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France's Fate Hangs In Balance

British Drive 'Well Across' Libyan Border

Bad Weather Is Impeding British Push

Italians Admitted To Be Still "Holding Strongly Fortified Positions Around Salum" After Fierce Fighting.

Genoa, Dec. 16.—(AP)—Vanguards of British army in the western desert "well across" the border with Libya, a general headquarters communiqué reported today at the beginning of the second week of the British drive.

The Italians, however, were admitted to be still "holding strongly fortified positions around Salum." Egyptian troops five miles east of the frontier on the coast sector, where heavy fighting has been going on for three days and three nights.

After fighting yesterday almost steadily through dust storms, British forces were said to be forging ahead to the Salum-Fort Capuzzo-Bardia sector today in rain. The communiqué said bad weather was still causing poor visibility.

The Italian high command reported earlier fighting both in Libya and in Algeria with heavy casualties inflicted on the British attackers.

The rain may impede the British push but it is not expected to stop it.

Military circles said the British would keep the Italians on the ground in the desert until a cause was given. The advance is expected to hold down in any case, however.

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Traffic Deaths Are Fewer

Charlotte, Dec. 16.—(AP)—The number of fatal highway accidents in North Carolina over the week-end was a drop as compared with the week Saturday-Sunday periods.

Three were reported.

J. Anderson, 23, of Fayetteville, was killed near there when a train got out of control and crashed into a ravine.

James Ballard, N. C. State College student, was killed near Newton, his car was struck by an automobile.

John Brewster Grant, 27, Mocksville, was killed in an automobile accident at a Kannapolis street intersection.

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Five Millions In Federal Road Money May Be Scorned By State Authorities

Daily Dispatch Bureau. In the Sir Walter Hotel. By HENRY AVERILL

Baleigh, Dec. 16.—Believe it or not, there is a strong possibility that the State of North Carolina will spend five million dollars of Federal money which normally would be available for highway construction during the 1941-43 biennium.

This almost unprecedented refusal to accept U. S. help will come about, unless there is a change in the present outlook, because of the niggardly and negative policy Congress seems prepared to adopt about building the so-called "national defense" roads.

Chairman Frank Dunlap of the Highway Commission, Governor Clyde R. Hoey and members of the joint commission are not getting up enough money to tell the world about it, but they do not hesitate in private to say flatly that unless the central government assumes the financial burden of building the defense highways, it will be better for the state to refuse to match Federal funds for that purpose.

They say frankly, too, that there is no present evidence that Congress intends to make up any sort of that burden. Close investigation, including trips by high-ups to the national capital, has failed to reveal to State officials any favorable sign. So far as can be learned, there isn't even a bill to change the present road building method, which calls for the State to match every Federal dollar with one of its own.

Under these circumstances, the highway chairman and others in au-

New N.A.M. Head



Walter D. Fuller, Philadelphia publisher, has been elected head of the National Association of Manufacturers. He was elected at the N.A.M. convention at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York.

Bloom Urges British Aid

Chairman of House Committee Would Remove All Legal Obstacles to Giving Help.

Washington, Dec. 16.—(AP)—The elimination of all legal obstacles in the way of expedited aid to Great Britain was urged today by Chairman Elcutt, Democrat, New York, of the House foreign affairs committee.

Bloom outlined his position as the capital awaited the return of President Roosevelt, who is expected to give thorough study to all recent developments bearing on British aid when he gets back to his desk.

The questions which await Mr. Roosevelt's decision range from direct financial assistance to a transfer of more destroyers and the implied request for outright naval assistance which Lord Lothian, the British ambassador, made in a speech delivered a few hours before his death last Thursday.

The President's preoccupation with foreign affairs in which British aid is an important element was indicated by the remark he made in a brief talk to patients at the foundation for infantile paralysis at Warm Springs, Georgia.

He told them he hoped to be back for two weeks next spring "if the world survives," and his words recalled the prophetic utterance on

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Greeks Take Important Positions

Italian Officers Reported Killed as Greeks Drive Italians From Strongly Defended Albanian Heights Position.

Athens, Dec. 16.—(AP)—An Italian general and a colonel were reported killed today when Greeks stormed an important position which fascist forces were trying desperately to hold.

The Italians were said to have fled, leaving many dead.

This was on the southern front where the Greeks are driving toward Valona, one of the three remaining Albanian ports in Italian possession.

"In this sector our troops scored another great victory by storming and occupying another height which the Italians defended with a general and a colonel at their head," one report said.

"These two senior officers with revolvers in hand induced their men to defend the position. However, both officers were hit in the breast and died."

"Their death was the sign for a wholesale retreat and abandonment of the height our soldiers found the bodies of Italian senior officers."

In a fierce new drive from Pogradetz toward Elbasani, in central Albania, Greek mountaineer regiments were reported to have smashed through massed Italian reserves for large gains.

Dispatches from that battlefield said the Greek offensive which had been held up by storms and zero temperatures was resumed over the week-end with greater gains.

The Greeks said Italians attempting to counter attack were "repelled and dispersed in such a way as to lose contact with the bases from which they started."

CANADIAN FREIGHTER BOMBED OFF IRELAND

New York, Dec. 16.—(AP)—A former Italian freighter seized by Canada after the crew attempted to scuttle her in the St. Lawrence river wireless today that she "was being bombed by enemy aircraft" off the coast of Ireland.

The vessel is now the Bic Island. On the day Italy entered the war last June 10 her crew ran the vessel ashore in St. Lawrence river near Bic Island, from which her new name was derived.

If, as seems likely, the Federals stand fast and ask the States to pay half of defense highway construction, North Carolina can ignore them, take its own money and build the roads. The Highway Commission feels it will fit most beneficially into the Tar Heel system.

An added indication that the central government will stand fast is the specific singling out by President Roosevelt of roads and highway construction as activities in which drastic economy "cuts" can be effected. In other words, it seems unlikely that the President will recommend that the Federal government assume entire cost of defense roads.

Of course the State will continue to accept, if the Federal government will allow it to take part and leave part of the program, the funds usually granted for secondary roads and for elimination of grade crossings.

The first item for 1941-42 amounts to \$348,612 and the second to \$754,096. The secondary road money must be matched by the State, the grade crossing funds are put up entirely by the Federal government.

The 1942-43 Federal funds which would normally come to North Carolina haven't been figured out, but the entire Federal appropriation to aid in state road building will be \$137,000,000 as compared with \$160,000,000 for the year 1941-42.

On that basis, it is easy to figure that North Carolina's share would be about twelve and a half per cent

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From "Down Under" to Fight on the Desert



Leaving their train in the desert during a sand storm, Australian troops in Egypt set out to pitch their camp. These are among the men who have routed the Italian forces in the successful British drive against the Fascisti. Sand storms occur frequently where the forces are fighting.

Food Ships To Europe

Duce May Be On Skids

Stewart Says Hitler Seems Glad Over What May Be Mussolini's Finish.

By CHARLES P. STEWART, Central Press Columnist

Washington, Dec. 16.—Probably it wouldn't be quite correct to say that Herr Hitler is outright glad of the evidently very serious situation in which Signor Mussolini is beginning to discover himself. He doubtless would have preferred Italy as a German asset rather than a liability.

Nevertheless, state department information from competent observers in the midst of events across the Atlantic strongly hints at the conclusion that the Fuehrer at least is glad of what looks like Benito's finish as the fascists' duce.

The impression in Washington is that Adolf considers his axis partner a hopeless bungler and wants to install a new management of his own in Rome as speedily as possible. Presumably it will be nominally an Italian management, but entirely subject to his dictation.

Assuming that this guess is a good one, it manifestly will be to Adolf's advantage to see Benito go into the discard in a hurry, and the frantic effort that the latter has been making lately to put some ginger into his military, naval and aviation commands is decidedly suggestive that he fully realizes how precarious his position is.

And it's surmised that Adolf fervently hopes Benito is right about it. If the duce's overthrow, the Fuehrer obviously will have to have the Italians think that they themselves capsized him. Then he can squeak in to control surreptitiously, direct the country's policy under cover and maybe make it genuinely helpful to the nazis without letting it know that he's doing the manipulating. Contrariwise, if he gives Benito a conspicuous shove the Italian people will be apt to resent it as outside interference, making them less amenable.

Internal Rumblings. That, it's supposed, is why Adolf's choice is an internal Italian revolution to dispose of the duce rather than an overt move on his own part to turn the trick. That he's doing his best to stir up anti-Mussolini sentiment in the fascist peninsula is deemed much more than likely—but very covertly.

What becomes of Benito, Adolf apparently doesn't care; it's immaterial to him whether the fascists kill him or chase him into exile or any other old thing, provided he's completely eliminated.

Stories are current to the effect

Champ Recruiter



Elaine Bassett is fast becoming known as the champion recruiter of North America. From Dallas, Texas, this winsome lass is the original of the Canadian Join-the-Army posters. Her face did so much good there, it has been selected to perform a like service for Uncle Sam. She is the daughter of a Baptist minister.

that the Fuehrer never did like the duce. When they met initially Benito already was a full-fledged duce, and going strong, whereas Adolf was just in his incipency as a Fuehrer, and accounts are that the former patronized his vis-a-vis overpoweringly. It's the other way over now. So perhaps there's something personal between the two. Had Benito turned out to be a capable junior partner, the chances are that Adolf would let bygones be bygones. Benito has fizzed, though.

Of course the duce's censorship, which still is effective, even though its boss is in a peck of trouble, prevents much news from getting out of Italy. Reports do leak out, however, of a deal of anti-Mussolini activity there, even to the point of sure-enough disturbances, especially in the country's northern area, which was as pro-fascist as the southern provinces.

Germany Pleased. It's noticeable, too, that German censors are pretty free in passing these rumors from the Nazi realm, hinting that Berlin doesn't object to their dissemination. If not, the fact tends to strengthen the belief that the Nazi regime isn't averse to further warming up the spot that Benito's seated on.

The rank and file of Germans certainly make all kinds of fun of the Italians' showing against the Greeks and in northern Africa. Dispatches from Berlin emphasize this detail, and the censorship o. k.'s 'em readily. Apparently it isn't that the Germans want to unload Italy (though Germany and Italy traditionally weren't particularly good friends with one another), but that Adolf wants to Germanize Benito. Then he wants to Germanize the Italians. It'll be a queer mixture, if he can do it.

Otto Abetz Expected To Meet Petain

Germany Withholds Comment on Ouster of Laval, Now Reported Held With Leaders Awaiting "War Guilt" Trials at Riom.

Bern, Dec. 16.—(AP)—The fate of conquered France's Vichy government and possibly even total Nazi occupation of her soil was believed here today to depend on how the axis takes the week-end upheaval in the cabinet of Chief of State Philippe Petain.

Hitler's representative in Paris, Otto Abetz, was expected in Vichy today to talk with Petain, according to diplomatic reports reaching Bern.

Berlin's approval of the ouster of Pierre Laval as vice premier and foreign minister may hinge on what the French chief of state tells Abetz, observers said.

Sources here said that Laval, at first reported under guard in his own home, now was rumored to be a prisoner in Chateau de Pellevein along with the republican leaders who faced "war guilt" charges in the impending Riom trials which Laval himself advocated.

Authorized sources in Berlin said that the Laval dismissal came as a surprise and that until the German government has been fully informed of what it means the German press will not even report that Laval is out.

A special reason for Germany's reserve, they said, is that France has made only a truce with Germany and peace has not yet been re-established.

Sheffield Is Victim Of Second Raid

London, Dec. 16.—(AP)—Germany's night raiders bombed Sheffield, English steel center, last night for the second time in less than a week.

Official sources in their first reports said only that bombs "fell in the Sheffield area."

Sheffield was attacked heavily last Thursday night and victims of that raid, buried alive in raid shelters, were still being rescued early today.

Royal air force planes struck at the Berlin area with "prolonged attacks" during the night, while what was at first identified only as an industrial region in the north of England was receiving German's blows.

In the first reported activity of the new day a German plane machine gunned a town in East Anglia this morning.

Planes were also reported near Liverpool.

In Berlin, the German high command reported that four persons were killed and twelve wounded in British air raids on Berlin last night and the command also acknowledged some damage. A commuter train and some houses were damaged and two hospitals hit, while a suburban rail line was "temporarily disturbed."

Smaller Use Of Fertilizer Is Foreseen

Daily Dispatch Bureau. In the Sir Walter Hotel. Raleigh, Dec. 16.—Any decrease in tonnage of fertilizer sold in North Carolina will unbalance the State Department of Agriculture's budget, according to D. S. Coltrane, assistant to Commissioner W. Kerr Scott.

There exists, too, the very serious possibility that there will be such a decline, Coltrane writes in the department's biennial report, soon to be released by the printer.

"In all probability the fertilizer tonnage for the next biennium will not equal that of the past two years," he said. "If the tonnage should drop there is a probability of our receipts for the next two years falling short of expenditures. In our opinion the reserve in the agricultural fund is about as low as it should be."

The assistant commissioner cited the fact that the department has

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Weather

FOR NORTH CAROLINA.

Showers this afternoon and tonight; colder in south and west portions tonight; Tuesday partly cloudy and colder.

7 SHOPPING DAYS LEFT

TO BUY SPOT A COLLAR

BUY CHRISTMAS SEALS