

Hidden History

The Unsung Saga of the Black Man



John P. & C. Buck West

HANNIBAL OF CARTHAGE

THIS IS THE THIRD and last in a series of three articles on the great Negro military giant, Hannibal. Last week our second segment of this series described, in detail, Hannibal's march across the Alps.

It took Hannibal and his men fifteen days to cross the Alps; nine days to reach the summit and six days to descend from the summit to the plains of Italy. During these historical fifteen days Hannibal encountered numerous natural, as well as man-made, obstacles such as snowstorms, landslides, and attacks on his men by the barbaric mountain tribesmen of the Alps.

Hannibal began his march across the Alps with an army consisting of 80,000 infantry, 12,000 cavalry and 40 elephants. Fifteen days later Hannibal was in Italy with an army which now numbered 20,000 infantry, 6,000 cavalry and 40 elephants. With the Alps behind them and 80,000 Roman soldiers facing them, Hannibal and his men were in a trap with only one hope of survival; battle and victory.

The forces of Hannibal and Scipio, the Roman commander, met at Ticino. Scipio, extremely confident of victory over the Carthaginians, ordered his entire force into battle. Hannibal, who had carefully studied the terrain, so arranged his men that the Romans attacked in a body and when they were bunched together, he turned his armored elephants on them precipitating great disorder in the Roman ranks. Following the elephants, Hannibal's famed African swordsmen entered the battle to complete the slaughter and insure victory.

WITH MOUNTING CONCERN over the situation, Rome gathered a larger army and sent it, the same year, against Hannibal at Trebia. Hannibal, though still greatly outnumbered, gathered reinforcements from the Italian tribes which had joined him. In the battle at Trebia, Hannibal drew the Romans into a marsh where his forces killed the greater part of them. This victory gave Hannibal all northern Italy.

His next exploit was to cross the Appenines, a feat second only to that of the Alps. By this time, however, Hannibal had lost all of the elephants except the one on which he rode.

Rome, in desperation, now dispatched her ablest general, Flaminius, with a still larger army. Hannibal, realizing that Flaminius had but one route to follow--via Lake Trasimene--decided to ambush the Romans at that location. When the armies met, Hannibal's agile Numidian cavalry closed in on the Roman rear and cut off its retreat while his Africans, Spaniards and Gauls hit the enemy's flank. Horrible massacre ensued in which the Romans lost some 25,000 men while Hannibal's casualties numbered 1500.

This victory opened the road to Rome, and as a last hope, the Romans gave complete control of their state to Fabius "The Delayer." The delaying tactics of Fabius were entirely to Hannibal's liking and he continued to ravage Italy. Finally the Romans, weary of Fabius, replaced him with two new generals, Varro and Emilius. With 90,000 men, the Romans started north with renewed confidence and, again, certain of victory.

Hannibal with only 50,000 men retreated at their approach. Although most of Hannibal's original army had perished, his Numidian cavalry was still largely intact.

Varro and Emilius caught up with Hannibal at Cannae on the Aufidius River. Hannibal's back was to the river, making further retreat almost impossible. His position appeared hopeless.

THE BATTLE THAT FOLLOWED is still the most renowned in the annals of military strategy.

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selected for the second slot, if there was to be more than one position filled at the convention.

Mr. Reid announced to the body at this meeting that he wished to have his name removed from the list if there were to be only one person selected from the group.

Copies of the selections were prepared for distribution to both factions. Tony McCormick, North Las Vegas, was chosen as the Floor Captain for the Negro delegation.

At the Friday caucus, the Westside group did not vote to commit itself to either faction. It was agreed to hold the decision of commitment until the group had re-sampled the political pulse at the convention the following morning.

When the Negro delegates met in caucus the following morning, they completely disregarded the vote for unanimity to which they had pledged themselves the previous night.

THEY WERE UNABLE TO REACH ANY DECISION. Forces within the delegation had previously chosen sides, and the conflicting factions failed to reach any compromise. The Negro delegation was split almost down the middle. The Rebel faction held an advantage over the Incumbents--the ratio was unofficially polled at six to four in favor of the group which steamrolled right through the convention.

Earle White, Bobby Johnson, Charles Kellar, Marge Elliott, and Tony McCormick led the charge for the victorious insurgents. Clarence Ray, Luther Graves, George Osley, and Joe Neal also added their share of steam to the insurgent steamroller.

The split in the Negro delegation did not damage the Negro cause nearly so much as did a 'trick' spearheaded by Mrs. Gloria Rome, President of the Democratic Women's Club-West. Mrs. Rome, joined by her husband, Ike, "brainwashed" a group of unsuspecting Westside delegates to call a 'last minute' caucus designed to drop Dr. West as the Negro choice for Vice-Chairman, and send the name of Attorney Robert Reid to the nominating committee as the Negro community's choice for the office. Reid condoned the action even though he had

Hannibal, realizing that he could not possibly win by attempting to overpower the enemy placed the weakest part of his army in the center (contrary to the best military rules) with his veterans and cavalry on both wings.

The Romans, driving down on the Carthaginians, struck them full in the center ranks as Hannibal had planned. Finding little resistance there, the Romans pushed on inwards, certain of victory. However, due to the light Carthaginian resistance and the Romans' zeal for a quick and complete victory, the Roman ranks were broken. When the Romans had penetrated far enough, Hannibal sent his African infantry, in solid formation, to attack them on both flanks while his cavalry galloped to the rear to attack the Romans there. The Romans, subsequently surrounded, were slaughtered like sheep. Their blood changed the waters of the Aufidius to crimson. Emilius was slain along with 80 Roman senators and 70,000 men.

IN TWO SHORT YEARS, Hannibal had become the master of all Italy except for the capital city of Rome itself. However, Hannibal refused to attack Rome due to a lack of siege artillery and no regular base of supplies. So for the next 13 years Hannibal roamed over Italy at will with little support from Carthage.

Scipio, son of the general whom Hannibal had first beaten, and who was later surnamed "Africanus" for his brilliant victories, had, in the meantime, been undermining Hannibal elsewhere. In Spain, by using Hannibal's own tactics, he had been defeating the Carthaginians there, and preventing any reinforcements from reaching Hannibal. His next move was to attack Carthage as one way of forcing Hannibal to return there. The Carthaginians, beaten, begged Hannibal to return and he did so.

Hannibal sailed from southern Italy and reached Africa safely despite the lurking Roman fleet. He had maintained himself in Italy for fifteen exciting years.

Back in Carthage, he whipped into shape such fighting material as was available. He took the field with 55,000 men, mostly raw recruits, and 80 elephants.

Scipio attacked him at Zama. He was aided by Massinissa, a former ally of Carthage. Hannibal, though tactically as brilliant as ever was beaten. His elephants, not sufficiently seasoned

given West his word that he (Reid) was withdrawing his name as a candidate.

THE POWER STRUCTURE of the victorious faction was frustrated as to what action to take when they were given Reid's name to replace that of Dr. West.

The Rome-Reid 'coup' was pulled off at about 2 a.m. Sunday morning, some 18 hours after the delegates had assembled. At the time of the attempted coup, most of the delegates had left the convention.

The Nominating Committee, as well as the Platform and Resolutions Committee were in session.

The victorious Hilbrecht-'Curley' Price faction used judicious political strategy when they side-stepped the possibility of indictment for involvement in the selection of Negro leadership. Their reaction was one of compromise. They offered a 'dark horse' candidate for 2nd Vice-Chairman, by-passing the 1st Vice Chair. They placed Norman Hilbrecht in the 1st Vice Chair and presented Attorney Earle White for the 2nd Vice-Chairman.

Earle White was nominated by Attorney Charles L. Kellar, seconded by Marjorie Elliott. Gloria Rome then nominated Reid for the same office. The resounding vote for White was overwhelming. The feeble voice vote for Reid must have been embarrassing to him and to his small group of Negro rebels.

ROBERT REID DAMAGED HIS OWN IMAGE, as well as that of the Negro community when he condoned the attempted plot to cut down a friend to whom he had given his word, at the same time ignoring the stand for unanimity he had supported the night before the convention.

Editors note: (The election of Attorney Earle White as 2nd Vice-Chairman of the Clark County Democratic Central Committee has our blessings. Although there are deep wounds to be healed and many fences to be mended, we believe that the new blood in the Clark County Democratic Central Committee will get the difficult job done well.)

for war, ran amuck among his own troops, turning the tide of battle against him.

CARTHAGE NOW became a vassal of Rome, and was made to pay a staggering indemnity. But Hannibal, who was an able statesman as he was a warrior, re-organized Carthage on such a sound basis that she was not long in regaining her prosperity on which she offered to pay off the indemnity in a lump sum. This so alarmed Rome that she found a pretext for accusing Hannibal of conspiracy and demanded that he give himself up.

Hannibal fled to Bithynia and found refuge with the king there. But the Romans demanded his surrender and Hannibal, now sixty-one and worn with fifty years of warfare, knew that the end had come. In a ring on his finger was poison he had always carried for such an emergency. The Romans found him dead.

Hannibal's fame increased with his death. Polybius, Roman historian, and therefore his enemy, said of him, "Who would not be seized with admiration for a general who accomplished such prodigies . . . All that happened at Rome, as well as at Carthage, depended on a single man. I speak of Hannibal".

As to his conduct, it was irreproachable, so much so that Justin, the Roman historian, who had a strong prejudice against Africans, demanded whether it was really possible that Africa could have been his birthplace.

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