

Russian Peasants Charge Persecution

MOSCOW (UPI) — Thirty Russian peasant men, women and children pushed past Soviet guards into the U. S. Embassy today seeking protection from religious persecution.

The embassy turned them over to Soviet officials and they were taken away in a bus.

Some of the elderly men in the group wept. Others argued with Soviet Foreign Ministry officials who had been called to the embassy compound.

One man told an embassy official: "We don't want to go anywhere. They will shoot us."

Another said in a loud voice to newsmen: "Those who believe in God and Christ help us. We ask it. We ask that those who believe in God and Christ help us."

Warn Against Pictures
Soviet plainclothesmen threatened to confiscate the camera of any Western photographer who took a picture of the departing bus load of peasants.

A U. S. Embassy statement said the band was from the Siberian city of Chernogorsk and entered the embassy compound "asserting religious persecution."

"The embassy notified the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and asked that the people be cared for," the statement said.

The group pushed its way past the two pairs of Soviet militiamen (policemen) who normally guard the two embassy gates at the rear of the compound.

U. S. officials herded them into the embassy lunch room, which is a low building separated from the main structure.

Arrive Promptly
Soviet Foreign Ministry officials arrived promptly, followed by a bus and then plainclothesmen. After two hours, the peasants emerged from the building.

One Russian man shielding a small child with his calf-length sheepskin coat said:

"We were told that for our religious beliefs we would be put in prison and our children would be taken away from us after Jan. 1."

Another said: "We believe in the evangel. As soon as we get out of here they will take us and arrest us."

After some of the statements, Foreign Ministry officials approached the peasants, gesturing and arguing with them.

Most of the women wore traditional peasant felt boots, cotton dresses, padded jackets and shawls. Many members of the group were weeping.

Board Bus
At 1:10 p.m., about three hours after they had forced their way into the compound, part of the group boarded the bus and it drove outside the compound and stopped.

Others balked but finally they, too, walked to the bus.

A Foreign Ministry official said the group belonged to an evangelical sect but had not contacted any evangelists in Moscow.

He said they would be taken to a hotel near the station.

Upholds Firing Of Workman At Warsaw

INDIANAPOLIS (UPI) — Ailing employees who take off on unauthorized vacations for their health should first get leave for disability, according to an Indiana Appellate Court ruling.

The court upheld Wednesday the firing of Ralph Decker by the Champion Door Corp. of Warsaw.

Decker had gone to Arizona on what was termed "a self-assumed vacation" without obtaining a leave for disability.

The ruling upheld the Indiana Industrial Board's review board.

San Francisco Home Is Levelled By Blast

SAN FRANCISCO (UPI) — Two firemen were barely clinging to life today and five others were hospitalized following a gas explosion which leveled a two-story house and sent part of the structure crashing atop the firefighters.

The presence of escaping gas caused Disaster Corps officials to move residents out of a five-block area in the southern section of the city Wednesday night.

Battalion Chief Frank Lamey had a heart attack while helping to fight the fire and was dead on arrival at a hospital. The two critically injured firemen, Lt. Clarence McGrath and Anthony Marelich, received serious burns.

The explosion packed enough force to drive a broom handle through a wall. Fire Chief William Murray said the pilot light of the seven-room house ignited gas fumes, setting off the blast. Residents of the home had been removed earlier.

The firemen had been called out to control a gas main leak. They were standing in front of the house when the explosion occurred, blowing the four walls of the home apart and collapsing one end of the structure atop them.

Repair crews shut off the ruptured gas main Wednesday night.

389 Holiday Traffic Deaths Over Nation

By United Press International
The nation's drivers rolled up the third highest New Year's holiday death toll on record to end "the most tragic year in traffic history," the National Safety Council said today.

Traffic fatalities during the 102-hour holiday from 6 p.m. Friday to midnight Tuesday totaled 389, exceeded only by the 409 toll in

1956-57 and 407 in 1952-53. The council was cheered by the fact that the toll fell considerably below pre-holiday estimates that between 420 and 480 Americans would die on the nation's streets and highways.

A United Press International breakdown showed these holiday deaths:
Traffic 389
Fires 73
Planes 12
Miscellaneous 132
Total 606

California led the nation with 47 highway fatalities. Texas had 36, Illinois 20, New York and Oklahoma 19 each. Pennsylvania recorded 16, Florida, Ohio and Georgia 14 each, and Michigan and North Carolina 13 each.

Admits Embezzling Of Store's Funds

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (UPI) — James Esterline, 41, Fort Wayne supermarket manager, was free under \$8,000 bond today pending grand jury action on a charge of embezzling \$25,000.

Esterline signed a confession Wednesday and waived preliminary hearing in Fort Wayne City Court. He was bound over to Allen County Circuit Court. He had waived extradition after his arrest last weekend in Bellefontaine, Ohio.

Authorities said Esterline signed a statement admitting that he took an estimated \$30,000 over a three-year period. The statement said he turned his regular salary over to his wife and "used what I had taken to run me."

He said he spent the money "on various things" and had none left when he was arrested "except what I had in my pockets."

Esterline said, "Once I started, I couldn't quit."

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Hi-Way Trailer Court News

Mr. and Mrs. James Herman, 71 Bella Casa, had as their Sunday dinner guests Charles Herman and children Freida and Jerry. Ronad Allen Everett, son of Mr. and Mrs. James Everett, Jr., 56 Vindale Trail, observed his 8th birthday Dec. 31.

Mr. and Mrs. Fritz Reinhardt and family of Van Wert, Ohio, were Saturday evening guests of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Reuben Reinhardt, 58 Bella Casa; and their Sunday evening guests were their son, Bill Reinhardt and family of Monmouth.

Miss Jeannie Clark of Fort Wayne spent from Friday until Tuesday in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Earl Jones, 57 Vindale Trail.

Mr. and Mrs. Earl Gumm, 60 Bella Casa, are parents of a 7 pound, 8½ ounce girl, born Dec. 30 at 9:38 a.m. She has been named Lisa Donalle.

Charles Wallace returned to his studies at Ball State Teachers College in Muncie Sunday after spending the holidays with his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Wallace, 38 Star Lane.

Seaman 3rd class Walter James Buettner, stationed on the U. S. S. Dalgren, and Miss Sylvia Miller of Monroe were Monday evening guests of Mr. and Mrs. James Herman, and enjoyed a late evening meal.

Mr. and Mrs. Gene Wilson and family are now located temporarily in a "Detroit" mobile home at 74 West St. Ext., while their trailer which was damaged in the fire last week is being repaired.

Mr. and Mrs. James Herman, 71 Bella Casa, spent Saturday evening with Mr. and Mrs. Walter Buettner and family, route 6, Decatur.

Ronald Haisley of Fairmount spent Sunday afternoon with Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Wallace, 38 Star Lane.

Mr. and Mrs. James Herman, 71 Bella Casa, spent Christmas day in Fort Wayne at the home of Mr. and Mrs. O. C. Jackson, grandparents of Mrs. Herman. Other guests were Mr. and Mrs. Walter Buettner of Decatur; Mr. and Mrs. S. Collins of Sturgis, Mich.; Miss Emma Kahline of Fort Wayne; Seaman 3rd class Walter James Buettner, stationed on the U. S. S. Dalgren, and Miss Sylvia Miller of Monroe.

Mr. and Mrs. Donald Boroff and family of Van Wert, Ohio, and Mr. and Mrs. George Bair, Jr., and family of Fort Wayne were New Year guests of Dr. and Mrs. Harold V. DeVor.

Miss Diane Rhodes has returned to Ball State Teachers College in Muncie after spending Christmas with her mother, Mrs. Lloyd Rhodes, 59 Vindale Trail. Miss Judy Rhodes, who is a teacher of English in the high school at Elgin, Ill., was also home for the holidays, returning to her duties Tuesday.

Dr. and Mrs. Frank DeVor returned to Allegan, Mich., after visiting with his mother, Mrs. Agnes Wright, and other relatives here during the holidays.

Mr. and Mrs. Ernie Rhinesmith and family of Monroe were Monday night guests of Mr. and Mrs. Sam Bell, Jr., and daughter Lisa.

Mr. and Mrs. Biran Duling left Sunday for their home in Iowa City, Iowa, after spending a week here with Dr. and Mrs. Harold V. DeVor and other relatives, which included a brief visit to friends in Cleveland, Ohio.

Debbie Lou, the two-month old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Winchester, 65 Bella Casa, was stricken with pneumonia last Saturday and taken to the Adams county memorial hospital and placed in an oxygen tent, and at

Three Are Killed As Plane Crashes House

CHICAGO (UPI) — A private plane crashed into a ranch home on Chicago's Northwest Side Wednesday night, killing three members of one family and critically injuring three others.

The twin-engine Cessna 310, carrying a suburban Skokie family home from a Florida holiday, plunged into the home of Dr. John V. Mennella after a desperate low-level search over the crowded residential area for a spot to land.

Dead were Mrs. Gennette Somlo, 33; her daughter, Susan, 5, and her mother-in-law, Mrs. Elsa Vidal.

Hospitalized in critical condition were Thomas G. Somlo, 35, the pilot; another daughter, Terry, 4, and the family's maid, Juana Cubias, 23.

Hospital authorities said Somlo was most seriously injured, with severe head wounds.

Mennella, his wife Blanche, and his two sisters, Miss Mary Mennella and Mrs. Elsie Serva, all escaped injury.

Police said the Somlo family was returning from Naples, Fla., when the plane apparently developed engine trouble. Somlo appeared to cut the ignition just before the craft tore into the Mennella home.

Party Struggle On Medicare Postponed

WASHINGTON (UPI) — An intra-party struggle among House Democrats that may determine the fate of President Kennedy's controversial medicare program has been postponed until mid-January.

The battle is over the filling of two vacant Democratic seats on the House Ways and Means Committee. The committee's composition holds the key to chances for enactment of Kennedy's controversial plan to expand Social Security benefits to include hospitalization and nursing home

care.

Customarily, the vacancies would be filled at the caucus of House Democrats scheduled for Jan. 8, the day before the convening of the 88th Congress. However, Speaker John W. McCormack, D-Mass., has ordered this decision delayed until a second caucus is held later this month.

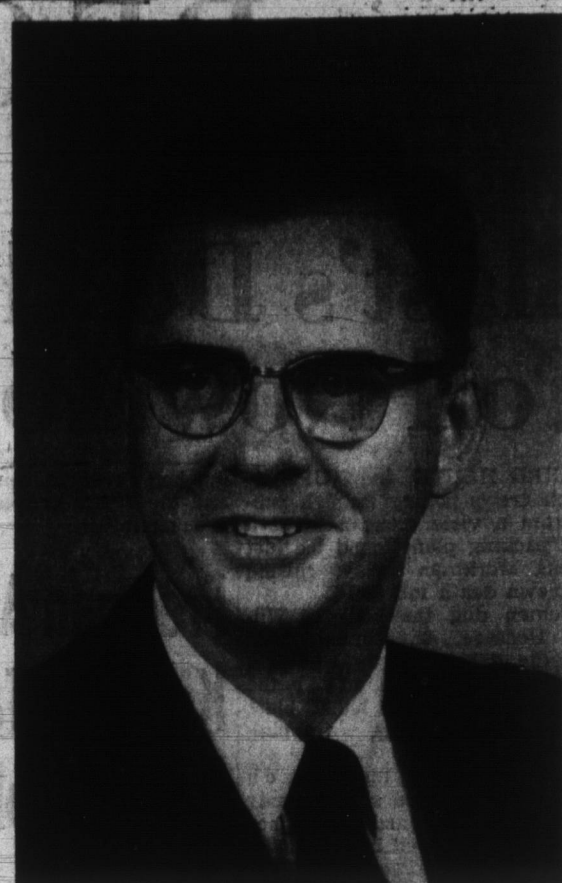
The delay apparently is part of McCormack's strategy for winning another fight even more vital to Kennedy. This second struggle in the House at the opening of the new Congress will determine whether conservatives regain control of the House Rules Committee and the legislative

machinery of the House.

If they do, Kennedy has warned, the administration's program will be "emasculated."

Because Ways and Means Committee Democrats serve as the Democratic Committee on Committees, no new committee assignments can be made until its roster is complete. Through the delay McCormack appeared to be subtly serving notice that the votes of Democrats in the rules showdown might determine their chances for getting committee assignments they want.

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Rev. Garth Shepherd

The Decatur Evangelical United Brethren church will hold a week of special services starting Sunday evening, January 6, and continuing each evening, except Saturday, to January 13. The Rev. Garth Shepherd, pastor of the St. Andrews E. U. B. church at West Lafayette, will be the guest speaker. Rev. Shepherd is the executive secretary of evangelism of the Indiana conference north. The services will begin each evening at 7 o'clock. Special music is being planned for each service. The Rev. Joe Penrod will lead the congregational singing. Services will be at the Bethany church on Winchester street Sunday evening through Wednesday evening. Thursday evening through Sunday evening, services will be at the Trinity church, at 9th and Madison streets. The public is invited to these services.

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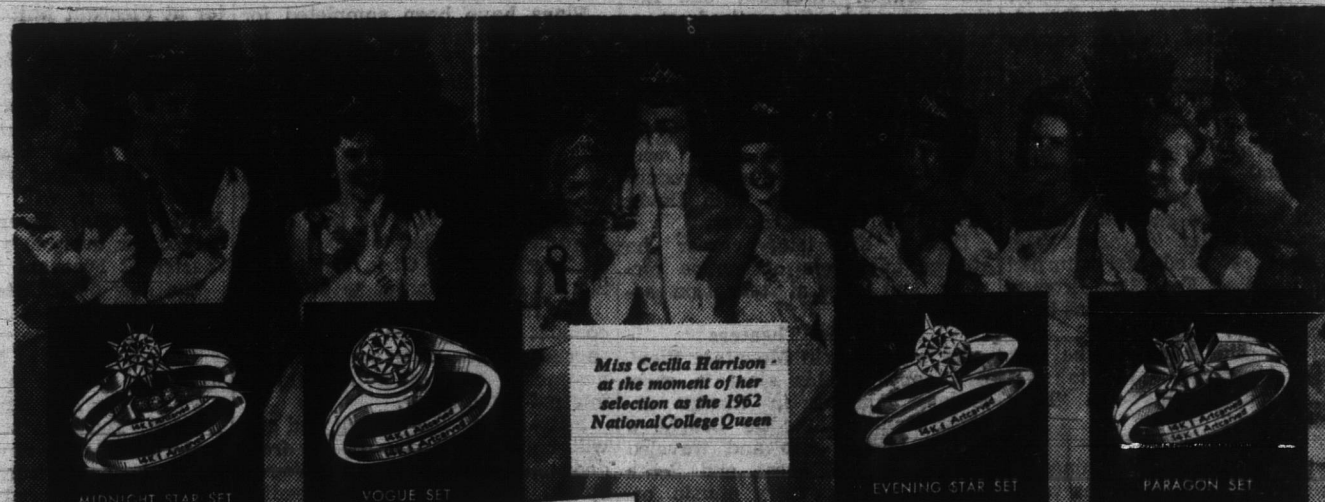
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