

CANADIANS OUTFLANK HUN ANCHOR

London, Dec. 20 (CP).—Canadian forces have slugged their way into the Germans' extreme eastern defenses in Italy with persistent attacks which have outflanked the Adriatic port of Ortona and possibly forced its capitulation.

Algiers radio, in a broadcast recorded by Reuters News Agency, said units of the 8th Army had entered Ortona. But this report was treated with reserve here in view of the fact that the Allied communique made no mention of it.

However, it appears that Field Marshal Albert Kesselring's strong line anchored on Ortona and Orsogna, which is joined to the coastal town by a lateral road, had been smashed by assaults of the last week.

The Canadians have been closing in on Ortona for the last few days from the south and southwest. The Algiers radio mentioned New Zealanders as entering the town. If that is true, it may be a fresh battle group which the 8th Army commander, Gen. Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, might have switched from the left flank to aid the Canadians in the final thrust.

Honors Go to Canadians.

If Ortona has fallen the honors for the victory go to the Canadians. They have waged one of the bloodiest battles in the war from the Moro River and through the hills to Ortona in fighting of the kind that made Longstop Hill a legend in Tunisia.

It is quite possible that the Canadians might come out of the line for a rest after this marathon day-and-night battle.

Reports here indicate that the Canadians, in eight days' fighting, have virtually wiped out the German 90th Division, and its place has been taken by the German 1st Parachute Division, made up of the toughest troops in the German Army.

The Canadians also have hit the paratroopers heavy blows, particularly with a massive artillery barrage.

The heaviest fighting continues to be just north of the crossroads where the highway from San Leonardo meets the Ortona-Orsogna main road.

Further Canadian moves might be north from the crossroads, following up the inevitable German withdrawal toward Tollo and a new line along the Moro River. Once the Ortona area is cleared, they also could work up the coast road, but both routes would be slow and tedious, through minefields and demolitions, with well-sighted German machine guns and mortars making the advance difficult.

By MILTON BRACKER

New York Times Special to
The Globe and Mail. Copyright

Algiers, Dec. 20.—The 5th Army is battering at the gates of San Vittore, next obstacle in the path to Cassino, where it is likely one of the great battles of the Italian campaign will be fought. Lieut.-Gen. Mark W. Clark's mountain-wise troops are within six miles of their next major objective, having pushed ahead virtually all the two miles between San Pietro Infine and San Vittore.

On the northern sector of the 5th Army front, French units are fighting furiously for a rocky pass in the area where Allied progress reached two miles at certain points. Opposition remained fierce, with German dead strewn the ground, indicating hurried withdrawal by the Nazis, who usually are meticulous about burying their own men.

The weather was cloudy and unsuitable for much close air support, but generally much more favorable than it has been for infantry actions. The Battle of Italy and its historic capitals obviously is most dramatic and important at this moment in the sector where the Provinces of Campania and Lazio meet across Via Casilina between Mignano and Cassino.

South of that highway, Pignataro will be an important barrier, for it is three miles below Via Casilina as it curves around Monte Cassino and five miles west of the road's course below Cassino. On the other side Cervaro will pose some problem after San Vittore is taken. Cervaro is just over two miles from San Vittore and four from Cassino.

But, as a glance at a map clearly shows, Cassino and its celebrated mountain abbey to which a zigzag road climbs, juts into Via Casilina like a barb protruding from a fishhook. Moreover, it is backed up by an enormous mountain mass topped by Mount Cairo, 5,800 feet.

Thus Allied troops thrusting northward to Rome along Via Casilina inevitably will be subjected to dominance of one of the best natural barriers in all Italy.

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