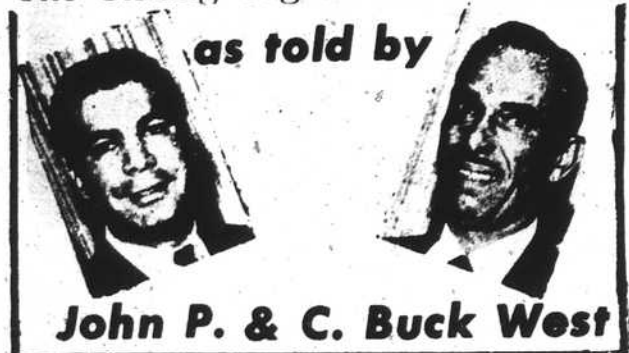


Hidden History

The Unsung Saga of the Black Man

as told by



John P. & C. Buck West

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(From Vol. II of J. A. Rogers' "World's Great Men of Color")

FELIX EBOUE

Great Statesman of France, Africa, and the West Indies (1884-1944)

"FELIX EBOUE, born at Cayenne, French Guiana, December 26, 1884, was a key figure in the second world war. But for his statesmanship in Africa, the forces of Hitler and Mussolini might have succeeded in breaking through the allied line at El Alamein, Egypt, in one of the most critical phases of the war. Such a step might have given all Egypt and Africa to the Fascist forces and turned the tide of war in their favor before America entered.

"When France fell in August 1940 and was given over to Hitler, plans were laid by the betrayers of the French people to hand over the African colonies, also. Eboue thwarted this by not only revolting against Petain, Laval, and others of the Vichy regime but succeeded in winning over most of the other governors, who were white, to the cause of General de Gaulle. It was through the territory governed by Eboue went the supplies which started the defeat of Hitler and Mussolini.

"THE TASK Eboue had set for himself from the start of his career was a gruelling one and was doubtless instrumental in hastening his death. A brilliant student, he won a scholarship in his native Guiana to study in Bordeaux, France. Later he entered the School of Colonial Science for preparation as a colonial administrator and then to the famous military college of St. Cyr, near Paris, where he studied military tactics and strategy.

"In 1907, or 1911, he was appointed governor of Ubangi-Shari territory in Central Africa, where because of his desire to advance the African people he spent little time in his luxurious colonial mansion but travelled through hundreds of miles of virgin territory away from the outposts of civilization learning of the people and their life. He studied their language, dialects, customs, folklore and music. In this latter field he found a great collaborator with his wife, a gifted musician. Together they collected and wrote down the native compositions, especially the drum language and the whistle language which they later published. Few, if any ethnologists, had a greater knowledge of African life than Eboue. To the time of his death, he had spent a total of over thirty years chiefly in its interior.

"IN 1930 he was appointed secretary-general of the Soudan and in 1931 that of Martinique. In 1936, he was named governor-general of Guadeloupe a post from which he was transferred to Governor of Chad territory in 1939. The Secretary for the Colonies, Georges Mandel, seeing that war with Germany was imminent, chose him for that strategic post, a trust that fully justified itself.

"When France fell in August 1940 and Eboue refused to side with Vichy he was denounced as a traitor, stripped of his Legion of Honor and other decorations, and sentenced to death in absentia. However, in November 1940, General Charles de Gaulle appointed him governor-general of Equatorial Africa, a territory of over a million square miles and 6,000,000 souls.

"EGON KASKELINE, a European war cor-

respondent, writing in 1942, ably summed up the effect of Eboue's decision to side with the allies on the war. As a result, he says, 'Free France had been recreated in the heart of Africa with who knows what destiny in the history of French democracy. When in September, 1940, General de Gaulle came to visit the Free French colonies, there could be no doubt about the personality who should be the head of the colonial administration. Felix Eboue was appointed governor-general of Free French Africa.

"Free French Africa has ever since proved to be an important cornerstone in the United Nations' defense system. A network of modern airports has been established there, and in these days of military crisis in the Middle East the air transport lines through Africa have proved to be of immense usefulness. Hundreds of British and American planes have been ferried across the Atlantic and then flown across the continent to the Egyptian battle-front, to the Middle East, and to India. Fort Lamy in the Chad region has become one of the aerial turntables of Africa.

"HAD EBOUE gone over to Vichy this would not have been possible. Kaskeline continues, 'The Free French administration in Africa has also endeavored to shorten the transport lines for heavy war material which cannot be sent by air. With the Mediterranean Sea practically closed for United Nations convoys, war materials and other supplies must be shipped on the 12,000 miles route around the Cape of Good Hope. So two trans-African roads constructed by the Free French now cross 1,700 and 2000 miles respectively of African veldt, forest, swamp and desert, a great deal of it built of stone and operable during the rainy season. The military critic of the London News Chronicle recently emphasized the increasing importance of land transportation across the African continent, facilitating the delivery of supplies to strategic points in normal or even shorter time. Ships and transports landing at West African ports run only a sixth of the risk involved in rounding the Cape of Good Hope. Thus is Free French Africa playing a major role in the active war effort.'

"IN ADDITION, Eboue provided more than 15,000 crack African troops which attacked the Italian flank in Libya and also prevented the Libyan Army of Marshal Graziani from joining with the Italian forces in Ethiopia under the Duke D'Aosta. But for this feat victory in Ethiopia would certainly not have come when it did, if ever it came.

"During this crucial period of the war more than one hundred and fifty British planes used the Chad base every day. In every way, Eboue was an important figure during the most crucial stages of the war.

"A democrat at heart, a servant of the people, modest and humble but very competent, Eboue was beloved not only by the natives but by those white subordinates who at first resented taking orders from a black man. He did all that he could to advance the natives and to prepare them for a fuller share in the government of the colony. He started a mass program of education and founded schools in which the best features of African life were grafted on to modern European education. He undertook large scale public works which were of great service in the war and was instrumental in the natives getting higher prices for their products.

"HIS DEATH on May 17, 1944, in a Cairo hospital was a great shock to Africa, France, and many in the allied nations.

"R. W. Mergusson, Pittsburgh Courier's war correspondent, who visited him in Africa, says, 'I first saw Eboue in the palace at Lake Tchad in the Sudan--refined, dignified, and reflecting the highest type of French culture. He received me informally with an extended hand of friendship and, at the same time lifting his large white helmet with cordial hospitality....

"Felix Eboue is a man of black complexion, stockily built, whose hair is tinged with grey, for, he is nearly sixty--58 years of age to be exact--and the heat of the tropics ages one much faster. When I saw him I had the immediate impression of a dominating force, a mental storehouse of knowledge for the acquisition of which years of travel was necessary.

"Eboue was nattily dressed in an immaculately white tropical suit. His warm personality is one that is pleasing to contact and one which bespeaks a man of action, energy and determination. He is jovial, conversant, and well-informed on world affairs. I might say that he knows America well. I found the General with a

THIS WEEK IN NEGRO HISTORY

AN "NPI" FEATURE

- March 16, 1827 Freedom's Journal, first Negro newspaper, was established by John Russwurm, in New York.
- March 17, 1836 Texas abolished slave trade.
- March 17, 1917 Nat "King" Cole, singer-entertainer, was born in Montgomery, Ala. Began musical career while still a high school student in Chicago. He died Feb. 15, 1965, at age of 47, in Los Angeles hospital, of cancer.
- March 18, 1898 Blanche K. Bruce, U.S. Negro senator from Mississippi (1875-81), died in Washington, D. C.
- March 19, 1785 Tom Molineaux, a slave and one of America's earliest pugilists, was born in Richmond, Va.
- March 20, 1851 First edition of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was issued. Written by Harriet Beecher Stowe, it was published in Boston by National Era.
- March 20, 1883 Negro inventor J. E. Matzeliger patented his famous shoe lasting machine, making modern footwear possible.
- March 21, 1512 Ponce de Leon landed in Florida with a group of Negroes seeking the Fountain of Youth.
- March 21, 1856 Henry O. Flipper, first Negro to graduate from West Point Military Academy, was born in Thomasville, Ga., in Thomas County.
- March 21, 1865 Anthony Overton, founder of Overton Hygienic Company and president of Douglas National Bank, both in Chicago, was born. He died in 1946.

keen interest in current topics and he manifested a deep concern about the American Negro....

"THE TROOPS of Eboue, at the moment, are on the march. They are moving from the Sudan to join forces with other units of the French forces under General Giraud and the Allied forces which are battling away at German defenses in Libya and Tunis. He is bringing up the famous Senegalese, who are universally known for their bravery and utter contempt for death. Contingents have already met the enemy.

"As was presaged, the world has heard of this remarkable man way from the heart of Central Africa. In collaboration with General De Gaulle of the Fighting Free French, Eboue is making history and his name will be emblazoned on its pages so the future generations will read with pride of the work he did to help free Africa from the thralldom of foreign domination."

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