

FRENCH SEIZE FORTS IN SWIFT ADVANCE

Expel Riffians and Re-establish Their Old Line on Central Moroccan Front.

OFFENSIVE IS CONTINUING

Spaniards Moving Out From Melilla Sector Drive Back the Moors— Fighting Between Riffians.

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FEZ, Sept. 11.—In the first tremendous bound this morning the French, in a simultaneous attack on both wings of the central sector, advanced three miles in four hours, reoccupying four of their old posts—Achirkan in the west and Astar, Sker and Ain Sahela on the east.

The offensive is continuing very satisfactorily. The infantry and cavalry are moving forward like a spreading fan from the Tafrant and Taounat bases while artillery and airplanes are clearing the way, throwing an intense barrage in the centres of the enemy's resistance, which are Mount Amjot and Mount Aghil.

The long artillery preparation which opened the attack yesterday, although handicapped by fog interfering with aerial range-finding until afternoon, seems, none the less, to have been efficacious. The column attacking from Mjara in Tafrant occupied the ridge just north of the base camp with little trouble, while the other columns advancing from Teroual and Skiffa a little further east cleared out the remainder of the area behind Tafrant, thus protecting the rear of the troops advancing further north. The rebels here, apparently fearing encirclement, retreated hastily.

With the air torn to shaking shreds by hundreds of shells, long, shadowy lines of troops in the dim early morning light filed down the slopes of the natural amphitheatre of Taounat in three directions. One moved west toward Sahela, another northwest toward Astar and the third north toward Sker. Each crossed the valley, swinging around Taounat and, spreading into one vast skirmish line, climbed through the groves of olives, figs and cactus hedges, up the riddled, rocky slopes of these three peaks, taking them by storm, despite the rifle fire poured down on them by the entrenched rebels.

Pétain and Naulin at the Front.

Marshal Pétain and General Naulin are surveying operations, one on the left, the other on the right.

The French continued their advance on both wings in the centre sector, especially the west, where they had the satisfaction of occupying Ain Bou Aissa, celebrated for heroic defense during the month of July. The French pushed even further ahead, retaking Haddarine and Aoudour. Thus on this wing they re-established the line originally held, except Beni Derkoul, and placed themselves in a position to attack at both sides. They also moved forward into territory whose occupation by Riffians had been undisturbed since the outset of the war.

In this sector the mountains are divided by two big streams flowing parallel to the south on both flanks. The Tanat sector reached the objectives at Sahela and Sker with comparatively little trouble.

The Riffians are concentrating their effort in defence of the centre, where a violent assault was required to take the position. Rebels here occupy trenches high on the point of a peak and all immediate slopes, allowing the French when most tired no cover except scattered olive groves, with Beni Derkoul perched high on the rocks dividing them and dominating their movements.

The French have been advancing fastest in the west in an enveloping movement, toward the centre encountering strong resistance but reaching ridges west and south of Beni Derkoul.

In the eastern sector a column re-victualing the post at Dahar was violently attacked. A mass bombardment of artillery was needed to disengage the column. The rebels were thrown back with heavy losses.

Riffians Attack in the West.

Apparently not yet seriously disturbed by these attacks, Abd-el-Krim continues tenaciously carrying on his own little offensive against the western sector. He has launched two more unsuccessful assaults on Issoual, where, despite the presence of a mobile group, rebels entrenched themselves within 150 yards of the post. American aviators flying to the rescue of Issoual, darting low along these trenches, raked them with machine guns, causing panic, but the Riffians are still hanging on. Attacks on other posts in this sector continue.

The threat of rain seems to have passed and the weather is bright and clear and not too hot, allowing aviation to render the greatest services. There is a constant coming and going of planes between Fex and Ouezzan, while other squadrons are conducting operations from new bases at Mjara and Ain Aicha, maintaining permanent liaison with infantry.

A special feature of the operations is the fact that the reserves include three battalions of crack troops of Alpine Chasseurs. Hitherto there have been no such large units of real French soldiers at the front. They are not being used immediately, as they only lately arrived.

The wierdest incident in the present operations developed when it was discovered that a single man constituted the entire gun crew of one of the enemy cannon which was particularly active against the Issoual outpost. Rebels had been ordered to capture this outpost at any cost in order to win the Mestira tribe to the banners of Abd-el-Krim. Officers through glasses saw the lone cannonier dressed in white garments, loading, aiming and firing a captured .75. Every one of the eight shells he fired hit the post, a fact which goes far toward proving that despite his clothes this gunner was not a native but a skilled European gunner.

Issoual cannon replied. But in fourteen shots did not succeed in hitting the cannonier. The position, however, became so hot for him that he had to retire. With the aid of mules he moved to the other side of the slope and opened indirect fire on the post.

French mobile groups have retaken the eastern blockhouse at Issoual, but are are having difficulty in dislodging the rebels, who are entrenched so closely around all positions that artillery in shelling them risks hitting the garrison. The Issoual garrison signaled the aviation it had three days' water left.

Another rebel attack on Douaher, northeast of Ouezzan, was repulsed with heavy losses, but this post as well as Bou Ganous is still narrowly encircled.