

In the Land of the Midnight Sun

It was the challenge of a lifetime. Travelling across wind-blown plains in temperatures of -50°C and 24-hour sunlight, 11 adventurers completed a gruelling three-month journey across the North Pole. The trip marked not only a triumph over some of nature's harshest extremes, but also the first ever joint Canada-U.S.S.R. Arctic crossing.

The expedition team, dubbed Polar Bridge, consisted of four Canadians and seven Soviets. They travelled by ski and inflatable raft from the northernmost tip of Siberia over the Arctic ice cap to Cape Columbia on Canada's Ellesmere Island. The first northern crossing to begin and end on separate continents, it was also the only such journey ever made without sled dogs or snowmobiles.

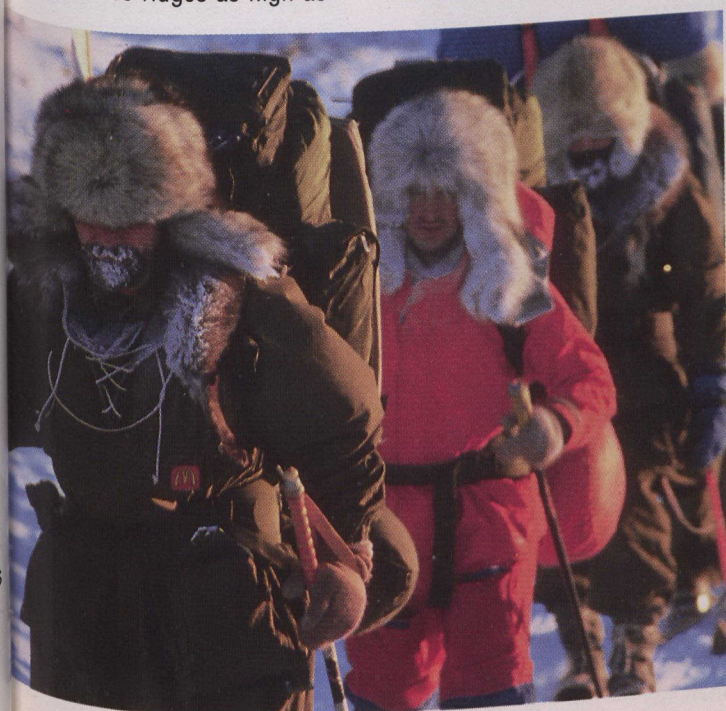
The team traversed nearly 2 000 km of treacherous snow, ice and water in their odyssey. They crossed regions of dangerously unpredictable moving ice, navigated 20-km stretches of open ocean water and scaled jagged ice ridges as high as

six-storey buildings — all while carrying and pulling a half-tonne of special equipment, clothing and food. Along the way they also conducted a number of medical, psychological and geomagnetic experiments.

Tracked by airplane and satellite, the team had their food supply replenished by food drops every 15 days. Their diet consisted mainly of dried fish, bacon and pemmican — a mixture of meat, fat and berries originally developed by North American Indians.

The expedition was led by Russian folk hero Dmitry Shparo and noted Canadian adventurer Richard Weber, both experienced in northern survival techniques from earlier trips to the Pole. Although the expedition was a first for the other members of the

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Canadian team, they were all well qualified to meet its rigorous demands. Dr. Maxwell Buxton had previously served on an Arctic oil exploration team; the Rev. Laurie Dexter lives in a remote northern community in Canada's Northwest Territories; and Christopher Holloway was a member of Canada's National Ski Team for eight years.

The success of the trip was in large part due to the team's careful preparations. All members were in top physical condition and thoroughly examined by physicians before the journey began. Last fall the adventurers trained for six weeks in the U.S.S.R.'s Tian Shan Mountains and at Canada's Frobisher Bay. And in the weeks immediately prior to the expedition launch, they prepared at a camp in Siberia and spent long hours of

"acclimatization" in a special cold chamber in Moscow. Here they learned how to use their instruments in -50°C temperatures and often slept in the chamber at night to prepare for the conditions they would face in their tent on the Arctic plains.

The Polar Bridge's amazing feat was highlighted with a televised ceremony at the North Pole, in which the members appealed for world peace and co-operation. Their success in conquering the harsh environment and daunting odds is a vivid demonstration of just how much international co-operation can achieve and has enhanced relations between the two largest nations ringing the Arctic Circle.

Radio Channel to China

"Canadian" English will soon be the subject of study for millions of people across China. In September, radio stations in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou will begin broadcasting "Everyday English," a 40-week course of English-language lessons produced by Radio Canada International (RCI).

RCI is not the first international broadcaster to offer English lessons by radio. However, it is the first to design a specific course targeted at listeners in a single country. All earlier courses have been general in nature, aimed at students of English anywhere in the world. But as Allan Familant, RCI's director of programming and operations notes, "This course is significantly different because it is tailor-made for the People's Republic of China."

In another major innovation, the program will be carried by local radio stations, rather than broadcast by the traditional shortwave. As a result, it will reach an enlarged audience of between 15 and 20 million.

The 120 lessons making up the course revolve around the storyline of a visit to Canada by a group of Chinese students. Beginning with the group's arrival in Montreal, subsequent lessons follow them as they travel across the country, learning about Canada's geography, resources, industries, culture, and political and social systems.

This is RCI's second major Asian venture this year. In April it launched an ambitious daily shortwave service to the region in English and French, and expanded its Russian and Ukrainian broadcasts to Soviet Asia.