

26 Hannibal Against Rome

A great army was marching against Rome. It had about 50,000 foot soldiers and 9,000 soldiers on horseback. As it marched, the army was seven miles long. Behind the soldiers were 37 big war elephants. And behind them were the many animals that carried supplies.

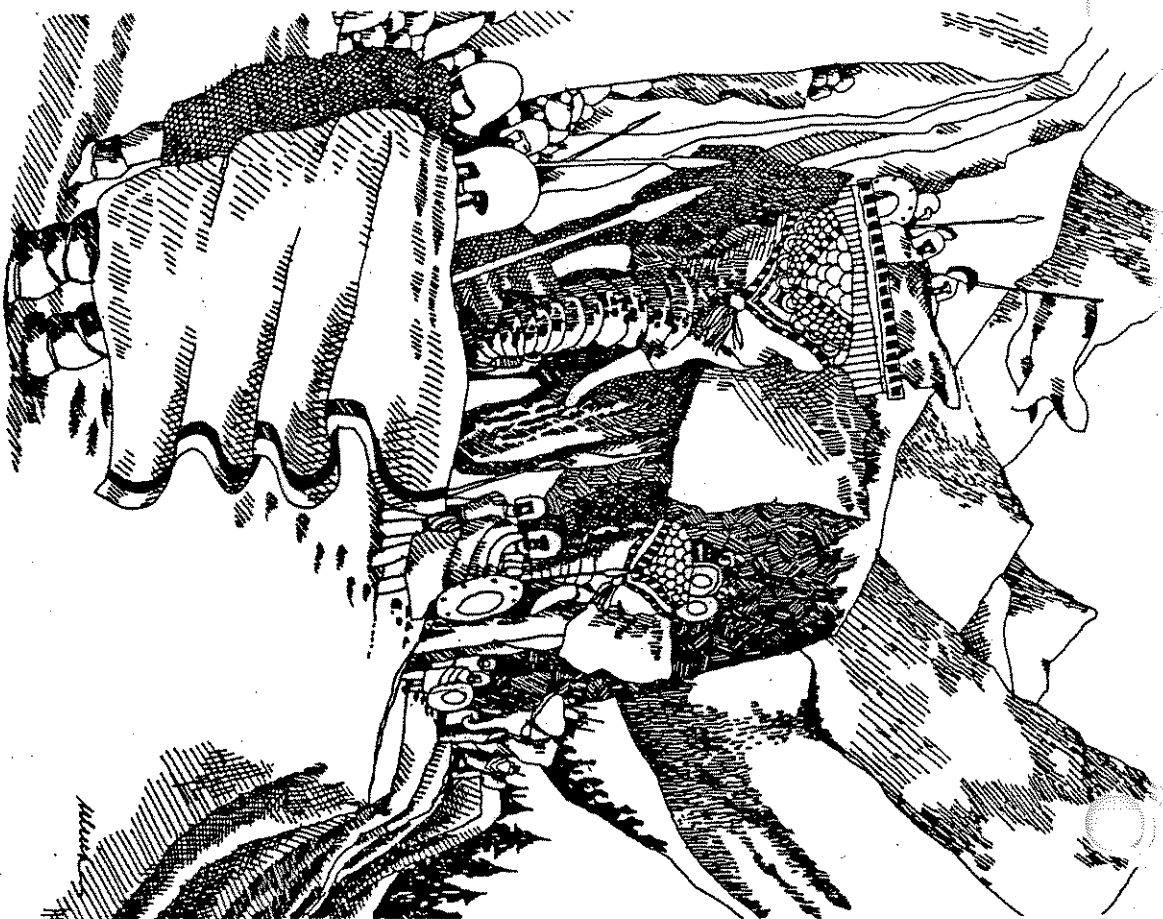
The leader of this army was a young general named Hannibal Barca (HAN-uh-bull BAR-cuh). Hannibal came from Carthage, a rich and powerful city-state in North Africa. Rome and Carthage had fought a long war for control of the island of Sicily (SIS-uh-lee). Finally, Carthage was forced to give up Sicily and two other islands to Rome.

Hannibal was only a boy when this happened. But his father, Hamilcar (HAM-ill-kar) Barca, the top general of Carthage, made him take an oath. Hannibal swore that some day he would get revenge against the enemy, Rome.

The Great March. Carthage began to rebuild its armies in Spain, one of its colonies. It hired professional soldiers from North Africa, Spain, and islands in the Mediterranean. Hannibal became the commander of these soldiers when he was 26 years old. His men were all for him. They knew he was a great soldier and afraid of nothing. He wore a simple officer's uniform and often slept on the ground near them. Hannibal could count on their loyalty to the end.

Hannibal had a daring and secret plan of war against Rome. He wanted to fight the Romans on their own ground. The Roman navy was too strong for him to risk moving his army to Italy in ships.

But there was another way for him to reach Italy. He could march his army 1,500 miles overland to get there. This meant that his army would have to cross the Alps, the highest mountains in Eu-



rope. It would be dangerous, but Hannibal was not afraid of danger.

The long march began in May 218 B.C. From Spain, Hannibal's army moved across the south of France. One of Hannibal's first problems was to get his elephants across a wide river. Big rafts were built to ferry them across. But some of the elephants panicked on the rafts. They began to stamp and scream with fear. Some fell into the river, but they did not drown. They walked across, with only their trunks sticking up above the water.

Finally Hannibal's army reached the Alps. The mountains were covered with snow and ice. The cold and wind chilled the men to their bones. Many became sick and were left behind.

The path through the Alps was narrow, twisting, and very steep. Men and animals slipped and fell thousands of feet to their deaths. Often they could not see ahead of them because of snow storms. Blinded by snow, tired, and dizzy from hunger, the men stumbled on.

Then one day the men looked down and saw a green valley below them. They had made it across the Alps to Italy. The long march had taken five months. Probably half of those who had started out had died. Those who made it were worn out. But after a long rest, they got back their strength.

him. Usually the Roman armies were much larger than Hannibal's. But Hannibal was such a clever general that he defeated them all. In one battle, he led the Roman army into a trap. The Romans were then surrounded and wiped out.

Hannibal could defeat Roman armies, but he could not attack the city of Rome itself. His army was not strong enough for that. So the war dragged on for 15 years. Meanwhile, Hannibal's army burned and destroyed much of the land.

Hannibal's Defeat. Finally, the Romans found a way to get rid of Hannibal. They sent an army to North Africa to attack Carthage. This army was led by a young general, Scipio (SIP-ee-oh), who knew all of Hannibal's tricks. Carthage then called Hannibal home to defend it against Scipio. This is what Rome wanted. In 202 B.C. Scipio defeated Hannibal. Carthage had to make peace with Rome and give up Spain.

What happened to Hannibal? He ran away to the Middle East where he tried to stir up trouble for Rome. Years later, Roman agents closed in on him. Hannibal, now 65, swallowed poison and died.

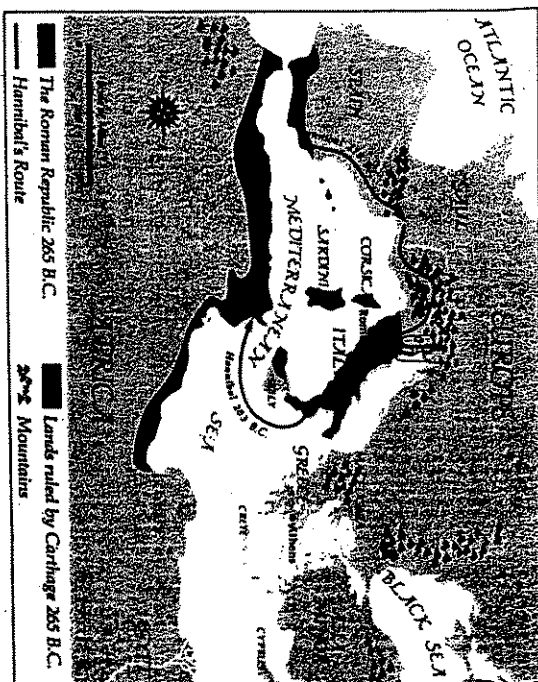
What happened to Carthage? The Romans always feared that Carthage might become dangerous again. A Roman senator named Cato (KATE-oh) said over and over, "Carthage must be destroyed." Finally, in 146 B.C., a Roman army completely destroyed the city of Carthage. North Africa became a part of Rome's growing empire.

Quick Check

1. Where was Carthage? Over what island did it fight with Rome? Who won?
2. Who was Hannibal? What did he take an oath to do?
3. What was Hannibal's bold plan? Why

4. How long did Hannibal remain in Italy? Did his mission succeed? How did he die?
5. Who was Cato? What was his concern? What did Rome do about it?

HANNIBAL'S ROUTE



MAP EXERCISE

Hannibal avoided doing battle with the superior Roman navy by marching his army over land. Use the map to answer the following questions:

1. In 265 B.C., Carthage controlled part of the northern coast of which continent? The southern coast of which modern-day country? Which islands?
2. From which country did Hannibal and his army begin their long march to Rome? In what directions did they travel?
3. How many years went by between the time Hannibal started out for Rome and the time he left Italy to return to Carthage?