

Inflation rate spirals upward

WASHINGTON

Sharply higher winter food costs are being blamed by analysts for an upward price spiral that is casting a shadow over the moderating inflation rate that was one of the economic bright spots of 1981.

However, overall January figures for prices at the wholesale level to be released today by the Labor Department still were expected to be well below the big monthly increases common for several years before last spring.

The recession is continuing to hold down non-food prices somewhat by stifling demand for goods.

But the January rise was considered likely to be above December's 0.3 percent increase that capped a year of just 7 percent inflation at the wholesale level, far below the 11.8 percent of 1980.

The main culprit in January was food prices that may have matched or even exceeded their 1.5 percent increase for all of last year.

Analysts commenting in advance of today's report said meat prices played the major part in pushing up January food costs — and, therefore, overall wholesale prices.

American, Soviet negotiators stalled

GENEVA, Switzerland

American and Soviet negotiators, amid mounting indications of an impasse, conferred for 2½ hours Thursday in the 15th full round of talks on limiting medium-range nuclear arms in Europe.

The session followed a pointed exchange between Washington and Moscow, highlighting the distance between the two sides at the politically sensitive talks, which began Nov. 30.

The Reagan administration said Wednesday it rejects as "spurious" a Soviet proposal to reduce medium-range nuclear strength to "300 units on both sides" by 1990.

A U.S. State Department spokesman said the plan would leave untouched the most formidable intermediate-range weapon in the Soviet arsenal, the triple-headed, mobile SS-20 missile. A major American objective at the talks has been to dismantle the SS-20s.

About 280 SS-20 systems, capable of hitting targets anywhere in Europe, have already been deployed. The West has no comparable intermediate-range weapon in place.

The revised Soviet offer was disclosed Tuesday in Moscow. At the same time the Kremlin assailed as "absurd" a draft treaty submitted last week by the American delegation. The United States proposed that both sides dismantle or cancel plans to deploy a variety of sophisticated missile systems.

Chisholm decides to leave Congress

WASHINGTON

Rep. Shirley Chisholm, who came to Congress as an outspoken maverick 13 years ago, said Thursday she now finds the job "tedious and frustrating" and will not run for re-election.

"It has become increasingly difficult to carry the tragic messages back from Washington to the jobless, homeless and hopeless Brooklynites," the New York Democrat said in a written statement.

Chisholm, 57, the first black woman ever to win a seat in the House of Representatives, became known nationally for her fiery speeches and her 1972 campaign for the presidency.

But in recent years, as she gained seniority and influence, her once angry style grew more subdued, leading some critics to say she had lost interest in her work.

"I haven't been angry for some time now. It burns up too much of the energy I need," she told an interviewer in 1979. "You don't get anything with wild rhetoric. I've lived to see how it works."

But she minced no words Thursday in describing the Reagan administration as one "that is cancelling the past 50 years of human progress in America."

Ironically, she is now on the Rules Committee, where loyalty to the leadership is the prime qualification for membership.

Fighting rages in Syrian city

DAMASCUS, Syria

Fighting raged Thursday between rebel Sunni Moslems and an estimated 8,000 Syrian troops shelling the city of Hama for the ninth day. Western diplomatic and other foreign sources said.

The leftist government said Hama was sealed off but that reports of a revolt were United States slanders.

One Western resident of Damascus attempting to reach the besieged city 120 miles north of here was turned back by police who told him he could not continue because of fighting. He said he saw Pres. Hafez Assad's reinforcements heading into Hama and ambulances coming out.

Casualty figures could not be estimated accurately, but diplomatic and other accounts say the number of killed is in the hundreds and damage is extensive in the city of 200,000.

Hama is a stronghold of Syria's Sunni Moslem majority and the outlawed Moslem Brotherhood, which has been fighting to oust Assad and replace his 12-year-old government with a Moslem fundamentalist regime.

Although 65 percent of the Syrian people are Sunnis, Islam's majority sect, and 11 percent are Alawites, the latter control the government.

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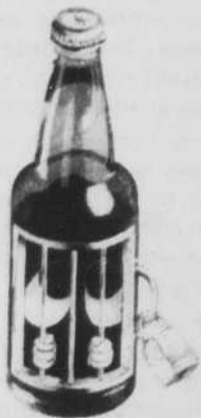
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