

Edible Armaments:
Food as a Weapon in the Cold War and Culture

by
Meghan O'Dea

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History Department

Project Director: Professor Ward
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Professor Rice, Professor White, Professor Simmons

Examining Committee Signatures:

Project Director

Department Examiner

Department Examiner

Liaison, Departmental Honors Committee

Chairperson, University Departmental Honors Committee

Food, like the atom bomb, was an important weapon throughout the Cold War. Food represented the United States' productivity, efficiency, and prosperity. Food gave America leverage over other countries by reminding the world of America's economic clout, much as the bomb was a symbol of American military prowess. The food weapon is a perfect lens through which the tenor and attitudes of the Cold War can be better viewed. The Cold War was, ultimately, one of conflicting ideologies and competing nations, who, after the devastation of World War II were more comfortable competing economically than militarily. A booming economy spoke of a nation's ability to fund not only the military, but to invest in science, research, education, and the community. A strong economy meant a high standard of living, and food was one of the most intimate symbols of how well a nation's people were doing. It was the backbone of all of a country's citizens, activities, interests, and goals.

It has not been uncommon to view changes in societal attitudes and values over time through food trends in the domestic sphere. The political use of food, too, has been touched on by scholars in very specific contexts, such as the use of food aid in a certain country, or the history of a certain aid or trade organization. However, the use of food as a weapon in the Cold War has not been directly addressed as a broad subject in its own right, despite the topic's ability to shed light on how today's world continues to be informed by Cold War politics and values. Though the Cold War has been over for nineteen years, there are many lingering political and cultural leftovers that have gone unrecognized as part of a larger phenomena. What the world eats and

why is as much a part of decades-old politics as the alliances, trade agreements, and military conflicts in which governments are entangled today.

Like the military armaments the United States and Soviet Union stockpiled over the decades, the food weapon is rooted in World War II. Food aid organizations that sustained Europe during the war were used afterwards as an early means toward geopolitical security. At first the food weapon was deployed directly through government agencies and eventually through increasingly private, corporate entities as the public image of the United States and international attitudes towards the Cold War changed. Though it seems ironic that as food aid became more politicized it was further distanced from direct government control, the change had much to do with backlash against the blatant use of aid for less than humanitarian motives.

As corporations took on a greater role, a second shift occurred in how the food weapon was deployed. The early Cold War had been marked by economic competition. In that period, plain grain shipments had been enough to satisfy the hungry in Europe and the third world while meeting America's political needs. As corporations found new international markets for their food products, the food weapon took the form of hamburgers, fries, and Coca Cola in a culinary culture war that Soviet borchst could not compete against. Though it was not part of a masterminded plan, the result of globalization was that the United States had yet another economic edge and an international cool factor with which the Soviet Union could not compete. The combination of food aid and food marketing allowed the United States to advertise itself all over the world to those who were hungry,

figuratively and literally, for something other than what their governments had been serving.

When the Cold War began, the world was in shambles. European powers had been reduced to rubble by World War II, and their hold on colonies in the third world was crumbling. America was left to solve Europe's troubles. What America feared most was that the very totalitarian ideologies against which the Allies had fought against would rise from the ashes of the war and take root in the weakness and chaos of the post-war world. President Truman voiced these fears in 1947, stating, that "the seeds of totalitarianism are nurtured by misery and want."¹ The Soviet Union had been an ally as long as there was a common enemy to fight, but it had its own agenda after the war. It was badly beaten, its crop land ruined, population reduced, industrial production stunted and its economy struggled. But it was determined that the world would see it as a competent superpower, that it would regain the promising forward momentum in agriculture and industry which it had possessed in the 1930s, and would spread its influence wherever possible. It was this later goal which Truman saw as a grave totalitarian threat. The United States alone was in a position to defend the wrecked European powers and their struggling colonies from that menace.

The Cold War was not a traditional engagement made up solely of hot battles and military might. It was also a battle of rival economies. Without the right

¹ Harry S. Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," ed. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters in the American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12846> (Accessed August 28, 2008).

combination of capital, resources, and technology, the most famous elements of the Cold War, such as the space race and arms race, could not have occurred. The primary weapon in the economic standoff was not anything as showy as rockets or warheads, but simple food. The United States had stockpiled a vast surplus of food long before it turned to stockpiling weapons. Indeed, it was this surplus that fed Europe throughout World War II when it was shipped abroad through the Lend-Lease program. The Soviets had a long history of famine and the reorganization of all agriculture and industry through collectivization had caused inefficiencies and hiccups in production. This simple inequality spoke volumes of where each country stood at the beginning of the Cold War.

Immediately after World War II, the United States began efforts to speed Europe's recovery by continuing shipments of food and other "necessities of life" to the neediest nations, including Greece, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Trieste, and China.² The Lend-Lease program had expired, but two organizations, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and the World Bank, were temporarily able to continue their work in peacetime. Their mission, as explained by Edward Mason, was to "provide for the financing and distribution of foodstuffs and other essential commodities needed for the relief of populations devastated by war conditions."³ It was Truman's hope that feeding Europe would give the United States the image of a friendly, concerned neighbor, and at first humanitarianism was the

² Judith S. Jeffery, *Ambiguous Commitments and Uncertain Policies: The Truman Doctrine in Greece 1947-1952* (New York: Lexington Books, 2000), 190-191.

³ Edward S., Mason, *The World Bank Since Bretton Woods* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1973), 16.

primary purpose of donated capital and grain. However, the great irony of the Cold War was that it sprouted, in part, out of these very programs designed to rebuild Europe. Because the Soviet Union would not accept American aid, such programs helped escalate the competition and rivalry between the two superpowers.

Just after the war, both the United States and the Soviet Union were vying for influence in Europe, mainly through aid. Despite the need and want within his own country, in 1947 Stalin boasted of impressive harvests and industrial progress that allowed the USSR to extend its own offers of aid to Europe.⁴ Stalin was determined to keep Russia's ledger books closed from prying Western eyes and refused to cooperate with the Marshall plan⁵. Just as the USSR stepped backwards from its European neighbors, the United States stepped forward as the largest pocketbook behind international development and made a point of directing aid to countries that were vulnerable to Communist takeover. Stalin focused on directing his own few aid investments towards fellow Communist countries, which only added to Western fears of Red expansionism.

As part of its efforts to rebuild Europe, the United States sent aid to Poland and Yugoslavia, which were especially needy and closely linked to troubles in Greece. Railroads in those countries had been torn apart in the war, making the

⁴ "Soviets May Help Europe With Food," *New York Times*, 5 July, 1947.

⁵ The Marshall plan was envisioned by Secretary of State George C. Marshall as a means of "restoring the confidence of the European people in the economic future of their own countries." The plan required European countries to open their markets up to American goods and capital for an infusion of economic growth, something the Soviets were staunchly unwilling to do.

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/marshall_plan/.

transportation of what aid arrived difficult at best.⁶ Even by the 1960s the Soviets had not recovered from their post-war inability to distribute crops and food products from the occasional good harvest. A 1964 economic study by Praeger Publishing showed that the Soviet bloc had inconsistent agricultural production rates and noted that too few and shoddy storage facilities, farm equipment and trucks to carry produce to market hampered distribution and created a “very high loss in agricultural output.”⁷ These production and distribution issues remained a major impediment to Soviet success from the beginning to the end of the Cold War.

The satellites themselves were a huge drain on Soviet resources. A 1957 CIA assessment of “The Stability of Soviet Satellite Structure” concluded that the satellites were necessary to Soviet pride, geopolitical security, and blocking any possibility of German reunification.⁸ The CIA noted that the Soviet grip on its satellites depended on their ability to control local regimes and popular attitudes.⁹ The Soviet Union was also eager to show that Communism could succeed all over the world. The satellites served as a model of what other countries considering Communism could achieve by submitting to Soviet influence. However, the USSR was hardly in a position to take on the economic and logistic burden of maintaining the satellites. To alleviate some of the monetary drain, the Soviets used the satellites

⁶ Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power* (Stanford University Press, 1991), 2.

⁷ John Butler, *The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and the World Food Markets* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 6.

⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, 1957, “Stability of the Soviet Satellite Structure 1957,” *National Intelligence Estimate*, 12-57, no. 277: 1, in the Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room,

http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs.asp?doc_no=0000269469.

⁹ *ibid*, 2.

for resources, putting them in the same position that the colonies were in at the height of European power. For example, the USSR appropriated grain from Romania and exported it to England to fulfill trade contracts, with little regard to Romania's needs. Czechoslovakia was pressured to sell the sugar it produced to the Soviets at low prices, who then sold 70% of the crop outside of the Soviet block at great profit.¹⁰ An earlier CIA document from 1950 on "Soviet Trade Practices and Activities Harmful to Satellite Economy and East-West Trade," announced that "the paramount objective of the USSR is the enlargement of its economic potential.... In the Satellite countries and the Soviet zones of Germany and Austria, the USSR pursues the same objective by exercising strict control over the satellite economies."¹¹ The Soviets accomplished this with the Council of Economic Mutual Assistance in 1949, and by cutting the satellite nations off from opportunities for trade with the West.¹²

Stalin was eager to expand even further than he had with the satellites. In Greece, a Communist insurgency had decimated the economy and made Greece vulnerable. The people were hungry as food production was disrupted and internal strife exacerbated instability created by World War II. The United States followed Economic Cooperation Administration leader Paul Hoffman's advice that "you cannot eradicate indigenous communism with bullets. The only way to win in such a fight is to remedy economic conditions causing unrest" as the quickest, surest means

¹⁰ Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum No. 286, 2 May 1950, "Soviet Trade Practices and Activities Harmful to Satellite Economy and East-West Trade," http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs.asp?doc_no-001117984.

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² *ibid*

of stifling the Greek Communists.¹³ Hoffman's advice seemed a sure solution to putting Greece on the path to the stability of capitalism. Truman proposed immediate aid to Greece and Turkey. Despite Stalin's hopes that Greece would be a gateway to the Mediterranean, and his eagerness to see Communism spread, he could not compete with the 1.3 million tons of food that Truman sent to hungry Greece between 1945 and 1946.

The United States' impressive generosity to the Greeks did not produce the same international public relations results as their donations to old European allies did, however. The move was too openly political, too directly linked to the growing tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. The international community alternated between seeing American interest in Greece as kind-hearted and dangerously imperialist.¹⁴ It was especially hard to combat this opinion in light of the fact that shipments of food to Greece were almost as large as those donated to seven whole countries in eastern Europe.¹⁵ Even worse, despite the donations the United States sent, the political and economic situation had barely improved by 1950. The United States had tried everything from sending boatloads of grain to the introduction of state of the art Western farming equipment and supplies, to new attempts to introduce rice to certain areas in Europe. Yet livestock production remained down and even lucrative cash crops had not recovered to levels of production seen in the

¹³ Judith S. Jeffery, *Ambiguous Commitments and Uncertain Policies: The Truman Doctrine in Greece 1947-1952* (New York: Lexington Books, 2000), 190-191.

¹⁴ *ibid*, 27.

¹⁵ John Lindberg, *Food Famine and Relief, 1940-1946* (League of Nations Economic, Financial, and Transit Department, 1946), 7.

1930s.¹⁶ If Greece proved one thing early on, it was that the food weapon was an expensive one, and slow to produce results.

Food aid also fostered dependency in recipient countries. Although the UNRRA had been conceived as a temporary project, its slow results meant that the countries the UNRRA helped needed assistance long after the organization was supposed to expire in 1946. China alone received an extension through 1947 because it faced a famine of unprecedented scale. As the time neared for the UNRRA to expire, many countries worried about how they would manage. They relied on American donations and loans to purchase new equipment, and in many cases had not yet seen the pay off their investments in the field.

That debt was only the beginning of many recipient countries' troubles, however. Just as the export of the United States' agricultural surplus stabilized food prices at home at a comfortable level, the import of American grains depressed the price of local grains in recipient countries that found less demand for their harvests. Typically, food aid was distributed to the recipient country in one of two ways, either through food-for-work (which partnered well with development aims) or through monetization, the conversion of food to currency.¹⁷ With food-for-work, workers in recipient countries labored on tasks such as reforestation or other development in

¹⁶ Jeffery, 211.

¹⁷ Christopher B. Barrett, and Daniel G. Maxwell, *Food Aid after Fifty Years: Recasting its Role* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 132-133.

return for their allotment of food.¹⁸ Monetization was more complex, as it meant the recipient government would then sell the food, keeping the profits for other purposes.¹⁹

Both these methods had significant impact on the value of local crops and local economies. It was easiest and cheapest for government organizations like Food for Peace, non-government organizations, and international corporations to supply the sort of grains favored in Western food-ways rather than those used locally. This disrupted the culinary traditions of recipient countries from agriculture to the dinner table and complicated the matter of what grains to distribute in which countries. Rice, for example, was a staple grain in some countries and “status” grain in others. When deciding whether to include rice or an alternative grain, it was important to gauge the preexisting role of that grain in the recipient country, or face questions such as whether supplying rice instead of wheat was the same as shipping cake to the third world in lieu of bread.²⁰ No matter the role of rice in any given country, the fact remained that it was more expensive than most aid organizations could provide.

Despite food aid vacuum left by UNRRA’s expiration, it was not until 1953 that the Agricultural Trade Development Act, better known as Food For Peace, was created as a suitable replacement food charity program. Although accusations of economic imperialism had stemmed from President Truman’s favoritism in Greece, President Eisenhower was quite candid about the purpose of Food for Peace. He made

¹⁸ A. Jenner, H.W. Singer, and J.B. Wood, *Food Aid: The Challenge and Opportunity* (Oxford UP, 1987), 98-99.

¹⁹ Barrett and Maxwell, 133-134.

²⁰ Jenner, 106-107.

impassioned speeches aligning the new act with national and global security, turning concerns about the United States' bid for geopolitical supremacy through food to a positive rather than a negative. In one address, Eisenhower declared that "the freedom of nations can be menaced...by the poverty that Communism can exploit. You cannot fight poverty with guns. You cannot satisfy hunger with deadly ammunition."²¹ Later in that speech he directly addressed the economic reasons for pouring so much money into other countries. "Our own strength would suffer severely from the loss of these lands--their people and their resources--to Communist domination. As these lands improve their own standards of living they will be stronger allies in defense of freedom."²² The American people were inspired, and abroad many countries were relieved simply to see that there was a new organization that would be providing much-needed assistance.

Between the UNRRA's end and Food for Peace, the Soviet Union had certainly not taken advantage of the opportunity it had to pick up the slack left by the United States. The USSR had done little to help or impress the international community because it simply did not have the resources. Despite Stalin's boasts about Soviet prosperity, the truth was that Russia was struggling as much as the rest of Europe after the war, and its troubles continued even longer without American aid. It was true that after World War II, the USSR saw improved harvests and improved

²¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Radio and Television Address to the American People on the Need for Mutual Security in Waging the Peace," ed. John T. Wooley and Gerhard Peters in the American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=11042>. (Accessed: October 2, 2008).

²² Harry S. Truman. "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey."

industrial production. Simple rainfall was responsible, and alleviated the bad drought that had afflicted some of Russia's most productive areas in 1946.²³ More than rain was needed, however, when Soviet farm equipment was old, out of date, rusted, and in disrepair.²⁴ Production of new equipment was slow and once in the field showed that factories had cut corners, making equipment that had the war in mind more than peace-time agricultural needs. A review of popular mechanized farm equipment in scholar Naum Jasny's examination of *Socialized Agriculture of the U.S.S.R.* showed that in 1946, a Chelyabinsk tractor factory's output was "expected to amount to 3,000 tractors, but fewer than 1,000 were produced."²⁵ Not only were too few tractors made, but those 1,000 tractors were too big, leading to the conclusion that "not gigantomania but military considerations are probably behind its production; the factory is apparently continuing the manufacture of tanks."²⁶ The USSR could not transition away from wartime production standards as quickly as the United States, nor play the role of international breadbasket.

The wide gap in Soviet and American production capabilities did not stop the United States and the Soviets from competing in India. India was popular and respected worldwide after it freed itself from colonial rule and became the world's largest democracy in 1947. It was determined to become self sufficient, and to that end had instituted the 1939 "Grow More Food" campaign in anticipation that World

²³ Naum Jasny, *The Socialized Agriculture of the U.S.S.R.* (Stanford Food Research Institute, 1949), 58.

²⁴ *ibid*, 282.

²⁵ *ibid* 462.

²⁶ *ibid*.

War II would disrupt rice supply lines in the Pacific Theater.²⁷ That program encouraged Indian farmers to abandon colonial-era cash crops like cotton in favor of self-sustaining local edibles and increased the quality of seedlings and fertilizers, updated irrigation systems, and put more land into production.²⁸ Despite India's respect, it was not very geopolitically significant. Decades before the Cold War, Sir Olaf Caroe, an Indian Civil Service member, advised that India was "no longer an obvious base for Middle Eastern defense" and that Pakistan was uniquely positioned for "securing the immense resources around the Persian Gulf, and for establishing a group of welfare states to combat communism."²⁹ Still, America was invested in India and the Soviet Union was jealous of the influence in Asia that relationship created for the United States.

Still, India's dependence on the United States was long term, if somewhat sporadic. In 1950, Truman committed two million tons of grain to India to relieve famine,³⁰ and India needed help again a decade later when Eisenhower committed 587 million bushels of wheat and 22 million bags of rice through Food for Peace.³¹ When China invaded the Indian border in 1962, Khrushchev saw an opportunity to

²⁷ R.N. Chopra, *Evolution of Food Policy in India* (Macmillan India Limited, 1981), 58.

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ Bilal Hashmi, "The Beginnings of U.S.-Pakistan Alliance," *Pakistan Forum* 3, no. 6-7: (1973), 6.

³⁰ Lawrence Kaelter Rosinger, *The State of Asia: A Contemporary Survey* (Manchester: Ayer Publishing: 1971), 462.

³¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Statement by the President Upon Signing Food for Peace Agreement Between the United States and India," ed. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters in the American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=11770>, (Accessed February 12, 2009).

prove to India that the USSR genuinely stood on its side. He had tried to keep lines of communication open with India's President Jawaharlal Nehru, and had sided with India in the 1950s when the United States became more interested in Pakistan's geopolitical value than its old friend to the south.³² Russia had even attempted to create trade agreements that would provide badly-needed machinery for India.³³ These overtures had only been partially successful, however. The Soviet Union eagerly offered military aid to India, but still could not compete with the United States' combination of military aid and long-term food trade and aid agreements. Though India and the Soviet union remained on good terms, and the Soviet image did improve abroad, Khrushchev could not sway India away from American influence.

The Soviets found another opportunity in the near-east, however. Around the same time that it made overtures to India, the Soviets had better luck with attempts to court Afghanistan. As with India, all the USSR had to offer was loans and manufactured goods. However, it made excellent use of its small resources, and won favor in Afghanistan by updating its food production capabilities. In 1954, Soviet aid of 4.5 million dollars funded grain elevators, a flour mill, and a bakery. Later loans built a fruit cannery, one of a few projects that helped modernize Afghani food production.³⁴ The Soviets had an opportunity for long-term influence, and they went to great lengths to form and maintain their relationship. Fortunately, America had

³² Dietmar Rothermund, "India and the Soviet Union," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 81.

³³ *ibid*, 85.

³⁴ J. Bruce Amstutz. *Afghanistan: The First Five Years of Soviet Occupation* (Darby: Diane Publishing, 1994), 24.

little interest in Afghanistan when it had Pakistan and India in its pocket. By 1978, the United States had spent only 42 percent of what the Soviets had, while the Soviets had backed their aid with political support for the Afghani Communist party, the PDPA, which wooed Afghan citizens at a grass roots level with promises of “good government jobs, higher pay for being a member, and special access to food” amongst other incentives.³⁵ By the 1970s and 80s, the Soviets’ persistence had paid off. Afghanistan had become more and more dependent on the Soviet Union and offered access to rich oil reserves and other coveted resources. Soviet assistance with food, agriculture, and industrial infrastructure was key to gaining an important ally in the Middle East.

Another important element of the geographic chess game was Korea. While the Soviets and Americans were jockeying for position in the Middle East and India, Korea was dangerously close to falling under Communist influence. China, the United States, and the Soviets all took an interest in Korea during World War II. The Allies saw Korea as an ideal beachhead from which to crush Japan’s empire and expansion into China. Up until the development of the atomic bomb, the Soviets had been integral to the United States achieving this goal. Even after the United States dismissed the Soviet role in defeating Japan, the Soviets maintained an interest in Korea. They had great success, and managed to place Soviet officials within the Korean government and formed a 1949 decade-long trade agreement.³⁶ There was

³⁵ *ibid*, 83.

³⁶ Allen Sues Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (Stanford UP, 1960), 42.

continued dispute as to post-war Asian influence that was further complicated by China's growing power and its desire to have a Communist neighbor.³⁷

Just as with cooler conflicts, food played an important role in the hot conflict of the Korean war. The same contrast between Western prosperity and Soviet want that marked the rest of the Cold War was just as apparent in the Korean conflict. Chinese troops were disadvantaged by the constant attacks on key supply routes, which already delivered rations and supplies that were more meager than those enjoyed by Western troops.³⁸ Communist North Korea also had the inherent disadvantage of a colder climate and shorter summer than the American-occupied South, and thus had weaker agriculture and lower yields. The Americans laid claim to the part of Korea that Japan had used as a "rice bowl."³⁹ To further complicate the preexisting agricultural status quo, the division of Korea interrupted a long-standing exchange of Southern agricultural produce for Northern fertilizers and manufactured necessities for farming.⁴⁰ The result of the difference between Northern and Southern agriculture meant that it was up to the Chinese army to feed the poorest North Koreans. Many of the Chinese troops had been farmers before their government called them to military service, and they used their old skills to help Korean farmers. They also imported products that were simply unavailable during Korea's crippled war-time economy.⁴¹

³⁷ *ibid*, 45.

³⁸ *ibid*, 71.

³⁹ Lawrence, 131.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, 133.

⁴¹ *ibid*, 200.

In South Korea, the U.S. military was trying to take care of its own. There were efforts at home to raise aid money and supplies for refugees, but much of the attitude towards the conflict in Korea was negative. Headlines read “South Korea’s Bankruptcy is U.S. Headache,”⁴² others accused the South Koreans of stealing from American soldiers.⁴³ Never the less, the United States did its best to help South Korea stand in strong opposition to the northern Communist menace. The United Nations, through various agencies, assisted the Republic of Korea by sending food, livestock, medicine and other basic supplies⁴⁴ and even after the war the United States invested in projects that would help Korea achieve self sufficiency, such as the 1958 commitment of 40 million dollars to build a fertilizer factory that would help boost Korean agriculture.⁴⁵ The United States military also took on the task of supplying the foodstuffs needed not only by its own troops, but by those of American allies who joined in the Korean conflict. One memorable attempt to adjust for so many different national palates was the inclusion of “fierce Louisiana Cajun Tabasco sauce as the closest approximation to [Thai and Filipino] culinary dressings.”⁴⁶ However, the United States was more interested in preventing North Korea from getting food than supplying South Korea with grain.

⁴² Walter Simmons, “South Korea’s Bankruptcy Is U.S. Headache,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 27 August, 1953.

⁴³ “Koreans Regard Stealing from Us as Normal,” *Chicago Tribune*, 7 September, 1952.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, 200.

⁴⁵ “\$40,000,000 Plant Is Rising In Korea,” *New York Times*, 20 October, 1958.

⁴⁶ Stanley Sandler, *The Korean War: No Victors, No Vanquished* (Kentucky UP, 1999), 164.

The United States was surprised when China invested so heavily in Korea. The conflict came only three years after the UNRRA had to leave China with much work left to be done, and in the midst of its reorganization according to Communist principles. That reorganization led to what has been described “the worst famine in human history” with deaths estimated as high as 30 million between 1959 and 1961.⁴⁷ To make matters worse, from 1949 to 1953 the United States placed an embargo on China in an attempt to squelch the recent success of the Communist party there and the 1949 signing of a treaty between Stalin and Mao.⁴⁸ The United States was torn and could not decide whether economic sanctions would be better because they would weaken newly Communist China or if it would be better to maintain business ties with China because those ties were important “as purveyors of American influence and as symbols of American interest in the Chinese people.”⁴⁹ The UNRRA had donated well over five million dollars in supplies and numerous experts before its expiration in 1947 to make sure that the resources were well-used.⁵⁰ In addition, 400 million dollars had gone to China through the 1948 China Aid Act which helped build infrastructure and ease hunger. At the same time, trade with China amounted to 360.5 million dollars just in 1948, which was a significant boost to the struggling

⁴⁷ Dali L. Yang, introduction to *Calamity and Reform in China: State, Rural Society, and Institutional Change Since the Great Leap Famine*, by Dali L. Yang (Stanford UP, 1998), 1.

⁴⁸ Shu Guang Zhang, *Economic Cold War* (Stanford UP, 2002), 17.

⁴⁹ *ibid*, 29.

⁵⁰ George Woodbridge, *UNRRA: The History of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration Vol. 2*. (Columbia UP, 1950), 371.

economy.⁵¹ The United States had expected that this influx of capital would protect China as they had protected Greece. When the Chinese Nationalist party fell to the Communists in 1949, it was a harsh blow to the United States' theory that enough money and enough economic involvement with the West could save any country from the Red Menace. China wanted to modernize and grow, but not in the image of the West. As China grew more determined that it would develop through Communism and not capitalism, Congress finally concluded that a total economic embargo was in order. By December of 1950 the United States would "license no goods whatever for export to Communist China" and refused "our ships and planes from calling at its ports or carrying any goods destined for its ports" and declared "we have frozen Communist Chinese assets within the United States."⁵² It was a complete turn around in policy after injecting so much funding and influence, but the United States felt it had little choice.

Meanwhile, Mao insisted on intense, rapid collectivization. Urban workers whose grandparents generations ago had left farming were forced to return to the fields and laws were passed preventing them from returning to industrial labor.⁵³ Yet when a construction project was pushed forward as high priority, the government put farmers to work building factories and updating infrastructure to the neglect of the crops in the field. Organization was so poor and efforts were so rushed that grain was

⁵¹ Zhang, 29.

⁵² *ibid*, 31.

⁵³ Ted C. Fishman, *China Inc.: How the Rise of the Next Superpower Challenges America and the World* (New York: Scribner, 2006), 44.

left to spoil unharvested.⁵⁴ Shortages resulted, but local administrators tried to cover up the low harvests by recorder higher yields in crop reports. Some reports made no attempt at realism or believability whatsoever. The 1958 *People's Daily* dramatically announced,

With the overcoming of the reactionary conservatism and the collapse of the old conventions in agricultural techniques, agricultural production takes a Great Leap Forward. The yields increase by 100 percent, by several hundred percent, by 1,000 percent and by several thousand percent.⁵⁵

The falsified records led officials higher up to believe there was a surplus that could be sold abroad, taking grain from the people to be sold at foreign markets. The people lived off rations of root vegetables and cabbage, taking little culinary delight in their food, approaching it only as a means to stay alive.⁵⁶

China's early troubles were much the reason that the Soviet Union remained the sole Communist superpower, though there were continual fears that China would rise to equal strength and prominence. Still, the USSR and the US were the primary collectors of peripheral countries to nurture and influence. The United States had successfully saved Western Europe from the Communist menace, and had done its best to help Korea. India and Pakistan offered a good strategic angle on the Middle East and Asia, though from America's perspective they had an irritating tendency to cooperate with the Soviet Union when it suited them.

America's initial goal to block and contain Communism using its economic clout and the food weapon had been successful enough that the United States

⁵⁴ Yang, 36.

⁵⁵ *ibid*, 37.

⁵⁶ Fishman, 126-127.

developed a new bill that took its trade and aid agendas to the next level. The 1966 “Food For Freedom” act made it impossible for any country that had trade agreements with Cuba or North Vietnam to trade with the United States. This put pressure on countries that were content to deal with both the Americans and the Soviets to pick a trade partner and ally. It was hoped that this would force countries like India, Pakistan, Yugoslavia, Poland, Morocco, and much of Latin America off the fence and into the American fold.⁵⁷ Food For Freedom was promoted by President Lyndon Johnson to Congress as a part of a “war on hunger” that would have “only victors” and would “keep free men free, and at the same time share our leadership and agricultural resources with our less blessed brothers throughout the world.”⁵⁸ Despite Johnson’s positive and inspirational sales pitch, the response to the bill was not entirely positive. The State Department worried that Food for Freedom was too limiting and would not force neutral countries off the fence as much as cut into the United States’ ability to bargain as effectively with Food for Peace.⁵⁹ The media wondered how the bill would affect the Vietnam war. *Christian Science Monitor* demanded “is winning the war in Vietnam the most important object of our foreign policy today, or isn’t it?”⁶⁰ Secretary of State Dean Rusk voiced concern that Food

⁵⁷ Morris H. Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution* (Cambridge UP, 1988), 216.

⁵⁸ Lyndon Johnson, “Special Message to the Congress: Food for Freedom,” ed. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters in the American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=28038> (Accessed April 22, 2008).

⁵⁹ Morley, 216.

⁶⁰ “U.S. Food and Freedom Policies Argued,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 26 May, 1966.

for Freedom indicated an unwillingness of the part of the United States to help any and all nations in need even if doing so would help further World Peace.⁶¹

Despite the United States' hopes that the embargos would sorely weaken North Korea's economy, the small country managed to weather embargos and the occasional drought. In 1961 the CIA reported that "North Korea has evidently not been troubled to any serious extent by food difficulties in the past two years."⁶² Though most people only had subsistence diets described in the report as "low-calorie, monotonous, but adequate," collectivizing agriculture had gone somewhat better in North Korea than in the USSR or China.⁶³ Prime Minister Kim Il-sung had also realized that it was more profitable to take advantage of tension between China and the Soviets than side with either country. This strategy won missiles and steel plants from the Soviets, which allowed North Korea to boost its industry and military, and aid from China, which helped North Korea through the embargos laid by the United States and its allies.⁶⁴

Just as the United States turned its back on North Korea, it turned its eye to Latin America as a prime territory to help off the fence and out of Soviet, Chinese, and Cuban hands. The United States had a geopolitical advantage and large American

⁶¹ Felix Belair Jr., "Rusk Says Hunger Threatens Peace: Tells Senate Unit U.S. Must Help Feed Poorer Nations," *New York Times*, 8 March, 1966.

⁶² "Central Intelligence Agency, "Food Shortages In the Communist Bloc," (1961), *Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room*, 6, http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs.asp?doc_no=0000307839

⁶³ *ibid*

⁶⁴ Andrei Lankov, "North Korean Policy During China-USSR Feud in 1960s," *The Korea Times*, 22 June, 2008, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2009/03/166_26280.html.

corporations had been entrenched in Latin America since the 1800s. The United States was not afraid of going to great lengths to maintain influence in Latin America, though it took more than a few food imports and capital donations to succeed. Rather than bribing Latin America with food aid and other grants, the United States kept control by directly influencing its government to maintain the profitable banana plantations that shipped produce back home. The most common excuse for interfering with any Latin American government that did not act in line with American interests was to accuse it of being communist. In 1954, the CIA ensured that America's foothold in Guatemala was maintained by overthrowing President Jacob Arbenz under the pretense that "the communists now effectively control the political life of Guatemala," a claim supported by an arms deal Arbenz had made with the Soviets.⁶⁵ American political interests were maintained, meaning that United Fruit continued to sit comfortably in a position of power.⁶⁶

Five years later, with Soviet blessings, the Chinese invited Latin American leaders to Peiping, China as part of a bid for influence in Latin American nations.⁶⁷ However, tensions between the USSR and China flared, and were complicated by Castro's investment in Latin American communism. The Latin American leaders were wary of the USSR and China in part because they disagreed with one another so

⁶⁵ David M. Barrett, "Sterilizing a 'Red Infection:' Congress, the CIA, and Guatemala, 1954," Central Intelligence Agency (1954), <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/docs/v44i5a03p.htm>.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "The Sino-Soviet Struggle In Cuba and the Latin American Communist Movement," (1963), <http://www.foia.cia.gov/CPE/ESAU/esau-22.pdf>

often and saw some ideas on the transition to collective agriculture as “too risky.”⁶⁸ Latin America became divided not only between Western and Soviet alignments, but Soviet and Chinese loyalties. Guatemala remained firmly in the grip of the United States, however, and United Fruit went to great lengths to promote its anti-communist stance, which only increased its popularity with consumers.

To prove its red-blooded patriotism, United Fruit had adopted the same rhetoric the United States had used to justify its actions in third world nations. It portrayed itself as a progressive organization that had saved Guatemala from unsanitary rainforests and struggling governments. The science and ingenuity that had made the United States so successful was applied to the construction of transportation and information networks, infrastructure, and the creation of thousands of jobs in Latin America.⁶⁹ This rhetorical similarity speaks to just how close the economics and politics of the company and its country were intertwined. In response to McCarthy’s fears of a Red terror, United Fruit quickly produced a film called *Why the Kremlin Hates Bananas*.⁷⁰ The film was described by the Director of Public Relations, Edmund Whitman, as part of “how an American company, through advertising and public relations, has combated communism in Latin America” and that “Guatemala, with the help of [United Fruit] had become the first nation to ‘throw back the red surge of international communism.’”⁷¹

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Steve Striffler and Mark Moburg, *Banana Wars* (Duke UP: December, 2003), 148.

⁷¹ John Farley, *Bilharzia: A History of Imperial Tropical Medicine* (Cambridge UP: 1991), 254.

Between the struggle to maintain supremacy in Latin America and the mixed success of embargos against North Korea, the 1960s were already proving difficult for the United States on the international scene. By the end of the decade, however, there were public relations problems on the domestic front as well. Just three years after “Food for Freedom” was founded, Senators Robert Kennedy and Joseph Clark “discovered” hunger in the American South. Kennedy and Clark had been invited to Mississippi by an anti-poverty committee to tour the Delta region and there they found the previously unrecognized reality of nutritional inadequacy and a tangled system of surplus dole programs that barely kept families fed.⁷² The very hunger America fought abroad had been ignored to the point of invisibility at home. Welfare for the poor was in the hands of the individual states, and Southern states frequently had delegated assistance to the planters who employed the poor. For example, handouts of food often came only in the winter, when agricultural and other seasonal work was over. When planters were hiring again, assistance stopped, forcing workers to make the most of their meager wages.⁷³

Other programs simply never saw all their funding going towards the end goal. Although a school lunch program had been in place since 1949, Kennedy and Clark found that just twenty eight percent of children who were qualified for free or reduced priced lunches actually received their meals.⁷⁴ There were similar problems

⁷² Marjore L. DeVault and James P. Pitts, “Surplus and Scarcity: Hunger and the Origins of the Food Stamp Program,” *Social Problems* (California UP, 1984), 6.

⁷³ Nick Kotz, *Let Them Eat Promises: the Politics of Hunger in American* (New York: Anchor Books, 1971), 25.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

with a program designed to subsidize milk for school children.⁷⁵ When the Food Stamp program replaced the commodity dole in 1964 it actually frustrated the distribution problem even more, as many people who had simply been handed their share under the old system could suddenly not afford to purchase stamps. Furthermore, racism, classism, and a misunderstanding of poor nutrition led to assumptions about how hungry the Delta poor actually were. Governor Paul Johnson famously remarked that he did not believe there was a hunger problem in his state of Mississippi because the poor blacks he encountered were “so fat they shine.”⁷⁶

The “discovery” of hunger was a harsh blow to a country that prided itself on abundance, equality, and a scientific, mechanized ability to package and distribute its edible wealth. No doubt aware of the possible comparison between the United States’ hunger “discovery,” and the perpetual Soviet food crisis, a 1969 meeting of the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee made clear that “it matters not how many [anti-ballistic missiles] we build if we cannot prove to the poor and hungry of other countries that we have an economic system which can take care of its own.”⁷⁷ From the 1940s on it was clear that food would be an Achilles heel for the USSR, as there had been continual crop short falls, famines, and near-famines since the 1920s. Then Russia had not been too proud to accept American support. Yet by 1955, Stalin’s desperation to prove a Communist system was every bit as productive and capable as

⁷⁵ *ibid*, 45.

⁷⁶James C. Cobb, "Somebody Done Nailed Us On the Cross: Federal Farm and Welfare Policy and the Civil Rights Movement in the Mississippi Delta," *The Journal of American History* (1990), 928.

⁷⁷ DeVault, 552.

a Capitalist one made any acceptance of American aid too great a blow to Soviet pride.

In 1955 when America was exploring the possibility of donating grain to the Soviets, one *New York Times* headline summed up Soviet pride, “Soviets Cold to U.S. Grain Gift; It Admits No Food 'Crisis' and Wants No Help -- Strings Seen to Any American Aid.”⁷⁸ The USSR had done much to dispel the idea it was struggling to feed their vast population. An endless number of farm tours, collective visits, and magnificent state feasts on both sides of the Atlantic combated any potential “misconceptions” about Soviet prosperity. Newspapers applied the food weapon metaphor in articles such as “Caviar and Kvass Floor Americans” and described American farmers “embattled” with their Russian hosts as they fought their way through glutinous reception after reception. “Their attempts to limit their intake of food and drink have been met by firm Russian insistence that the visitors partake of everything.”⁷⁹ Other articles described in glowing terms the fields of golden wheat and the bulging udders of America’s heartland, as seen by Russian diplomats. No amount of PR could quite shake the rumors, however, of citizens under Stalin who grew hungry enough to resort to cannibalism.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Clifton Daniel, “Soviet Held Cold to U.S. Grain Gift; It Admits No Food 'Crisis' and Wants No Help -- Strings Seen to Any American Aid,” *New York Times*, 27 February, 1955.

⁷⁹ “Caviar and Kvass Floor Americans,” *New York Times*, 4 August, 1955.

⁸⁰ Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* (Cambridge UP 1999), 167.

The Soviet Union was eager to show off the best its farms produced because it was desperate to conceal the history of hunger that the Soviets themselves could not forget. Scholar William Moskoff noted that “A Soviet citizen who was 55 years old or more in 1931 could remember the famine of 1891, one who was 25 or older could remember the famine of 1921 to 1922, and one who was only about 15 years old could remember the famine of 1932 to 1933.”⁸¹ It was the later famine, known as Holdomor, which was still fresh and painful in the Soviet imagination after World War II. In one of the worst failures of the Soviet regime, in 1932 Stalin ordered crops to be confiscated from the Ukrainian people for use by the military. The peasants were left to eat weeds, bark, horses—whatever they could find. In 2003, Ukrainian artist Mykola Mykhaylovych created a series of linocuts entitled *Ukraine 1933: A Cookbook*. One “recipe” reads “Children delirious from hunger would catch and eat all sorts of bugs, chafers, butterflies, moths, etc. Caterpillars were gathered and eaten with leaves.”⁸² Even simple implements like graters and oil presses were taken apart and hidden from activists and officials who searched Ukrainian homes for any sign of food hoarding.⁸³

Africa provided a final frontier where the United States could block Communism and save face after its domestic embarrassment. From 1949 on, America hoped that some of the old African colonies could be brought under its influence,

⁸¹ *Ibid* 3

⁸² E. Morgan Williams, “Ukraine 1933: A Cookbook; The Food They were Forced To Eat In Order To Survive the Famine,” *Art Ukraine*, <http://www.artukraine.com/famineart/bondarenko.htm> (Accessed November 20, 2008).

⁸³ *ibid.*

much as it had done successfully in Asia. The oldest of the great imperial powers left first—Britain, France and Belgium were out by the 1960s and were joined by Portugal in the 1970s.⁸⁴ Africa was left entirely to America to defend from the Soviet Union, an expensive and cumbersome project. The USSR and China were still at odds and both hoped that Europe's slow departure from Africa would leave a power vacuum that could be used to Communist advantage. Just as with post-war Europe, however, the United States felt it had an obligation to protect Africa as the last remnants of European control crumbled.

Not only were world powers outside of Africa interested in filling the political void left by exiting European powers, but factions inside were jockeying for position as well. The result was a complex series of conflicts. In 1973 Rwanda collapsed into civil war. A decade later, fighting in Sudan contributed to large-scale famine.⁸⁵ The Communists were quick to recognize that they could take advantage of various post-colonial movements to end white-minority control.⁸⁶ The Communist advantage was also enhanced by the fact that African governments themselves dismissed American-style democracy as poorly suited to their needs, and were eager to actively decide the fate of their countries.⁸⁷ The Soviet Union was able to influence Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, the Congo, Ethiopia and Benin. For a short period they had sway in Somalia, but that relationship was lost in 1969 when Somalia's political

⁸⁴ Michael H. Hunt, *The American Ascendancy* (North Carolina UP, 2007), 201.

⁸⁵ Steven A. Holmes, "The World; Africa, From the Cold War to Cold Shoulders," *New York Times*, 7 March, 1993.

⁸⁶ Colin Legum, "The Soviet Union, China, and the West in Southern Africa," *Foreign Affairs*. (July 1976).

⁸⁷ *ibid*, 42.

attitudes changed.⁸⁸ Much as the Soviets had gotten involved with India simply to frustrate the United States, the Chinese sought a foothold in Africa out of its rivalry with the Soviets.⁸⁹ China managed to forge a relationship with Tanzania during the 1960s, and joined the Soviets in Angola. Although these connections balanced American power in sub-Saharan Africa, neither Communist power could crack the sphere of influence America had built up in that region.

In Africa, as in Asia, food was important to maintaining a positive presence and strong economic ties. However, Africa is the best example of the negative consequences of food aid. After the United States began to export wheat to Ethiopia in the 1970s, local farmers saw demand for their produce sink and ceased farming all together, creating indefinite dependence on American aid. The *Washington Post* declared that “During the 1970s, only the poorest African countries were net food importers,” and those imports cost the poorest countries “the largest fractions of their incomes on cereal imports.”⁹⁰ The Vietnam war had put an end to America’s faith in government policy and the black-and-white patriotic fervor that prevented any discussion and admission of the ulterior motives behind Food for Peace. Debate over the long-term cost and effectiveness of the food weapon as a tool in economic warfare grew louder and more prevalent. A 1984 *Washington Post* article declared that “[Food for Peace] has been acknowledged as an arm in the American foreign policy

⁸⁸ “The Story of Africa: The Cold War,” BBC Worldservice.com, http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1624_story_of_africa/page28.shtml, (Accessed March 16, 2009).

⁸⁹ Legum, 58.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

arsenal” and noted that “As concerns grew about the spreading drought in Africa, Congress directed the administration to spend an additional \$150 million this year and next on direct food aid” throughout countries in the sub-Saharan region.⁹¹ Food For Peace expenditures had already climbed to 1.7 billion dollars in 1981, “about half in gifts of food and the other half in long-term credit...to needy nations.”⁹²

The Soviets were also worrying about how much they were spending, and the effectiveness of their aid offerings. Despite years of investments abroad, the Soviet position remained tenuous in strategically valuable countries such as “India, Algeria, Iran, and Turkey.”⁹³ Unlike the United States, the Soviets had only been able to offer investments for industry, mainly steel plants, for decades, and justified this plan of action “on the grounds that socialist countries, with economies that produced no surplus, could not afford to allocate large quantities of resources to developing countries.”⁹⁴ A declassified CIA document showed the Soviet records that as of January 1, 1973, 35.3 crude steel contracts had been made with Communist countries since World War II, with another 16 in developing countries.⁹⁵ Still, by the 1970s, Soviet technology lagged behind that of the US, Japan, and West Germany, where

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² Ward Sinclair, “Food Aid: Under Reagan, Program Has Seen Real Growth,” *The Washington Post* (November 1, 1984).

⁹³ Central Intelligence Agency, “Iron and Steel: Soviet Aid to Less Developed Countries,” in the Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room, http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs.asp?doc_no=0000309265 (Accessed February 11, 2009), 4.

⁹⁴ Ragna Boden, (2008), “Cold War Economics: Soviet Aid to Indonesia,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 10, no. 3: 110-128.

⁹⁵ Kinzer 3

steel could be made faster and more economically.⁹⁶ Delivery problems, delays, and other holdups, the same that stymied food production and the possibility of food aid, frustrated production in all sectors.⁹⁷ Still, these endeavors were the best the Soviets could do, though they lacked the long-term time frame and intimacy of the United States' food donations.

The total Soviet aid program covered only the same ground as the World Bank's post-war goals—offering loans and grants to update infrastructure and provide equipment. This limited program matched only a fraction of what America's many government aid agencies, NGOs, grants, loans, and public laws accomplished. The Soviet Union simply did not make the economic and cultural impact that the United States was able to through solid production and distribution, and a history of strong agricultural production. The fact that the Soviets and Americans put in the same one percent of their national income towards foreign aid and had such dramatically different outcomes says a great deal about the United States advantage.⁹⁸ Cold War economics scholar Ragna Boden noted that “by early 1965, only three of twenty-seven projects funded by the USSR had been completed.”⁹⁹ The simple difference in economic clout also demonstrated in an analysis of how each country behaved towards its third world allies at the end of the Cold War.

A *New York Times* article from May 1989, declared “there is a new sound coming from the third world- the sound of superpowers pulling up stakes. From

⁹⁶ *ibid*, 5.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 4.

⁹⁸ Boden, 117.

⁹⁹ *ibid*, 119.

Afghanistan to Syria to Cambodia to Ethiopia to Angola to Nicaragua, both the United States and the Soviet Union are looking for the exits.”¹⁰⁰ It was indeed clear at that point in the Cold War rivalry that “in the long run the only thing you win in this game is a bill. All these countries come with price tags. The superpowers don’t look at their strategic profiles but their debt profiles.”¹⁰¹

By the 1980s, it took Reagan’s fierce anti-Communist principles to quiet the distress on Capitol Hill over the United States’ debt profile. Since the 1960s Reagan had renewed anti-Communist fervor with speeches and statements such as his comment that “by 1970 the world will be all slave or all free,” depending on how hard the United States continued to fight against its Red enemies.¹⁰² Fortunately for Reagan, by the time he came to office the burden of the food weapon’s role in that fight had largely been transferred to non-government organizations and corporations. Though government efforts like Food for Peace and Food for Freedom remained important and in effect, they were suddenly just a part of America’s many options for using food as a weapon.

Non-government organizations began to play a larger, more public role than older programs, such as Food for Peace, in part due to growing backlash against the transparent political motives of government-backed food aid. The Global Policy Forum, an organization which “monitors policy making at the United Nations,”

¹⁰⁰ Thomas L. Friedman, “The Superpowers Decided Clients Are Too Expensive,” *New York Times* (May 7, 1989).

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out there in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 30.

concluded that “national interests and media attention, rather than need, often determine how governments, as well as private donors, prioritize crises.”¹⁰³ NGOs ranged from charities such as Catholic Relief Services and CARE to quasi-governmental operations such as the World Food Program branch of the United Nations.¹⁰⁴ NGOs were free of the obligations and restrictions that were naturally a part of government efforts, and had the additional advantage of being able to accept both private and government donations.¹⁰⁵ In the article “New Roles and Relevance: Development of NGOs,” Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce suggested that the transition of the food weapon from government organizations to private groups was a natural result of the capitalist market—that “by reducing the power of the state and increasing the role of the market, it is assumed that civil society too will flourish...” and that “in some countries, government officials have set up their own NGOs as a way to work more creatively, access different resources, and gain new opportunities...” or to dodge tax, environmental, or labor restrictions that prove more binding for governments.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Katarina Wahlberg, “Food Aid for the Hungry?” *Global Policy Forum* (January 2008).

¹⁰⁴ Originally CARE stood for Cooperative American Remittances to Europe, but now it stands for Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere.
<http://www.care.org/about/history.asp>.

¹⁰⁵ Katarina Wahlberg, “Food Aid for the Hungry?” *Global Policy Forum*.
<http://www.globalpolicy.org/socecon/hunger/relief/2008/01wahlberg.htm> (Accessed: September 12, 2008).

¹⁰⁶ Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, *New Roles and Relevance: Development NGOs and the Challenge of Change*, ed. David Lewis and Tina Wallace, (Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2000) 76-78.

Not only were NGOs uniquely positioned to have moral and economic flexibility, there was the simple fact that throughout the 1960s and 70s, the Cold War had cooled. Despite tense moments such as the Cuban Missile crisis in 1962 and the long presence of Soviets in Afghanistan from the late 1970s to the end of the Cold War, the sense that hot war could break out at any time had been soothed into a quieter, colder standoff than the Cold War had been just after World War II. These conditions made it more difficult to handle the food weapon through the government. Ulterior motives too easily cast a shadow over humanitarian pretenses. The transfer of the food weapon to NGOs, corporations, and new frontiers only changed the target for worldwide backlash, however. People the world over were frustrated over changing food ways, trade issues that blatantly favored American interests at third world expense, and global economic downturn did not improve dispositions.

In the 1980s when Vietnam was badly in need of aid, public backlash against offering aid to a former enemy in an unpopular war encouraged the government to let NGOs handle assistance. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported in 1988 that, according to a State Department spokesman, “The United States is encouraging private U.S. organizations to provide humanitarian assistance to Vietnam” and hedged that “the call for aid is unrelated to United States efforts to persuade Vietnam to account for any missing American servicemen.”¹⁰⁷ What the article makes clear is that many were suspicious of any and all aid motivations in the war-torn country and that there was great willingness to be critical of the United States’ decisions there.

¹⁰⁷ “U.S. Backing Private Aid to Vietnam,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 4 January, 1988.

However, it made little difference who made the shipments considering that NGOs were as susceptible as Food for Peace when it came to issues of long-term dependence as a result of food aid. The effectiveness of NGO donations was also called into question when the media noted certain downsides to America's aid efforts. A 1988 article looked at Vietnam after American military involvement there had ended and noted that population growth stretched food supplies thin. A United Nations survey showed that 2,700 children were "seriously malnourished" and that 9% of children would die before the age of five because of the poor health conditions in Vietnam.¹⁰⁸ Increasingly it seemed that American dollars were not going as far as hoped.

Another downside to placing a heavier burden on NGOs was that success depended on more than convincing congress to dedicate more capital and resources to programs in one country or another. Without private funding, NGOs were able to do relatively little. Towards the end of the Cold War, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that "belt-tightening throughout the food industry" caused an "unusual drop in corporate donations" for food banks domestic and international.¹⁰⁹ Corporate mergers and the growing power of companies in the United States "made some managers more timid about supporting charitable efforts, according to hunger relief specialists."¹¹⁰ The *San Jose Mercury News* called on the United States to put its political motivations aside and send NGOs to help stop famine in Angola, where the

¹⁰⁸ "Vietnam's Population Growth Outstrips Food Production," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 May, 1988.

¹⁰⁹ "Food Banks in a Pinch," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 April, 1989.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

collapse of Portuguese colonialism led to a civil war which attracted Cuban and American attention.¹¹¹ Not surprisingly, Cuba had little to commit besides troops and military support, which the United States also provided. However, the United States was also able to send funds through the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, an anti-communist resistance group. NGOs including the Export-Import Bank, African Development Bank, and UN Development program pumped millions into Angola in addition to United States government funds.¹¹² Without the attention of these private organizations and the stability of their funding from governments worldwide, drought in Angola would have caused much greater suffering.

Unlike NGOs, American companies found that forays into the third world could be quite profitable. Seed companies had proven this early in the Cold War when they filed into peripheral countries through the World Bank and other traditional aid programs. Such organizations donated seeds or provided loans for their purchases to help improve third world agricultural development. The purchase of seeds and matching fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides meant profits for American companies and another link between the United States and recipient governments. Once again, however, there were unintended consequences. These companies promoted hybrid, genetically modified, and engineered seeds that slowly pushed out cheaper traditional varieties that had often been bred for hundreds of years and were

¹¹¹ "U.S. Must Sidestep Politics, Help Feed Starving Angolans," *San Jose Mercury News*, 2 September, 1987.

¹¹² Doug Bandow, "Rethinking U.S. Foreign Aid," The Heritage Foundation Leadership For America, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/tradeandeconomicfreedom/bg653.cfm> (Accessed: January 8, 2009).

optimized to grow well in their birthplaces. Cash crops took over when donated food cut into the profitability of traditional food crops, which often put farmers in debt to afford the new seeds and equipment.¹¹³ This was especially hard on farmers who had only just started growing edibles again after years of colonial cash crops.

By the 1970s, the World Bank and aid programs were not the only ones offering seed sales. American companies began heavily advertising their products by traveling from village to village in “video vans” that broadcast advertisements that used local religious imagery to make the sale.¹¹⁴ In other cases, it was simple misfortune and good timing that allowed Western companies to push small, indigenous manufacturers and food ways out. Though it was long after the Cold War, in 1998 a mustard oil adulteration scare in Mumbai caused a government ban on the production of the oil and led to a deal that made imports of soybean oil inexpensive and plentiful. Mustard oil prices were crushed and dependence on American imports was furthered.¹¹⁵

Activist and author Vandana Shiva wrote on the devastating effect of American economic and geopolitical interests in the third world, stating “While the rhetoric is agricultural development in the Third World, the enforcement of strong patent protection for monopoly ownership of life processes will undermine and under

¹¹³ Vandana Shiva, *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2001), 10.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, 11.

develop agriculture in the Third World.”¹¹⁶ She spoke out against the genetic engineering and patenting of seeds that replaced local varieties developed over thousands of years by the peasants themselves, and declared, “This reductionism and fragmentation might be convenient for commercial concerns, but it violates the integrity of life as well as the common property rights of Third World peoples.”¹¹⁷

Shiva described a particular line of rice exclusively licensed to the Chinese government through Cargill Seeds and Occidental Petroleum.¹¹⁸ This strain simultaneously gave the Chinese an advantage over their Asian neighbors, but also gave the United States crucial control over China—much needed as China was anticipated to become a third world superpower despite its troubles. Whole organizations have cropped up to protest the rights seed companies have claimed for themselves at the expense of farmers. The aptly named No Patents on Seeds and Animals organization website notes that just 10 companies control 50% of the seed market, and these companies’ patents infringe on the rights of farmers to save seeds left over from harvest and breed them, which is “crucial for the survival of farmers... food sovereignty... [and] the preservation of biodiversity in agriculture.”¹¹⁹

Over the decades, the United States’ encouragement of NGOs and corporations to take over the food weapon has meant that private companies,

¹¹⁶ Vandana Shiva, *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives On Biodiversity and Biotechnology* (London: Zed Books, 1993), 122.

¹¹⁷ *ibid*, 91.

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, 120.

¹¹⁹ “The Global Appeal” http://www.no-patents-on-seeds.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1&Itemid=27 (Accessed October 21, 2008).

organizations, and trade agreements that link those companies to the government have become more powerful and controversial than ever before. The expansion of that power has continued even after the Cold War. In 2005, the natural culmination of the food weapon handover from government to corporate hands took place when “U.S. fast-food giants, in a move reflecting the crucial role of agricultural subsidies at the World Trade Organization are for the first time injecting themselves into trade talks in a big way.”¹²⁰ Yum Brands, a company which operates a number of different fast food chains, attempted to rally other franchises to push for “free food trade” at a WTO meeting.¹²¹ In 2003 the World Bank met with the World Trade Organization to broker a similar approach to trade and development topics in common.¹²²

Much as there was mistrust of the United States’ political motivations behind aid, suspicions grew towards the WTO, NAFTA, and the World Bank as questions about profit margins versus ethical business practice have grown. The perception by some consumers, activists and farmers that true aid has been tainted by increased emphasis on political motives has led to protests against free trade agreements and the World Trade Organization. In 1992 protestors from “labor, environmental, farm, and consumer groups” fought against then-president George Bush’s efforts to renew the North American Free Trade Agreement.¹²³ A Yale Global article on French activist

¹²⁰ Scott Kilman, and Steven Gray, “Fast Food Seeks Influence in WTO,” *Wall Street Journal*, 19 April, 2005.

¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹²² Emad Mekay, “IMF, World Bank Join Forces with WTO,” *Interpress Service* 12 May 2003.

¹²³ “Special-Interest Groups Want Renegotiation of Agreement,” *Victoria Advocate*, 10 September, 1992.

Jose Bove, whose work has included “the dismantling of the McDonald’s in Millau,” wrecking a genetically modified harvest in Solmiac, and joining Greenpeace “to intercept the cargo vessel the *Golden Lion*, which was carrying 32 thousand tons of transgenic soy to the French port of Lorient.”¹²⁴ Such actions come out of the view that aid and trade organizations favor the interests of American politics and corporate salaries over the needs of workers and consumers.

Originally a farmer before he turned to sabotage, Bove emphasized a “food sovereignty,” meaning that “each population should be able to eat from its own agriculture. The main issue for the farmers is to feed the population where they live: first of all, their own families, also the local market, and then the national market.”¹²⁵ Bove insisted that seeds, genetically modified plants and foods, and food importation harm smaller countries.¹²⁶ His complaints all stem from Cold War policy intended to develop the periphery in America’s own image and contain Communism, although America’s economic interests became quickly entangled in those efforts. In the post-Cold War period, it is disentangling America’s economic interests from its current humanitarian goals and out-dated politics has created great challenges and debate.

As corporations grew in international significance, it was indicative of another important change to the food weapon, the addition of a cultural component to America’s battle for supremacy. Global corporations not only benefited the American

¹²⁴ Jonathan Schell, “Food Should Be Left Off the Free Trade Table—Jose Bove.” *Yale Global Online*, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=5529>, (Accessed: February 3, 2009).

¹²⁵ *ibid.*

¹²⁶ *ibid.*

economy, but they appealed to foreign consumers in a way that plain political grain shipments could not. When the McDonald brothers revamped their restaurant in 1948, they had no way of knowing that their concept would become one of the best examples of the power of American corporations and American supremacy abroad. Although fast food at first did not have great appeal to consumers, it grew slowly throughout the 1950s and came to represent everything that was different about American food ways. American food was cheap, plentiful, and backed by a unique blend of technology, and traditional dishes. Anywhere in the United States, the hamburgers were the same as at every McDonald's, and there were no shortages. Everyone could afford a fast food meal. These qualities partnered well with American pride in distribution, equality, and freedom from want. Self-service also catered to an American sense of independence and individualism, and the mechanization of food preparation boasted of American's technological capability. Fast food represented America's best qualities and advantages, and everything the Soviet bloc lacked.

As Eric Schlosser explains in *Fast Food Nation*, "Fast food chains have become totems of Western economic development. They are often the first multinationals to arrive when a country has opened its markets."¹²⁷ Indeed, fast food franchises marked the countries that became a part of the United States' empire of economic alliances. Throughout the 1960s, corporate clients and non-government agencies took on a role that equaled and even rivaled that of political programs like Food for Peace and Food for Freedom. Starting in 1960 almost three thousand new

¹²⁷ Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 229.

McDonald's opened nation wide.¹²⁸ In 1967 McDonald's made its first expansions outside of the United States, opening franchises in Canada and Puerto Rico. Costa Rica and the Virgin Islands followed in 1970. The real leap over the Atlantic began, however, in 1971 when Japan, Holland, Australia, Germany, Guam, and Panama all got McDonald's. Fast food expanded even more rapidly overseas in the 1990s after the Cold War ended, entering East Germany, former Soviet satellites, and the Middle East for the first time.¹²⁹ The secret ingredient in every Big Mac was the allure of Western culture.

In those countries behind the Iron Curtain, the Western "cool-factor" of American style food, art, and fashion preceded specific chains like McDonald's and Burger King. Marjane Satrapi, an ex-Iranian author and cartoonist, recalled the allure of Western style fast food to Iranian teens in the late 1970s and early 1980s in her autobiographical graphic novel *Persepolis*. After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Iranian teenagers were suddenly restricted after relatively free, secular childhoods. One of the hottest spots to go in Tehran for young, rebellious, fans of Western pop culture was a café on Jordan Avenue called Kansas. Satrapi wrote, "Jordan Avenue was where the teenagers from north Tehran hung out. Kansas was its temple. In spite of everything, kids were trying to look hip, even under risk of arrest."¹³⁰ Satrapi's illustrations show a slick American style interior, as plain and ordinary to Western eyes as any

¹²⁸ *ibid*, 24.

¹²⁹ "A Brief History of McDonald's," McDonald's, http://www.mcspotlight.org/company/company_history.html, (Accessed: March 03, 2008).

¹³⁰ Marjane, Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Complete Collection* (New York: Pantheon, 2007), 112.

McDonald's or cafeteria. On the wall is a sign in English that reads "Coca Cola." On the front door are letters in Arabic. The teenagers sit shyly, segregated by gender, all in black, the girls in veils. Satrapi admitted, "My friends weren't actually that interested in the hamburgers...we let the boys know they could follow us by a few signs."¹³¹

Though Strapi downplays the role of the hamburgers, food was part of the draw to teenagers who idolized Western punks, American pop idols, and longed for MTV. However, when Satrapi's parents sent her to live in Germany to grow up outside of Iran's repressive culture, she quickly missed the flavors of home. She recalled her first experience at a German supermarket, and its wealth of products—a rare sight after the shortages of the Revolution years in Iran. Despite the variety and abundance, her budget required her to live off of pasta, and when her mother came for a visit, Satrapi recalled the "heavenly food of my country, prepared by my mother."¹³²

Despite the appeal of culinary tourism or the cool factor of Western-style food, it was hard to deny that the effects of the food weapon's transfer from political to corporate hands included rising health problems abroad. Once fast food restaurants appeared in a country, from the United Kingdom to Japan, obesity rates seemed to multiply at the same rate as the numbers of restaurants.¹³³ Though nutrition had been a concern of Food For Peace, albeit more because of pre-existing malnutrition than considerations for how to provide a well-balanced diet, it was of no little concern to

¹³¹ *ibid*, 112.

¹³² *ibid*, 206.

¹³³ Schlosser, 242-243.

companies shipping microwavable macaroni and cheese or fast food companies' salty dishes. Malnutrition, rather than starvation, had been at the heart of the American food crisis discovered by Senators Kennedy and Clark. America's scientific capabilities did not prevent the unfortunate reality that the latest in nutritional studies and food fortification were applied everywhere but to the neediest parts of the global population. It was also difficult for many to accept or understand that growing obesity problems at home and abroad were as much a matter of food quality as quantity.

Schlosser explained that from the early 1980s until well past the Cold War, “the number of fast food restaurants in Great Britain doubled—and so did the obesity rate among adults,” leading to the highest obesity rates in Western Europe at the time of Schlosser's research, around 2001.¹³⁴ A 2008 study by Synovate, a global market research firm, found that in the United Kingdom, 45% of participants agreed with the statement “I like the taste of fast food too much to give it up.”¹³⁵ Though companies like Coca Cola spent millions linking their products to pleasure in ads like its famous “Hilltop Ad,” which featured the refrain “I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony/I'd like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company”¹³⁶ or the “Open

¹³⁴ *ibid*, 242.

¹³⁵ “Fast Food Addiction, Obesity, and Other Weighty Issues,” (January 2008), Synovate, <http://www.synovate.com/insights/infact/issues/200801/>, (Accessed February 12, 2009).

¹³⁶ “The ‘Hilltop’ Ad: The Story of a Commercial,” Coca Cola Television Advertising Homepage, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ccmphtml/colaadv.html>, (Accessed December 20, 2008).

Happiness” campaign, the old maxim “You can’t buy happiness”¹³⁷ remains true for much of the world. Nick Kotz wrote of the American hunger crisis of the 1960s that “this is the story of hunger in the America of the \$900 billion gross national product, of 1.2 cars and 1.3 television sets per family, of block-long supermarkets, the America that spends millions on dieting because the affluent consumer can afford to eat too well.¹³⁸ And as Eric Scholsser pointed out, consumers the world over who bought into the Little Caesars pizza brand’s slogan “Big! Big!” are now “Big! Big!” themselves.¹³⁹

The statistics just for the consequences of obesity in America include \$240 billion spent on obesity related healthcare for ailments like heart disease, diabetes, digestive tract cancers, blood pressure, and strokes, and \$33 billion on diet and weight-loss programs.¹⁴⁰ The World Health Organization acknowledges that since 1980, developing nations have seen increased obesity rates. WHO describes diet with the same qualities as most fast food, “energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods with high levels of sugar and saturated fats,” and explains that increased consumption of these foods “combined with reduced physical activity, have led to obesity rates that have risen three fold or more...in some areas of North America, the United Kingdom,

¹³⁷ “Open Happiness Advertising,” The Coca Cola Company, http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com/presscenter/presskit_open_happiness_ads.html, (Accessed December 20, 2008).

¹³⁸ Kotz, 21.

¹³⁹ Schlosser, 243.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, 242.

Eastern Europe, the Middle East, the Pacific Islands, Australia and China.”¹⁴¹ Though the United States may have won influence worldwide as a result of its Cold War geopolitical aims, the metaphor of food as weapon becomes even more apt in the context of its harmful effect on world populations years after deployment.

Since the end of the Cold War, and especially in the new millennium, Americans have paid increased attention to the obesity crisis. The United States has worked hard to make food aid for the poorest Americans healthier, correcting many of the misconceptions and faults about nutrition that contributed to America’s weight problem during the Cold War. In 2009, federal programs such as Women Infants and Children stopped dispensing vouchers for whole milk in an effort to reduce saturated fat intake as obesity skyrockets nationwide.¹⁴² In 2007, the USDA started a new initiative to turn surplus commodities into stock for food banks and soup kitchens by setting up exchanges between the federal government and food corporations. Since July of that year, over 138 million dollars worth of goods were exchanged and more than 700,000 low income children the world over benefited from the increased availability of healthy foods.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ World Health Organization, “Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity, and Health: Obesity and Overweight,” WHO, <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/publications/facts/obesity/en/> (Accessed January 5, 2009).

¹⁴² Mandy Locke, “Skim to Slim: Parents On Food Aid Encouraged to Wean Kids Off Whole Milk,” Physorg, <http://www.physorg.com/news153932592.html> (Accessed February 15, 2009).

¹⁴³ “USDA’s ‘Stocks for Food’ Program Turns Raw Commodities into Food, USDA, <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=2008/12/0303.xml> (Accessed December 4, 2008).

For obese Americans, state and local governments have begun finding clever ways to help their populations get healthier. New York City, for one, requires certain restaurants to post nutrition information and put rules in place limiting all restaurants' use of trans fats. To similar ends, increased attention has been paid to how urban planners can redesign cities to decrease urban sprawl and obesity. A 2003 bill entitled the Pedestrian and Cyclists Equity Act was proposed to encourage the walkability of cities and more bicycle routes and trails.¹⁴⁴ Much as Americans, and now others worldwide, have to reconsider the effects of Cold War food ways, many communities are reassessing the role of the automobile, another Cold War innovation of prosperity and convenience, in cities and everyday life.

Though American food ways had powerful allure and represented everything modern, free, and Western, it is important to note that traditional cuisines had their own potent psychological allure as well, and held their own against invading foods from the West. The 2003 film *Good Bye Lenin!* shows some of the complexities of transition from traditional to Western food ways in Berlin in the midst of German reunification. Mrs. Kerner, an ardent Socialist and dedicated East Berliner, falls into a coma after she sees her son Alexander arrested at an anti-government protest. By the time she wakes up, the Berlin Wall had fallen and German reunification was underway. To keep the shock from killing her, Alexander and his sister go to great lengths to conceal the truth, despite the fact that they had taken jobs at Burger King,

¹⁴⁴ Marin County Bicycle Coalition, "Congressman Oberstar Introduces Landmark Bike/Ped Bill," MCBC, <http://www.marinbike.org/News/Releases/PACE2003.shtml> (Accessed March 3, 2009).

purchased West German grocery brands, and installed a slick new tanning bed in the living room. The new Western goods were removed and replaced with old Soviet castoffs, new food was repackaged in old Soviet jars scrounged off the street, and Alexander searches everywhere for his mother's beloved spreewald gherkins, one of the only old East German foods still on the shelves. Even the unfamiliar label of Western pickles is enough to tip poor Mrs. Kerner over the edge. Still, there was no stopping the Westernization of East Germany, and it became harder and harder to keep up the ruse. A Coca Cola advertisement went up on the side of the apartment building across from Mrs. Kerner's window, spreewald gherkins disappeared, and finally she saw a giant statue of Lenin airlifted out of the city, no longer a welcome reminder of the German Democratic Republic.¹⁴⁵

What is remarkable about *Good Bye, Lenin!*, especially as a film dependent on visual clues, is that it focused not just on the superficial, observable changes in East Germany, but on those personal details as simple as a change in the flavor of pickles from one regime to the next. Culinary journalist Anya Von Bremzen, whose family emigrated from the Soviet Union during her childhood, recalled in an article for *Saveur* magazine that her mother insisted that “The *sosiki* of [Anya's] 1970s Brezhnev-era childhood were nothing compared with the true, Stalinist article” which she had eaten as a young girl.¹⁴⁶ The reason why certain Soviet dishes were, and have remained, so enduringly dear to Russian cooks is because “besides *sosiski* with

¹⁴⁵ *Good Bye, Lenin!*, DVD, directed by Wolfgang Becker, 2003, X-Filme Creative Pool [sic], Westdutcher Rundfunk, Arte.

¹⁴⁶ Anya Von Bremzen, “Emigree's Feast,” *Saveur* 110, (April 2008), 68.

canned peas, kotlety (Russian hamburgers), borscht, and a few other simplicities, there was precious little to eat back in the USSR.”¹⁴⁷

Other common dishes on family dinner tables in Russian neighborhoods were *pirog* (savory pie) and “watery cabbage soup known as *shchi*.”¹⁴⁸ Despite the association of these foods with the hard times during the Cold War, Russians to this day embrace these foods as part of their heritage despite the richer tradition, in both flavor and cost, of nineteenth century dinners before the Bolshevik revolution. During the Cold War, Anya remembered that her mother secretly read clandestine pre-revolutionary cookbooks like Elan Molokhovets’s *A Gift to Young Housewives*, chock full of nineteenth century recipes for “live-poached sturgeons and rosy hams.”¹⁴⁹ During the Cold War, these rich foods were symbols of a different time and different ideologies. As she put it, “the years of corruption, enforced collectivization, and state-induced famine had wiped out such comestibles, [and] this was the Soviet idea of food porn.”¹⁵⁰

Just as tastes changed in countries which received American aid, the Soviet Union altered culinary culture in its satellites. Changes to Armenian cuisine in particular have received scholarly attention, perhaps because of the radical changes the rigid, industrial Soviet Union created in the vibrant culture and passionate culinary history of rural, religious Armenia. Armenian cooking was passionate and deeply tied to its social and religious context, qualities which the Soviets desperately

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*

wanted to strip away from the local culture.¹⁵¹ Photographs in Soviet cookbooks even replaced candles, which were considered too religious in connotation, with ashtrays as a accessory for table settings, because they were considered more practical and modern.¹⁵² State-sanctioned cookbooks were precious few in Soviet Russia and pertained mostly to navigating the particulars of Soviet food services, nutrition, and incorporating prepared foods into meals.¹⁵³

The march to modernity affected Americans as well, not only in what they ate, but how they related to their food. There was no better example of this than cake, a luxury food with little nutritional value and vast emotional weight. It represented the shift from food as sustenance, as it had been during the Depression and under war-time rationing, to food as a form of consumerism and a means of pleasure. It was also an epic battle ground between housewives and the food industry, as companies struggled to sway cooks from baking from scratch to using cake mixes that had grown out of the processed foods trend started during the war. The cake mixes the industry invented were scientifically savvy, making cakes lighter, fluffier, and taller than ever before, allowing for great visual shows of a cook's kitchen skills. However, cake also represented all that a woman was supposed to give to her family. To skimp on effort and time was to skimp on love, too. Just as the Soviet Union was stripping the history and religion from food, American companies were challenging the reigning values of

¹⁵¹ Irina Petrosian and David Underwood, *Armenian Food: Fact, Fiction, and Folklore* (Lulu: 2006), 20.

¹⁵² *ibid*, 21.

¹⁵³ Joyce Toomre, "Food and National Identity in Soviet Armenia," *Food in Russian History and Culture*, ed. Musya Glants and Joyce Toomre, (Indiana UP, 1997), 205.

tradition and conservative family values. Michael Cunningham tapped into the mid-century significance of a simple birthday cake in his 1998 novel *The Hours*. In it, he looks back to a frustrated post-war housewife who feels trapped by the cult of domesticity, yet obligated by her gender and status as wife to do her duty to her family just as her husband did his duty to his country during the war.

Cunningham's heroine hopes that "The cake will speak of bounty and delight the way a good house speaks of comfort and safety,"¹⁵⁴ but instead it comes out amateurish; handmade."¹⁵⁵ She compares her "failed" cake to her friend Kitty's husband, a man lacking the same success and masculinity as Mr. Brown. He was a prisoner of war, a failed soldier, and seems bland and impotent. "Ray is not an embarrassment, exactly, but he is somehow Kitty's version of Laura's cake,"¹⁵⁶ Mrs. Brown muses. What *The Hours* shows us is how deeply personal and symbolic food became, and how something which seems to have as little political or historical significance as a birthday cake can become, in the mind of both the character and the reader, a symbol for an entire generation of men and the hopes of an entire generation of women.

As food ways changed early in the Cold War, American values shifted. While McDonald's were popping up like mushrooms all over the United States, the counterculture movement grew stronger and more prevalent. Part of that counterculture included bourgeois bohemians who exchanged the mid-century WASP

¹⁵⁴ Michael Cunningham, *The Hours* (New York: Picador, 1998), 76.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid*, 99.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid*, 105.

culinary values of meat and potato dinners for the soybean and espresso palate of 1960s hippies.¹⁵⁷ People of all values and persuasions went wild for Julia Child's reintroduction of international food trends to the United States in the early 1960s with *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Americans flocked to the sophisticated cuisine which was a nineteenth century blend of aristocratic tastes and peasant ingredients that was completely different from the pre-prepared preparations housewives had become accustomed to. In the 1970s, cooks and consumers further reacted against heavy food processing by embracing everything natural and wholesome they could find. As cultural historian Kelly Boyer Sagert noted in *The 1970s*, that "anything that was perceived as 'natural' was considered to be 'good'.... Granola skyrocketed to popularity...salad bars began appearing in restaurants...brown rice, whole grain breads, and yogurt appeared in more and more recipes."¹⁵⁸

Decades of aid to Asia made Southeast Asian cuisine newly popular. The craze for all things Oriental in the 1920s had made Chinese food common enough in American restaurants, but after the 1960s there was a steady growth of other types of Asian restaurants—Japanese, Korean, Burmese, Indonesian, Vietnamese and Thai all cropped up in big cities like New York.¹⁵⁹ Foods associated with want and poverty in Asian countries (and indeed, as Food For Peace studies of malnutrition show, there was no shortage of hunger in Southeast Asia) became trendy delicacies in the West.

¹⁵⁷ David Brooks, *Bobos In Paradise* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), *passim*.

¹⁵⁸ Kelly Boyer Sagert, *The 1970s* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing, 2007), 109-110.

¹⁵⁹ Sylvia Lovegren, *Fashionable Food: Seven Decades of Food Fads* (Chicago UP, 2005), 293.

Laotian foods such as “crickets, green tree ant eggs, river algae, wild cassava, and wild yams,” termed “hunger foods” by culinary scholar Penny Van Esterik, were seen in the United States as the rare, exotic, and adventurous antidote to the familiarity of hamburgers and Kentucky Fried Chicken even as Western grains and fast food franchises poured overseas in fulfillment of United States geopolitical and economic interests.¹⁶⁰

Today we can see the ripples extending out from these small culinary revolutions. Dishes that emphasize quality over cost and symbolize the values of the educated descendents of the counter culture revolutionaries of the 1960s and 1970s tempt taste buds in culinary magazines like *Saveur* and *Food and Wine*. It is hard to imagine culinary magazines celebrating McDonald’s secret sauce, yet millennial food magazines extol European fast food favorites like German *currywurst*.¹⁶¹ Americans today love to read about lessons “in Cambodian flavors”¹⁶² and go on a “Chinatown tasting tour” from the comfort of their kitchens, where they try recipes for adventurous new dishes like “icy lemon-ginger vodka cocktails”¹⁶³ and “tomato

¹⁶⁰ Penny Van Esterik, “From Hunger Foods to Heritage Foods: Challenges to Food Localization in Lao PDR,” *Fast Food/ Slow Food*, ed. Richard Wilk, (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2006), 3.

¹⁶¹ “Curry in a Hurry,” *Saveur* 101, April, 2007.

¹⁶² “A Lesson in Cambodian Flavors,” *Food and Wine*, <http://www.foodandwine.com/menus/menu.cfm?Objectid=7FA56BAD-C766-4B45-B80FB96D3A7F3EAE>, (Accessed January 10, 2009).

¹⁶³ “Tyler Florence’s Chinatown Tasting Tour,” *Food and Wine*, <http://www.foodandwine.com/menus/menu.cfm?Objectid=42D97840-067A-44DA-A7DA4E350B7C6FA7>, (Accessed January 10, 2009).

mango salad.”¹⁶⁴ Russians today remember favorites from Soviet communal cafeterias more kindly thanks to greater culinary freedom. Dishes such as borscht, Chicken Kiev, porridge, and *pelmeni* (meat dumplings) are memorialized in the Moscow Public Nutrition Museum today next to exhibits on Kremlin feasts of “caviar, roast pheasant and turkey with goose liver stuffing.”¹⁶⁵

Not only did the use of food as a weapon in the Cold War affect the world’s economics and culture, but it continues to inform politics. Though the Cold War ended almost two decades ago, presidents and politicians cannot help comparing today’s international relations to those their predecessors shaped and navigated. President Bill Clinton once admitted in an interview with the *Washington Post*, “I miss the Cold War,” remarking on a sense that Cold War politics were very simple compared to today.¹⁶⁶ Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates in 2007 had similar sentiments, and commented that the Cold War was “a less complex time, almost.”¹⁶⁷ Yet the Cold War, and food’s role in it, have not vanished, nor has the effect of the Cold War on today’s global politics. The backlash that has grown against American food aid and culinary supremacy worldwide reconnected with left over Cold War troubles when, after the United States’ invasion of Afghanistan, troops air dropped 2.5 million food ration packages containing peanut butter, Pop-Tart pastries, and

¹⁶⁴ “Slideshows: Caribbean Recipes,” *Food and Wine*, <http://www.foodandwine.com/slideshows/caribbean/2>, (Accessed January 10, 2009).

¹⁶⁵ Michael Specter, “Just In Case Lenin Wakes, Dinner is On,” *New York Times*, 21 September, 1994.

¹⁶⁶ Charles Krauthammer, “The Greatest Cold War Myth of All,” *Time Magazine*, November 29, 1993.

¹⁶⁷ Linda D. Kozaryn, “World Much More Complex Than During Cold War, Gates Says,” American Forces Press Service, February 11, 2007.

lentil stew packets.¹⁶⁸ Almost immediately, rumors spread around the United States that offended Afghan peasants were feeding the peanut butter and Pop-Tarts to cattle in disgust, and would have been satisfied with cheaper staples common to the local cuisine.

World Food Program spokeswoman Abigail Spring coldly sidestepped the *Washington Post*'s questions about the truth of the rumors when asked "Are efforts being made to provide traditional food to the Afghan people?" Ms. Spring simply responded. "The food you're referencing is part of the humanitarian daily ration known as HDR's which is what the United States military is airdropping. The World Food Program is delivering wheat."¹⁶⁹ She added in response to allegations that supposedly starving Afghans were feeding their rations to livestock that "There is always some waste, some people who will not like the food and will not eat it and those people clearly are not starving. But there are over seven million people inside Afghanistan who are primarily relying on international food aid for survival."¹⁷⁰

A Mumbai newspaper *Indian Express* reprinted a *New York Times* op-ed piece originally titled "Pop-Tarts or Freedom" with the snarky new title "Pop-Tarts Won't Win Us a Muslim World," portraying the contents of American aid rations as a pathetic attempt to sway anti-American Muslims after years of Middle Eastern

¹⁶⁸ Elizabeth Becker, "The Danger of Doing Good Deeds," *New York Times*, 6 January, 2002.

¹⁶⁹ Abigail Spring, "America At War: Aid for Afghanistan," *Washington Post* www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/liveonline/01/attack/attack_spring101501.htm 15 October, 2001.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*

governments blaming America for their problems.¹⁷¹ Whether or not the opinions in that article were an accurate assessment, it is undeniable that many of the problems in the Middle East today are rooted in the Cold War, just as the Cold War was egged on by colonial collapse and unresolved issues left over from the two World Wars. Countries that are currently anti-American choose to blame their woes on past American foreign policy, and the United States finds it easier to blur the memories of Cold War complexity with nostalgia. Another sarcastic article, this time a 2008 *Los Angeles Times* op-ed piece, accused the United States of reviving Cold War attitudes concerning the recent conflict in Georgia between South Ossetia and Russia. The author wrote, “When tiny Georgia rashly tried to seize control...and the Russians responded with a massive military intervention, we understood that at last we had an opportunity to travel back in time to the Cold War” and added that some commentators wanted to travel back even further, noting the comments by “neocon pundits” comparing “Russia’s action to the 1939 and 1968 invasions of Czechoslovakia by, respectively, the Nazis and the Soviets.”¹⁷²

Many of the questions about food aid have not yet received answers. The Heritage Foundation, a conservative Washington public policy research institute, published an article in 1988 entitled “Rethinking U.S. Foreign Aid” and asked why the United States gives away 15 billion dollars in aid every year though many of the

¹⁷¹ Thomas L. Friedman, “Pop-Tarts Or Freedom,” *New York Times*, (January 16, 2005, reprint, *Indian Express* <http://www.indianexpress.com/oldstory.php?storyid=62834>, 2005).

¹⁷² Rosa Brooks, “The Cold War, Reheated: It’s 1981 Again and the Russians Are Once Again the Bad Guys,” *Los Angeles Times*, 21 August, 2008.

recipients are “avowed adversaries of the U.S. and hostile nonaligned nations”¹⁷³ and expressed concern that “businesses and so-called private voluntary organizations lobby for more funds to serve their own ends.”¹⁷⁴ It specifically called out the Agency for International Development for swift, decisive actions rather than well-thought out solutions.¹⁷⁵ Some of the Heritage Foundation’s observations had a point; despite current American condemnation of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program and the continued state of war between South Korea and its northern counterpart, both the United States and South Korea donate food aid to North Korea through the World Food Program. In *Food Aid After Fifty Years*, author Christopher Barrett described the United States’ use of food aid as a bargaining tool as “repeated games of chicken.”¹⁷⁶ Indeed, President Clinton saw fit to cut aid during a famine in North Korea in response to the direction of political winds at the time.¹⁷⁷

Despite any misgivings about who receives aid and why, primary aid recipients worldwide have changed a great deal since the early years of the Cold War, to reflect how America’s geopolitical strategy has changed. In 1960, the country that received the most aid in total volume was India, followed by Poland, Egypt, and Pakistan. The United States’ priorities were rebuilding Europe, preventing the Soviet Union’s takeover of Eastern Europe, and securing resources in the oil-rich Middle

¹⁷³ Doug Bandow, “Rethinking U.S. Foreign Aid” Heritage Foundation, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/tradeandeconomicfreedom/bg653.cfm>, (Accessed September 7, 2008).

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Barrett and Maxwell, 41.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*

East. During the 1970s, India remained top priority, followed by South Korea, Indonesia, and Pakistan.¹⁷⁸ The major change was, of course, that Europe no longer needed assistance, and the United States' lingering obligation to Korea. Indonesia, joined the list because of Soviet attentions there and concerns over the rising power of Islam. In the 1980s, Egypt captured the top of the list from India, followed by Bangladesh (which had separated from Pakistan in 1971)¹⁷⁹, South Korea, and India.¹⁸⁰ Egypt's sudden ascendancy was due to the blossoming Islamic movement's threat to American security in the Middle East.¹⁸¹

By 1990 with the end of the Cold War, little changed in food aid. Egypt remained the number one recipient, followed by Bangladesh as activist Islam continued to flourish. Ethiopia ranked third as famine continued to rage, and Poland returned to the list.¹⁸² The reappearance of Poland was especially interesting; it showed how the United States was quick to scoop up ex-Soviet satellites as they rose up against Communism in 1989. One politician, Janusz Reykowski, described the impact of the Polish elections on fellow committee members of the Polish United Workers Party, stating "What has happened in Poland is going to have tremendous

¹⁷⁸ *ibid*, 11.

¹⁷⁹ "All Pakistan's Cities Within Taliban's Reach," (February 27, 2009), The Middle East Media Research Institute, http://www.memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=SD226509#_ednref2 (Accessed March 1, 2009).

¹⁸⁰ Barrett and Maxwell, 11.

¹⁸¹ Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Egypt's Islamic Activism in the 1980s," *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2, (April, 1988), *passim*.

¹⁸² Barrett and Maxwell, 11.

impact outside (USSR, Hungary, other countries). This may lead to upheavals in the whole camp, this must be driven to social awareness.”¹⁸³

In 2000, American enemy North Korea received the most aid despite the United States’ concern over the small country’s nuclear program. Debates between politicians and in the media about how appropriate this aid is returns to the old question from 1950 on whether it was better to sanction China or maintain economic involvement to keep control. Ethiopia remained the second greatest recipient; neither its political problems nor famine had let up. Bangladesh and Kenya ranked third and fourth. In Bangladesh, the Islamic movement maintained its momentum and the United States needed to maintain a geopolitical position in the Middle East, as well as keep its eye on relations between India and Pakistan as the nuclear weapons programs started there in 1972.¹⁸⁴ It became worrisome after a 1999 air strike by India against Pakistan.¹⁸⁵ Most revealing of all, Russia was on the list at number five. Finally they were able to accept American aid with Communist pride no longer at stake.

The United States’ contemporary policy of providing aid to ex or current foes has garnered some attention. For example, Chris Fair published a book entitled *Cuisine of the Axis of Evil and Other Irritating States: A Dinner Party Approach to*

¹⁸³ “Minutes No. 64 From an Expanded Meeting of the PZPR CC Secretariat Held June 5, 1989,” National Security Archive Electronic Briefing book No. 22., <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/news/19991105/Doc-57.htm>, (Accessed February 20, 2009).

¹⁸⁴ “Pakistan Nuclear Weapons: A Brief History of Pakistan’s Nuclear Program.” Federation of American Scientists. <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/pakistan/nuke/> (Accessed February 2, 2009).

¹⁸⁵ “India-Pakistan: Troubled Relations.” BBC News. http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in_depth/south_asia/2002/india_pakistan/timeline/default.stm (Accessed February 12, 2009).

International Relations. Not only did Fair's book comment on American foreign policy, but it also showed how interested Americans have become in understanding other countries through what they are obsessed with the most—food. Fair wrote “Only the foolish would underestimate the social and political importance of food when, in fact, every aspect of what we put into our mouths is burdened with social, political, religious, and even militarized baggage.”¹⁸⁶ *The Independent*'s review of the book added to the conversation that “Geopolitics and food go together like samak masquf (Iraq's national dish) and fresh tomatoes. This can mean food security or competition over who has cultural ownership of a dish. Food is often a metaphor for international relations, and it is impossible to really know anything about your allies or enemies unless you understand something about how they eat.”¹⁸⁷

Indeed, reflected in China's reluctance to tighten food safety laws there is its desperation to continue growing industry and agriculture at alarming rates. Too much regulation might choke the progress that has created murmurs that China is almost a superpower. The *Independent* quoted Fair on the Chinese attitude towards its exports. She said “The Chinese don't care who they poison. The incidence of food-borne poisoning is unacceptable. They export so much and we test only a fraction.”¹⁸⁸ In 2009, China tightened its food safety laws under pressure from the UN after endless discoveries of unsafe chemicals in Chinese food exports. In 2008, 300,000 people

¹⁸⁶ Chris Fair, introduction to *Cuisine of the Axis of Evil and Other Irritating States* by Chris Fair (New York: Guilford, 2008), xvii.

¹⁸⁷ Clifford Coonan, “Axis of Evil: The Cookbook,” *The Independent*, 22 December, 2008.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*

were harmed by melamine in Chinese milk. In February of 2009, edible pig organs hurt many in Guangzhou, China because of steroid contamination.¹⁸⁹ Even dog food, widely-exported, was tainted, causing worldwide uproar from animal lovers.¹⁹⁰

China and North Korea are two of the last remaining Cold War enemies still in power and still causing headaches on Capitol Hill. Before the recent global economic meltdown, China was widely acknowledged as nearing superpower status. The Heritage Foundation published an article on China's economy, noting that "China has been the world's leading producer of steel, copper, aluminum, cement, and coal for several years. As a consumer, China surpassed Japan as the globe's second largest importer of petroleum in 2005. In 2006, China surpassed Japan as the world's No. 2 auto market. In short, China is an economic superpower."¹⁹¹ Despite its economic success though, the World Trade Organization long denied China membership because it was not, and is not, a capitalist country. When the WTO finally admitted China in 2001, a *New York Times* article noted that "Chinese officials have presented the nation's membership as one of their most significant diplomatic achievements since China displaced Taiwan and took a seat on the United Nations Security council in 1971. That step decades ago gave China the political rank of the

¹⁸⁹ Gordon Fairclough, "Beijing Tightens Food-Safety Laws," *Wall Street Journal*, 2 March, 2009.

¹⁹⁰ Bridget M. Kuehen, "Melamine Scandals Highlight Hazards of Increasingly Global Food Chai," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, (February 4, 2009), 1.

¹⁹¹ John J. Tkacik, Jr., "China's Superpower Economy," (Dec. 28. 2007), Heritage Foundation, <http://www.heritage.org/research/asiaandthepacific/wm1762.cfm>.

United States and the former Soviet Union.”¹⁹² This has been a worry to the United States, which has enjoyed its post-Cold War status as the most powerful nation on earth. Though North Korea continues to worry the United States with its nuclear weapons program, it is certainly not what might be called a superpower, in part thanks to a combination of bad government, United States sanctions, and crop failures. China, however, has only continued to grow in economic and military clout and President Hu Jintao directly challenged the United States as the lone superpower, stating that China would become “a world power second to none.”¹⁹³

India has also been discussed as a rising star. The *International Herald Tribune* explained that India’s ascendancy as the United States declines is the story of “the world’s two largest democracies: an unrivaled superpower and an aspiring one.”¹⁹⁴ Indeed, India has taken steps to secure geopolitical power through trade, investment, and aid, much in the image of its long-term friend and ally. It has also done much to dispel its reputation as a “renegade nuclear power,” a label better applied to North Korea today than almost any other country.¹⁹⁵ The Yale Global online warns, however, that we should not be too quick to credit China and India with superpower status. The publication cites the extreme poverty that continues in both countries, although China’s rapid agricultural improvement in the 1980s helped lift many to a more stable socio-economic status. With millions of people living on \$2

¹⁹² Joseph Khan, “World Trade Organization Admits China, Amid Doubts,” *The New York Times*, 11 November, 2001.

¹⁹³ Anand Giridharadas, “India Welcomed As New Sort of Super Power,” *International Herald Tribune*, 21 July, 2005.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*

dollars a day or less, it is easy to see why these so-called rising superpowers continue to need aid and assistance.

It is unclear how the post-Cold War balance of power will continue to shift and change in the decades to come. Much work remains to be done in untangling the mass of consequences that resulted from Cold War politics and the use of food as a weapon. Africa, for example, is still decades and billions of dollars away from recovery from the unintended damage done by the food weapon. If only problems in Africa were as simple as finding a solution to dependency on Western food aid and increasing self-sufficiency, a solution would probably have been found years ago. Yet countries like China, eager to follow in the United States' footsteps to global power, continue their Cold War involvement in Africa, unable and unwilling to disconnect any more than the United States. The *Washington Post* acknowledges that American attempts to disengage have hurt Africa as well, leaving it open to the imbalanced influence of China. Trade links between China and Africa created in the 1970s continue, and have contributed to suffering and genocide in Darfur. This has greatly hurt China's international image.¹⁹⁶

By recognizing the United States' Cold War role in today's economic, political, and military landscape, Americans can better find solutions to the negative affects of the use of food as a weapon in the Cold War and other political leftovers. Russians today drink Coca Cola with their borscht, the Japanese snack on Big Macs, and Americans are trying to slim down by going vegetarian and vegan. In the post-

¹⁹⁶ "China and Sudan: President Hu Can Bring Relief to Darfur—If He Wants To," *Washington Post*, 30 January, 2007.

Malta world, these things are now as much a fact of life as conflict in the Middle East, political unrest in Africa, and tension in Latin America are the result of Cold War politics exacerbated by trade and aid relationships built on the back of our most common human necessity.

The United States cannot undo the use of food as a weapon in the Cold War, but by acknowledging its use, power, and long-term effects, consumers the world over can better understand one of the most intimate aspects of their lives. Food is a connective thread that brings us together, or as Chris Fair pointed out, sometimes divides us. Just as the food weapon evolved over several decades to suit changing political and economic needs and consumer trends, the fallout will evolve along with the direction that global politics and economics take. Politicians and CEOs continue to make decisions every day that affect what people eat from New York to Mumbai. Whether that food comes through NAFTA or the FTTA, whether from a World Bank Loan or as a gift from Food for Peace, whether fat-free, sodium-free, or full-flavor, food remains at the core of the world's nations—the very quality that made food as a weapon in the Cold War so effective. By recognizing that the Cold War and its weapons—from nuclear bombs to sacks of rice—still have a vast impact on the world today, we can perhaps better understand how to move beyond the Cold War in politics and in the kitchen.

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