

Confederate Invasions – The Union In Peril The Antietam and Gettysburg Campaigns

Lecture 1 – Civil War Background

A. Prelude to War – What was America Like

- 31 million people; 23 states
- Common language, religion, history
- Still largely rural, small farms; small towns
- Impact of advances in transportation, technology
- North and South developing differently – North 40% farms; commerce & industry, free labor vs. South 80% agricultural (many large plantations); cotton & tobacco are cash crops; slave labor
- Similar attitudes toward blacks as inferior to whites intellectually

B. Sectional Conflict Threatens the Union

- Federalism vs. States Rights
- Slavery protected in the Constitution
- Westward expansion causes tensions to maintain balance between free & slave states(regions)
- Louisiana Purchase (1803)
- Compromise of 1820
- Mexican War (1846-48)
- Compromise of 1850
- Kansas/Nebraska Act
- Dred Scott decision (1857)
- John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry (1859)

C. Election of 1860

- Four candidates – Democrats (2); Republicans (1); Constitutional Union (1)
- Republican Party opposed expansion of slavery into territories
- Democrats split between northern moderates and southern radicals
- Lincoln wins 39% of popular vote but carries Electoral College (180-123)

D. Secession & War (Nov. 1860 – Apr. 1861)

- Six southern slave states secede between December 1860 – February 1861
- To Southerners, it is a “second” Revolution to protect slavery, political parity
- Montgomery Convention adopts Constitution, selects Jefferson Davis as president and Alexander Stephens as Vice President
- March 1861 - Lincoln inaugurated: Promises not to attack slavery where it exists.

- April 12 – Confederates shell Ft. Sumter. Sumter surrenders on 14 April.
- April 15 - Lincoln calls for 75,000 volunteers to put down “rebellion.”
- April-June Four more slave states secede

E. Both Sides Mobilize

- North has advantages in manpower; manufacturing; and railroad network
- South has advantages in 3.5 million slaves; armed state militias; geography
- U.S. military has only 15,000 men; 42 ships (only 3 ready on 15 Apr)
- Many Southern officers resign, join Confederacy

F. Political & Military Strategies

- Lincoln and Davis – contrasting Commanders-in-Chief
- Union Strategy: Scott’s Anaconda Plan – Subdue South
- Southern Strategy: Defend the homeland and erode Union public support
- Northern Pressure to Act: On to Richmond

G. Eastern Theater – First Manassas; McClellan’s Peninsula Campaign

- First Manassas/Bull Run (21 July 1861) – demolishes many myths
- Rise of McClellan - “Little Napoleon”
- Peninsula Campaign (April-May 1862) – plan to flank Confederate defenses
- Army of Potomac, 100,000 strong, advances slowly, cautiously
- Battle of Seven Pines – Johnston wounded; Lee assumes command
- Jackson’s Valley Campaign – one bright spot for Confederacy

H. Western Theater – 1862 Early Union Successes – Grant Emerges

- Grant captures Forts Henry & Donelson in February 1861
- Nashville is abandoned by retreating Confederates
- Battle of Pea Ridge (8 March): Union victory
- Battle of Shiloh (6-7 April): Grant again victorious
- New Orleans falls to Admiral Farragut on 25 April
- Halleck’s Union forces capture Memphis on 6 June

I. Political Dimension

- Despite Union successes in the Western Theater, the key to victory in the Civil War is the public’s “will to continue” in the face of mounting costs.
- The Eastern Theater paramount, with both capitals and largest portion of populations.
- As Lincoln knew: “Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail. Without it nothing can succeed. He who molds opinion is greater than he who enacts laws.”