

PATHE JOURNAL

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OIL FIREFIGHTERS' EFFORTS TO MASTER GASSI TOUIL BLAZE  
35 mm. developed dupanegative: 19 meters - 65 ft

Red Adair and his famous crew of american oil firefighters technicians are hard at work, with ~~more~~ a hundred other workers, to prepare their offensive against the giant gas blaze which has been burning in a 200 ft high flame in the Sahara Desert at Gassi Touil.

First water had to be found 2000 feet below ground level and a pumping station put into operation has already pumped a man made lake of water, containing thousands of cubic meters of water. This water will be used to help red Adair and his men in their approach of the actual blaze in their monstrous looking shielded bull-dozers, when the time comes to try to blast the fire. For the time being, the shielded and armored bulldozers equipped with special giant iron hooks, are busy clearing the immediate area of burnt iron from the original derrick tower.

Everything must be cleared before the firefighters try to bring their explosives to blast and kill the inferno. Two other wells are being drilled to pump down mud to ~~strangle~~ the burning fire and lessen the pressure when the blast will be sent off.

Millions of cubic meters of gas have already been built in this unprecedented fire, which illuminates the desert on a 500 kilometers area.

## THE GASSI TOUIL IN FIRES

35 mm. developed duponitive: 65 meters

In the Eastern Great Erg (mountains) in the Sahara desert, since November last, the giant Gassi-Touil flame at G.T. 2, has kept burning night and day. Each day, this colossal lighter has burnt 10 million cubic meters of gas, which represents half of the daily production of Lacq in south-west France.

For the first time, our cameraman, with great focal power lenses and under protection of fire-fighter hoses, was able to reach the area near enough from the inferno to photograph the actual mouth of the burning well. Here you can clearly see the enormous gas column sprouting under a pressure of approximately 200 Kilos to the square centimeter. The pressure of the gas coming out makes a heavy frost at the pipe's end. The flames you see around are coming from secondary cracks. The flaming geyser itself begins burning only after several meters.

The Red Adair crew has reached the before-last phase of preparations before putting out the fire: clearing the area. But before that they had to drill a well to bring to the surface enough water to give ensure protection of the workers. This water comes from the Albian hold, without which the industrialisation of the Sahara desert would have been impossible, and which is threatened of pollution by the Gassi-Touil gas fire. It was also necessary to drill on either sides of the burning hold, two holes which will permit injecting to the base of mud to lessen as much as possible the gas powerful leak.

Before blowing the torch, the surrounding area must be entirely cleared of all iron remains of the former derricks (pipes etc.) It is not a small work as the workers teams must work at the very foot of this terrific flame. They do it with the help of specially equipped bulldozers with sheet-iron cabins continually kept under the "artificial rain" of ten powerful fire-hoses, sending water nearly 100 meters away. The burnt out iron armatures are cut into smaller parts, then a specially built kind of hook picks them up to take them out of the danger zone. Such operations have to be conducted in the smallest delay possible, as the necessity of keeping the precious water hold from pollution is as important as that of keeping the giant gas reserves. When the area will be entirely cleared of debris a TNT charge will be placed near the mouth of the fire, and the explosion should blow the flame as a simple candle... Then the spurt will have to be mastered with a cap equipped with several pipes which will device the gas.

The blowing out of the Gassi Touil gas inferno is probably the most spectacular operation ever known in the history of oil. It will have cost one and a half billion old francs, of which 500 million for the dangerous work of the Adair fire fighters specialists. But the industrial Sahara desert is interested in the results of this new work of Hercules.