

Christmas Day
December 25, 1975, Thursday
Jerry Landay

EGYPT- SYRIA

Middle Eastern experts tonight are pondering the meaning of a report - in the semi-official newspaper of Egypt - Al Ahram. That paper speaks of a crackdown against Syrian Communists - by the regime of President Hafez Assad. The Egyptian Newspaper says - Assad had ordered the arrest of three hundred Communists - and had ruptured the alliance between the Syrian Communist Party - and his own Baathist Party. The Chairman of the Communist Party - Khaled Bekdash - has reportedly managed to escape - a fugitive. There is as yet NO confirmation of this report - from Damascus

The Soviet Union has armed Assad's Army - and there are thousands of Russian Military advisers in Syria. Assad has evidently made no move against them.

One theory for the reported Communist arrests in Syria - comes from another Egyptian newspaper - Al-Akhbar.

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That paper suggests Syria is now prepared to follow Egypt's lead - and seek closer ties with the United States. The paper says Syria has asked this country for nearly two hundred thousand tons of foodstuffs. We repeat - so far - the report of the anti-Communist crackdown in Syria - still unconfirmed.

WEATHER

It was a white Christmas over much of the nation - with snow falling in the East - areas of the West and as far south as Arkansas. In fact, a foot of snow blocked highways at Mena, Arkansas, while power lines and telephone service were interrupted elsewhere in the state. There were heavy rains and at least two tornadoes in other parts of the South - one in southern Alabama and the other farther East at Pensacola, Florida. The twisters uprooted trees, unroofed some homes, snapped power lines - but with NO reported injuries.

CHRISTMAS

And for the most part, it was a peaceful Christmas over most of the earth. Even in the more active trouble-spots, fighting and violence subsided - if only for the moment. In Israeli-occupied Bethlehem, some fifteen-thousand crowded into the traditional birthplace of Christ. In Beirut, Moslem and Christian gunmen remained behind their barricades - their guns silent. And in Argentina, where more than a hundred were reported killed in guerilla battles with police, Christmas Day was likewise quiet.

ANGOLA

Not so in Angola! Anti-Communist forces there have launched a campaign - aimed at driving Soviet-backed troops out of a strategic railroad town on the Zambian border. It's also reported that South African mercenaries are among the forces trying to capture the town of Teixeira de Sousa.

In Moscow, the government newspaper - Izvestia - says Russia will continue its involvement in the Angolan fighting - even if it threatens detente with the U.S. Said the newspaper - "support for national liberation struggles is an important principle of Soviet foreign policy."

In a direct response to warnings about Angola from President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger - Izvestia said threats from "leading personalities in the United States" - will not sway the Kremlin - from that policy.

FORD-CAMPAIGN

The campaign motto for President Ford - in the political year ahead - is to be: "The Job Comes First."

At least - that's how Mr. Ford's news secretary - Ron Nessen - is telling it - out in Vail, Colorado. The President apparently plans to be - Presidential - during the crucial state primaries - to woo votes - by being seen to be busy - behind his Oval Office desk. Nessen says Mr. Ford will do very little campaign traveling - will only visit New Hampshire and Florida - once each. Those are the states where he'll first come up against Ronald Reagan.

The President had been criticized by some - for traveling too much.

However - Nessen was careful not to shut the door on the idea of sallying into the hustings. He said Mr. Ford will be making "Presidential trips" early next year. How can a newsman tell the difference between a political and a

Presidential trip? Nessen was asked. He replied: "I will tell you."

The reason - substantially more available
December and early December which reduced the cost of gas
However, industrial shutdowns remain a possibility in some
areas. Long range - however - the FEA adds - there is
ground for concern. Domestic gas production continues to
decline at the rate of six per cent a year - and current
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Sixteen-Fifty-Two.

GAS

The Federal Energy Administration says shortages of natural gas this winter won't be as serious as previously expected. The reason - unseasonably warm weather in November and early December which reduced the use of gas. However, industrial shutdowns remain a possibility in some areas. Long range - however - the FEA adds - there is ground for concern. Domestic gas production continues to decline at the rate of six per cent a year - and current proven reserves of natural gas - are at their lowest level since Nineteen-Fifty-Two.

STATION

WAGES

Nearly four-MILLION workers will receive pay increases January First. That's when the minimum wage rises to two-dollars-thirty cents for most of those covered by Federal law. NOT all the four-MILLION however, will receive the full two-thirty right away - but all covered by the law will be eligible for the increase by January first, Nineteen-Seventy-Eight.

STUDIOS

In Hollywood, a pre-dawn fire at Samuel Goldwyn studios destroyed two sound stages - used in the popular CBS television series - "Cannon" and "Barnaby Jones." The entire Cannon set was destroyed - his office - and his apartment - and the same was true of the "Barnaby Jones" set. Cause of the fire - unknown - with damage estimated at three MILLION dollars.

KICKER

A prime example of brotherhood among men of this Christmas Day - in Baltimore - where members of the Jewish Community have again taken over volunteer police duties - to allow Christian members of the regular force - to spend Christmas with their families. Some Fifty Jewish men - perform NON_hazardous police duty in district stations - doing typing and paperwork - answering telephones - emergency radio calls - and dispatching patrol cars. One of the volunteers - eighty-two years of age - said he didn't need any advice on his temporary job - he's a police veteran. He's been on the job every Christmas for a decade.

For Lowell Thomas - so long until tomorrow. I'm

Jerry Landay - CBS-News.