

Displaced Persons in Salem Recall Christmas in Estonia

By AGU OUNAPUU
(Now a Resident of Salem)

(Author's Note: Estonia is a country very far away from here, on the beach of the Baltic sea. There now it is cold and dark. The weak daylight lasts only six hours. The following line describes a Christmas eve of those happy days when Estonia was still a free land and the people could live there in ease. Now the violent rulers, the Russian communists, have prohibited the celebration of Christmas eve and Christmas, too.)

Christmas eve is the most appreciated part of Christmas, maybe even of all holidays in Estonia.

The children begin to talk about it a month or more before; the Santa Claus would come, and verses and songs for him must be ready. Adults are excited about gifts among themselves and for the children. Mostly troubled are housewives about holiday dishes. Dough for gingerbread is made ready long before. The most considerable dishes of Christmas eve are Yule sausages and roasted pork. Home-made ale is the care of men.

In another time there may be some shortage of things in the house, but at the Christmas time there must be an abundance.

Sixty or 70 years ago they brought straw into the house, in which the young people played their Christmas games—striking of the straw shoemaker's eye, wrestling like gypsies, pulling the club of vigor, pulling the hooked fingers, etc.

But what makes Christmas eve so longed for is going to church this evening, and the Christmas tree with presents.

At village churches the other divine services are always by daylight, but the service of Christmas eve is in the evening, when out-of-doors it is dark and the snow is gleaming bluely. Only the high windows of the church shine then in the darkness with yellow candlelight.

As the church is not very far from your home you walk to the service. But it is not very easy to get along. The only way is the trace of sledges, and when people come by in sledges you have to step into the deep, soft snow and give them way to pass. It hinders your approach to the church, but you are not annoyed. It is Christmas eve, and "peace is on the earth." You are not late, and you enter the church together with the other people.

The church is decorated with green firs and lighted by candles, which stay in the branches of the green fresh firs in special candlesticks. The shadows are dancing on the walls and the high ceiling, and the church, usually so quiet and dull, is animated and vivid.

Never are the churches so crowded as on Christmas eve. All people, children and adult, young and old, want to take part in the service of this evening. Though they are solemnly silent, the low-spoken words, noise of

feet, and slight coughs fuse in a soft rustle.

Then the bells of the church ring, slowly, solemnly. The organ begins so softly and remotely, then stronger and stronger it grows, and then the whole church is full of the mighty sounds. You are enchanted. You sing, you follow the well-known old prophecies and the other familiar episodes which you have learned by heart at school in your childhood, and sing again the old Christmas carols with enthusiasm that has seized all the congregation.

The school children's choir sings three hymns. The minister sings the words of blessing with arms lifted, accompanied by the organ. You answer three times "amen," and sit down to sing the last hymn.

It is over. The organ becomes silent abruptly. Now it is so still that you could hear a pin drop. All the congregation is saying the Lord's Prayer once more. After some time it is over, and the noise of feet begins. The bells of the church ring again, the organ begins to play for going out.

Suddenly all the roads around the church are filled with people, like dark serpents among white fields. The horses are cold and rush from the church. The pedestrians have to look out. The bells on the horses behind you are too cutting and annoying. You let them pass.

You arrive home. Your hands are numb with cold, your face is insensible. How cozy and caressing the warmth of your home now. You are hungry, too. The table is already set. You see many attractive things there. You get ready, and sit with the others at the table. And hear! . . . the still, trying and searing Yule sausages arrive on the table.

Afterwards, when all the people in the house are ready, the candles on the Christmas tree will be lighted. You sing "Still the Night," "The Shepherd's Christmas Bells" and other Christmas carols. Then Santa Claus comes in fur coat and fur cap, with long beard, and knapsack full of gifts. You sing him



Son-Heir Born to Alfred Vanderbilts

New York, Dec. 20 (AP)—A son and heir was born early today to the Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilts—the first male addition to the Vanderbilt clan in a number of years.

The wife of the millionaire sportsman gave birth shortly after midnight at LeRoy sanitarium.

The mother is the former Jeanne Murray, cousin of Mrs. Henry Ford, 2nd, and daughter of the late John F. Murray, stock exchange firm head.

a suitable carol, and the distribution of the presents begins. You all get yours, packed in multicolored paper and bound with a nice tape, but before getting one you have to "say your verse."

Some of the presents surprise you. They were planned and made secretly. You have to show your presents to the others, too. Some of them may be funny. They may be meant to tease you, or to mark some faults of your character from which others want you to be rid.

The children have matched and examined their presents enough now, and come to show you what they have got and how to play with them. At last the children become tired of the exciting day and have to go to bed. Tonight they do not protest. They are satiate. They take only some of the things to bed with them.

After that you listen in, or chatter quietly, or read some new books you have the habit of buying for Christmas. Then you also feel a little tired, and go to bed, and say, "However, this world is worth living in."

Christmas Business Congests Post Office—Hundreds of patrons with packages to mail crowded the parcel post and stamp window at Salem post office Monday where an expanded staff is working around the clock to expedite Christmas mail.

French Commies to Purge Ranks 'Titoism, Trotskyism'

By JEAN DeGANDT

Paris, Dec. 20 (AP)—The French communist party, which has publicly admitted "growing apathy" among members, today faced a large-scale purge of its ranks of leaders accused of "Titoism" and "Trotskyism."

Earlier last week the communist party published a long resolution of the communist party central committee accusing local party leaders of all the crimes in the current communist lexicon, ranging from "deviationism" to "opportunism."

Titoism and purges have cropped up in a number of other Western European communist parties. But France is the second largest communist center west of the iron curtain.

The communist party here has suffered a steady and continuing decline in influence ever since the government broke the general strike in the fall and winter of 1947.

Three years ago the communist party was the strongest single political group in France and it controlled the biggest part of the labor movement.

Today its influence in the labor movement has been weakened. The recent 24-hour general strike was considered a failure, and the party's political influence, although not by any means a minor factor, has been declining since 1947.

One of the most striking signs of communist decline—in addition to a drop in communist membership in trade unions and election results—is the decrease in circulation of the two main communist newspapers in Paris, L'Humanite and Ce Soir. Raymond Guyot, one of the

principal organizers of the party electoral machinery, wrote early this fall in L'Humanite about the "growing apathy" of the party cells. He referred to members failing to pay their communist newspaper subscriptions.

But the party's influence is far from dead, even though it probably would lose some of its seats in parliament if elections were held today.

Although no general elections have been held since 1946, the communist candidates in local elections have polled even fewer votes.

The communist-led general confederation of labor (CGT) claimed 6,400,000 members in 1946. But on Dec. 20, 1947, after the general strike, a minority group led by the "grand old man" of French labor, Leon Jouhaux, broke away from the CGT. After the split, CGT membership fell off to little more than 2,000,000 and the newly formed socialist force Ouvriere has close to 1,500,000 members.

In October, 1947 the communist morning paper L'Humanite had a daily circulation of 450,000. It now has about 230,000. The afternoon paper Ce Soir has dropped from a circulation of 430,000 to 195,000.

American Priest Gets Soviet Visa

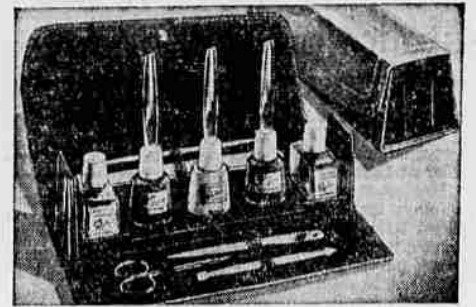
Washington, Dec. 20 (AP)—State department officials said today they do not believe that permission granted an American priest to conduct services in Moscow indicates softening of the Soviet front in the cold war.

A passport visa came through yesterday from the Soviet embassy for Father Louis Robert Brassard—10 months after the priest had requested. It would authorize him to serve the 116 members of the American colony in Moscow.

Since Father Brassard first applied for the visa, the state department has sent several reminders to the Russian government that Russia agreed in 1933 to permit one American Catholic pastor to work in Moscow.

Father Brassard was designated to succeed the Rev. J. Antonio Laberge left Moscow last January with a reentry

permit but this subsequently was cancelled.



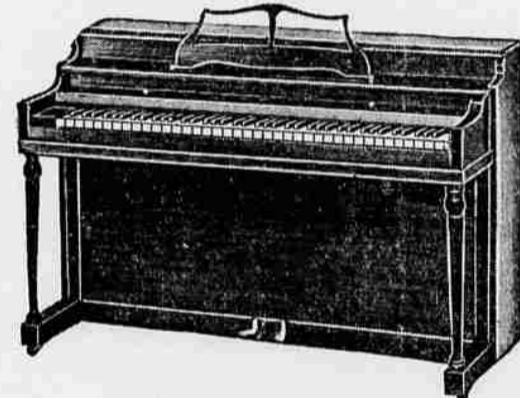
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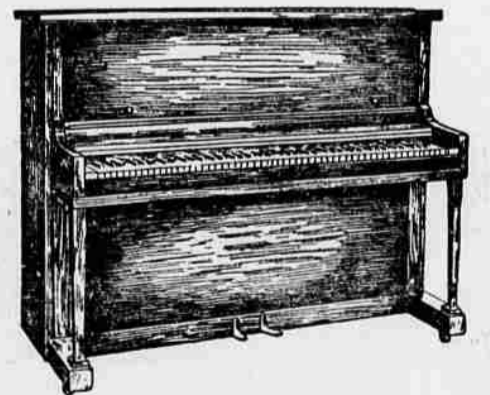
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