

History 225

Source: Royster, Destructive War

Re: Notes w/ Sherman's March

Sherman's part of Grant's Grand Plan. He was to march through Georgia and the Carolinas. Georgia, the interior of the CSA and thought invulnerable to the Yankees, was a great reserve for war supplies. these supplies Lee relied on to keep his defense of Richmond possible. Grant's roll was to keep pressing Lee and prevent him from abandoning Richmond and the Virginia country and link up w/ Johnson's army/

Lee realized that unless Sherman could be stopped he would have to abandon the CSA capital. But Jeff Davis for political reasons did not want Lee to remove his forces from in front of the capital. Grant remained locked in mortal and bloody combat w/ Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. he could not allow Lee to throw any of his forces against Sherman.

Grant's pounding offense. Between May and June the Union Army of the Potomac lost 50,000 men killed in the battles of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania Court House, and Cold Harbor. On one plain these last battles of the war were <sup>w/</sup> like the rest since 1862--masses of men thrown against other masses of men. Attacks, repulses, woods afire, living and dead ground together into the mud(it was a very rainy Spring in 186~~2~~<sup>3</sup>), wounded dying slowly between the lines. But on another plain the combat was on a scale that was horrifyingly new. It was as if each day the two sides had joined in the final great battle that would bring the war to an end. But it went on and on . . . .for weeks (7 weeks) and nothing seemed to change.

Criticism in the North of Grant's wasteful use of manpower. Grant called "a butcher," a general without skill who didn't know what he was doing. Calls for his dismissal.

This war of attrition during the spring and summer of 1864 also played havoc with the morale of Northern troops in Grant's command. The assault on Cold Harbor

Grant was aware of the cost of the war. By 1864 it was costing the Union \$4,000,000 per day. The concern was that unless military results were not fast in coming that the public would lose confidence in victory and would stop buying the bonds that were financing the war. For Grant it was a trade-off of lives to accelerate the end of the war as swiftly as possible.

History 225

Source: Royster, Destructive

Page two

Despite the barrage of criticism Lincoln never gave up on Grant. Grant made it clear that despite the losses he would not let up. There was no turning back. This was exactly the kind of message Lincoln wanted. Grant was a man who fought. Lincoln wrote to Grant: "Hold on with a bulldog grip, and chew and choke, as much as possible."

In 1864 when 55% of the Northern electorate voted to reelect Lincoln this was a mandate for going forward. In addition 71% of the voters in the Army of the Potomac voted the Lincoln ticket. This was the soldiers' vote to sustain the war of attrition as a way of bringing it to a close. If Grant was a butcher, he was a hired man. His employers were the government of the US and the people who sustained that government, and he kept his job.

The Grand Plan worked: By unrelieved pressure Grant kept Lee's army as it were in a vice while the other Federal armies destroyed Lee's resources. When that process was nearly complete and Sherman had come within supporting distance, Grant had disposed of Lee.

The hard fact was that the Southern resistance consisted on 300,000 men who refused to quite. If the Union was to be restored these 300,000 would have to be killed or knocked out of the war. People who believed the war could have been won in any other way were trying to avoid this fact.

Grant and Sherman were the kind of men necessary to bring the war to a close by a bloody war of attrition. They were the men that would persevere in this bloodletting. Lincoln had finally found the generals who would persevere. Had it been McClellan he would have ended the war in the Wilderness--by establishing the Confederacy.

These coordinated campaigns of 1864/5 were to force the CSA to back off of some of their assumptions. That the North would never pay the price necessary to restore the Union. That the Army of Northern Virginia could win southern independence by a dogged defense that cost the Union dearly in lives. Whose morale would crack first.

Lincoln would use and protect Grant and Sherman because they were the tools who would change the Southern mind by shedding more blood, destroying more property and inflict more suffering than the South's illusions of independence could withstand.

History 225

Page four

Source: Royster, Destructive

The Grand Review:

May 1865. The first day was given over to the Army of the Potomac. 75,000 spectators turned out. The next day it was Sherman and the men of the West. More people showed up to pay tribute to Sherman and his "bummers." The contest between the western and eastern armies. They marched down Penna. Ave.

The crowd watched on both days the best army on the planet.

History 225

Re: Handout: A Destructive War

The combined death of the Union and CSA in four years of war was about 620,000. The military deaths of the Civil War exceeded the American deaths of WW II in all theatres by more than 50%.

Excluding the Vietnam War, more Americans died in the Civil War than all of the American wars combined.

Northern dead is figured at 360,000. The South lost 258,000. Of the Union dead about 36,000 were black soldiers.

About one out of every ten Unionists who served in the Civil War died . For the South it was about one in every four.

Given the magnitude of this war, most Americans who were adults at the time of the war either participated in the fighting or had close friends or relatives who fought.

In the North about 35% of all white males of military age (15 to 40)served in the Union army. In the South the figure was about 61%.

Disease caused more than 50% of the Union deaths. More Americans died in POW camps on both sides than died in the Vietnam War. (The round figure for VN deaths was about 58,000).

It is estimated that about 200,000 Union men deserted during the war. The CSA lost at least 104,000 to desertion.

\*This handout will be useful when reading Reid Mitchell's essay on "The Perseverance of the Soldiers."