

History 225

Re: Notes w/ Gallagher's essay

Gallagher like McPherson is an exponent of the school of External over Internal explanations of Why the North Won the Civil War. (or Why the Confederacy Lost the War).

He notes in passing advocates and a summary of their reasons for pointing to the home front and loss of morale as the explanation.

JAH (March 1990)

He cites Drew Faust ("Altars of Sacrifice") who identifies the collapse of southern womens' support for the war as the main factor. (Faust hits on the patriarchal understanding or "contract" that was broken by the Davis government and therefore the loss of women's dedication to the South's war for independence).

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He cites others (Beringer, Hattaway, and Jones How the North Won) and their argument of how Richmond lost via internal means the will to continue the war for Southern independence.)

As the Chicken and Egg problem, Gallagher comes down on the side of the battlefield events (victories and defeats) as the ultimate determiner as to impact on home front will, morale, perseverance, etc.

His reading of the three commanders that deserve detailed attention -- Lee, Grant, and Sherman. For Gallagher the Civil War was really their's to win or lose.

He examines the contributions of Grant and Sherman--this remarkable warrior partnership--and salutes them for being visionaries who saw what the North needed to do to bring down Dixie.

Examines Grant and his strategy of Raids.

Note: To class that this will be developed later in some detail.

Then he shifts to the interesting issue of Lee and the recent controversy swirling around the South's preeminent commander.

Note: The Lee was for years immune to any criticism. His great biographer Douglas Southall Freeman. See addendum sheet on Lee's historiography.

The general contemporary schools of thought about Lee's role in the collapse of the Confederacy is taken up.

Gallagher notes his critics and their criticism of Lee.

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* Limited vision. He was a theatre commander who failed to appreciate the Big Picture. This based on his so-called failure to appreciate the strategic value of the trans-Appalachian West.

* He more than Grant deserved the rep. of "Butcher" in the way to used up his manpower in the Army of Northern Virginia.

* That he was exemplar of aggressive war--attack and die thesis--when he should have practiced the only strategy that could have worked for the Confederacy. That was one of defense and fall back, etc. Instead Lee launched two invasions of the North. His critics would say two futile incursions that cost the South irreplaceable manpower. Especially among the South's best officer corps.

Gallagher's rebuttal. In gist: That the war as far as the South was concerned could have been lost in the West and the East. But the only hope for Southern success was in the East.

Lee's victories and his reputation as the George Washington of the Confederacy. In time Lee was the symbol of the Confederacy. The soldiers who fought in the Virginia theatre fought for Lee; Lee was the country. As long as Lee had an army in the field the morale and staying power of the Confederacy was high.

Gallagher makes the stronger argument in Lee's defense. The only hope for a Confederate victory in achieving her independence rode with Lee. Only Lee could have convinced the Union or the people in the North that the war was unwinnable because of the costs of manpower and money to bring Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia to heel.

He agrees w/ McPherson about contingencies of the war. For example, had Lee won at Gettysburg the impact might have changed the fortunes of the South.

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Re:Notes w/ Gallagher essay/BCF(14 & 15)

Source: Davis, "The Cause Lost

Davis quote about the quality of the Confederate commanders (w. the exception of Lee, of course):

With the one shining exception of Robert E. Lee, it might have been challenging to assemble a greater assortment of unproven talents and demonstrated inadequacies than those found in the other seven full-rank generals of the Confederacy."

[They were a bunch of munchkins].

Special attention is devoted in this essay to Joe Johnston and P.T.G. Beauregard.

Johnston: The three recurring themes in the genealogy of Joe Johnston: He refused to take moral responsibility for his command (he was not a physical coward, but he would not fight his army; obtuseness in understanding and following orders; and a constant instinct to fall back rather than fight.

* Johnston refused to take responsibility for the Western theatre of the war. He dawdled and procrastinated when Vicksburg was under siege. He refused to try to relieve General Pemberton forces who were holding Vicksburg in 1863.

* Johnston's campaign in the Peninsula. He retreated to the suburbs of Richmond without telling Davis. Had he not been removed from command due to a Yankee shell fragment he doubtlessly would have abandoned the Confederate capital without a fight.

* Davis' dilemma was that he kept returning to Johnston in the West because he had nothing better to offer. He finally removes him in 1864 when Johnston will not stand and resist Sherman's marching columns. Davis replaces him with Hood who had fighting spirit but no brains.

Beauregard: Relations between Davis and the Creole general were poisonous from almost the start of the war. Part of this was Davis' fault; but the greater responsibility for this disastrous relationship rested with Beauregard. Davis hated Beauregard with such blinding passionate hate that he failed to call on him to head up the western theatre when Beauregard might have put up a better defense against Sherman. He could not have done any worse than Johnston or Hood.