

AOSTA GIVES IN

Slide No. 1067..20..5..1941.
Title: Grand Jury Secrets.
Tracks: Battle..Fight..Light That Failed.
Discs:
Lines: Stagg...Voice: Stagg.

Co-inciding with the Duke of Aosta's surrender come first pictures of the capture of Asmara, capital of Eritrea. Dynamited mountain-roads held up the advance, but Indian engineers were by this time expert at clearing a way through.

Heartened by the news that Keren had fallen, the British pushed on with what speed the crude high-ways allowed. Armoured vehicles formed the spearhead of the advance, and as the Italian rearguard was still putting up a fight our machine-guns harried the stragglers.

On the outskirts of the capital, with its good roads a welcome contrast to what was behind, delegates came to negotiate the surrender. They were conducted to the brigadier in command of the advanced troops. They included the Bishop of Asmara and the chief of police. Terms of the capitulation were agreed in the brigadier's mobile headquarters - an historic scene which the film-camera put on permanent record.

It only remained to occupy the city. The Eritrean natives had no regrets at seeing their Italian masters defeated.

(LV TROOPS WAVE) To nearly 150 British soldiers our advance meant the end of captivity. They had been secretly tunnelling a way to escape, and had only another 15 feet to go when they were relieved in another way. Though they were cheated of the thrill of escaping they had no quarrel with the way matters had turned out.

Asmara was surrendered practically undamaged - a well-planned, modern city of one hundred thousand people, nearly half of them whites. Transport and armoured units were the first to enter.

A Scottish infantry regiment moved in to provide the garrison of occupation.

At Government House, from which the governor himself had fled, the men who negotiated the surrender now met General Platt, British G.O.C. in Eritrea. Indians and other troops were already on the march while this ceremony proceeded, for still untaken was the important Red Sea port of Massawa - roughly eighty miles away. By now the enemy could not effectively resist. The barren Eritrea which had been Italian for fifty years, was no longer theirs. On the outskirts of the port a white flag showed the position of the last defensive fortress.

Massawa lay abandoned by its former owners. A native organized himself into a reception committee, assuring the British, in reformed spelling, "We Are Very Glad To See You In Good Health."

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Health./

Nothing but wrecked and burned out planes remained on the aerodrome when our troops and some Free French units took possession. Most of the Italians had escaped to Abyssinia to join the Duke of Aosta.

Every ship in the harbour was scuttled. This is a sight which shows how weak strategically the Italian Empire had always been. Massawa is on the Red Sea, both ends of which are British-controlled. The ships can easily be salvaged.

Italian tanks were driven into the water to prevent the British using them. One was still smoking on the mud.

Admiral Benetti, who defended Massawa while defence was possible, was much too shy to be photographed.

Sheltering from the sun beneath a bridge outside the town were the prisoners we took in the last stage of the campaign.

Now, the Duke of Aosta has surrendered with 7000 men. Viceroy of Abyssinia he now sees that colony too captured by the British. Victory in East Africa is complete.
