

Event D: The End of the Second Punic War



For 15 years, Hannibal marched up and down the Italian peninsula inflicting staggering losses upon the Romans. During one series of battles the Romans lost a total of 65,000 men. These were the worst military defeats in Roman history. Nevertheless, Hannibal never attacked Rome itself; capturing the city seemed impossible. He

had no siege weapons, and Carthaginian leaders refused to send reinforcements because they were more concerned with protecting their settlements in Spain. Also, to his disappointment, almost none of the people Rome had conquered joined him. Thus, he did not have a safe base from which he could launch an attack on Rome. Despite these setbacks, no Roman general was able to defeat Hannibal's forces in battle.

After years of humiliating losses and terrible casualties, Rome finally found a leader who was equal to Hannibal in courage and intelligence. The new Roman leader, Publius Cornelius Scipio (pronounced POO-blee-uss kor-NEE-lee-uss SIP-ee-oh), was respected for his bravery, cleverness, and religious devotion. When Scipio was only 25, the Senate made him commander of the Roman forces in Spain. Scipio greatly admired Hannibal's military leadership and studied the Carthaginian general's tactics carefully. Using what he learned, Scipio drove the Carthaginians from Spain and brought the region under Roman control in 207 B.C.E.

Following his victory in Spain, Scipio obtained permission from the Roman Senate to sail to Africa to attack Carthage directly. Upon landing in Carthage, the Roman army began plundering the area around Carthage, and the Carthaginian leaders ordered Hannibal to return home from Italy to defend the city. For Hannibal, this return was a bitter disappointment. He felt that the Carthaginian leaders' unwillingness to reinforce him when victory was near could lead to defeat in the Second Punic War. Nevertheless, he obeyed the order and sailed for home.

What happened next? What do you think happened to Hannibal after he returned to Carthage?

Notes about the outcome of the event: