

PEACE ON EARTH

Holiday celebrations take place around the world



By **ROD LOCKWOOD**
BLADE STAFF WRITER

There are feasts and there are sparkling lights. There are fat men in red suits and humongous Christmas trees.

There are smiling, happy children and harried shoppers. It must be Christmas all over the world.

It's not just an American thing, all of this hullabaloo over the holidays. From Russia to Hong Kong and South Korea to The Netherlands, the world celebrates in various forms the birth of Jesus Christ, the winter Solstice, and whatever other cold-weather traditions have been passed down through the ages.

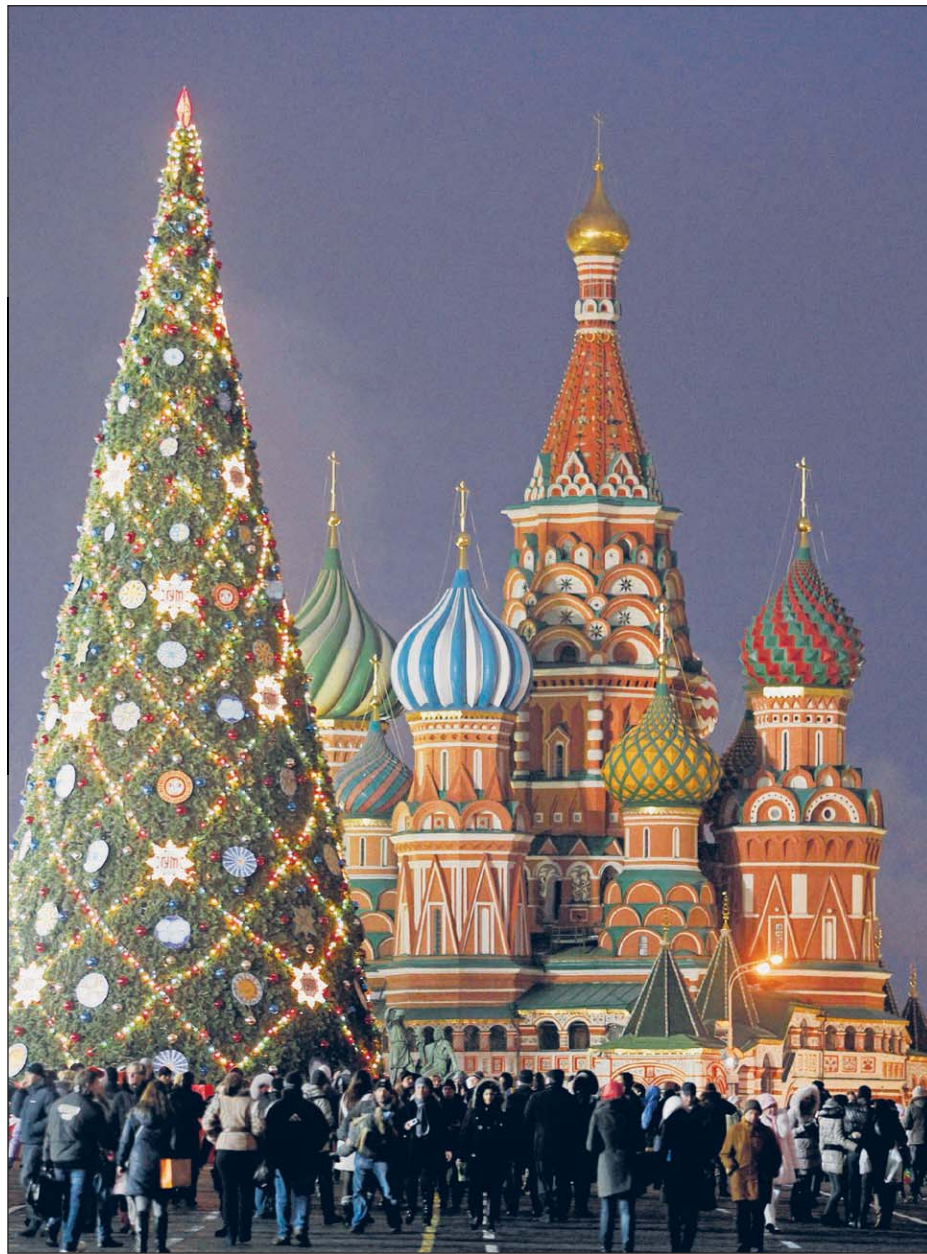
As Christianity spread across the globe, Christmas was eventually celebrated in places that traditionally were Buddhist or Hindu and, of course, the various European countries have their twists on the holiday.

In Sweden, things get rolling on Dec. 13 for the St. Lucia ceremony, and Christmas trees are generally brought into the home just a few days before the big day. In Poland, special emphasis is put on Advent and the days leading up to Dec. 25, while in Hungary, the big celebrations are actually on Christmas Eve.

The ubiquitous nature of the celebrations indicates something magical about this time of year that doesn't fade no matter how much we grouse about crowded malls, garish commercialism, and an oversaturation of consumerism.

Embedded in the rituals that span the planet is always the notion that peace will prevail. And perhaps bah humbug doesn't translate so well in other languages.

Contact Rod Lockwood at: lockwood@theblade.com or 419-724-6159.



People walk in Moscow's Red Square. St. Basil Cathedral is in the background.



A worker puts up decorations in Barcelona.



A shopping mall in Hong Kong.



Rose Morrison, 2, with Santa in Dickson City, Pa.



Lights illuminate the Christmas Fair of the Mariendom, left, and St. Severi's Church in Erfurt, central Germany.



St. Nicholas waves to fans in Amsterdam on Nov. 18.



Children in Seoul on Nov. 26.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Santa cheers at a soccer match in Tijuana, Mexico, on Nov. 29.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Volunteers of America Santas ring their bells as they walk in the 110th annual Sidewalk Santa Parade in New York on Nov. 23.