

## Tragic Sea Drama At Beirut FRENCH LINER A TOTAL WRECK Cruiser Kenya In Final Rescue Bid

Associated Press

BEIRUT, December 23.

Officers and ratings of the British cruiser Kenya are fighting a desperate battle against time to save nearly 300 passengers and crew from the French liner Champollion which has broken in two and is at the mercy of huge seas 200 yards from the shore near Beirut.

Seventy persons, including a 10-year-old boy, have reached shore but at least 20 have been drowned.

Kenya, after a 230-mile dash from Port Said, reached Champollion soon after midnight, together with a British seaplane crew, and immediately began rigging a line from Champollion to the shore. During the night, radio contact with the ship broke down and at dawn the situation was grim.

Passengers, including many Christmas pilgrims on their way to Bethlehem, looked fearfully shorewards clinging to the swaying decks.

Thousands of people stood on the shore helplessly watching passengers plunge from the decks.

**HELPLESS**  
Reuters special correspondent says:

"I stood among these thousands watching men, women and children, unable to swim, unable to grasp the ropes of the lifeboats, unable to do anything but wait for death."

"After a night of rain, morning broke bright with sun."

"People aboard could be seen lying on the decks at the first sight of dawn waiting for the promised rescue."

"With primitive equipment, police and sailors on the shore did their best, but in vain."

"At that time no help had arrived from anywhere, no one really knew what to do."

"A heavy boat with 13 experienced sailors put out at 5.30 a.m. towing a line towards the ship."

"Slowly it advanced fighting every wave, but when it got within 50 yards of the stricken ship it overboarded, towing the crew into the water."

"They were able to return to shore by boat."

**DESPAIR**  
This failure brought despair to the passengers."

"At 6 a.m. they started to jump into the oil-covered water."

"They had seen that wreckage coming from the ship was being carried to the beach."

"So about 70 of them, then faces black with oil, let themselves drift with the current, waves lashing them from all sides."

"Everything was set along the beach to receive them."

"The Queen's ship remained clear of the wrecks while the women volunteers waded knee-deep waiting for them with ropes. Doctors and nurses set up emergency first aid posts."

"Soon it appeared that the current was pushing the wreckage towards a mass of rocks, usually visible, but now covered by water. Rescuers concentrated on this point, waiting for the ship to reach the shore."

"It was a horrible scene. Some of the swimmers disappeared under the waves."

"Some bodies were floating on the surface, some were seen to be struggling, but none were able to reach the shore."

"At about 7.30 a.m. the first survivors arrived and soon afterwards they were swimming over the rocks in dozens. Lebanese rescuers threw ropes to pull them clear, but some were too material. A RAF Sea-King tried to drop a cable link to Champollion."

"Until the British help arrived, the only aid was an Air France Dakota which tried to drop provisions by parachute."

"When Kenya arrived she put rescue equipment ashore. She told those on board Champollion to keep to the seaward part of the broken ship and not to jump into the water."

"The Lebanese Government earlier offered a reward of £1,000 sterling to anyone able to get a line from the shore to the ship."

"One man tied a rope to a belt and managed to get within a short distance of Champollion but heavy seas forced him back."

"The man made two more attempts but each time was forced to give up."

"Champollion was forced ashore by a short distance of 200 yards from the Lebanese coast by terrific gales in Ussai Bay, two miles south of Beirut, early on Monday."

"When the first cable to the shore snapped, the crew managed to replace it with another, but the raging sea made it a precarious contact."

"Earlier, the captain sent a message ashore saying bluntly that all aboard were doomed unless they could be immediately rescued."

"At first there was no panic among the passengers and crew, but as the ship tilted and began to break up, a later report from the ship said that panic was rising among passengers and crew and officers had been using arms to ensure order."

**"AT WAR"**  
A row also broke out over rescue procedure between Israel and Lebanon, which are still technically at war. An Israeli spokesman asserted that the Lebanese authorities had prevented Israeli Naval tugs entering Lebanese territorial waters in response to SOS messages picked up by Israeli Naval HQ."

"After the difference was adjusted and the tugs went in but found the Champollion too firmly aground."

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The Queen will speak from the Queen's Palace at Sandringham, where she is spending Christmas with her family.

She has written and revised the speech herself—a legacy from her father, who impressed upon her the importance of speaking to her people in words of her own choice.

She will rehearse the speech once on Christmas morning, then alone in the study she will make the broadcast immediately after the Royal Family have had Christmas dinner.

It will be the Queen's first broadcast since coming to the Throne but the thirtieth she has made.

The BBC knows her as a skilled and experienced broadcaster with a steady voice and a natural manner completely devoid of any "microphone fright."

The BBC plans to give the Queen a recording of the broadcast and a report on the reception throughout the world within a few hours of its transmission.

But the Queen will already have heard it, the Duke of Edinburgh is making a recording on his home tape recorder set.

**STOP PRESS**  
Passengers Taken Off Liner  
PARIS, Dec. 23.  
The owners of the French ship Champollion announced today that all passengers and crew had been taken from the ship.



Eleven occupants, including several children, were injured when this car collided head on with a city-bound bus on the Main North road, Clearview, last night. The bus carried no passengers and the driver was not injured.

### Children In Crash

## Eleven People, Including 8 Boys, Injured In Head-On Collision

Eleven persons, including eight boys and two women, were injured in a head-on crash between a bus and a car on Main North road, Clearview, about 8.45 last night.

Earlier yesterday nine people were taken to the Royal Adelaide Hospital in an hour after road accidents.

The victims are believed to be—

John Andrew Roneberg, 37, garage proprietor, of Gladstone, commuted to his wife Eileen Veronica Roneberg, 34, severe shock; their three children, John, seven, Gerry, five, and Geoffrey, three—all unconscious.

Katherine Montgomery, 40, married, of Gladstone, fractured arm; Patrick and Michael Scarry, eight-year-old twins, concussion.

Reid Ryan, nine, concussion and lacerations; Dennis Weathers, about 18, concussion; and a New Australian boy whose name is not yet known.

The condition of some of the children was described last night as serious.

**Trapped in Car**  
The crash occurred on a straight stretch of road about 400 yards south of Gepp's Cross Road.

The noise of the crash brought people hurrying from nearby homes as the engine of the bus burst into flames.

The fire was quickly quenched.

All the victims—the children crying in terror and pain—were trapped in the wreckage.

Rescuers found Roneberg slumped unconscious over the steering wheel.

The injured children were found in a heap in the back of the car.

While Leonard Bonnett, of Gepp's Cross Towing Service, was putting out the fire with sand, James Lloyd Green and Thomas Burrows, of Main North road, Blair Athol, dragged the injured through the windows of the car.

Within minutes of the crash civil and St John ambulances, police crash cars and fire appliances were on the scene.

The children were admitted to the Children's Hospital and the three adults to the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

The empty bus, belonging to Murray Valley Coaches, was being driven from Millicura to Adelaide by Ronald Claude McGregor, 38, of Lemon street, Mildura.

The car was travelling from west to east, hitting the bus from the rear, where some of the ground shots with added confidence.

Ken McGregor spent some time on service yesterday morning and suddenly it was booming down the court like a cannon-bell.

From then on, there was no holding him. His wife came lifted and the Australian title-holder finished yesterday's round with a score of 69.

That exacting maestro, Harry Hopman.

Lewis Head practised in double with Sedgman against McGregor and Hopman. His interceptions, volleys and overhead work were devastating and his play was a joy in the game that was a delight to watch.

**Reprive For Murderer**  
A special meeting of Executive Council yesterday decided to grant a reprieve to the death sentence passed on Stefan Hostynsky in the Criminal Court earlier this month.

The reprieve followed a recommendation by the jury, and a petition organised by Hostynsky's counsel, Mr. V. M. Rostov.

Notice of the reprieve was immediately conveyed to Hostynsky.

**Allied Air Raids On Red Centres**  
TOKIO, Dec. 23.  
Allied bombers hit a key Communist stronghold at Pyongyang and pounded enemy supply and troop centres head-on in North Korea today.

On the ground, Chinese charged eight snow-covered Allied outposts last night and early today at scattered points across the frozen battle front. Allied defenders repulsed all assaults.—A.P.

**Offers £10 For Return Of Wagtail**  
A city businessman has become so much attached to a tame wagtail that he is prepared to pay £10 for information leading to its release or recovery.

J. R. Fallu Hindley, street sweeper, who lives at Napier terrace, Hawthorn, has advertised an advertisement to this effect in today's issue of 'The Advertiser.'

He has a tame wagtail, which he has named 'The Wagtail' and has established contact with the household because it was so friendly and trusting.

Hoppy would respond to a series of whistles and would answer in bird talk, said Mr. Fallu.

He would come inside the house when called and would perch on your shoulder or hand.

"We used to feed him on cheese, but the food we left

### 650 Stood Down At Port Pirie

PORT PIRIE, Dec. 23.

About 650 men had been stood down at Broken Hill Associated Smelters, it was announced tonight.

The works manager (Mr. P. A. Green) said tonight that the production plant was closed and would not be restarted until continuity of operation was guaranteed.

Meanwhile it would be made ready for restarting and essential maintenance work carried out.

From the time men resumed full production would take about three weeks to reach.

Shipping, ore handling and other necessary operations would be continued as required, he added.

Men stood down will lose wages averaging about £18 a week, including the £5 lead bonus.

A number have already filled in unemployment forms.

Three meetings of members of unions employed at the smelters have been called for tomorrow morning.

Members of the Amalgamated Engineering Union will hold a stop-work meeting at Port Pirie Town Hall, and the Boilermakers' Union will hold a meeting in Ellen street.

The Carpenters' Union has called its meeting for tonight.

Earlier, the captain sent a message ashore saying bluntly that all aboard were doomed unless they could be immediately rescued.

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## New Commander In Korea Named

From Our Staff Representative

CANBERRA, December 23.

Li-Gen. H. Wells, GOC, Southern Command, has been appointed C-in-C, British Commonwealth Forces in Korea.

Announcing this today, the Minister for Defence (Mr. McBride) said that Li-Gen. Wells would succeed Li-Gen. H. II. Bridgford, who had reached the retiring age.

The Director-General of Recruiting (Lt-Gen. Sir Horace Robertson) would succeed Li-Gen. Wells as GOC, Southern Command, and Lt-Gen. H. II. Bridgford, formerly GOC, Central Command, would be Director-General of Recruiting.

Li-Gen. Wells served continuously in the field with distinction, with Headquarters, 7th and 8th Divisions, A.P. and Headquarters, 1st Australian Corps, in the campaigns in Greece, Syria, Libya, New Guinea, and Borneo.

Since the end of the war, Li-Gen. Wells had held the appointments of Director of the 11th Infantry Brigade from February, 1946, to February, 1947, and was appointed GOC, Central Command on February 20, 1947.

He commanded the 11th Infantry Brigade from February, 1947, to February, 1948, and was appointed GOC, Central Command on February 20, 1947.

He was attached to the Australian Military Mission in Washington from 1943 to 1945 for liaison duties with the US War Department and as a member of the US Signal Corps technical committee.

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