

## Tekst 6

Ian Traynor on a fowl export policy

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### Bush's legs rile Russia

FOR Muscovites of a certain generation Spam is the finest product America ever made. We might turn up our noses, but for starving Russians in the second world war the tinned ham and pork was a lifesaver.

Red Army soldiers wolfed it down. Moscow children devoured it. There were also Sherman tanks and US bombers, but it is Spam and corned beef that have left their imprint on the Russian folk memory.

George Bush's legs are the contemporary equivalent. Ten years ago, when Russia was immersed in another bout of hunger, the current US president's father inaugurated a food aid programme that flooded Moscow with chicken legs. The Russians are good at nicknames. The drumsticks instantly became famous as "Bush's legs".

Charity begins at home, of course. The aid programme was a huge boon to US chicken farmers. The aid soon became trade and what began as charity helped to crush the Russian poultry industry.

"Russia", the agriculture minister, Aleksey Gordeyev, complained this month, "is not a rubbish dump for poor-quality food."

He's living in a different country. I bought a bottle of Italian wine recently. Only after a couple of glasses did I notice something funny about the label and peeled it back to find the real label underneath.

There are very yummy chicken legs in Moscow, but they're not George Bush's. They're at the Riga market, alongside the pig's trotters, calves' shins and plump geese – good, fresh produce flogged by the babushkas from the countryside.

The problem is that these chicken legs are three times the price of the US drumsticks. The Americans send \$600m worth of poultry to Russia every year – half their worldwide exports – cornering up to 60% of the Russian market.

The Kremlin is crying foul. Moscow is mulling a complete ban, complaining the poultry is pumped full of hormones and antibiotics and is salmonella-prone.

But will Russia go hungry without Bush's legs? The biggest country in the world can't feed itself, importing \$14bn worth of food last year.

The answer, perhaps, lies in coming up with another madcap import of the kind that periodically erupts.

When demonstrations came into vogue here at the end of the democratising 80s, the riot police were at a loss. They lacked riot control gear. Imports again supplied the answer. Thousands of rubber truncheons were bought from Germany. The truncheons were instantly dubbed "the democratisers".

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- “Bush's legs rile Russia” (kop tekst 6)
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