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BRITISH ADVANCE THREATENS KEY ITALIAN BASE

Greeks Hurling Captured Shells At Fascist Army

Struggle forward despite snow and cold; Advance slowed by weather but continues.



By J. Wes. Gallagher
Associated Press Staff Writer

WITH THE GREEK ARMY IN ALBANIA, Dec. 16 (AP)—Greek shells hurled captured Italian shells into Italian emplacements high on a mountain northeast of Pogradetz today while Greek infantry struggled forward through snow four feet deep.

I stood on a snowy mountain pass 2,000 feet above the southern tip of Lake Orkida while the Greek cannon lobbed shells over my head across the end of the lake and into the mountains several kilometres beyond.

The Greek forces have advanced beyond Pogradetz but one Italian stronghold remains on a small mountain-top plateau several thousand feet above the lake. The Italian position here is aided by weather, for Greek foot soldiers have to flounder through snowdrifts almost deep in many places.

A bearded young captain explained the situation as he tinkered with a trench mortar in a nearby farmhouse.

"We must do everything on foot," he said, "and that takes time particularly with weather conditions as they are now."

The Greeks admitted they are not accustomed to the terrific snow and cold being encountered here, but there has been no apparent slackening of their morale.

The colonel of one regiment walked into a first aid station with a four-day-old wound over one eye. He refused to consider the doctor's order that he go back to a hospital but got an emergency dressing and left on foot to rejoin his troops.

While the infantry presses on, the Greek artillery is keeping up a steady fire on the Italian positions. One artillery officer told me four-fifths of the shells being fired by his battery were captured from the Italians.

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Four killed When Swiss Town bombed

BASEL, Switzerland, Dec. 17 (Tuesday)—(AP)—Four persons were killed and widespread damage was done when 10 aerial bombs exploded in the heart of Basel just before midnight last night.

The bombs were believed to have been dropped by British raiders mistaking this blacked-out city on the German border for one of their Nazi objectives.

One bomb ripped through the central railway station but exploded without casualties.

Another fell in Winkelried Square, behind the station, killing a woman. Three persons were killed in the suburb of Dillingen, a mile from the centre of the city, second largest in Switzerland.

The bombs caught Basel by surprise. The sudden drone of airplane motors was followed immediately by the blasting of high explosives and a spatter of anti-aircraft fire from German guns across the Rhine.

Several minutes later an alarm sounded, and the all-clear did not come for more than an hour afterward.

Some of the streets where the bombs fell were littered with debris.

War risk Insurance Is resumed to some Mediterranean ports

NEW YORK, Dec. 16 (AP)—British and Greek victories in the Mediterranean brought resumption today of war risk insurance rates on limited types of cargoes going to or coming from a number of southern European and North African destinations.

Marine underwriters announced that on shipments not in excess of \$500,000 a vessel they were prepared to cover under open policies the risks of capture except by the British authorities or their allies.

Shipments of which such coverage now will be written include those to or from Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Black Sea ports excluding Russian ports whose shipments are via Suez.

The "possibility of improved shipping conditions in the Mediterranean due to the recent Italian reverses on both land and sea" was given as the reason for resumption of policies.

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Canuck Miners Do Important Work At Rock

Unit composed of men from all Provinces of Canada tunnel to strengthen defences at Gibraltar

(By Ross Munro, Canadian Press Staff Writer)

SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND, Dec. 17 (Tuesday)—(CP Cable)—A detachment of a tunnelling company of the Royal Canadian Engineers, composed of hard-rock miners from every province in Canada, is now engaged in tunnelling work on the Gibraltar front.

First Canadian unit ever sent to Gibraltar for duty there, the engineers are doing a vital job in connection with the defence of the stronghold guarding the entrance to the Mediterranean.

The unit went to Gibraltar some time ago under Maj. Colin Campbell, former Ontario Public Works Minister, now commander of the tunnelling company. He has returned to the Canadian army in Paris representative to Vichy today for conferences with Marshal Petain and foreign observers here.

Believed the visit might mean life or death for the re-organized French Government—possibly even total Nazi occupation of France.

What the future holds for the old Marshal's regime, these observers said, hinges on what explanation he gives Abetz regarding the sudden dismissal of Pierre

Laval as Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister.

Berlin sources claimed the Cabinet upheaval at Vichy came as a surprise. They said also that not until Germany has obtained full information concerning the purpose, intentions and effects of the change would the Nazi press even be permitted to publish the news of Laval's dismissal.

The special reason for Germany's reserve, these informants claimed, lies in the fact that France has merely reached a truce with Germany and that peace has not yet been established. They said also that France is a country largely occupied by German troops and that any change in the Vichy Foreign Ministry "naturally constitutes a milestone in French contemporary history."

German-French relations may or may not be improved.

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Hitler's Envoy To study mood Of Vichy Gov't

Total Occupation of France by Germans May be Outcome.

(By Charles H. Guppli, Associated Press Staff Writer)

BERNE, Switzerland, Dec. 16 (AP)—Hitler sent Otto Abetz, his Paris representative to Vichy today for conferences with Marshal Petain and foreign observers here.

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Weather cuts Short raids On Britain

LONDON, Dec. 16 (CP)—London had brief alarms tonight as German raids, cut short by heavy mist, dwindled to solitary attacks by single bombers.

The capital has been prepared for reprisal raids following the Royal Air Force's attack on Berlin Sunday night. Instead the first raid did not come until unusually late and it was followed quickly by the all-clear.

Shortly thereafter the sirens sounded a second warning and after another interval of inactivity there was a second all-clear.

A raider which slipped in with motors roaring during a non-alert period dropped one light bomb which landed in a London street near a nurses' home, but it did little damage. A heavier bomb fell in an attack of such proportions.

The raiders concentrated their Sunday-Monday overnight assault, under brilliant moonlight, on Sheffield, British steel centre, for the second time in less than a week but the number of dead was said to be fewer than expected from an attack of such proportions.

The new raid came as air raid precaution workers were still digging out persons alive who had been buried in Sheffield air raid shelters.

The Germans flew sporadically against Britain Monday and were over East Anglia and a west midland town as night fell.

While Sheffield marshalled all available food stocks and electrical power to feed the city, the Nazis threatened Liverpool for a short time, dropped a dozen incendiary bombs on the docks and machine-gunned a train and a passenger train in East Anglia.

The Japanese raider was a broadcast heard tonight by the Columbia Broadcasting System claimed the Japanese liner Canberra Maru, just returning from Australia, had sighted German floating mines on the way to Melbourne, which were "presumably intended for the Queen Mary."

All the Queen Mary big British liner was seen in Sydney.

How the mines were identified as German was not mentioned.

Lower Hog prices Not asking too Much—Gardiner

SASKATOON, Dec. 16 (CP)—A. J. G. Gardner, Federal Agriculture Minister, today told a farm conference here that the Canadian government, in order to ensure the Dominion's bacon surplus, had decided to take a lower price for surplus bacon than the United Kingdom.

The British government, Mr. Gardner said, regarded bacon as an expensive way to eat pork and had placed it well down on its list of food requirements. The minister outlined negotiations he and other agricultural officials conducted in Britain recently when the new bacon agreement was drawn up.

The conference was called by Mr. Gardner to review production and other problems in the three Prairie Provinces in the light of recent food agreements with the United Kingdom. The conference, which will continue today and Tuesday, was attended by the ministers of agriculture of the Prairie provinces, members of their departments, and representatives of farmer organizations and the packing companies.

The British officials, he said, had indicated that they had \$10,000,000 more this year to pay for bacon than they had last year. They had stated that, if Canada was prepared to sell all her bacon surplus to Britain on the basis the British government considered and United Kingdom, "I had a statement prepared to show that the lower price would bring to the producer of hogs, selling them on the various markets of the east and west. That statement showed that, if conditions in Canada were to last, yet it should net the producer an average of 50 cents per 100 pounds less than last year throughout the year."

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Last Fascist Stand in Egypt Is Captured

Victorious desert fighters take Fort Capuzzo in Libya and continue advance.

CAIRO, Egypt, Dec. 16 (AP)—Britain's army of the Nile claimed its first big victory on Italian colonial soil today and simultaneously crushed the last important Fascist threat inside Egypt's borders by capturing Fort Capuzzo, just within Libya, and overwhelming the bitter-ly tenacious Italian garrison at Salium, five miles from the Libyan border.

Thus with one stroke reported in a large announcement at British headquarters troops of Gen. Sir Archibald P. Wavell, Middle East commander, sized two points of a triangle of Fascist resistance in the western desert and on the Libyan frontier.

British advance guards were reported sweeping on into Libya, and the next probable objective of the advancing troops apparently was Bardia, Libyan port and key Fascist base.

The British spearheads of motorized desert troops were reported to have set the Italians back at some points to where they started from more than three months ago.

Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, Italian commander in Libya, had been reported strongly entrenched in Salium, and his men put up what the British official said was a terrific battle before their pockets of resistance was conquered.

While the fighting was going on around Salium and Fort Capuzzo, British units swept around them into Libya.

Bombing delivered a smashing attack upon Bardia and British planes were said to be penetrating farther into the Italian colony.

While the British command began their surprise offensive across the western desert a week ago today the Italians were authoritatively reported to have 200,000 men, all told, in the Libyan army.

Of these, British sources believed that less than 100,000 were involved in the present fighting, with the remainder scattered along the length and breadth of the vast Libyan desert.

More than 30,000 must be deducted as prisoners in the week's fighting, not including any prisoners captured at Salium and Fort Capuzzo and a large number of casualties.

Both Britain's land and air commands in the Middle East reported sharp blows against Italy, at home as well as in her African empire overseas.

Two battleships also were attacked at Naples, the communicate added. While making no claims of having hit either of them, it said one plane dumped its whole load of case to one and that bomb hits set the petty to which both were moored.

Bad weather apparently has dogged the British land offensive, but good weather or bad, the British forces are expected to slow down their pace to mop up and to prosecute their lengthened communication lines.

(Continued on page 8, Col 3)

1st Contingent Landed in Great Britain year ago

(By Ross Munro, Canadian Press War Correspondent)

WITH THE CANADIAN ARMY IN ENGLAND, Dec. 17 (Tuesday)—(CP Cable)—A year ago today the first contingent of the 1st Canadian Division landed in the United Kingdom, vanguard of the thousands of sons of Canada who now form the Canadian army in England.

Reviewing the last 12 months in an interview with The Canadian Press Lt.-Gen. A. G. L. McNaughton, corps commander, said: "It has been a year of great activity, considerable anxiety and marked progress in perfecting the forces of Canada overseas."



HEADS OPERATIONS
Maj.-Gen. Richard O'Connor has been in immediate command of the British operations in Egypt. He won the Italian silver medal for valor during the first war.

ASK HIGHER WAGES
DETROIT, Dec. 16 (AP)—The Ford Brotherhood of America today asked the Ford Motor Company to pay its hourly rated workers higher wages than employees of any other automobile manufacturer. No specific wage was mentioned.

7 MORE SHOPPING DAYS

A BANDIT FRIEND IS ONE GUY WHO'LL 'STICK UP' FOR YOU

1st Contingent Landed in Great Britain year ago

(By Ross Munro, Canadian Press War Correspondent)

| MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM TEMPERATURES: | |
|-----------------------------------|--------|
| Dawson | 83 63 |
| Victoria | 20 35 |
| Edmonton | 313 28 |
| Regina | 73 1 |
| Winnipeg | 6B 1 |
| Toronto | 29 45 |
| Ottawa | 16 32 |
| Montreal | 20 35 |
| Quebec | 9 24 |
| Saint John | 16 31 |
| Halifax | 21 34 |
| Charlottetown | 20 26 |

Maritime East: Strong winds with rain or part snow.

SYNOPSIS
The weather has been fair with moderate temperature in the western provinces while rain or snow has been general in Ontario.

High tide today at noon and tonight at 12:57.

Sun sets tomorrow morning at 4:13 and rises tomorrow morning at 7:59.

Last quarter moon, December 21, 9:45 p.m.
Summerside tide 18 minutes later than Charlottetown.

THE CAR FERRY SAILINGS
Leaves Bord'n 9:45 A.M. 1:00 P.M.
Leaves Tormentine 11:00 A.M. 3:15 P.M.

Nazi paper sees Possibility Italy May collapse

LONDON, Dec. 16 (CP)—The influential German newspaper Frankfurter Zeitung, is pondering the possibility that "Italy may collapse like a house of cards," the British Broadcasting Corporation reported today.

The newspaper was said to have expressed the hope that Italy would resist but held out no promise of direct German assistance should her plight become more intense.

"The only way we will relieve Italy from British pressure is by means of constant attacks on England," the newspaper was quoted as saying.

While the Italian army is not accustomed to the terrific snow and cold being encountered here, but there has been no apparent slackening of their morale.

The colonel of one regiment walked into a first aid station with a four-day-old wound over one eye. He refused to consider the doctor's order that he go back to a hospital but got an emergency dressing and left on foot to rejoin his troops.

While the infantry presses on, the Greek artillery is keeping up a steady fire on the Italian positions. One artillery officer told me four-fifths of the shells being fired by his battery were captured from the Italians.

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War — 25 Years Ago Today

(By The Canadian Press)

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Ships send out Distress calls; Fate Unknown

NEW YORK, Dec. 16 (AP)—MacKay Radio said the 5,946-ton Italian freighter Istra called for "urgent assistance" near Kingston, Jamaica, late today.

The MacKay station at Amaganset, N. Y., reported 15 minutes later, at 6:30 p. m. AST that it was still in touch with the Istra which gave her position as between Jamaica and Cuba.

No details of the cause of distress were immediately available.

The Istra is owned by the Italian line and traded between Italy, United States ports and the West Indies before war. She reached Italian waters three days before Italy entered the conflict.

Her distress message was the first indication that she had left the Mediterranean although shipping circles here had heard that she was scheduled to sail from Lisbon, Portugal, to Cuba.

Italian line officials said they had received no information from Italy on recent movements of their vessels and that "there must be a mistake some place."

The call from the Istra was the second heard today by MacKay from ships in distress. At 7:23 a. m. AST the Bio Island a former Italian freighter seized by a Canadian warship after the crew attempted to scuttle her in the St. Lawrence River wireless that she was "being bombed by enemy aircraft" of Ireland. The 2,450-ton vessel originally was the Hudson Line Munardan. In 1934 she was renamed the Capo Noli and placed in the Italian trade.

Last June 10 the day Italy entered the war her crew ran the vessel ashore in the St. Lawrence River near Bic Island from which her new name derived. Refloated, she was declared a prize of the crown.

NEW YORK, Dec. 16 (AP)—Executors of the estate of the late Mrs. Maclellan Force Astor D'ick, mother of John Jacob Astor today accepted a compromise offer of \$250,000 from her second husband, William K. D'ick, in settlement of a \$250,000 claim allegedly due the estate on four promissory notes.

Says plot Was planned Against Petain

LONDON, Dec. 16 (CP News)—The Free French press agency said today that a coup d'etat against Marshal Petain Premier of the Vichy Government, by enticing him to Paris for the ceremonies connected with the moving of the remains of Napoleon's son from Vienna to the German-held French capital.

The news agency said the plot against Petain was aimed at forming a Government under Pierre Laval, ousted Vichy Premier, and containing friends of Otto Abetz, Hitler's representative in Paris.

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