

History 225
Re: Notes w/ 1864 Election
Source; davis, Cause Lost

Davis essay rejects the view that the election of 1864 was a crucial turning point regardless of how it went.

The scenario from Richmond: By 1864, despite reverses at Gettysburg and Vicksburg/ and humiliating defeats at Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge during the 1863 year of campaigns in the East and West the South was still in the war and independence was still possible if the following could all mesh together:

BIF IFS BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE

1. Repulsing Grant's drive on Richmond/Petersburg front by costing the Union unacceptable losses; *+ Attracting Northern media.*

Keeping Sherman from taking Atlanta and opening all of Georgia and the Carolinas to his Army; with some limited offenses to embarrass the Yankees (see Early's strike on WDC); *July '64 - Hagerston +*

2. Confederate encouragement of the peace faction in the North, chiefly the Democrats who would play on the war weariness and flagging perseverance of northern population. Especially in the face of the news coming from Virginia--Wilderness, Spottsylvania, and Cold Harbor. *Bruce + Chamberlain*

3. Southern financial support and encouragement of militant organizations like the Knights of the Golden Circle and Sons of Liberty in the Midwest who were presumably willing to take armed action against to stop the war;

4. The most daring were a series of covert actions engineered by the South's clandestine services--to wage a war of terrorism in the yankees rear.

The cumulative effect of all these if put into action could throw the 1864 election against Lincoln and bring in a peace candidate like George Brinton McClellan. In short, the South would conduct the most comprehensive and sinister campaign to subvert an election in the history of the American politics. Beside it, Watergate would appear as about as threatening to democracy as a Tupperware party.

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Davis, p. 2

Davis on these efforts from the Rebel Secret Service working out of Canada.

* Richmond provided this network with about \$1,000,000 in gold to influence the election. *McClellan's \$1,000,000*

* Plans entailed buying anti-Lincoln press. Support peace candidates in the 1864 election. Pouring sums into the Knights and Sons of Liberty to finance the Great NW Conspiracy (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, and Missouri) to leave the Union and join the Confederacy, etc.

This was one of the grand illusions of history. These groups did not have the manpower they claimed; they were interested in Confederate gold but they posed no significant threat to the Union. They had more secret handshakes and pass words than they did weapons. The leaders of these groups were generally crackpots infatuated with their own fantasies.

* Plans to free the tens of thousands of Confederate POW at Camp Johnson in Ohio and Camp Douglas outside of Chicago. Jeff Davis was very interested in this possibility.

* Plans to burn New York city

The Rebel Secret Service planned that all these events would be timed to take place on the eve or close to the election.

None of these schemes came to anything. That is, none helped influence the election in any way that favored Lincoln's opponent, McClellan.

(Might mention the terrorism of NY fire bombing plot. And the raid on St. Albans, Vermont, in which a band of Rebel raiders got off with \$200,000 and burned a woodshed. Most of them was hunted down and captured by Canadian officials.)

Jacob Thompson benefited in that he took \$200,000 that remained of the gold and absconded to England. He never returned a cent. Years after the war he invested what was left, about \$100,000 in a new enterprise called Bell telephone company.

Safe to say that these actions by SS not only were they bungling and unrealistic efforts that gained nothing for their cause, they were counterproductive in terms of alienating many Union voters who were offended by these efforts and voted for Lincoln out of anger for the Rebels.