

History 225
Re: Notes w/ Emancipation Proclamation

CF

Source: Howard Jones, Union in Peril

Make the point that the possibilities of British mediation-cum-recognition of the Confederacy did not die with Antietam. They simply were postponed and Whitehall still watched with great intensity the course of the Civil War in her former colonies.

In actual fact the declaration of the Emancipation Proclamation only encouraged talk of intervention because of the widespread fear of slave revolts and a bloody race war. The Palmerston Government viewed these possible contingencies as a dire threat to the civilized order.

[Foreign secretary Lord Earl Russell was the most consistent advocate for intervention on humanitarian grounds after Lincoln launched the EP].

BCF chpt. 18 notes the Bulloch Rams in its opening pages, especially the British conclusion w/ Confederate agents to allow the CSA Alabama to escape. The Alabama's record as a highseas raider against Federal merchant shipping was spectacular (destroyed 63/64) vessels during its military career.]

Point: That after the war the Union made claims against the British for the destruction levelled on her merchant fleet by the Alabama and other Bulloch rams. The high court of Geneva awarded the US \$15 million in damage claims in 1871. Still strong feelings in the US against the Palmerston Government that she prolonged the war with this kind of assistance to the Confederacy.

After Fredericksburg (Dec. 1862) Napoleon III made a unilateral and informal offer to mediate which the Union promptly rejected. So the game was still afoot among the European capitals.

The events that seemed to seal off for good any British move to mediate came with Gettysburg and Vicksburg Federal victories in July 1863.

Add to this the weight of consequences. It was clear to Palmerston, how could it not be, that mediation would lead to recognition of the Confederacy and certain war with the Union. Britain realized that Canada was indefensible. The British would have to see Canada fall to Union armies.

There was also the fact that Whitehall did not really trust Napoleon III and his imperial ambitions. In BCF Chpt. 18 there is some discussion of Napoleon III's mucking about in Mexico. Was this just the beginning of a French effort to restore her old North American empire (remembering that she lost Canada during the Seven Years War ending in 1763; and w/ Napoleon's surrender of Louisiana

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to Jefferson in 1803). The old animosity and suspicions between these two European powers going back centuries had not been smothered over.

Then there was the recognition that pro-Union Russia would not join in any concert of European powers to try and force the Lincoln government to stop the war and accept the independence of the Confederacy.

The irreducible point that was made incandescently clear by Washington was that from the European side that the only remedy to stop the war (on humanitarian grounds) was the use of force.

Fortunately for history Britain clearly saw the writing on the wall and refrained from taking the desperate and almost certainly catastrophic gamble of initiating mediation.

Why catastrophic? Because such a course would have had the most upsetting repercussions reaching well into the 20th century.

Is it too much to say that the future of the world was at stake in the fall of 1862 and into the summer of 1863. I think not.

Ask the class WHY?

Read pertinent paragraphy from Allan Nevins, War for the Union, Volume II, p. 242.