

Soviets start search for oil, gas reserves on Arctic shelf

United Press International
TULSA, Okla. — The Soviet Union has launched its first offshore Arctic drilling campaign, but predictions of large oil and gas deposits probably will

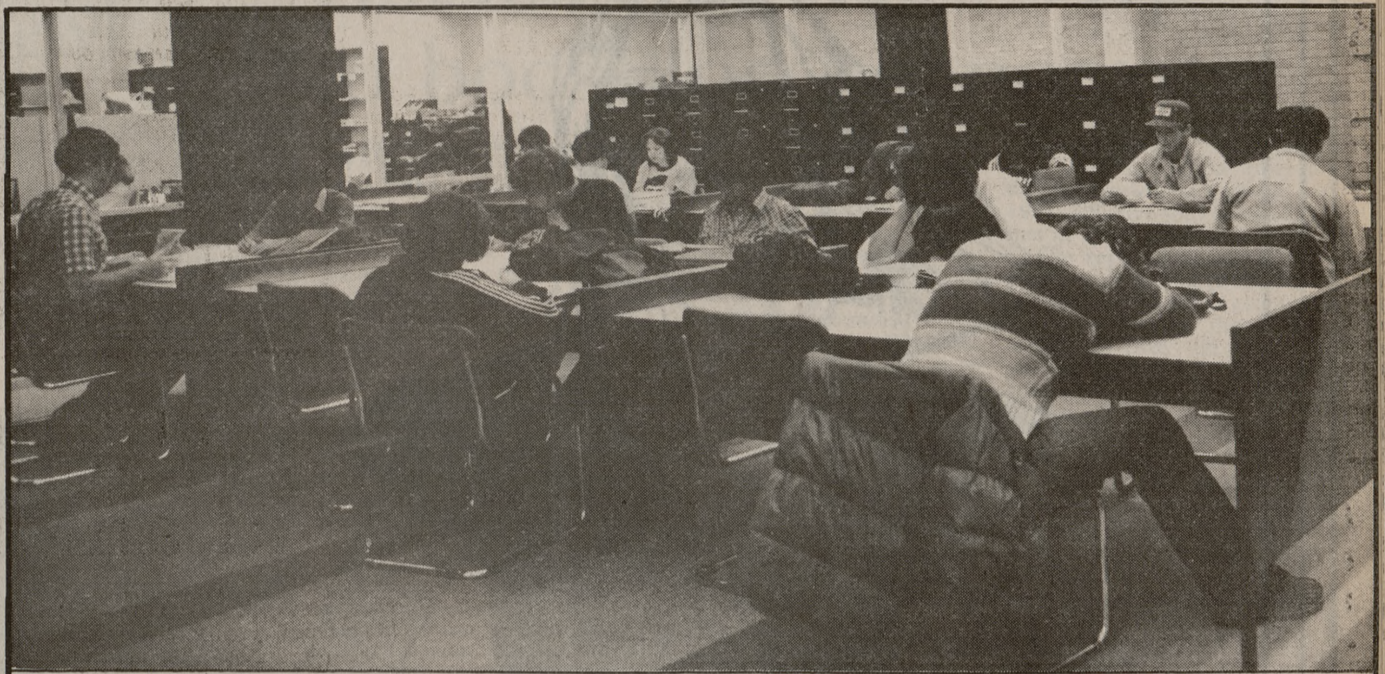
not be realized this decade, the Oil and Gas Journal reported Sunday.

The weekly publication, based in Tulsa, reported in its Feb. 22 issue that the Soviet Union apparently will work through to the 1980s to confirm geologists' reports of large energy reserves on the continent's western Arctic shelves.

The Soviets appear confident that by the 1990s they will gain enough experience in non-arctic offshore ice conditions to develop fields in the Barents and Kara seas without foreign assistance, the magazine said.

The journal said the Soviets are drilling a test hole in shallow water from a Soviet ship converted to an ice-resistant fixed platform in the southeastern Barents Sea.

The publication said drilling from a Finnish-built ship will begin this winter in the Barents Sea.



Study time

staff photo by Laura Larson

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Retrial scheduled in 1971 murders, first trial 'farce'

United Press International
HAYWARD, Calif. — Juan Corona, sentenced to 25 consecutive life terms for the bludgeoning deaths of 25 transient farm workers, is facing a costly retrial for crimes he says he did not commit.

Ten years in the making, the second trial for one of the worst acts of mass murder in the nation begins today. Corona has already served 11 years in jail.

The bulky, sullen Corona, 48, victim of a fierce prison attack in which he lost an eye, has maintained since the day of his arrest he had nothing to do with the two dozen-odd bodies found buried in shallow graves in California's Sacramento Valley in 1971.

Estimates put legal costs to re-try Corona at \$3 million. Officials say it could cost \$5 million by the time the verdict is read in the Alameda County Courthouse where Colusa County Superior Court Judge Richard Patton will preside over the case for the second time.

Whatever the trial's outcome after an estimated four to six months of testimony, it will have been a long, hard road for Corona, a Mexican national who built up a successful labor contracting business.

Shy and deeply religious, Corona has spent much of his time in Soledad Prison sewing burlap bags for 50 cents apiece.

Defense attorney Terence Hallinan said Corona's mental condition seems fine although depressed over the long years it has taken for his retrial to begin. The lawyer said Corona is not crazy. There will be no plea of innocent by reason of insanity, he said.

Corona was first convicted on Jan. 18, 1973, of committing the then-largest mass murder on record — hacking and stabbing

the 25 victims and burying their bodies in crude graves in several peach orchards near the town of Yuba City, 50 miles north of Sacramento.

In July 1978, the California Supreme Court ordered a retrial for Corona, upholding a state Court of Appeal finding that his defense attorney, Richard E. Hawk, had made a "farce" of the original trial.

The appeals court said Hawk failed to mount a defense, created a circus atmosphere in the courthouse, sought to exploit the Corona story commercially, and according to Hallinan, ignored evidence in his client's favor.

Facing a mountain of circumstantial evidence to the contrary, Hallinan said he will prove Corona innocent.

The crimes came to light on the two ranches where the bodies were found, near the banks of the Feather River, beginning on May 20, 1971, when rancher Goro Kagehiro notified police that someone had dug a hole and refilled it a day later in his peach orchard.

Sutter County Deputy Steve Szelove, investigating, spaded away a few scoops of dirt — and found a denim-covered pants leg about 2 feet down. It was the body of the first victim, Kenneth Whitacre.

A gag order keeps attorneys in the case from discussing the evidence, but in a 1978 interview Hallinan said: "It seems this kind of case is going to demand an explanation. If Juan didn't do it, who did?"

Will the defense team headed by Hallinan disclose at the new trial who really did hack, stab and shoot the middle-aged workers to death and why?

"Yes," said Hallinan. He would not elaborate.

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