

Faststepping Muslim marched with Garvey

By Larry 14X
(M.S. Staff Writer)

CHICAGO — In the summer of 1917, during the furious revolutionary struggle that initiated the overthrow of the Czarist monarchy in Russia, Edward Ali was there. In North America, during the seething anti-Black racialism of the early 1920's, Ali marched with all the

flamboyant pomp and promise of Marcus Garvey's uniformed Black legions.

THE LUXURIOUS experiences from first-hand activity in these and other of the most dynamic historical events of the 20th century make up the remarkable personal odyssey of Captain Edward Ali, of the Nation of Islam.



But for all his heady adventures, bitterly tainted with a 21-year prison term, Captain Ali's most memorable experience is his

part in an obscure scuffle between Muslims and police officers in 1935 at the 11th Street Station.

Captain Ali's response was a blunt but unpretentious "I was!" when asked was he present at the beginning of the legendary Bolshevik revolution.

He said he was accidentally stranded in Russia with a

troupe of show people when the revolution began. All the foreigners were eventually rounded-up and evacuated.

CAPTAIN ALI described the social climate resultant from the breakdown in authority that preceded the revolution as "wild" and savage. He recalled that the "murders, kidnappings and gang wars"

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Muslim Captain once marched with Marcus Garvey

Photos by Emerson Muhammad

inspired, upper-middle-class Negro opposition that plagued Garvey is common to the Muslims today.

But Captain Ali contrasted the bickering, disunity and lack of spiritual significance of the UNIA with the unity and discipline of the Nation of Islam. He conceded that the spiritual upliftment of the Black man, however, was outside the responsibility and capacity of Marcus Garvey.

CONSEQUENTLY, the former Garveyite views his membership in the Nation of Islam, since 1933, during the early development of the Nation in Chicago, as somewhat of a logical progression from his UNIA affiliation.

Captain Ali said that the peculiar job and capacity for the spiritual awakening of the Black man, along with satisfying every other

He cited this moral and spiritual degeneracy as the primary contributor to the eventual failure of the movement.

Captain Ali said he left the movement after 6 months because "to tell the truth, it wasn't enough unity for me." He said this disunity bred by lack of dedication, money and power motivations plagued the movement with in-fighting until its death.

DESPITE THE similarities commonly drawn between the UNIA and the Nation of Islam as corresponding mass movements, Captain Ali explained there was as much difference as "between night and day."

He told Muhammad Speaks that the same status quo-

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common to the present-day American climate are identical to occurrences in Russia prior to 1917.

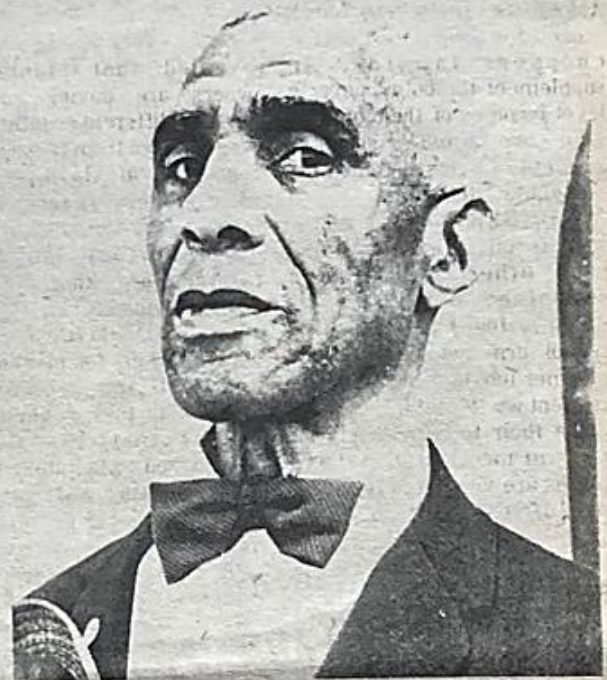
He pointed out the factionalism in government, the inter-departmental suspicions in the United States Government as reminiscent of the prevailing Russian climate just prior to the revolution.

Prized among his richest experiences was the membership he began in Chicago in 1924, in the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Emphasizing one of the major elements of the mass-appeal that generated for the charismatic Garvey a following of millions, Captain Ali said, "For one thing, he could speak up to this white man."

THE MUSLIM captain pointed out significantly that underneath the regalia of Garvey's parading uniformed legions that provided such inspiration for millions of Blacks, the primary focus of the UNIA was economics.

"He bought up chain laundries, grocery stores...launched the Black Star Steamship Line. He was trying to teach Black people to do something for themselves."

The former Garveyite stressed that despite the dramatic success of the UNIA's economic programs, Garvey's major shortcoming as a leader was his inability to motivate the spiritual development of the Black man.



Captain Edward Ali

necessity of Blacks in North America, was assigned to the Honorable Elijah Muhammad.

Captain Ali pointed out explicitly that the Honorable Elijah Muhammad "is cultivating your mind. He's wiping the teachings of the white man out completely, and giving us a new mind. Garvey didn't give us a new mind."

INJECTING SOME balance into his argument, however, he reminds us that "the Messenger speaks very highly of Marcus Garvey. He was a Muslim."

Garvey's connection with the religion of Islam, to which many attribute his spectacular successes, are well documented. During his travels through London, Garvey studied under Egyptian Muslim scholar Mohamed Duse. The Black Egyptian published an informative monthly called Africa Times and Orient Review.

Captain Edward Ali also revealed during the interview that Garvey — the man, and his movement — anticipated the appearance of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam. Ali said that Garvey recognized his incompetence to teach the religion of Islam to the Black man, admitting it openly.

ACCORDING TO Captain Ali, Garvey emphasized during meetings of his massive

following, about the spectacular and long-awaited coming of a Messenger to deliver the Teachings of Islam. "Yes, he spoke about it many times," Ali says, casually finishing his point. — he and Noble Drew Ali both."

Captain Edward Ali, satisfying the enormous curiosity of the born adventurer, frequently visited the Moorish-American Temples founded by Noble Drew Ali. He had a frustrating, but brief encounter with the American Communist Party, where he was repulsed by the prevailing intergrationist sentiments of his comrades.

The catchy, nationalist slogan "Asia for the Asiatics, Africa for Africans" of the Japanese-sponsored Pacific Movement, attracted Captain Ali also

The massive Pacific Movement was designed to incite the nationalist spirit of Blacks as well as Asians for the approaching world war, which erupted in the late 1930's.

But in describing his acceptance of the Nation of Islam and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad as the jubilant culmination to his epic search for salvation, Captain Ali asserted that "What the Messenger is doing is making a new Nation altogether."

Captain Edward Ali has devotedly followed the Messenger for 41

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Captain Edward Ali, moving on.

Edward Ali

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AFTER ACCEPTING ISLAM in 1933, Captain Ali rapidly advanced through the ranks, from instructor at the University of Islam, to lieutenant, and finally to captain. He has been described by fellow pioneers of Islam in North America as "a born fighter." He said during the interview, "I have always been a military man."

Captain Ali received training at St. Charles Military Academy, at St. Charles Ill. and was Captain of Muhammad's Temple No. 2 at the time of the "11th Street Fight," his most cherished and memorable campaign.

It was Captain Ali's involvement, in fact, in "The 11th Street Fight" that led to his 21-year incarceration.

"It all started with Zack Hassaan's wife," he said. Captain Ali explained that Brother Hasaan and his wife were involved in a scuffle with a Caucasian family one evening after leaving a Temple meeting. The Muslims emerged victorious and were promptly arrested.

FOLLOWING A trial, the Hasaans were acquitted. But then, a bailiff, apparently dissatisfied with the outcome of the proceedings, according to Captain Ali, "shoved the sister down. Then the fight was on — upstairs and downstairs in the courtroom."

During the courtroom fracas he said the judge fell dead from a heart-attack.

Tensions were still high throughout the area when the Muslims returned to their Temple. Later that night, 150 Chicago policemen appeared seeking entry to the Temple. "I had about 60 or 75 Muslims," Captain Ali continued, who was Captain of Muhammad's Temple No. 2 during the incident.

The invaders shook the Temple door and yelled, "Open up!" Ali had issued orders at all costs to defend the sanctity of Muhammad's Temple.

CAPTAIN ALI paraded up and down the vestibule of the Temple, a swaggering, stocky figure of a Black man, and motioned for the intruders to enter at their own risk.

In response to the valiant stand of the Muslims, the policemen vanished and never returned. Edward Ali, however, was later incarcerated for parole violation.

Captain Ali revealed the original source of his arrest and imprisonment: "Why brother, I used to be one of the best gun-hawks the gangsters could find."