

History Shows Blacks Gallant In Battle

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Prejudiced liars would have us believe that blackmen are cowards. But their blind eyes will not read the story of the Danakils of Ethiopia, who with primitive weapons, finished off a column of 2,000 Italian invaders in the middle of 1930's.

These were the days when Mussolini wanted to build an empire. He boastfully told the world the old stale lies; that since Africa was a land of "savages" it was his duty to civilize it. He even invoked Christianity in his boasts and said, like the slaveowners of the past and like King Leopold of the Belgians, that it was his Christian duty to bring religion and culture to "barbarians."

Well, the truth of the matter is that Africa was civilized long before Europe; that Ethiopia was one of the first nations to accept the teachings of Christ; and that Europe indeed received its first cultural lessons from Africa itself. But truth never bothers a racial supremacist and an imperialist. Mussolini, then proceeded to give Africans the "benefits" of civilization by killing them with poison gas and enslaving them. The latter is what he really had in mind for the Ethiopian people.

Mussolini sent three invasion parties into Ethiopia. Two were successful and were highly written up in fascist journals. A third invasion made up of 2,000 Italians with 20 tanks and 50 motor trucks, machine guns and all other latest weapons was annihilated by Ethiopian tribesmen known as Danakils. About the absolute failure of this invasion column the Italians have remained silent.

The Italian column of 2,000 men set out with all the weaponry and training of a modern army. Their march would take them through the Danakil desert and the first water holes were some 300 miles ahead at Hala. Once in the desert itself they encountered Danakil tribesmen who retreated before them. These Danakils were armed with only spears and hatchets.

They were people who were called "barbarians" and laughed at because of their

primitive fighting tools and their dyed henna-red hair. But they knew something about conducting war and something about courage the fascist troops could well study.

When the Italians arrived at Hala they found their long hoped for source of water gone. The water holes had been poisoned by the Danakils. Try crossing a large desert with heat that burns without the help of cooling water. This brings a physical weakness that ends in death. But Mussolini's troops took no account of this. While they should have had the sense to understand their plight and turn back these troops had been propagandized so much by their leaders into believing about a "New Ethiopia" and their "pride" led them straight ahead. Indeed they were headed for the jaws of hell itself.

So the fascist column went forward from the poisoned Hala water holes. Their own water supply was dangerously low for 2,000 men in a dry desert. The Italians went further into the desert and the Danakils who remained invisible during the day suddenly appeared at night to harass the invader's rear. The fascists even left their main course in pursuit of the Danakils. This is exactly what the tribesmen wanted. They wanted to lead the invading troops deeper and deeper into the hell of the desert.

At night the Danakils would appear as if from nowhere. They used a curved sword and threw it like the Australian aborigines use the boomerang. Their skill in throwing these razor sharp weapons cut off the heads of many Italian sentinel. The sentinels dropped quickly and quietly.

Then nature, in the form of a cloudburst, harassed the invaders. They were immobilized for three days. After they survived this catastrophe, weakened still further for having endured it, they started out once again on the dry, flint highway of the Danakil desert. This time they knew they were doomed men and they knew that it was just as impossible for them to turn back as it was to go ahead.

Now the Danakil tribesmen surrounded them on all sides but kept a goodly distance.

One morning as the Italians were breaking camp the Danakils closed in on them. The invader's tanks were leading the column. The tanks were a goodly distance ahead of the rest. The tribesmen came close to the tanks. They knew they would suffer the consequences of their guns but they climbed up on the lumbering tanks and poured highly inflammable liquid over them and into the firing holes. It was over in a matter of minutes. The men in the tanks were roasted alive in their burning coffins. It did not seem to matter to the Danakils that some of the tribesmen were victims of Italian guns. Their own mission had been successful. The damage done was fatal to the expedition.

Then the Italian invaders were forced to travel over dangerous terrain. They had to go through the narrow ravines of Haddelleh. These were wedged between volcanic cones of loose blocks of lava. They decided to use the remaining water for the radiators of 4 trucks, and these would be sent back for help. The column would, in the meantime, camp at this point and set itself in a circle for defense.

While the Italians were encamped in this waiting operation the Danakils let the desert do its murderous work. While the natives of the Red Sea area know how to cope with this heat and sun, to the European it can mean instant death. Once a European uncovers, the heat, cutting like a razor, can be fatal. The sunstroke strikes the neck and paralyzes the brain. It might come through the eyes and strike the victim blind. The Danakils did not show up for five days letting the desert to take its toll of the weakened Italian aggressors.

Then came several Italian scouting planes and the next day they came back to drop food, water and other supplies to the dying column. But now the Danakils felt they must act at once lest their enemies be revived. They launched an attack under the cover of darkness. As the last few Italian defenders remained, planes came in but it was already too late. The Danakils had done their work and done it quite well.

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