

History 225  
Outline of BCF,  
Chpt. 25

Strategic and national symbolic importance of Atlanta to the Confederacy; next to Richmond it was perhaps the second most important city in the South, because of the efforts of Sherman's army to take the city.

Discusses the removal of Johnston by Davis and replacement w/ Hood. Davis had good reason to suspect that the cautious Johnston would abandon Atlanta without a fight; the morale of the Confederacy could not stand up under this eventuality. Hood's resistance to Sherman. By July the fall of Atlanta expected in the North almost any day began to look like a crushing illusion.

Grant was not having any more success in front of Petersburg. Moreover, in July Jubal Early had a force outside of WDC. Early's victory at the Battle of the Monocacy on July 9th opened Washington to his 15,000 rebel force. All of a sudden it looked like WDC might fall to the rebels until Grant sent his best corps, the 6th, to rescue the capital.

Early escaped without a scratch. In his return to Virginia he first held up Hagerstown and Frederick to ransom. Then burned down Chambersburg in retaliation for the damage General Hunter inflicted on Virginia. All of these were humiliations and suggested that the Confederacy was far from the end of its tether. None of these actions by Early and the stalemated Union offensives outside of Atlanta and Petersburg helped w/ Lincoln's re-election campaign in November.

To add to the Union woes at the end of July came the horrible bungling that was The Crater.

Grant charges Sheridan to destroy Early and to wreck havoc in the Shenandoah valley.

McP discusses in good detail the array of Confederate Secret Service plots to undermine confidence in the Lincoln gov't but acts of sabotage, terrorism, propaganda behind Union lines. These were the plots hatched by the Canadian crowd--Thompson, Hines, Clement Clay, etc.

A useful section on the phony peace overtures from the South. The futile Niagara Conference w/ Greely and Southern reps. MP makes it all clear that there was no real basis for peace talks, arbitration and end to the war at a conference table because of the issue of Southern independence and Lincoln's refusal to surrender on the issue of slavery's finish. The Democratic peace faction's willingness to entertain even the idea of an armistice while the "talks" proceeded wrote volumes about their vacuousness and political naivete.

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McPherson ends with some important points:

Lincoln's "let Jefferson Davis try me" letter that he was apparently going to send with a delegation to Richmond. MP infers here that Lincoln may have been toying with the idea of striking the second war aim--liberation. Was he willing for a brief time to end the war on the basis only of reunion and leave the question of slavery to be debated and decided by some kind of national referendum? Whatever his reasoning he pulled back. (McP would have this as his finest moment even while he was said to be convinced of his defeat in November).

The August 23, 1864 "Blind Memorandum"

This was directed at his Cabinet. He notes that he will work with the new president-elect (expects Cabinet's support) so as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration. . . .

What is the meaning of this? Best laid out in Wm. Davis essay in Cause Lost. Raises question of whether 1864 election was a turning point. In one way it was: Lincoln's election sent word to the South that the war would continue unabated until the South surrendered or as long as Lincoln was president.

See notes from Davis essay for class use for this.