

Features

Winter harsh for Russians; survival tactics different

United Press International
MOSCOW — How do Russians prepare for the onslaught of their ferocious winters?

Some advise eating more to build up an extra layer of body fat. Others go to great lengths to pickle, can, salt and dry foods that can be broken out during the long months when little fresh produce is available.

Still others do nothing, trusting instead in the predictions of mysterious, irascible, and generally lovable babushkas who are convinced they foresee the future, or at least the future weather.

By mid-October, the cool breeze that brought relief from summer heat has turned to a whistling wind that penetrates sweaters and light jackets.

Most Muscovites had already brought out their heaviest coats and chapkas, the fur hats with ear flaps that they seem to wear constantly. Those who were waiting for the first frost to buy a new leather coat or hat had a rude shock — those items jumped about 30 percent in price in September.

But black market sales of used coats, hats and boots go on openly at most of Moscow's farmers' mar-

kets, and business in the past few weeks has been picking up.

Just as much in demand are imperishable foodstuffs. Most of the lush fruits and vegetables from the southern republics of Georgia and Central Asia have disappeared in the capital by now. The staple items until springtime on most Russian tables will be potatoes, dried fish, cabbage when available, pickled mushrooms and peppers, and whatever meat is available from day to day.

A recent excursion to several government produce stores found fatty cuts of beef — unrefrigerated — selling for 2 rubles per kilo (\$1.60 per pound), potatoes at 34 kopecks per 3 kilos (about 55 cents for 5 pounds), tinned sardines for 1 ruble (\$1.40) and salad greens like dill and parsley for 30 kopecks (42 cents) per handful.

Few Soviets have deep freezers, so produce bought now must be preserved in other ways.

"Now what you do," said a wizened woman, "is boil the potatoes, the fish, the greens with a lot of garlic (sold for about 15 kopecks or 21 cents per clove), then put it in jars. You can eat it all through the winter."

Other women sell mushrooms

that have been dried and strung together — an arduous process, apparently, for they command 15 rubles (\$21) for about 30 mushrooms. They can be rehydrated by flinging them into soup.

"They're not as good as fresh, of course, but they're mushrooms in the winter," the persuasive saleswoman said.

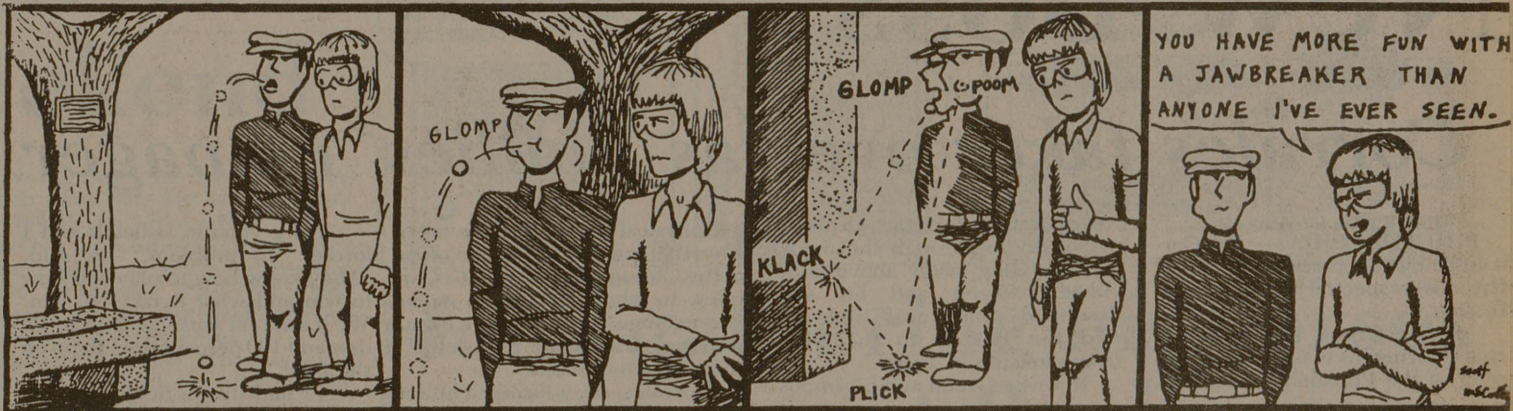
Her stout figure was no accident, and she explained the reason.

"We always eat very big meals before winter. Thin people get sick more in the winter." If that is so, she is a guaranteed survivor.

So are the fascinating babushkas — gnarled and wrinkled widows or old maids anywhere between the ages of 50 and 500. With only a little urging they will prognosticate on the specific characteristics of the coming winter — the first snowfall, the length and ferocity of the season's grip on Russia, and the first safe day for planting spring crops with no fear of them being frozen.

Their methods, shrouded in secrecy and legend, could well prove as accurate as those of the most modern meteorologists. And if they are not, there is always next year.

Warped



By Scott McCullar

Mexican-American realizes dream

Pope names Hispanic bishop

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — When the Catholic priests who moved from town to town during the Depression came to eat at young Ricardo Ramirez's four-room house in Bay City, the awed son of migrant farm workers thought it felt like God Himself had arrived for a visit.

That early rapture with men of the cloth led Ramirez to the priesthood and to his appointment last week as one of only two Mexican-American officials in a diocese with more than 500,000 Hispanic parishioners.

Pope John Paul II named Ramirez, 45, as one of three auxiliary bishops to Archbishop Patrick Flores.

The appointment made Ramirez the second native church official in the diocese — a right-hand man to Flores, who was the first Mexican-American bishop in America.

"My family really had a strong feeling, a reverence for priests," the Rev. Ramirez said. "I remember how hospitable they were for

priests who came to our home to eat. It was a very special time. It was almost like God coming to visit us."

The family saved money from working on local farms to help send Ramirez to college. An order of priests in Bay City, the Basilians, took an interest in Ramirez and gave him a scholarship to St. Thomas University in Houston, where Ramirez earned his teaching credentials.

He said: "Later, the idea of being a priest entered my mind and my heart."

He said the Basilians impressed him with their "spirit of community, their quiet simplicity, their camaraderie," prompting him to enter a seminary after he graduated from college.

"I've had a very beautiful life with many trans-cultural experiences," Ramirez said. "I feel that might be one of the gifts God has given me, to be sensitive to all kinds of people and to help others come to an awareness of the church."

Now that he has reached the decision-making level of the Catholic church, Ramirez said his new position would help strengthen the Mexican-American community's religious life.

He said a priority would be to speak out for the poor, to include more bilingual and bicultural training for new priests and to have a voice in appointing priests

who are sensitive to the cultural pluralism in the diocese.

"Helping the archbishop create an atmosphere of harmony and mutual understanding will be very

important," Ramirez said. "The fact that here we are — bilingual, bicultural and able to operate in both cultures very easily — just that will be a help."

Judge blocking takeover of oil company by Mobil

United Press International
CLEVELAND — Mobil Corp.'s \$5.1 billion plan to take over Marathon Oil Co. was bottled up in federal court Wednesday.

U.S. District Court Judge Frank J. Battisti refused Tuesday to lift his temporary restraining order blocking attempts by the nation's second largest oil company to purchase the Ohio-based Marathon, the No. 16 oil firm.

Battisti rejected Mobil's argument that its takeover bid will lose crucial momentum unless the order issued late Sunday night is lifted.

However, the judge did modify the order to bar Marathon from making any public statements or announcements about Mobil's offer, except as required by law. Similar restrictions were placed on Mobil when the order was issued.

The next step in the complex legal battle should be a hearing on Marathon's request for a preliminary injunction against Mobil's takeover bid.

The request was part of an anti-trust suit that Marathon filed Monday against Mobil and the prominent brokerage house of Merrill, Lynch. A hearing date was not immediately set.

Battisti, after daylong arguments by Mobil and Marathon attorneys, said he could find "no grounds to dissolve the temporary restraining order," which is to expire Nov. 10.

"In the absence of the order," Battisti's two-page opinion read, "it appears that Marathon and its shareholders will suffer immediate and irreparable harm, which would outweigh any potential damage to (Mobil)."

Marathon had raised serious anti-trust questions about Mobil's takeover bid, he said, and the status quo should be maintained pending the hearing on a preliminary injunction.

Mobil said last Friday it hopes to buy up to 40 million Marathon shares, or two-thirds of the company's outstanding stock, for \$85 per share, a total of \$3.4 billion.

Mobil said it later intends to acquire the rest of the shares, with the overall deal valued at \$5.1 billion.

Marathon labeled Mobil's offer grossly inadequate and said it was not in the best interests of the company or its shareholders.

Marathon said Battisti's temporary order was necessary to bar professional traders and speculators from buying up company stock for short-term gain and changing the nature of Marathon's shareholders.

"What this order insures,"

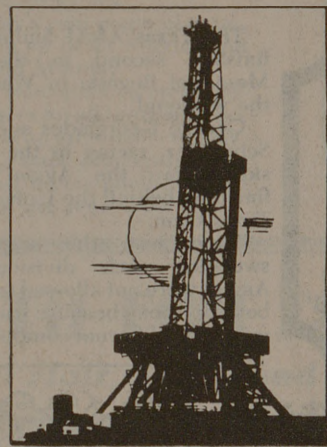
Marathon attorney Patrick F. McCartan told the court, "is that those buying and selling stock in the market today are doing so with at least some appreciation of the antitrust implications."

"Mobil's not going to be able to play roulette with Marathon or its shareholders," he said.

McCartan said Marathon and Mobil compete "at every level." The proposed takeover would make Mobil the nation's No. 1 gasoline marketer, second largest industrial company and second largest refiner, he said.

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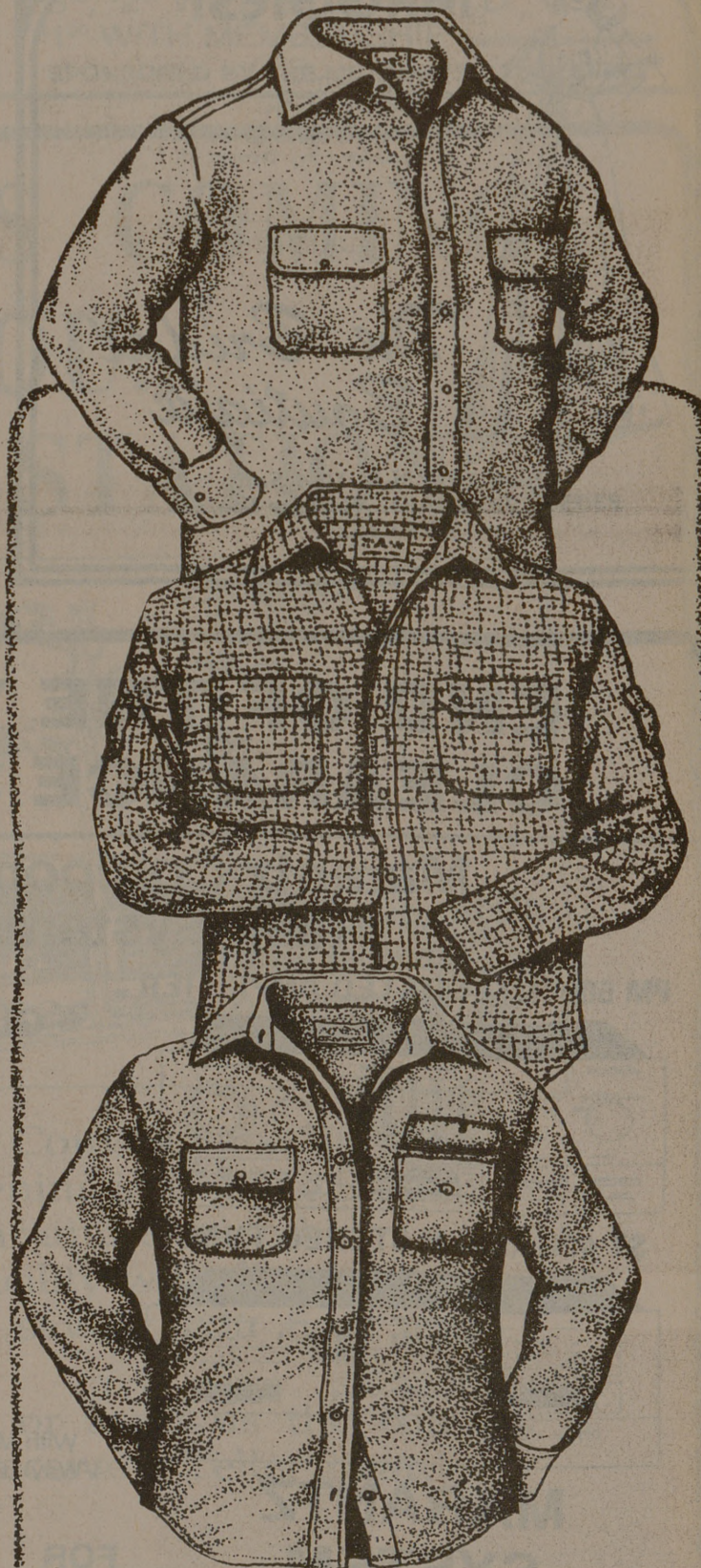
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