

right had encountered considerable opposition, and had been much hampered by the difficulties of the ground.

Two miles south of Neby Musa the enemy held the high ground at Jebel el Kalimum and Tubk el Kaneiterah. Compelled to move in single file over tracks which were exposed to machine-gun fire from the enemy's position, and which had been registered accurately by the enemy's guns at Neby Musa, the progress of the mounted troops was necessarily slow. By 2 p.m., however, the enemy was driven from his position at Jebel el Kalimum and Tubk el Kaneiterah. The further advance of the New Zealand Brigade on Neby Musa was hampered by the ground, and was finally checked at the Wadi Mukelik, the only possible crossing over which was subjected to a heavy fire from Neby Musa. On the right of the New Zealanders an Australian mounted brigade discovered a crossing over the Wadi Kumran, and entering the Jordan plain reached the Wadi Jufet Zeben by dusk.

The chief feature of the enemy's resistance was the volume of machine-gun fire.

By 6 a.m. the New Zealanders and a battalion of the 60th Division reached Neby Musa, meeting with no opposition.

The Australian Mounted Brigade, advancing along the plain, entered Jericho at 8.20 a.m., the enemy having withdrawn during the night.

The 60th Division advanced to the line Rujm es Shema-Liyeh-Kh. Kakun-Jebel Karuntul, overlooking Jericho.

Meanwhile, patrols from the Australian Mounted Brigade reconnoitred as far as the Wadi el Aujah to the north and the El Ghoraniyeh Bridge. The enemy was found to be holding the high ground north of the Aujah, and a bridgehead covering the El Ghoraniyeh Bridge with guns on the left bank.

As a direct attack on the bridgehead would have involved heavy losses, without compensating advantages, it was not attempted. On the 22nd the 60th Division withdrew to the line Jebel Ekteif-Talat ed Dumm-Ras et Tawil, leaving outposts on the cliffs overlooking Jericho. The Mounted Division, leaving one regiment to patrol the Jordan Valley, returned to Bethlehem.

During these operations four officers, 140 other ranks, and six machine guns were captured from the enemy.

On no previous occasions had such difficulties of ground been encountered. As an instance of this, a Field Artillery battery took thirty-six hours to reach Neby Musa, the distance covered, as the crow flies, being only eight miles.

The Royal Air Force rendered valuable service, but mist and low-lying clouds interrupted their work to a great extent.

8. This operation, by driving the enemy across the Jordan, had rendered my right flank secure, but the base thus obtained was not sufficiently broad to permit of operations being carried out east of the Jordan against the Hedjaz Railway.

Before any such operation could be undertaken it was essential in the first place to cross the Wadi Aujah and secure the high ground on the north bank covering the approaches to the Jordan Valley by the Beisan-Jericho road, and, secondly, by advancing sufficiently far northwards on either side of the Jerusalem-Nablus road, to deny to the enemy the use of

all tracks and roads leading to the lower Jordan Valley. This accomplished, any troops he might determine to transfer from the west to the east bank of the Jordan would have to make a considerable detour to the north.

I therefore ordered the XXth Corps to secure Kh. el Beiyudat and Abu Tellul, in the Jordan Valley, north of the Wadi el Aujah, and further to the west the line Kefr Malik-Kh. Abu Felah, the high ground south of Sinjil, and the ridge north of the Wadi el Jib running through Kh. Aliuta-Jiljilia-Abwein-Arura, thence to Deir es Sudan and Nebi Saleh.

The watershed from which the wadis run, in the one direction to the River Jordan, in the other through the hills to the plain north of Ludd and thence to the sea, runs parallel to and some two miles east of the Jerusalem-Nablus road. The fall to the Jordan Valley is short and sharp, with the result that the beds of the wadis are deep and their sides almost precipitous. The country is so intricate that it cannot be crossed by large bodies of troops. Consequently, there was no danger in leaving a gap between the right of the XXth Corps at Kefr Malik and the detachment in the Jordan Valley at Abu Tellul.

To conform to the advance of the XXth Corps, I ordered the XXIst Corps to advance its right to include the ridge north of the Wadi Ballut, the village of Mejdeh Yaba, a conspicuous landmark on a foothill overlooking the plain north of Ludd, Ras el Ain, an old Crusader stronghold on the railway from Ludd to Tul Keram, and El Mirr.

As a result of this advance the XXIst Corps would be placed in a better position for a further advance, should it be decided to attack the defensive system constructed by the enemy from Jiljulieh westwards through Tabsor to the sea.

The two Corps were thus advancing on a front, from Kefr Malik to El Mirr, of 26 miles — to a maximum depth of seven miles.

The ground over which the advance was to take place is rugged and difficult. A succession of high and rocky ridges, separated by deep valleys, afforded the enemy a series of positions of great natural strength. The slopes of the ridges are in many places precipitous. Ledges of rock confine the descent to definite places, on which the enemy could concentrate his fire. In places the slopes are terraced, and men had to pull or hoist each other up.

It was necessary to reconnoitre each successive position held by the enemy, and the subsequent movement of troops into positions of assembly was of necessity a slow process.

Under these conditions no rapid advance could be looked for.

As soon as supplies and ammunition had been collected and preparations were complete, both Corps made a preliminary advance to enable a closer reconnaissance of the enemy's main positions to be made, and to allow of the construction of roads for the movement of guns and supplies.

By March 8th the XXth Corps had reached the line En Nejme-Et Taiyibeh-Ain Sinia, on the Jerusalem-Nablus road, Hill 2665 overlooking Bir ez Zeit-Beit Ello, the 53rd Division being on the right, the 74th Division in the centre astride the Jerusalem-Nablus road, and the 10th Division on the left.

On the right of the XXIst Corps the 75th