdown of their economic dealings with the Soviet Union. They supply food products to Leningrad, for example.

So in shifting on the food question, is not Bush actually giving the strengthened Soviet internal security apparatus a green light to go ahead with a clampdown against national movements in Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, like the Chinese student massacre in Tiananmen Square?

Rather than a change of heart, or anything like that, the Bush food initiative is the continuation of years of using food as a weapon, the foreign policy specialty of Henry Kissinger. Bush even has a special food weapon committee. Last summer, a special interdepartmental subcommittee on food aid for the U.S.S.R. was set up by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, a former president of Kissinger Associates, Inc. For the past four months, no aid was forthcoming from this agency, while they "studied" the issues involved, such as the possibility of allowing private speculation in the Soviet Union.

Meantime, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's publications insisted that reports of Soviet food needs were exaggerated. The USDA played up the size of the Soviet 1990 grain harvest (estimated at 238 million tons, a near record), and played down the fact that the physical infrastructure of the food chain is disintegrating, and people are suffering.

The Kissinger crowd, including National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, continued to block food shipments to the Soviet Union. This is part of an agenda of actions intended to undermine the emerging economic relations between Germany and Gorbachov, and to coerce Moscow into supporting the Bush drive for war in the Middle East.

At the Rose Garden ceremony, Secretary Baker was quick to deny that the new aid promise was a "payout" or a "payback" by the United States to court Soviet support in the Gulf.

But Baker could have saved his breath. The Departments of State and Agriculture have not done anything for genuine humanitarian reasons since the days before Kissinger became secretary of state 20 years ago, and ushered in the era of mass food control.

### **The Kissinger policy**

In 1974, Kissinger spoke at the Rome founding meeting of the World Food Council, and announced his plans for "strategic" food policies to provide nations with food "security" (see article, page 22). His intention was the same as that of the 15th-century Venetian pirates who roamed the Mediterranean and offered desperate people food "security," a few days' supply at a time, in exchange for political servitude.

Kissinger was one of the principal collaborators in a series of studies by the New York Council of Foreign Relations in the 1970s called the "1980s Project," whose premise was

that when famines arise at the close of the century (which is inevitable in the CFR view), then international agencies—the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the mega-companies, the relief groups—are to take over and exercise food control, overruling the sovereignty of nations.

Over the 1970s and 1980s, food control mechanisms proliferated, principally through the international food cartel companies (Cargill, Continental, Bunge, Louis Dreyfus, André/Garnac, ADM/Toepfer, Unilever, Kraft), the domestic and international relief agencies (the Red Cross, the refugee coordinating groups), and the "facilities" of the IMF and the World Bank. But the potential of most nations to be self-sufficient, or truly food secure, declined to the point of mass deprivation on the scale of genocide in Africa.

### **A counter to European development efforts**

The exceptions to this policy have been Japan and Western Europe, which now offer a potential bridge to development for the former East bloc.

The IMF has moved, in parallel with Washington, to attempt to thwart this potential. On Dec. 4, IMF chairman Michel Camdessus met in Brussels with the foreign ministers of the European Community, and criticized the German initiative to provide food aid to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. He insisted that aid must be tied to IMF austerity conditionalities and "free market reforms." The foreign ministers of Germany and Italy, Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Gianni de Michelis, insisted that aid and loans be without conditionalities, but rather as a "European sign of support for the reform process in the East." A followup meeting was scheduled for Dec. 10, to prepare a proposal for the Dec. 15 EC summit in Rome.

Unfortunately, to date the aid effort from Germany and other European nations has gone mostly through private channels, and hence has been quite limited in scope, instead of through government-coordinated mobilizations based on developing infrastructure for the future. This is guaranteeing needless suffering. On Dec. 1, rationing was imposed in Leningrad for the first time since the war.

The kind of policy alternative required was laid out at a press conference at Berlin's Bristol Hotel given by Lyndon LaRouche in October 1988, more than one year before the Berlin Wall came down. He called for Western aid to the Soviets to be tied to Soviet agreement to the unification of Germany and the development of Poland. LaRouche called the policy "Food for Peace." In his approach, political freedom and economic development went hand in hand to solve problems peacefully. His proposals anticipated in a way no one else did the developments of October and November 1989 in eastern Germany and Czechoslovakia. His approach is the one that is needed now. The alternative, based on using food as a weapon and blackmail conditioner, is one whose only result can be to push the world closer to a war, and genocidal disaster from which it might not recover.