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SOURCE British Broadcasting Corporation

Budapest in English at 1820 EST, 1 January 1949.

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(Text)

Here is Betty Cranshaw, a British girl studying in Hungary, to read you her weekly letter to her mother at home.

"Dear Mother: Thank you so much for your letter with all the Christmas greetings and New Year wishes.

"Well, as you probably want to hear about my Christmas and New Year, I'll proceed to tell you all about it. Now that the holiday turned out to be so pleasant I can confess to you that I was a bit scared of my first Christmas away from home, but luckily it wasn't half as bad as I had feared. I felt really homesick only for a few minutes at the Christmas dinner and pretty bad at midnight last night when the lights went off for a minute and the crowd I was with wished each other a happy New Year, toasted, kissed and hugged.

"Well, as I have written you I spent my Christmas Eve with the Horvaths. I arrived at six to find the three boys all agog in the drawing room. Mr. Horvath's mother and a good friend of theirs were also there. As Baby Denes, aged four, still believes that the little Jesus brings the gifts, the fairy story was strictly adhered to. Baby Denes kept hopping about and declared in a letter his Mother had written for him to Jesus, he had asked for a big white rocking horse. Ilonka Horvath was in the next room busy putting the finishing touches to the tree and laying out the presents. At around 6:30 we heard the tinkling of bells, the kids rushed in and we followed to find a beautiful three-foot tree standing in one corner, ablaze with lighted candles, topped by a silver star, glittering with many multi-colored decorations, strands of tinsel, little frosted bells, houses and glass mushrooms and sweets wrapped in silver paper and pale pink and white meringues. It was beautiful. The central table in the room had been covered with a white cloth and here the presents were laid out. The children were wild with delight. There was Denes' rocking horse, big, white, with long mane and tail and red saddle and reins, just as he had dreamed of it. Then there were sweaters and flannel shirts for the boys, a (Merkant?) building set for the eldest boy, the toys I had given them, also stamp-collecting album, story books and quite a lot more which I can't remember.

"Ilonka got a lovely beige and black check skirt from her husband, also

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the compact I gave her and a couple of other smaller gifts. Her mother-in-law received black wool for a dress and a book. Mr. Kovac's presents included two shirts, two ties, a book and a fountain pen. I got a far greater present than I'd expected. Ilonka, on the sly, hunted in town until she found the same dark green cloth as my winter coat is made of and had a hood made lined with white lamb's fur, lovely for the cold weather.

"Well, after Holy Night had been played on the gramophone and sung by all of us and short prayers said by the boys, toys were played with, presents viewed, we chatted awhile and then had a lovely dinner -- tomato soup, boiled fogas, the best Hungarian fish with melted butter, potatoes and rice and then a wonderful chocolate cake with whipped cream, also white wine and coffee. Trying to make your mouth water is a Hungarian habit I've acquired to describe meals at length.

"On Christmas Day I was with the Kovacs. I also got lovely presents from them. Mrs. and Mr. gave me a pair of those fur-lined suede bootlets I've been longing for so very long, Hanna gave me some lovely pale blue underwear silk, two girls at the University a pair of handknitted gloves and half a dozen handkerchiefs, and two boys gave me a box of chocolates each. Well, I think you'll agree that I had a very enjoyable Christmas.

"After New Year's Eve a bottle party was arranged at friends. As a matter of fact, I'd been invited to three but in the end went only to one. There were 16 of us, some of them very good fun, also nice food and drinks. We did a good bit of dancing but also played games, laughed at the silliest things, and were all in very high spirits. There was quite a lot of tomfoolery and joking going on all the time, but a few of the youngsters sat together in the corner of one of the rooms and carried on serious discussions about literature, art, politics and all the rest of it. Some of the conversations and views expressed were most interesting especially to me as a foreigner, and I mean to tell you about them in my next letter. But now I must close, Mum. Love to you all and I wish you a Happy New Year of peace and prosperity. Kisses from your daughter, Betty."

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