

The War Between the States: America's Uncivil War

Chapter 26 – Sherman/1864/West I

Summary:

While the powerful Eastern Theater armies of Lee and Grant came to grips with one another in Virginia, the Federals' main Western armies, under their new commander William Sherman turned south from Tennessee into Georgia. Fighting persisted in other quarters of the Deep South and Trans-Mississippi regions, but the central development the Western Theatre was that the Federals had for the most part shoved the Confederates south out of Upper South states such as Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri, and then eastward across the Deep South into Georgia. After three years of mass slaughter and destruction, traditional notions of chivalry and mutual respect singular to Christendom were fast disappearing. Sherman's southeastern campaign was launched by an ominous directive from his superior, U. S. Grant, to inflict "all the damage you can against their war resources." Subsequent events would give much import to that order. Meanwhile, Confederate Nathan Bedford Forrest's stunning military record was marred by accusations of murdering surrendered prisoners.

The growing intensity and brutality of the war spilled over into the prisons, where unprecedented suffering occurred among the prisoners of both nations. And even civilians, en masse, began to feel the full and direct weight of total war, with whole groups of women and children being captured and shipped away from their homes as war prisoners, many of them never to return.

Identification:

1. Leonidas Polk
2. Henry Wirz
3. The "Raiders"
4. William Tecumseh Sherman
5. John Bell Hood

Completion:

1. The first military campaign outside the Eastern Theater (which was discussed in Chapters 24 and 25) was the Federals' invasion of the state of _____, which was rebuffed by the Confederates.
2. Grave issues accusations of brutality and murder arose regarding the behavior of some Confederate soldiers under the command of General _____ at the Battle of _____ in April, 1864.
3. During the _____ Valley Campaign, the Confederates managed to secure significant portions of the states of _____, _____, and _____.
3. During the pivotal _____ Campaign, which followed that in Chattanooga, two superb generals clashed when the Federals' _____ led his armies against the greatly outnumbered Confederates commanded by _____. Despite the latter's expert leadership and victory at the Battle of _____, President Davis replaced him with _____.
4. The Federals' capture of the city of _____ ushered in an unprecedented series of military actions directed against the civilian population and its property, and also likely helped save _____ from defeat in the _____ (year) U.S. Presidential election.
5. The Confederates' _____ was probably the most infamous prison of the war. Approximately _____ Federal prisoners died there.
6. One of the most controversial United States Congressional bills ever passed was the short-lived wartime _____ Resolution, which among other aspects actually called for the slow death of Confederate prisoners by starvation, exposure, and disease.
7. Among the Northern political leaders who opposed that resolution were _____ and _____.
8. _____ in the state of _____, _____ in _____, and _____ in _____, were among the most brutal Federal prison camps.

9. _____ was the largest Federal prison camp.

Thought Questions:

1. Pretend you are either a Confederate guard or a Federal prisoner at the Confederates' infamous prison camp in Northern Georgia, and describe your experiences there.
2. Explain the reasons why the horror of that camp occurred.
4. If you had been Henry Wirz's defense attorney, lay out the legal defense you would have presented for your client.
4. Describe some of the harsh actions taken against Confederate captives in Federal military prisons, partly due to public pressure in the North.
5. Pretend you are a civilian laborer shipped north by Sherman from one of the textile mills in the towns just north of Atlanta, and describe what your experience might have been like.
6. Discuss some of the reasons for William Sherman's greatness as a military commander.