

CIA Research Report

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Big U.S. Grain 'Weapon'

By Henry Weinstein
New York Times

Washington

A research report of the Central Intelligence Agency has concluded that world grain shortages, which are likely to increase in the near future, "could give the United States a measure of power it had never had before — possibly an economic and political dominance greater than that of the immediate post-World War II years."

Written in August, 1974, shortly before the World Food Conference in Rome, the report predicts that "In bad years, when the United States could not meet the demand for food of most would-be importers, Washington would acquire virtual life-and-death power over the fate of the 'multitudes of the needy.'"

The report, made available unofficially to the New York Times, continues: "Without indulging in blackmail in any sense, the United States would gain extraordinary political and economic influence. For not only the poor LDC's (less-developed countries) but also the major powers would be at least partially dependent on food imports from the United States."

In recent weeks, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has referred to American grain stocks in news conferences about how to deal with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz has also referred to the way food could be used as a bargaining lever with oil-producing countries.

In early November, Butz said: "Food is a weapon. It is now one of the principal tools in our negotiating kit."

The CIA report, prepared

by the agency's Office of Political Research, says that the trends in grain produc-

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tion will give the United States an "enhanced role as a supplier of food" in coming decades that will provide "additional levers of influence, but at the same time will pose difficult choices and possibly new problems for the United States."

"This study was prepared by the Office of Political Research of the Central Intelligence Agency. It does not however, represent an official C.I.A. position. The views presented represent the best judgment of the issuing office, which is aware that the complex issues discussed lend themselves to other interpretation."

In a section on "political and other implications" of food shortages, the report says: "Where climate change causes great shortages of food despite United States exports, the potential risks to the United States would rise. There would be increasingly desperate attempts on the part of the militarily powerful but nonetheless hungry nations to get more grain any way they could. Massive migration backed by force would become a very live issue."

"Nuclear blackmail is not inconceivable," the report says. "More likely, perhaps, would be ill-conceived efforts to undertake drastic cures which might be worse than the disease — e.g., efforts to change the climate by trying to melt the Arctic ice-cap."

Near the end of the report, it states: "In the poor and powerless areas, population would have to drop to levels that could be supported. Food subsidies and external aid, however generous the donors might be, would be inadequate. Unless or until

the climate improved and agricultural techniques change sufficiently, population levels now projected for the LDC's could not be reached. The population 'problem' would have solved itself in the most unpleasant fashion."

The report gives no indication as to to whom it was distributed. It is not known whether U.S. representatives to the World Food Conference had an opportunity to read it.

It also does not indicate why the CIA did a political analysis of food-production and climate trends or whether the agency has taken or plans any action based on the information in the study.

Much of the information in the report, such as that on food needs, supply and demand and on climate, appears to be drawn from academic research by agronomists and climatologists, but the precise sources are generally not identified.