

History 225

Re: Notes from Ed. Fishel, *The Secret War for the Union* (1996)

Introduction notes:

EF notes several Union intelligence coups that have gone unknown until this book:

- The Gettysburg campaign was not a case of two armies stumbling around in
- Pennsylvania until they happened to chance upon one another at the cross-roads town of Gettysburg. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia was blind—factor because of Stuarts' dramatics about riding all around the Union forces, etc. But Meade knew that Lee and the Army of the Potomac would meet at Gettysburg because of intelligence from soldier-spies within Lee's invading force and from intelligence from farmers who reported the whereabouts of Lee's army.

Meade therefore had the advantage and seized the high ground at G'burg before Lee was aware of the location of the enemy.

He cites the case of Hooker at Chancellorsville as well. Although the advantage was to not impact the outcome for Lee.

Notes the case of Lee's "Lost Orders" and the Antietam campaign. The excellence of this intelligence placed McClellan in a position to wipe out two or three of the five segments of Lee's army. But McClellan's slavish attention to the details and not allowing for some deviation on Lee's part led to a draw on the battlefield when McClellan could have destroyed the invasion force and possibly ended the war in 1862. (Of course the war would have ended before the release of the Emancipation Proclamation).

Fishel challenges the old chesnut that the Rebels ran intelligence circles around the Union during the war. What was discussed in Lincoln's, we are led to believe, was in Richmond within the hour, etc. . . . His conclusion was that Union military intelligence was superior to the Confederacy in all areas except with the Rebels' reconnaissance with cavalry.

Some indication that once So. Carolina seceded there was a plot or at least the suggestions of one that involved some units of the militia in the Capitol City to take over the government during the Buchanan lame duck session.

Facts were that the only military force in DC made up of 300 to 400 marines and a small army detachment. Chief-of—Staff of the Army, General Winfield Scott's Hqers were in New York. Scott preferred to be quartered not in Washington while Jeff Davis was Secretary of War under Buck's administration.

The question was whether all of the militia units were loyal to the Union or

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were some sympathetic to the newly hatched Confederacy? Scott encouraged a former Union officer Charles Stone to go ahead and reorganize the militia and cull out militia units that were suspected of disloyalty. Stone took up the assignment and it may have made a difference enough to allow Lincoln to give his inaugural address in the capital.

The question of the Baltimore plot. Union intelligence about an assassination attempt targeted against Lincoln when he came thru Baltimore ("Mob City"). This plot was reported by two independent groups of detectives or Union intelligence groups who were unaware of each other and reported their suspicions independently.

Fishel concludes that while this question is still debated by historians Lincoln's prudence in this matter was well advised. As were the security precautions undertaken by Scott during the inaugural.

He notes that the Confederates had their own intelligence advantage during the Sumter crisis. Up to April 8th they allowed mail to go freely into and out of Sumter. Then Palmetto State authorities stopped it but not until they had opened an Anderson note to the War Department in which he stated that he would surrender the fort on April 15th unless he was reprovisioned. F notes that the Rebs could have waited for the surrender of the fort on the 15th and avoided opening fire on April 12th, fearing that the fort might be provisioned while they parlayed w/ Anderson.

Did they miss an opportunity to take the fort without firing the opening salvos?

Chpt. Pinkerton's Unique Arithmetic

Contrary to previous accounts of McClellan's inflated numbers of Lee's manpower strength on the Peninsula, F discovered that it was McClellan who ordered Pinkerton to "make large numbers out of all reach of the reality. Mac's purpose for bring Pinkerton into this numbers game was to delay pressure that he take action and to pressure Lincoln administration to find more manpower for his army.

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Chpt. P All the Plans of the Rebels

Notes that it was the Signal Corps stationed on Sugar Loaf mountain that spotted Lee's army in Maryland and gave the alarm to Washington.

Lee's advance north was defensive. (Lee was forced to take the war into the North because of the nature of southern society. See Freehling on this in his essay in RAH.

After his victories over McClellan and Pope these would have been wasted if he retreated to the Shenandoah Valley or to Richmond bringing the war right back into war-torn Virginia. A decisive victory might bring European recognition; would allow Virginia farmers to get in the crops and plant other autumn crops; and it might influence the upcoming fall elections in the North.

Mac was at it again swelling the numbers of Lee's force from their 50,000 to 120,000 a number larger than Mac's 70 to 80,000.

The lost Orders. These were in Mac's hands on September 12th. His Hqers didand not treat them as a windfall secret. This information was revealed to a Washington correspondent and appeared in NewYork Hearld on the 15th. But the Rebel Secret Service failed to pick this up!!!!

Lee never learned of the lost orders until some time in early 1863!!!!!!!!!!