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Paris, February 15. 1960

First French nuclear bomb
Reggan, February 14. 1960
Official films serviced to all competition
35 mm. developed dupnegative : 52 meters - 172 ft

For the installations of the French nuclear weapons testing center it was necessary to find an extensive zone where there was no life for many square miles. The "Desert of Thirst" in the Sahara, south of REGGAN was perfectly suited to security conditions for an atomic explosion, superior to those which were applied by the americans in Nevada, the Russians in Central Asia, and the British in Australia.

To explode a nuclear weapon in the heart of Sahara it was necessary to put into action enormous means, especially for the construction of several bases, one for living quarters, and the other for the firing grounds. These were built in a record time - less than two years- by armed Forces Units helped by Civilian Firms. Nothing was overlooked in the heart of the desert to insure minimum confort to scientists and technicians. They had to live, work, be cared for and relax there. To find water supplies in sufficient quantity, build housing quarters, insure power for the laboratories, and bring in equipment was a difficult work. The whole project necessitated considerable earthwork and enormous amounts of concrete. French nationals and native moslems united their efforts to do the work in the minimum of time. Transportation of heavy equipment and materials made necessary the construction of many miles of road which were built with powerful modern machinery. A large airfield with navigation equipment and an air-station was built to organise an airlift to bring in men, materiel and supplies.

Scientists and technicians were able to use a series of laboratories to finish the device and make a series of final tests. For technical reasons part of these laboratories are underground and entirely air-conditioned. Thus a town in the heart of the Sahara desert (Country of Thirst) was born. A forbidden city, the access of which is severely controlled and only allowed to base technicians.

Several miles southward, an advanced base has also been built. Exploding a bomb is not enough, it is also necessary to get from this first explosion all possible data with the help of considered measure-equipment. This meant building important outposts around Zero Point, to house apparatus recording the entire operation. Such measurements have to be recorded in the course of a mere fraction of a second.. A real laboratory is around the bomb. Underground cables connect the equipment in the coming tower to underground laboratories.

The final device is lifted on top of the firing tower by a lift. As it is of utmost importance to accurately record the entire operation, ultra rapid cameras are trained on the phenomenon and will film the entire operation.

Besides informations furnished by world's meteorological network several weather stations as this one have been built in the Sahara to five further datas which will forecast direction and speed of winds until a great height. Now, weather conditions are good... Decisions of firing for J day H.hour are confirmed. During the previous days briefings grouped those responsible under command of General Ailleret commanding officer of the operational group. Each giving latest developments of their work and their foresight.

Firing a nuclear bomb is not all, it was also necessary to test its effect on various equipment, and materials of Army, Airforce and Navy services, in order to find a protection against them.

../...

A. BOMB (2)

../... Decontamination teams are ready. ~~Countdown~~ Zero hour is near, everybody is at their post... only a few minutes to wait... then seconds..., count down... 5-4-3-2-1... FIRE!

You have just ~~now~~ witnessed the first french nuclear explosion. Thanks to the operators of this success, Statesmen and scientists, officers and engineers industrialists and technicians, France, through her only efforts alone in the field of nuclear armament, is now in a position to reinforce the defensive power of the Community and the West.