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 Editor and Publisher Jack Tell
 Business Manager Bea Tell, 870-1255
 Vegas News Helene Stadler, 384-3685
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TELL TALES

"One Man Plus The Truth Constitutes A Majority"

BY JACK TELL



(Continued from Page 1)
 ed to Bishop of Myra and in the 9th century was canonized. His Dutch name was Santa Claus.

The furthest reference to a Christmas tree is a legendary story of a wounded Swedish officer being cared for by the people of Leisig during the 30 Years War in the 17th century. As an offer of gratitude, he set up a lighted tree in a church on Christmas Day.

The Christmas tree was introduced to America in 1747 by Germans settling in ePnnsylvania. Five years later the Moravian sect decorated their trees with lighted candles. Catholic and Protestant colonists from Holland introduced the annual St. Nicholas vistsation to America.

Early colonists were divided in the recognition of December 25th. Members of Church of England, Dutch Reformed, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Episcopalian and certain German sects honored the holiday. Quakers, Baptists, Presbyterians and Puritans ignored the date. It was on the night of December 25, 1776, George Washington crossed the Delaware River to defeat the Hessians celebrating Christmas at Trenton.

Fantasy had Santa arriving in a cart, a wagon, on mule, drawn by goats and other means of transportation until Clement Moore's "A Visit From St. Nicholas" in 1822, and thereafter the popular conception was a sled drawn by reindeer. In 1847, the first classroom Christmas tree was decorated in a New York City Episcopalian Sunday School.

The individual states commenced declaring Christmas a legal holiday. Alabama, which, like all southern states celebrated Dec. 25 with fireworks a la Fourth of July, was the first, in 1836, and the rest followed suit; California, 1851; Nevada, 1861; Utah, 1882; etc., with Oklahoma being last in 1890.

As late as 1855, all religions were still not in accord in their tolerance of the holiday. The Dec. 26 edition of that year's New York ITmes stated: Churches of Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists were not open yesterday. They do not accept the day as Holy one, but Episcopalian, Catholic and German churches were open. Inside they were decked with evergreens. However, by 1880, all evangelical churches were accepting Christmas.

Passing of Christmas gifts in those days was not emphasized, except the wealthy were expected to be generous to the poor. In the middle of the 19th century, due to the influence of Charles Dickens' writings, singing of Christmas carols became prevalent, and the sending of cards began in 1875.

The classic editorial which began, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus," in response to a child's query, was written by Francis Church for the New York Sun of Dec. 21st, 1897.

In recent years Santa Claus has become to be known as a communal folk figure. A Pennsylvania judge ruled in 1936, that any doubters of Santa Claus who appeared before him would be held in contempt of court. The court citation read: Santa is not a figment of the imagination but an actuality. He is the symbol of kindness, a token of smiling charity and a badge of all that is cheerfully benevolent.

Commercial exploitation of Christmas has become systematic and thorough, impelling Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Episcopalians and Jews, to band together in Milwaukee in 1949 and decree to put Christ back into Christmas.

Today Jehovah's Witnesses and members of the Christian Science faith oppose the tree, festive lights and Santa and other secularization of the holiday. But they have deep reverence for the religious observance.

Meanwhile millions of non-Christian homes in scores of non-Christian countries, including Japan and India, have taken unto their own the kindness and charity and cheer of Christmas and proudly display decorated and lit trees on December 25th.

All this proves the true sense of Christmas has not waned — its just that the Spirit of Christmas has overwhelmed and is about to inundate all humans in the four corners of the earth.

WASHINGTON (WNS)-- The State Department has an "open mind" on the possibility of a joint Soviet-American Middle East peace-keeping force, a spokesman announced early this week, commenting on the proposal suggested by Jordan's King Hussein.

Behind Closed Doors

Reports say that four of the eleven being tried in the Soviet Union for allegedly plotting to hijack a Soviet airliner, have been released. Even assuming the truth of any allegations about this, what is disturbing is the closed door secrecy of the trials. The Soviet Union, which prides itself on its history, should perhaps take a leaf from the page of this history.

The founding father of the Soviet Regime, Lenin, was shot in an assassination attempt by a Dora Kaplan of the Social Revolutionary (anti-Bolshevik) party. Although he never fully recovered from the wounds, Lenin insisted on the right of Miss Kaplan to be represented by an attorney of her choice. He permitted another enemy of the Soviet Regime to return to Russia to defend Miss Kaplan. Even during the purge trials of the Thirties, the courts were open and our then Ambassador, Joseph E. Davies, was permitted to attend each day's session of court.

The Soviet Union has the right to conduct its affairs as it sees fit. However, it would seem even more to its interest if its claim against the defendants were proven in an open court and that the verdict were based on fact and not political expediency in full view of its own people and press, and that of the foreign corps of newsmen.

Still Another Palestine?

By Robert E. Segal

With Anwar Sadat, longtime Nasser-man, functioning now as President of Egypt, the question no longer appears to be "who," but "what" will take Abdel Nasser's place. And the answer, with much propaganda steam building in the Middle East boiler, appears to be: a new Palestinian State.

Nasser dies. A vacuum results. Bingo, a late 20th Century Palestine is to come into existence to fill the vacuum left by Nasser's passing.

Students of the New Left push the idea. Highly-placed advisors to President Nixon note publicly that more and more "Palestinians" are talking about some national "entity." Richard H. Nolte, who has represented Washington at Cairo and has formed a distaste for Israel's aspirations, is a strong protagonist. And, of course, leaders of Palestinian terrorist units are convinced that here is an idea whose time has come.

To all of which, Golda Meir in her homespun way, has replied: "Is it necessary to have a 15th Arab country. There are 14. Is that the problem of the tens of millions of Arabs in the world---that they have only 14 countries?"

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Thrice in history has Palestine been an independent state: When it was the first Jewish Commonwealth, extending to the Babylonian conquest of 586 before the Common Era; when it was reconstituted and then dissolved by the Roman conquest in the year 70 of the Common Era; and when Israel was born in 1948. In the period, 637 to 1071 of the Common Era, absentee Arabs ruled over it.

In the late 19th Century, when Jews began to see a faint prospect for re-establishment of their ancient homeland, Arabs concentrated their nationalistic hopes on the south of Syria. In that period, the territory now so bitterly fought over was desolate and dismal. Mark Twain referred to the region as a ruin as far as the eye could see. Lawrence of Arabia asserted that the Jews, and only the Jews, could restore life to the land and make it truly viable.

As Jews came into the Holy Land and began to rebuild it with their hands and their sweat and their dreams, more Arabs were attracted to it. And while Jews the world over were clinging to the promise of the Balfour Declaration, offering hope of restoration, the Arabs in that part of the world now so much in the news were picking up new units to satisfy their nationalistic yearnings: Yemen became theirs in 1918. Transjordan (now the Kingdom of Jordan) was carved out by the British Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill, in 1922, the same year that the Egypt we know today achieved modern status. Following World War II, the Arabs acquired nine more states: Algeria, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Southern Yemen, Syria the Sudan, and Tunisia.

When the allied powers got around to giving further substance to the Jewish dream of a restored homeland, only 1% of all the territory then available to those powers for disposal was allotted for the establishment of the Jewish National Home. And in 1947, when the United Nations voted Partition, the population of all Palestine was 1,850,000. Of that total, some 650,000 were Jews (concentrated in the area designated for the Jewish state) and 1,200,000 were Arabs. And of the Arabs, some 500,000 lived on the West Bank.

Which brings us back to current agitation for the establishment of a sovereign state of Palestine. Mr. Nolte wants such a state set up because, in his judgment, the establishment of Israel "has resulted in a great and prolonged injustice to the Palestinian Arabs." Golda Meir (and countless others) can't agree. Says Mrs. Meir: "The UN resolution of 1947 spoke of the partitioning of Palestine into two states--- Jewish and Arab. Had the Arabs gone about the business of setting up a state, they would have had it. But they didn't."

And once more we must be reminded that a vacuum remains a vacuum not for long. Nasser died. There was a vacuum. To take his place, the wind of a new idea for the 1970s is blowing: A Palestinian State. We had better stay tuned in.