

AMERICAN TROOPS NARROW ROMMEL'S ESCAPE ROUTE AS BIG OFFENSIVE LOOMS

REACH MAKNASSY Massive Allied African Command Appears Near French Threaten Southern End Of Protective Mareth Line

FOE LEAVES GADAMES Italians Reported To Have Evacuated Important Sector

(By The Associated Press) LONDON, Jan. 28.—American troops were reported to have narrowed Marshal Erwin Rommel's escape corridor to 33 miles and a combined Giraud and de Gaulle French column threatened the southern end of his protective Mareth line today as indications grew that the Allies were beginning a major offensive in Tunisia.

The Algiers radio, as heard by Reuters, said American troops had reached Maknassy, only 33 miles from the Gulf of Gabes in an advance toward the rear of the Mareth line only 75 miles to the southeast.

Simultaneously, the broadcast said, British troops to the north were showing marked activity in the Medjez-el-Bab and Bou Arada regions facing Tunis and Bizerte, and a French communique announced that the Italian garrison had evacuated Gadames, in Tripolitania, some 195 miles south of the end of the fortified Mareth line, and that the fort had been occupied by the combined forces of Gen. Henri Giraud and Gen. Charles de Gaulle of the Fighting French.

The American thrust, obviously aimed at either Sfax or Gabes or at the coast between, put these troops in a position to sever the connection between Rommel to the south and the Axis forces of Col. Gen. Jurgen von Arnim at Tunis and Bizerte to the north.

The radio broadcast said the enemy troops retreated to the north and a number of them were captured. Maknassy was the scene of an American raid early this week when the Americans answered a German dare to "come out and fight" and captured 80 prisoners.

At Maknassy the Americans were separated by only about 200 miles from the British in Tripolitania.

The Ankara radio said, meanwhile, that the Axis was "evacuating the port of Zuara, 70 miles west of Tripoli.

The Axis, apparently anticipating the all-out attack, put out reports through the Paris and Vichy radios saying that British-American forces concentrated in the region of Medjez el Bab and Bou Arada already had "begun an offensive" against the Axis forward positions in Tunisia, and that in the southern sector strong American and French forces were massing for a companion offensive.

No such present activity was indicated from Allied North African

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Citizens Service Corps Plans Underway In City The Office of Civilian Defense met Thursday afternoon to begin the formation of the Citizens Service Corps for this area. Louis J. Poisson, chairman of the New Hanover Defense Council presided over the meeting and the executive committee of the council was present. Bruce B. Cameron was named director of the new organization with W. J. Riley, assistant director. A woman member will also be named as an assistant director at a later date. Another meeting will be held next Thursday afternoon to complete plans for the organization. At the meeting Thursday Louis J. Poisson presided and the following is the text of his statement to the committee on the Citizens Service Corps. "We are fighting a total war and a total war can be won only by the united effort of every man, woman and child in America. The home front must sustain and supply the battle front. In every community the war has brought new problems, new tasks and new opportunities for service to our civilian population. "Many agencies of the national

RAF Pays Dueseldorf Blazing Visit To Bombers

(By The Associated Press) LONDON, Jan. 28.—Hundreds of incendiary bombs and fire-bombs were dropped on Dueseldorf by a heavy force of Royal Air Force bombers from a night schedule of a stepped-up aerial offensive on Germany.

It was the 51st raid on the great industrial center. The Air Ministry, terming the attack "Dueseldorf's quickest blitz," said most of the thousands of bombs carried were dropped within 10 minutes of the 20-minute raid.

Only six bombers were lost out of a force officially designated as "heavy" indicating several hundred planes were in action. In the last raid on Dueseldorf, on October 9, 1942, the British lost 31 planes, but the disparity in losses probably was due to differences in weather conditions rather than to enemy action.

Last night was so black that the RAF pilots saw only a few enemy fighters.

AFRICA MAY GET DEGAULLE ENVOY

Gen. Catroux Mentioned As Representative To Giraud

ALLIED HEADQUARTERS IN NORTH AFRICA, Jan. 28.—(AP)—Gen. Georges Catroux, Fighting French high commissioner in Syria, may soon take his place in the government of Gen. Henri Giraud as Gen. Charles de Gaulle's representative in North Africa, it was reliably reported today.

Catroux, it was stated, would have the dual role as a member at the same time as representative of de Gaulle. It is expected that Gen. Giraud will have a similar representative in the de Gaulle National committee in London, it was said. (In London, it was reported that Catroux may be sent instead to Washington to head Gen. de Gaulle's delegation there.)

Catroux is one of the Fighting French leaders who enjoys some popularity among officers of the French African army. Some sources have predicted that he would replace Gov. Gen. Auguste Nogues of Morocco, whose regime is under heavy fire from several sources.

He has been criticized for failure to repeal anti-Jewish and anti-Free Mason laws which were enacted under German influence, and for continued operation of the Fascist "groupement" systems of trade control.

Under the clothing rationing system still in force in Morocco an applicant for clothing must state on his questionnaire whether he is Jewish, a Free Mason or a member of the pro-Fascist Velezans Legion. If he is Jewish or a Free Mason, his request for a ration coupon may be delayed for weeks or months, according to liberal elements who complain of the system.

Most heavily criticized is the "groupement" system, a sort of Fascist-distorted farmers' cooperative. Under this system dealers in all essential commodities in Morocco, such as wheat, barley, salt, fish and eggs, were organized in groupements. The groupement buys up the entire crop and sells it for high prices. Some leaders in these groups are reported to have made from 15,000,000 to 20,000,000 francs during the past two years selling foodstuffs for transshipment to Germany.

The groupement rules provide for numerous restrictions as to membership, which usually are aimed at Jews, Free Masons and de Gaullists.

The anti-Free Mason feeling in the French army dates back to the Dreyfus case but has reached a new height under the Vichy regime, prodded by the Axis.

As a result of the mass selling by these groupements, persons trading outside them are seldom able to compete.

Even the American Army has been buying from the groupements

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SOVIET ARMY FAST WELDING BAND OF STEEL AROUND TWO IMPORTANT RAILWAY POINTS

Russian Victories Reopen Three Strategic Rail Lines



Russian armies, claiming to have smashed all except two small groups of Nazi troops (indicated by swastika) near Stalingrad, have thereby reopened three rail lines which will be useful in sending supplies and reinforcements to the front, London sources have heard. These lines feed from Stalingrad north (1) toward Voronezh; (2) west toward Tatsinskaya; and (3) southwest toward Salsk. Arrows show where Russian pressure is greatest against the Germans. Broken line is the front line as it existed Nov. 19 when the current Russian drive began.

Army Airmen Establish 4-1 Advantage Over Foe

WASHINGTON, Jan. 28.—(AP)—The Army's air power, in "brilliantly successfully" operations around the globe, has established a four-to-one combat superiority over the aerial strength of the Axis, Secretary of War Stimson reported today.

In a review of the war's progress on all fronts, Stimson presented at his press conference a box score on the work of the Army Air Forces in the last eleven months of 1942—a total of 1,349 enemy aircraft shot down or probably destroyed in aerial combat, against losses of only 309 American planes.

Nearly a third of these enemy losses were inflicted by Army fliers in December, when Stimson said, air operations increased considerably due to the North African campaign. In that month, 419 Axis aircraft were definitely or probably destroyed with a loss of only 98 Army planes.

"Probables" are claimed by the air forces, Stimson explained, only when the enemy planes are seen falling out of control or in flames, but the actual crash—or abandonment of the stricken ship by a parachuting pilot—is not observed.

The score of enemy losses, said the secretary, was confined to the bag of aerial combat—no enemy planes brought down by anti-aircraft fire were included. However, the Army losses of aircraft in his report included those destroyed by enemy anti-aircraft guns.

Stimson also disclosed at the press conference that American casualties to date in Tunisia have totaled 1,258 dead, wounded and missing.

As to other developments of the war Stimson suggested that President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill "undoubtedly were heartened" during their conference at Casablanca by these reports from the battle fronts.

In recent days German officials have begun to tell the German public for the first time of Nazi military disaster in Russia.

2. Marshall Rommel's forces, in full flight toward Tunisia, abandoned the Libyan capital of Tripoli without a fight, pausing only for an unsuccessful effort to destroy harbor facilities and air fields.

3. French and American troops in Tunisia threw back a German thrust designed to widen Rommel's corridor of escape along the coast.

4. General MacArthur's Australian and American troops have cleaned

GERMANY BEGINS DRAFT OF LABOR

Drastic New Decree Institutes Compulsory Work For People

(By The Associated Press) LONDON, Jan. 28.—A drastic new decree instituting compulsory labor for all German men from 16 to 65 and all women from 17 to 45 was announced by the German radio today with strong hints that the death penalty will be applied to slackers.

The announcement was made after days of intense propaganda barrage in the German press and radio warning that Adolf Hitler's Reich is at a crisis in the war because of continued reverses on the Eastern Front.

In their discussions of the growing seriousness of the situation Berlin radio commentators have been dwelling with increasing frequency on the date of January 30, the 10th anniversary of Hitler's coming to power, and there were numerous suggestions that he might use the occasion Saturday to discuss full implications of the drastic measure.

Although there was no official announcement of a forthcoming Hitler speech, the German Fuehrer

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ACL Revenues For 1942 Highest In Road History

Revenues realized by the Atlantic Coast Line railroad during 1942 were the highest in the history of the firm—\$115,108,820—it was revealed Thursday, when a statement of revenues and expenses was released by company officials.

The operating revenues represented an increase over 1941 of \$47,704,568 and surpassed 1940 figures by \$65,020,836.

Operating expenses for the firm were listed at \$62,947,631, as compared with \$46,859,449 in 1941.

The report showed that taxes in the amount of \$27,900,000 were paid—\$20,250,000 more than 1941—by the railroad.

The operating income was said to be \$2,261,189; the net railway operating income \$21,195,567. For rent of equipment and joint facilities, the ACL spent \$3,065,622 during the year.

It was also reported by ACL officials that December 1942, was the best December in the history of the railroad, as revenues reached \$12,730,132—an increase of \$6,277,758 over the final month of 1941.

Operating expenses for December were quoted as being \$5,974,052; net operating revenues, \$6,756,080; the amount required for taxes, \$4,345,400; operating income \$2,411,080; net amount paid for rent of equipment and joint facilities \$356,676; and net railway operating income, \$2,054,404.

Despite the unusual load of business handled by ACL in both freight and passenger service during the final month of the year, firm officials declared that the cars and manpower were entirely adequate to the task, and that no delay was experienced in taking care of either phase of the transportation work.

ACL, as all other railroad companies, could well use additional cars for its service. It has been pointed out but the government has greatly restricted manufacture and distribution of such vehicles.

In February of 1942, the Coast Line placed an order for 2,000 new freight train cars and a portion of the order has been filled.

In addition to its purchases of new equipment, the company carried on, in its own shops, a program of rebuilding and repairing old equipment to fit it for use during the current transportation emergency.

RESULT OF PARLEY Leaders Of British And American Military Might Confer

ALLIED HEADQUARTERS IN NORTH AFRICA, Jan. 28.—(AP)—The formation of one huge Allied Mediterranean theater command, bristling with troops pointed toward Greece, Italy and France, appeared in sight today as a result of a Mediterranean war conference held here among American and British military chiefs.

For 48 hours the military brains of the Allies conferred here in the policy-making conference of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill at Casablanca, it was announced.

The fact that so many top-flight military leaders of the Allied nations met on African soil so soon after the decisions reached at Casablanca was taken by military observers as an almost sure sign that the Allies rate a Mediterranean offensive as tops in their plans for 1943.

Military experts pointed out that there are six Allied armies in this theater now, which form the nucleus for a vast and powerful striking force against Europe.

These are the British Eighth Army in Tripoli, the Ninth and Tenth Armies in the Middle East, and the First in Tunisia, the American Fifth Army in Tunisia, and the French Army.

The welding of these armies into one military force was rapidly becoming a military necessity as the army of Gen. Sir Harold Alexander and the Fighting French in Tripolitania rapidly neared a junction with Gen. Eisenhower's forces in Tunisia.

For the United States, General George C. Marshall, Army chief of staff, Admiral Ernest J. King, commander of the U. S. Fleet, Lieut. Gen. H. H. Arnold, chief of the Army Air Forces and other

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ARGUMENT RAGES OVER FR'S ENVOY

Senate Almost Deadlocked In Controversy Over Flynn

WASHINGTON, Jan. 28.—(AP)—One of the hottest controversies in years found Senate supporters and opponents of President Roosevelt's nomination of Edward J. Flynn as minister to Australia almost deadlocked tonight on the basis of membership polls.

An Associated Press canvass which reached 89 of the 96 members showed 31 Senators publicly committed to vote against confirmation and 30 on record as supporting the President's choice.

Twenty-eight Senators, including 20 Democrats and 8 Republicans, either had not made up their minds or declined to say publicly how they would vote. Seven Senators were away from Washington.

While most Republicans were expected to oppose confirmation, at least four Democrats—George of Georgia, Gillette of Iowa, Van Nuys of Indiana and Wheeler of Montana—were on record against sending the former Democratic na-

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WEATHER

FORECAST: North Carolina Slightly warmer Friday. (Eastern Standard Time) (By U. S. Weather Bureau) Meteorological data for the 24 hours ending 7:30 p. m., yesterday.

Temperature: 1:30 a. m., 45.2; 7:30 a. m., 46.8; 1:30 p. m., 41.1; 7:30 p. m., 39. Maximum 47; Minimum 39; Mean 43; Normal 45.

Humidity: 1:30 a. m., 100; 7:30 a. m., 95; 1:30 p. m., 85; 7:30 p. m., 86. Precipitation: Total for the 24 hours ending 7:30 p. m., 1.04 inches. Total since the first of the month, 4.69 inches.

Tides For Today: High 10:51a, Low 10:51a. Wilmington 3:45p, 11:49p. Masonboro Inlet 12:56p, 12:56a. Moore's Inlet 1:09p, 7:41p. Moore's Inlet 1:01a, 7:31p. New Topsail Inlet 1:14p, 7:41p. Elmore 1:06a, 7:36p. Elmore 1:19p, 7:51p. (All times Eastern Standard) Sunrise, 7:11 a. m.; Sunset, 5:39 p. m.; Moonrise, 12:33a; Moonset, 11:59a. (Continued on Page Eight; Col. 4)

Taxi Driver Found Guilty Of Violating OPA Gas Ban

Of eight cases considered at the War Price and Ration board hearings Thursday afternoon on persons cited by OPA investigators as possible violators of pleasure regulations, only one motorist was dismissed as "not guilty", and four cases were continued until more information can be gathered.

The individual found guilty is a taxi-driver; the penalty he will pay for alleged pleasure driving will be a loss of gasoline ration permits.

Two taxi-drivers are among the four persons whom the ruling board has not yet passed judgment.

One of the individuals declared not guilty by the ration board officials is a man who, en route from the shipyards to his home stopped at a drive-in food place. The driver's car remained in front of the eating establishment for two hours, during which time OPA investigators found it.

Hearings on the other cases, of OPA officials declare there are more than 100, will be continued Monday afternoon at 3 p. m. in

U. S. HITS JAPS IN TEN PLACES

MacArthur's Air Arm Busy Pounding Foe In Many Quarters

ALLIED HEADQUARTERS IN AUSTRALIA, Friday, Jan. 29.—(AP)—General Douglas MacArthur's ever busy air arm has struck the Japs in 10 places, the noon communique reported today.

Long range fighters heavily strafed the Fuloiro airdrome on Portuguese Timor. In Binnan Bay, an Allied heavy bomber attacked a Jap merchant ship and shot down one of five Jap planes which attempted to intercept.

In the Aroe island area, long range fighters strafed enemy float planes on the water off Dobo. One was destroyed.

Japs ships in Open bay, New Britain, were strafed by an Allied heavy bomber.

In New Britain's wide bay, an Allied heavy bomber scored near bits from a low altitude on a Jap cargo vessel and capsized a nearby boat. It also strafed a coastal village.

At Gasmeta, New Britain, a medium bomber raided the airdrome. The airfield at Cape Gloucester was attacked by a heavy bomber.

NOTICE!

If your carrier fails to leave your copy of the Wilmington Morning Star, Phone 3311 before 9:00 a. m. and one will be sent to you by special messenger.

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