

Christmas Eve In Soviet Prison Camp Described

By ALICE E. MORGAN

We, who have just finished celebrating Christmas surrounded by families, friends and neighbors, are thankfully unaware of how some people have had to spend that Holy Day—that day of Peace on the earth.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Plexico of 309 Arlington road, through a young German student, Klaus Krug, who was their guest last fall and again during the holidays, have had a glimpse at the grimmer side this year.

Mrs. Plexico received a letter from Bernd Krug of Hamburg, Germany, and a story of a Christmas he experienced. The latter was written in lyrical German prose and translated by his brother, Klaus.

ALTHOUGH SOME of the rhythm of the writing was lost in the translation, Mrs. Plexico described it as being one of the strongest and most gripping things she had ever read.

"Bernd," she said, "wrote the letter to me in English, which he has learned without outside help. He's only twenty-six now, and it's hard to believe that he is a veteran of the last war. Even harder to believe that four of those war years were spent as a prisoner in a Russian camp."

It is of a Christmas Eve at that Bernd wrote. Coldly and starkly he described the underground bunker in which he and fellow prisoners huddled that cold night. The pain and sorrow shown on the faces of these men is visible to the reader in the words of the then 16-year-old boy.

IT IS NOT DIFFICULT, after reading what he has written, to see the whole horror of the place. Men, skeletons of their former selves, huddled on bare planks beneath a few filthy rags. Men, disheartened and beaten; half frozen and ill; forlorn and miserable.

Bernd lets one feel his own fear when "Hermann," the leader of that bunker, asked him to read from the Bible on that bitter Christmas Eve.

Briefly he told of having the Book taken from him when he reached the Russian camp, and how a friendly guard returned it. It was a forbidden thing, that Bible, but he had kept it. Now, the thought of reading from it filled him with a new fear.

"I sat up slowly and took with trembling fingers the Book from my haversack," the boy wrote. "He (Hermann) helped me like a father who takes his sick child out of the bed. Then we staggered together through the bunker."

HERMANN PUSHED a block toward Bernd when they reached the crude stove, built from loam and ordered the boy to read.

"Now I sat there and something in me asked: Can you read at all? Would not the misery here-strangle your voice?"

"I had found my passage and begun. But my voice was free and without trembling. Maybe it was not my voice at all? A motion like a hard rattle went through the rows of the fellows. Heads rose, some fellows sat up in their plank beds, some wrapped up deeper in their rags and groaned."

AND SO THE BOY, burning with fever from his untreated frost-bitten feet, read the Biblical story of the Birth of Christ.

He read of the edict which sent men and women and little children streaming across the country because it had been ordered by Caesar Augustus? As he read, he saw the pattern of tyranny which was being repeated in his own time.

As he read, he tried to see the reason for his own plight, and that of his fellows, over and over he realized the power and the might of the men who were suffering from it. To himself, he compared the men of Caesar's day and the men of his own and saw little difference.

THERE, IN THAT BUNKER, several feet under the earth's surface—the boy read—and thought. Around him he felt, rather than saw, the reaction of these listening human wrecks. Finally, the passage was finished, and of it Bernd wrote:

"I sat on my block. The Book in my hand was trembling. The passage which I had ended with shone moistly . . . good will to men."

"I rose troubledly and hobbled back to my place. Most of my fellows sat upright on their plank beds. The eyes which were dead a few minutes ago were shining. The words which I was allowed to say died away, sucked up by the hammering hearts and by the damp, cold walls of the bunker."

Bernd wrote that he went back to his cold, hard bed, and he looked at the ceiling. The small lamps, only tin cans with a bit of oil and wicks of cotton scraps from the ragged jackets, "were going out sadly. We were tired, and with the sleep of peace of the holy night fell down on emaciated faces."

"SOME OF US went over the strange bridge from here to there this night. The other fellows slept into another grey, icy day."

"When I was falling asleep I heard bells somewhere."

This was Christmas Eve, 1946. Christmas Eve for a mere slip of a boy. Christmas Eve for a world at war.

Klaus, his brother, is studying at Ball State Teachers college in Muncie, Ind., hoping to take back to his homeland a knowledge of how a free people live. Hoping, according to Mrs. Plexico, that what he has learned here in the United States will be of help to his people.

"Klaus is getting good marks," she said, "but he is not cramming and aiming for scholastic honors. Instead he spends every possible minute mixing with Americans."

"He wants to learn everything he can about us and how we live so he may take that back to his country. He wants to do what he can to keep other boys from spending a Christmas Eve like the one Bernd wrote about."

Everywhere about, in the earth, above it, and into the universe beyond us, are visible the Nations of the world under an inviolate system of law. Is that not sufficient proof that our own lives must measure up to the inexorable Moral Law?

Community House Opens Enrollment For Study Groups

Registration for the winter series in adult education craft and hobby classes at the Community House opened Monday, Jan. 5.

Class work will start the week of Jan. 19, with the exception of the gardening group which is scheduled to start Feb. 17. This will consist of five classes. All others have 10 lessons each.

Mrs. Ewald E. Schaffer, assistant director in charge of adult education, said no Red Cross courses would be given this year. The only other change in the class schedule will be three groups for the study of ceramics.

CLASSES OFFERED, and the instructors are: bridge, Mrs. Connie Anderson; ceramics, Mrs. Edith Foster; creative writing, Miss Alice E. Morgan; drawing, Mrs. Virginia Schaffer; gardening, Mrs. Alice W. Burlingame; interior decorating, Miss Gladys Etzold; millinery, Mrs. Pat Cuchi; painting, Mrs. Bernice Birch; rug hooking, Mrs. Kerline Decker; sculpture, Miss Svea Kline; sewing, Mrs. Charlotte Currie; and silver working, Mrs. Thelma Anderson.

Mrs. Schaffer said all registrations should be made in person at the Community House office as soon as possible. As is customary, a nominal fee is charged for each subject.



PAUL BADURA-SKODA

Young Austrian Pianist to Play In SOC Concert

Paul Badura-Skoda, the distinguished young Austrian pianist will give the third concert for the season sponsored by the Community Concert Association of Southern Oakland County on Monday, Jan. 12, at 8:15 p.m. in the Royal Oak high school auditorium.

Although only in his twenties, Paul Badura-Skoda is on his first North American tour and already has achieved an enviable position in the ranks of internationally famous pianists.

Badura-Skoda became a student of Viola Trems in Vienna in 1939, with whom he still continues his studies. Although World War II delayed the realization of his dreams, 1945 found him hard at work at the Vienna College of Music.

WITHIN TWO years, however, he had begun to achieve professional recognition by winning the first prize at the Austrian Music Competition in 1947. In 1948, he passed his finals for piano and choir conducting with special mention from the Vienna College of Music.

His North American debut took place Nov. 1 in Toronto, and his United States debut as soloist with the Cincinnati Symphony Nov. 7.

His first North American tour has been sold out for quite some time and it will take him from the East Coast to as far west as Fort Worth and Houston, Tex.

ON SATURDAY, Jan. 10, he will give his first New York recital in Town Hall. He appeared as soloist with the Detroit Symphony, Paul Paray conducting, late in November.

Detroit music critics claimed him a gifted young artist who already possesses "a power in the pianistic world."

Consider Truck Purchase

Birmingham's city manager, Donald C. Egbert, has been authorized by city commissioners to issue quotations for the purchase of a truck for the sewage disposal plant. The truck, according to Norman Knapp, DPM superintendent, would replace the old chassis now on hand, and be used for hauling sludge.

The Birmingham Eccentric

SECTION 3

Thursday, January 8, 1953



Oldsmobile's Super "88" four-door sedan for 1953 features a restyled front and rear end, new chrome trim on the rear quarter panels and fenders and a more powerful 165-h.p. "Rocket" engine with 8 to 1 compression ratio. Interior beauty is enhanced by a choice of three color combinations and there is a new instrument panel, GM power steering, Frigidaire car conditioning, "Pedal-Ease" power brakes and the Automatic-Eye are among the optional accessories available at extra cost. These new 1953 models are being introduced Friday, Jan. 9, by the nation's Oldsmobile dealers, including the Birmingham dealership, Suburban Motors Co., 565 S. Woodward.

Have You Met . . .

and Robert, 9 months-old, Dr. and Mrs. Foster moved to 2810 Manchester road in November. Dr. Foster, a dentist, is a graduate of the University of Detroit.

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Red Cross Volunteers To Hear Campaign Plans

A "kickoff meeting" for some 75 volunteer fund-raisers on Wednesday, Jan. 14, will officially launch the 1953 fund drive of Oakland county's American Red Cross chapter. Dr. Robert W. Kelso of Pleasant Ridge said this week.

Remove Trees on Willets

Five trees will be removed along Willets street by the Detroit Edison company to make room for additional lines. One tree, according to Birmingham city commissioners, will be replaced. The other four have been declared to be in unsatisfactory condition. The work is being done in conjunction with the installation of new street lights on West Manly between Baldwin and Southfield.

Want ads cannot be accepted after 5 p.m. each Monday.

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