

*At Leningrad - a Soviet court today ordered the death penalty - for two leaders of a plot to hijack a Soviet airliner. The court also sentencing nine others - to sentences ranging from four to fifteen years.*

*As you perhaps know - all but four of the defendants listed as "ethnic" Jews. Admitting in court that they planned to hijack a plane to Boden, Sweden - there seek political asylum - and then make their way to Israel.*

*But the severity of their sentences - coming as something of a surprise. Apparently prompted by a recent Soviet sensitivity - to airliner hijackings; along with testimony that the defendants planned to kill in cold blood - both the pilot and co-pilot of the plane in question.*

## VIETNAM

*In Vietnam - a relatively "silent night;" followed by a Christmas morn, Saigon-time - with the guns of war still strangely silent. Both sides - observing a Christmas cease-fire; for once, it seems - fairly effective.*

*Saigon also reports another U.S. casualty list - showing twenty-three killed in action the past week; the lowest figure - in more than five years. The Pentagon adds that accidents and illnesses - are now killing more U.S. servicemen in Vietnam than actual combat.*

## COST

*The U.S. cost of living index - up again last month, in case you hadn't noticed; jumping another three-tenths of a per cent - according to government figures announced today. And yet - it could have been worse. The November rate-of-increase - only half that of October; comparing favorably with the summer months of June, July and August when there were those who said that inflation had clearly been checked.*

*However, the Administration <sup>ion</sup> now taking - a somewhat softer line. Paul McCracken - the President's chief economic advisor - saying: "This kind of good news is always welcome." "On the other hand" - he added - "we do have to be cautious - about making too much out of month-to-month swings."*

**WHITE HOUSE**

*From the White House press corps - a report today that Tricia Nixon will be spending Christmas weekend - with her long-time escort; namely - Ed Cox. This in the wake of published reports - that the First Family's first daughter will be setting her wedding date - sometime during the holiday season.*

*However, the White House itself - taking a dim view of the nuptial story. One of Mrs. Nixon's aides - saying: "We absolutely deny it - there is no imminent engagement to announce." The spokesman adding: "If and when - it will be announced b̄y President and Mrs. Nixon" - and no one else*

## CAPE KENNEDY

*At Cape Kennedy - a step-up today in a campaign undertaken by U.S. space officials; with the goal that of impressing on moon port workers - the importance of making Apollo-Fourteen as perfect as possible - when it takes off for the moon next month.*

*This, in part, because of the war-disaster that befell Apollo-Thirteen - just eight months ago. Also, the result of cutbacks in the U.S. space program - which forced a great number of layoffs; for a time - causing a serious morale problem.*

*Space officials are insisting though - morale is again good. Those who survived the halcyon days of the space program - having now accepted the fact - we are told - that what goes up must come down; here on earth - anyway.*

## MOSCOW

*The death of an "Old Bolshevik" - reported today from Moscow. Nikolai Shvernik - a member of the Communist Party since Nineteen-Oh-Five; one of the last of a dying breed - who actually joined up before the Revolution in Nineteen-Seventeen. Shvernik later serving - in a number of key posts. Eventually becoming President of the Supreme Soviet - the Soviet Parliament. Retaining his seat in that body - right up to the end. Nikolai Shvernik - age eighty-four.*

# ATLANTA

*Atlanta, Georgia - the State Archives Building - a visit today from Santa Claus; who arrived by helicopter - red suit, whiskers and all - in keeping with his advance billing of the past week. Santa strolling to the nearby State Capitol - along the way, dispensing candy canes from a huge sack he carried.*

*But there was something in his "ho-ho-ho" - the way he shook hands like a veteran politician - the Southern fried chicken in his "Merry Christmas;" some "je ne sais Quois" - that finally gave him away. Atlanta's Number One Santa Claus this day - none other than Governor Lester Maddox.*

*But no one told the children. And once his job was done - Santa disappearing into his own office. Explaining as he went: "I have to see the Governor."*

# SUGGESTED LEAD-IN TO THOMAS TAPE "LAKE RUDOLPH"

Next - Lowell Thomas; with a message - well, if you listen all the way - a message of hope, I hope. Lowell...



LAKE RUDOLPH

*From Lake Rudolph in Kenya - by way of London - comes the story of a remarkable find. A team of British archaeologists discovering a number of shaped rocks once used as primitive hand tools. These dating from the year - Two million, One Hundred and Sixty-Eight Thousand BC. As such, the first known hand tools - conceived by human ingenuity.*

*Also found in the same excavation - the remnants of a species called "Australopithecus", a distant relative of man. Unhappily though - the 'Australopithecus' primitive implements apparently did him little good. He was hunted for food - and finally wiped out - by homo habilis, another kind of half-human who lived about the same time.*

*All of which calls to mind - a story about Alexander the Great; who took a test dive in a forerunner of the submarine - way back in the Fourth Century BC. The great Alexander coming up visibly shaken explaining - everything*

*LAKE RUDOLPH - 2*

*down there eats everything else."*

*And the same up here - it seems sometimes - except that I like to think Warren - that maybe, just maybe, we are finally beginning to outgrow it.*

## CHRISTMAS

*The White House again - a Christmas message today from President Nixon; who observed that Christmas - "is a family time;" and "Christmas, Nineteen-Seventy" - he added - a time that should call forth - "a special sense of Americans as a national family."*

*The President, therefore, urging:" "Let us put aside what divides us - and refind what unites us; concern for one another- love for liberty and justice - pride in our own diversity." And he continued: "Let us resolve to work together - to right old wrongs and heal old wounds - to do what needs to be done - to make this a better country and a better world for all of our children."*

*The President also saying: "Our greatest hope - at every Christmas time, of course - is for peace in the world;" and he noted that "peace is a fragile thing - and there are dangers that threaten it in many parts of the world."*

*"But I firmly believe" - he concluded - "that, in this Christmas season - we can look forward with greater*

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*confidence than at any time since World War Two - that  
our children can have at last what we all devoutly hope for:  
" A generation of peace."*

... in Vietnam, Communist forces were reported to  
... launched scores of rockets against allied positions, from  
... Christmas was proclaimed by the Communist  
... A leave which ended today. The pilot of an  
... American plane is listed as missing after crashing in the  
... Communist-held Plain of Jars in Laos - the eighth U.S.  
... reported last in Laos since last March. Two B-57s  
... were killed when their helicopter gunship was shot  
... south of Saigon.

... in Berlin, East German tower guards observed five or six  
... toward the Berlin Wall - obviously to an  
... West. He fell wounded on the Communist  
... side of the Wall, and was removed by ambulance.

... A terrorist had been reported in Hawaii - the  
... of Jerusalem - including those listed in the