

FORECAST

CANBERRA: Cloudy periods, cool winds. LAKE: Wind NW 5-12 knots, gusty later. S. TABLELANDS: Showers, cool. S. COAST: Showers, mild. Seas slight. Weather details, world weather. — Page 12.

The Canberra Times

To serve the National City and through it the Nation

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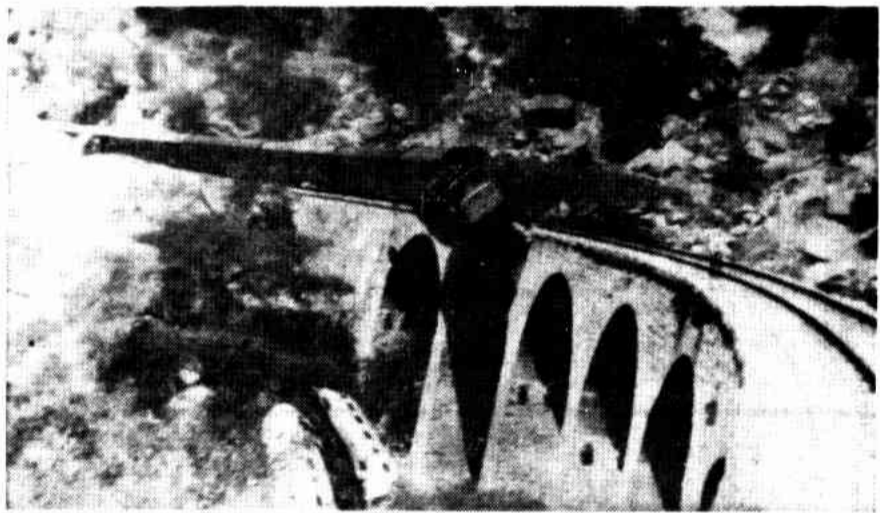
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Sabotage in Eritrea



Guerrillas of the Eritrean Liberation Front, who are in revolt against the Ethiopian regime of Emperor Haile Selassie, tear up railway tracks on a bridge spanning a deep ravine on the line between Keren and Asmara in Ethiopia. This is one of a series of photographs taken by a Syrian photographer, Ahmad Abu Sada, who says he has spent a month with the guerrillas. — AAP-AP cable picture.



Having torn up a section of the track, guerrillas shunt a captured train on to the bridge where it pitches into the ravine below. — AAP-AP cable picture. Eritrean massacres alleged. — Page 4.

BASQUES' SENTENCES CONFIRMED

Franco's move awaited



MADRID, Wednesday (AAP-Reuters). — General Franco's Cabinet will meet tonight to make final decisions on whether to reprieve six Basque nationalist guerrillas condemned to face the firing squad, government officials announced.

Lieutenant-General Rebull, commander of the Burgos military region, confirmed the sentences late this morning, they said.

Until he had done so the Cabinet could not be officially notified.

Lawyers representing the six Basque nationalists asked General Franco today to commute the sentences, United Press International reported.

A telegram containing the

plea was sent to the Chief of State a few hours before he was scheduled to make his annual New Year's speech to the nation.

"For reasons of justice, we urge that no executions be carried out in connection with the [Burgos] court-martial", the lawyers' telegram said.

Nations from east to west have appealed to Spain for clemency and demonstrators throughout Europe have held marches and vigils in protest against the sentences.

Vatican sources said the Pope was working on intervening on behalf of the Basques and might even make a personal plea by telephone to General Franco.

Governments which spoke out against the death sentences and appealed to Spain for clemency included Britain, Israel, Switzerland, France,

West Germany, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, Belgium, Austria, Norway, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.

Various organisations throughout the world, including the British Council of Churches, the British Opposition Labour Party, and the Bishops of Denmark and Norway also sent telegrams to General Franco on behalf of the Basques.

In Washington, Senator Edward Kennedy said in a statement, "without intending to interfere in the judicial process of any country, I must express my deep personal dismay that the military court in Burgos, Spain, has sentenced six Basque nationalists to death.

"I want to add my voice to those millions of others who are appealing to the Spanish Government for tolerance and compassion".

30 years likely

Informed sources in Madrid said there were indications that the 78-year-old Head of State would commute all the death sentences to 30-year prison terms, but there has so far been no official confirmation of this.

The legal department of Burgos Divisional Military Headquarters finished earlier today its task of studying the sentences, analysing observations on them submitted by defence lawyers, and drawing up an advisory report, officials said.

The sentences then went for confirmation to General Rebull, who signed them immediately.

The confirmed sentences were being delivered to the Minister for the Army in Madrid, Lieutenant-General Juan Castanon, who would officially notify them to the Cabinet, the officials said.

It was only then that General Franco, as Head of State, could exercise his prerogative of reprieve by commuting death penalties with 30-year gaoi sentences.

Majority in favour

The delay in receiving official confirmation of the sentences from the army authorities had begun to cause concern in Madrid.

General Franco held advance consultations yesterday on the case, both with his Cabinet and with his leading constitutional advisory body, the 17-man Council of the Realm.

Informed sources said a clear majority of the Cabinet Ministers were in favour of commuting the death penalties.

Reports of the outbreak of fresh internal protests began coming in late last night from the Basque areas



The six Basque ETA members sentenced to death by a Spanish court-martial behind a grille in Burgos Prison on Tuesday. — AAP-AP cable picture.

of north Spain and other parts of the country.

In the industrial suburbs of the Basque city of San Sebastian, more than 20,000 workers struck in protest against the death sentences. Similar troubles plagued factories in the Bilbao industrial region, where 10,000 people walked off their jobs and more were expected to follow tomorrow. Bands of youths roamed the streets overturning cars, blocking traffic and chanting, "Amnesty for the condemned" and, "Akatasuna (freedom)".

ST JEAN DE LUZ, France, Wednesday (AAP-Reuters). — One of the Basques condemned to death at Burgos has written to his family saying all six facing a firing squad want to die for their cause, a Basque organisation said here today.

The Anai Artea Association said the letter, smuggled out of prison, said in part, "We hope that we will not be granted reprieve. We are revolutionaries. We want to die for the dignity of man and

the freedom of our Basque country".

LONDON, Wednesday. — Basque sympathisers in major cities throughout Europe demonstrated against the verdict against Spanish officials in Sweden if the sentences were carried out.

Protesters break into embassy

About 200 demonstrators in Brussels broke into the Spanish Embassy on Monday night shouting, "Franco murderer".

Protesters marched in West Berlin and Hamburg and hundreds in Rome flooded the streets outside the Spanish Embassy and the Vatican.

Demonstrators in Rome clashed with police and hurled molotov cocktails at the Spanish Embassy. Earlier, a bomb, apparently thrown from a car, exploded outside a building housing the Spanish military, naval and commercial attaches.

In Stockholm a militant left-wing Spanish organisation, Association Hispanica, announced it would take "drastic action" against Spanish officials in Sweden if the sentences were carried out.

SYDNEY, Wednesday. — A brawl broke out between police and demonstrators outside the Spanish consulate in Sydney tonight as about 100 Australians and Basques protested against the sentences.

When a man approached the lawn of the Consulate, police were called. Fights broke out but no arrests were made.

MELBOURNE, Wednesday. — The president of the ACTU, Mr R. J. Hawke, said today the Australian trade union movement had a proud tradition of concern for the "rights of the individual to the full and fair processes of justice when they are charged under the laws of their country".

"On behalf of our movement I therefore register our strongest protest at the blatant infringement of these principles that have recently occurred in the Soviet Union and in Spain", he said.

Soldier killed in Vietnam action

NUI DAT, Wednesday (AAP-Reuters). — One Australian was killed and three were seriously wounded today when a company from the Seventh Battalion overran a Vietcong bunker complex 12 miles east of here, the Australian Military Command reported.

A command spokesman said that blood trails were found but Vietcong casualties were not known.

Australian troops were on a reconnaissance mission in heavy jungle to the east of Task Force Headquarters at Nui Dat, 40 miles south-east of Saigon, when about 20 Vietcong opened fire with machine-guns from camouflaged bunkers.

He said that after several minutes of fierce fighting the Australians moved back to evacuate their casualties.

Gunships called up

At this point armoured personnel carriers operated to the rear of the ground troops and helicopter gunships were called up to engage the Vietcong.

The spokesman said that after safely evacuating the casualties the company had moved forward to discover that most of the Vietcong had abandoned the bunkers.

A small Vietcong "suicide squad" had remained and continued firing at the Australians for several minutes before retreating.

The spokesman said the Australian force had found some 20 bunkers which apparently had been used for some time. The bunkers had been destroyed later.

A spokesman for army headquarters said in Canberra last night that a casualty list had not yet been received.

Scientists attack US war methods

US scientists have attacked the use of herbicides by the US in Vietnam and a US legal authority says the US has engaged in activities for which Germany and Japan were prosecuted after World War II. — Page 5.

PROTEST

About 300 people, mostly Jewish students, protested outside the Soviet Embassy last night against the Leningrad trials which recently convicted nine Russian Jews on hijacking charges. — Page 3.

DEATH - sentence appeal heard by Leningrad court. — Page 4.

NEW GUINEA

The executive of the Rabaul Workers Association has decided to have nothing to do with the Leader of the Federal Opposition, Mr Whitlam, when he visits Rabaul next month. — Page 7.

BENEFIT

A resolution which would have benefited Sir Howard Beale, a former Australian Defence Minister, by up to \$3,000 yearly, was withdrawn at the Minicorp Ltd annual meeting yesterday. — Page 12.

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Embargo eased on secret papers

Secret Commonwealth Government records dating from 1923 to late 1940 and not previously scheduled for public scrutiny until as late as 1990 will be available for examination from tomorrow.

The Prime Minister, Mr Gorton, said in Canberra yesterday that the Government would modify the "50-year access rule" down to 30 years from January 1.

The Prime Minister announced also that to facilitate study of the World War II period, the Government would also allow accelerated issue from January 1, 1971, of records originating between January 1, 1941, and December 31, 1945, where they were required for preparation of important works of scholarship.

The 50-year rule was varied in 1966 to speed the issue of World War I records.

Records originating from before 1923 were now currently available publicly and records originating between then and 1939 were made available

for preparation of important works of scholarship. "Some categories of records are regarded as not available for public access under current rules and will still be restricted under the new rules", Mr Gorton said.

"Personal papers, such as those relating to pensions, will not be released, nor will there be any release of taxation or census returns.

"Access to records relating to Australia's national security or affecting the Commonwealth's legal interests may also be restricted.

"Specific approvals will be required for release of Cabinet records. "The Government has decided in principle to erect a new national archives building in Canberra which will be the headquarters of the Commonwealth Archives Office and to which important Commonwealth records will be transferred for preservation, public study and display.

Pen Duick reported safe

MELBOURNE, Wednesday. — The French trimaran Pen Duick IV, missing for two days in big seas off the Tasmanian east coast, was reported sighted today heading north.

The Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania said Pen Duick had been sighted about 70 miles east of St Helen's Point at 8am by the sloop Diggerdoo, which said she was running before a 45-knot southerly gale with her storm jib up. She was in no difficulties.

She had not been seen or heard from since Monday. Facha probable winner. — Back Page.

Dustmen deliver ultimatum

Hangovers and absenteeism had meant that a quarter of Canberra's garbage men bore the brunt of work on Christmas Day, and they were determined it should not happen again at New Year, Mr Doug Carpenter, the secretary of the ACT Transport Workers Union, said yesterday.

A meeting of the men yesterday decided to declare Friday a non-working day and demand that they be paid for it.

The managing director of Hallwell Waste Disposals, Mr Ron Hallwell, will fly to Canberra today to discuss the ultimatum with the Department of the Interior.

Mr Carpenter said that quite apart from the results of New Year's Eve festivities, the men considered they were entitled to a holiday.

Mr Carpenter said the union had asked that Christmas Day and Good Friday be made holidays when the new award was being drawn up, but withdrew the request in the face of departmental opposition.

The men worked on Christmas Day because they were allowed to begin soon after midnight, which meant they were home in time for festivities.

Bad News indeed for boats

By LLOYD CUTHBERT

A 16-year-old boy forced seven skippers in the fifth Australian Mirror Championships on Lake Burley Griffin yesterday to adjust the equipment on their boats under threat of a protest after the race.

The boy, Mark Phillips, skipper of Bad News, from the Bayview Yacht Racing Association in NSW, threatened to lodge protests against the position of the boom-vang on seven other boats. [The boom-vang is a mechanical device, usually a line through a system of pulleys, used as a means of adjusting tension on the boom and the set of the mainsail.]

About 10.30 yesterday morn-

ing, Mark came to the conclusion that the distance of the boom-vang from the mast on some of the boats was not in accordance with the specifications for the class (between 19 and 22in from the mast).

With his crew, Matthew Penfold, 15, he measured some of the boats and found discrepancies in the measurements.

He told the officer of the day, Mr Ross Smith, of his findings and said he wished to lodge a protest over the boats.

Mr Smith advised Mark that he was obliged to inform the other skippers involved of the protest although he was not obliged to name the specific grounds of the complaint.

However, because he did not want to be "mean and nasty" Mark told the other skippers

his decision to protest over the boom-vangs. All the other skippers involved, with one exception, told Mark they would make the necessary adjustment to their boats. The other skipper, according to Mark, said he would "not be dictated to by a 16-year-old boy".

Mr Ian Nichols, a former State titleholder and skipper of Nimrod, said later he had been unaware that his boom-vang fitting was in the incorrect position. He said the boat had been built to the designer's specifications, but had since had its boom broken and replaced.

Apparently the fitting was incorrect in relation to the new mast. Mr Nichols said that he made the adjustment to his boat on

the way to the starting line and after the race had asked for the boat to be officially measured. The boom-vang had then been in the correct position.

After the race, Mark said he had told the other skippers of his proposed protest to give them a chance to make the necessary adjustments and because he "did not want to lose any friends over the incident".

Mark said a protest had cost him last year's NSW championship when he had unavoidably sailed over another boat's spinnaker after it had been dropped in the water.

Mark now leads the field in the championship on the aggregate points score total with two seconds and a fourth in the best three-of-four races. — Picture, race report. — Back Page.

Landslide buries 40

BEERSHEBA, Israel, Wednesday (AAP). — A rockslide buried about 40 people today in the village of Neot Hakika, south of the Dead Sea, police sources said, the Associated Press reported.

An army medical crew flew by helicopter to the village, only half a mile from the Jordanian border. Police rescue missions from three southern towns went to the scene.

Snow falls at Thredbo

Four inches of snow fell on Crackenback Mountain on Tuesday night, and a cold southerly airstream brought a cool change to eastern Australia.

In Canberra the maximum temperature yesterday was 66 degrees, 12 degrees below average. Today's forecast maximum is 69 degrees.

The cool weather was attributed to a low-pressure system covering eastern Australia and the western Tasman Sea and a large high centred over the Bight.

The high and low pressure complex is expected to move on during the next few days, when temperatures will rise again.

Give us the words . . . and \$1,600 and Is Yours! Just 20 words can win \$1,600 — the record jackpot in this week's NEWSWORD puzzle contest in the Canberra News. You'll find full details in the News today.

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