

NEW YORK, N.Y.
WORLD-TELEGRAM
& SUN

E. 373,849

DEC 17 1965

CPYRGHT

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A Look Into the Future --Merry Christmas 1975



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UNDER THE circumstances, Christmas, 1975, was as joyous a season as could reasonably be expected.

President Ernest J. Soapsuds, who had administered a sound thrashing to Republican Pinchley Bleak in the election of 1972 (and, of course, had promptly adopted that poor man's entire foreign policy), tried to put a brave face on things when he lit the traditional White House Christmas tree.

"Normally," said President Soapsuds, beaming uncertainly at the television cameras, "the tree is lighted in the week before Christmas. Unfortunately, however, that was not possible this year. As most of you know by now, the whole Western Hemisphere was blacked out by a power failure that lasted from December 19 to December 26 inclusive, and it was not possible to light the tree until the electricity had been restored."

Here President Soapsuds fixed his audience (estimated at 400 million as a result of the compulsory viewing act of 1974) with a stern expression.

"The Central Intelligence Agency has traced the cause of the failure to a short circuit in an electric guitar being played in a pickup combo in the Tierra del Fuego. As these words are being spoken, elements of the United States Marines are landing to protect American lives. Already (here President Soapsuds consults a teletype flimsy) more than 200 electric guitars have been captured or destroyed.

"So much (the famous Soapsuds smile floods 200 million living rooms) for not-nice news. We are happy to report that reports from the other side of the world are a different matter. News from Viet Nam continues to be good. Ambassador McNamara, who after all knows more about war in Viet Nam than anyone else, has sent me a special Christmas message in which he assures me that we have turned the corner and that, in

his words, 'we have definitely stopped not winning, and by springtime at the latest should be able to foresee the day when we will have positively started not losing.'

"I'm sure we will agree that is good news, indeed," President Soapsuds continued. "Ambassador McNamara, of course, added a small postscript. He feels that 1.5 million troops should be sufficient to do the job, but (the smile vanishes) we are dealing with an exceedingly treacherous foe, and it may take up to two million soldiers to finish the task of civilizing them."

President Soapsuds fumbles momentarily with a sheaf of papers on his desk. "Now, just as an illustration of why the anti-rumor act was in our list of must legislation. Here is a letter from a little girl in Cincinnati. 'Dear President Soapsuds,' it begins. 'My little friends tell me that our nice plastic 25-cent pieces are to be replaced by quarters made of cardboard. I hope it isn't true. I can play tiddle-winks with plastic quarters, but I'm afraid I can't do it any longer if you start making them of cardboard. Can you tell me what to say to my little friends?'"

President Soapsuds brushes away a tear. "Just let me assure this loyal little American that her little friends are wrong. The mint assures me that our plastic quarters are working just fine, they've licked the melting problem, and—without intending any slight to our great pasteboard industry—there is absolutely no plan for shifting over to cardboard quarters. When you write to your little friends at the youth rehabilitation camp, you will tell them you have the word of President Soapsuds, and they'd better believe it."

(Suddenly the lights on the huge White House tree begin to flicker and fade. So, indeed, does the image of Mr. Soapsuds on 200 million TV screens. His last words, before the power fails completely are, "Dagnab it, tell whatshisname over at CIA that I want to see him right away.")