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A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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EUROPE'S WINTER

Sub-zero temperatures and blockading snowstorms from Belgium and France to Bulgaria are extraordinary for early winter, and unusual for any time during the cold season there. M.Jules Gabriel is said to have forecast this condition; but M. Gabriel is a scientist who with due caution suggested last July: "Are we to experience in 1926 the periodic return of these great winters(1552-53, and 1740)?"

M.Gabriel suggests that the effects of a luni-solar cycle of 744 years, with its subdivisions of 372 and 186 year periods may be traced in seasonal weather. He cites ten series, including in all 40 extreme winters, since the 8th century. These all come at intervals of 185 to 187 or multiples of 186 years within their different series. This winter falls into one of these series.

Of the 30 such intervals traced, 20 were of 185-187 years, 11 of these being 186 and 5 of them 187. On this basis, the chances appear to be 11 out of 30 that this winter, as a whole, will be as severe as the general run of the coldest five in a century. While this is eight times the average probability of any winter being a particularly severe one, it cannot be turned into a forecast while the chances are 2 to 1 against its occurring.

Whatever may be the indications for western Europe, America does not need to worry, for we are dominated by a different set of atmospheric centers of action. 1916-1917, Europe's last cold winter in one of these 186-year series, was a mild one here.

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