

FOURTH SESSION

The Civil War

Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States on November 6, 1860. Six weeks later, South Carolina seceded from the Union. Four more states seceded in January 1861. By the time Lincoln was inaugurated, March 4, 1861, six states had withdrawn from the Union, formed the Confederate States of America and inaugurated as its president a former Secretary of War and, until his resignation, a member of the U.S. Senate--Jefferson Davis. Lincoln had been in the White House only a week when the Confederate States of America adopted its Constitution. A month later, Confederate troops under General Beauregard captured Fort Sumter at Charleston, South Carolina.

President Lincoln declared the existence of an insurrection, issued a call for troops and ordered a blockade of southern ports. In the wake of Lincoln's reaction, four more states, for a total of ten, joined the secession. The first federal income tax law was passed by Congress and the president was authorized to strengthen the army with volunteers.

With these moves, political, financial, commercial and domestic bonds which for seventy years had joined the North and South were ripped asunder. In Washington, every department of government fell into disorganization as employees resigned to join the southern movement. Members of both houses, cabinet officers and judges volunteered their services to the new nation. U.S. Ministers and Consuls abroad resigned their posts and hurried home to support the Confederate cause.

The division of the nation was not along geographic lines. There were thousands in the north who believed sincerely in the justice of the southern cause. There were also northern businessmen with established ties to commerce below the Mason-Dixon line who would continue to supply the south with the money, materials of war and supplies it would need to sustain itself.

Lincoln, new to the Presidency had another problem. As an author would note in 1862:

"The diplomatic corps abroad and the incumbents of office at the North were most of them inclined to thwart the action of the new administration, and in their train was a large number of active men on whom the government could not depend . . . The new administration found itself completely in the power of the secession party, and all its secrets, from the cabinet debates to the details of orders, were known in the South. The business of the departments, the judiciary, the army and navy, and the offices were filled with persons who were eagerly watching to catch up and transmit every item of information that might aid the Confederacy, or thwart the government."

Congress had not anticipated the emergency and made no provision for it. President Lincoln, exercising his Constitutional powers to suppress insurrection, acted quickly. All communications between the North and South were watched carefully. Records of all telegraph messages with the South for the preceding year were seized for intelligence exploitation. Postal regulations were changed to permit examination of the mails. Police chiefs in northern cities were requested to trail and arrest suspected persons. Newspapers printing editorials construed as containing sentiments disloyal to the Union were suppressed. The writ of habeas corpus was suspended in many places, and all persons believed to be aiding the South in any way were arrested by special civil and military agents and placed in military custody. The police commissioners of Baltimore were arrested, as was a portion of the Maryland legislature. Soon the prisons were overflowing with prisoners of state and distracted

wardens complained that they had no room for more. In 1862, President Lincoln was anxious to return to a more normal course of administration and issued an order for the release on parole of all political and state prisoners, except those detained as spies or otherwise inimical to public safety. From that time, important arrests were made only under the direction of the military authorities.

The organization for wartime security and intelligence was not complex. Each military department commander devised projects, assigned missions, and appointed their own chief detective to recruit soldiers and civilians for espionage and investigation. Some department commanders directed intelligence personally, others delegated to their provost marshal, their signal officer, their chief of staff, etc. In addition, the War Department employed special agents reporting directly to the Secretary. From the beginning, Washington, D.C. was one of the centers of intense Federal investigative activity. The city was filled with persons suspected of supplying information to the Confederates; fatal secrets dropped at parties were sent, as were maps and plans from Federal offices.

The only regular troops near the capital were three or four hundred marines at the Marine Barracks and perhaps a hundred enlisted men of ordnance at the Washington Arsenal. The only armed volunteer organizations consisted of two companies of riflemen, a skeleton infantry battalion of 160 men and a small National Guard unit. The units were mobilizing and new ones were being formed. One, the National Rifles had over one hundred men and was adding to its rolls daily. It had a full supply of rifles, two mountain howitzers, sabers, revolvers and ammunition, and was drilling every night. A Federal detective who had penetrated the unit reported that the commanding officer was encouraging his men to take the weapons and ammunition home for the day it would be mobilized for a single mission, the seizure of the U.S. Treasury Department. Another group, the National Volunteers was found to be discussing openly the seizure of the Federal capital. Both units were neutralized and broken up.

Pinkerton Organization:

In April 1861, Major General George B. McClellan, the vice president of the Illinois Central Railroad, was appointed to head the Ohio Militia. Named to head his intelligence office in Cincinnati was Major E. J. Allen, the nom de guerre of Allan Pinkerton, a Chicago-based private detective who had conducted confidential investigations for McClellan in the past and who had, until recently, been working as a government detective in Washington. [Some years would elapse before E.J. Allen's true identity as Pinkerton would be revealed.]

After the Confederate victory at Bull Run, McClellan was promoted to command the Union Forces, and Pinkerton accompanied him to Washington, tasked with both espionage and counterespionage. He conducted a full-fledged secret service activity in the Army of the Potomac's field of operations and his performance in counterintelligence appears to have been very effective. In fact, Pinkerton provided the principal detective force in Washington from the summer of 1861 through 1862. Pinkerton maintained daily contact with and made reports to the President, the Secretary of War, the Provost Marshal General and the general-in-chief of the armies. He found his staff insufficient for the job at hand and one of his greatest problems was the recruitment of new agents. Pinkerton's field intelligence efforts have been given high marks, but his analytical method evidences consistent overestimation of enemy strength and capability which fed McClellan's penchant for cautiousness and inaction.

In November 1862, after Antietam, McClellan was relieved of command and Major General Ambrose Burnside was appointed to command the Army of the Potomac. Pinkerton was indignant at the treatment of McClellan, and left Washington with him, to spend the remainder of the war investigating fraud and war claims against the government. Eleven

members of the Pinkerton organization continued in operation in Washington for a while, but dwindled thereafter. Following the war, Pinkerton was not spared the views of detractors. Ward H. Lamon, a friend of Lincoln, alleged that the Baltimore assassination plot supposedly foiled by Pinkerton in 1861 was a fiction invented by Pinkerton to further his ambitions. Another was that Pinkerton had contacted an agent in Richmond through couriers known to the South, resulting in the agent's execution.

Baker Organization:

The Federal Government was, in the beginning, lacking any organized secret services. The Department of State, the Department of War and the Department of the Navy each attempted to deal with the loyalty issue, but the greater share of the effort fell to the Department of State. Secretary Seward sent a force of detectives into Canada and along the frontier to intercept all communications between the British Dominion and the Confederacy. He assigned other agents to investigate industry in an effort to stop the flow of materials from them to the South.

And, Seward appointed Lafayette C. Baker to conduct War Department investigations under State Department supervision. Baker, whose grandfather was one of the Green Mountain Boys killed by the British on a spying mission near Montreal during the American Revolution, was a veteran of the California Vigilance Committee, had completed a colorful and successful mission into the South, had been recruited by the Confederacy--or so they thought--and dispatched back to Washington. Baker had reported on suspicious persons in Baltimore, followed by a short tour watching and arresting Confederate agents at Niagara Falls, before the Washington assignment.

He served under direction of the Department of State until February 1862, when the strong-willed Edwin H. Stanton became Secretary of War and had Baker's organization transferred to his jurisdiction. Baker was commissioned a colonel and made responsible for the organization of the First District of Columbia Cavalry, a regiment employed in defense and regulation of the Nation's capital. Despite his colorful postwar memoirs, Baker's responsibilities dealt chiefly with matters that had little to do with the active conduct of the war or positive intelligence collection. Rather, he focused on domestic counterintelligence, fraud and criminal investigation: he took charge of abandoned Confederate property, investigated fraudulent practices of contractors, assisted the newly-formed Secret Service in the Treasury Department in unearthing counterfeiters, and did more than anyone to suppress bounty-jumpers, the latter a serious problem made worse by Confederate manipulation.

But, it was Baker's domestic security or counterintelligence effort that gained him a reputation, probably deserved, for high-handed methods, illegal arrests and star-chamber legal proceedings against those suspected of disloyalty. He dispatched agents to Canada, had a small field office in New York for liaison with the police, and his men traveled the North making arrests. Officially, his title was Provost Marshal of the War Department [not Provost Marshal General as were his counterparts in the geographical departments and field armies]. His chain of command was actually through a colonel who relayed orders from Major Levi C. Turner, Judge Advocate of the War Department.

Baker preferred to call his organization the National Detective Police Department, a term happily exploited by the press in reporting its successes and failures, but there appears to have been no legal authority behind the title. There was no precedent for what Baker's organization might or might not do in making the friend or foe determination. His agents were often charged with being corrupt, but then it must be remembered that the Civil War was a time when far too many high military and government officials were involved with respected businessmen in deals so corrupt they bordered on treason and aiding and abetting

the enemy.

Lucius Crittenden, Registrar of the Treasury said later of Baker:

"He took into he service . . . men who claimed to have any aptitude for detective work, without recommendation, investigation, or any inquiry, beyond his own inspection, which he claimed immediately disclosed to him the character and abilities of the applicant. How large his regiment ultimately grew is uncertain, but at time he asserted that it exceeded two thousand men. With this force at his command, protected against interference from the judicial authorities, Baker became a law unto himself. He instituted a veritable Reign of Terror. He dealt with every accused person in the same manner; with a reputable citizen as with a deserter or a thief. He did not recognize the formality of written charges; it was quite sufficient for any person to suggest to Baker that a citizen might be doing something that was against the law. He was immediately arrested, handcuffed, and brought to Baker's office, at that time in the basement of the Treasury. There he was subject to browbeating examination, in which Baker is said to rival in impudence some head of the criminal bar. This examination was repeated, as often as he chose. Most were kept in their rooms for weeks, without warrant, affidavit or any semblance of authority . . . He always lived at the first hotels, had an abundance of money, and I am sure did more to disgust good citizens and bring the government to disrepute than the strongest opponents of the [detective] system had ever predicted."

Congressional complaints made against Baker following the war focused on his excesses during the war, or as one put it "this miserable wretch . . . held . . . in the hollow of his hand, the liberties of the American people." It was alleged that he had forged letters used in the impeachment attempt against President Johnson and that he had extended his counterintelligence network into the White House itself. The Baker organization was dissolved to coincide with Baker's dismissal by President Andrew Johnson.

[It should be noted here that for a period of some eighteen months the Baker and Pinkerton organizations existed side by side, yet were entirely separate. In fact, there are at least two cases where members of one were under surveillance or arrested by agents of the other. Neither was the "secret service" each claimed in his memoirs, and neither had the authority claimed in those post-war volumes. If there is to be any comparison between the two groups it might be in the form of a simple statistic: reports of Confederate espionage successes around Washington were more numerous for the period from June 1863 onwards (under Lafayette Baker) than for the year preceding Pinkerton's departure and the months immediately following it.]

Sharpe Organization:

Burnside failed to fill the Pinkerton vacancy, and it was not until January 1863 when Major General Joseph "Fighting Joe" Hooker replaced Burnside that the situation was remedied; Hooker, who is also credited with developing an effective combat intelligence and cavalry reconnaissance activity, appointed a young volunteer colonel, George H. Sharpe, to be deputy provost marshal and to direct the activities of the Bureau of Information.

Sharpe organized a headquarters staff group which actually functioned as a centralized intelligence agency in the field; for the first time in the nation's history commanders could receive intelligence that had been evaluated by experienced military and civilian personnel who had access to the body of intelligence flowing to Sharpe's bureau. It continuously had agents, resident and transient, in Confederate territory and took over management of the Richmond ring at the beginning of the siege of the Confederate capital.

The Sharpe organization had its own scouting capabilities [Sharpe employed some 200 spies and scouts, although they were listed as "guides" for payroll purposes, but even here the so-called guides were frequently behind Confederate lines wearing Confederate uniforms], maintained liaison detachments with neighboring commands, and provided a digest of information from all sources--prisoners, deserters, refugees, newspapers, scouts, cavalry, balloonists, Signal Corps observation posts and intercepts and dispatches from distant commands. As one writer has noted, "All this was not essentially different from the work of Pinkerton's earlier organization, but the products resembled Pinkerton's reports about as much as Hooker's personality resembled McClellan's."

The Sharpe organization gained a reputation of trust and accuracy in its reports and estimates, and in October 1863, Sharpe was breveted Major General and appointed Assistant Provost Marshal of the Armies Operating Against Richmond. His assistant, Major John C. Babcock, a former member of the Pinkerton organization, was named military intelligence chief for the Army of the Potomac under General Meade.

William Wood

Another valuable agent in the War Department was William P. Wood, superintendent of the Old Capitol Prison in Washington. As a result of his daily contact with political and military prisoners he missed no opportunity to gain the sort of information they might impart, be it the plans of the armies or the workings of the Confederate government. His reports to the Secretary of War were viewed as among the most helpful to reach the War Department. [After the war, Wood gained appointment as the first chief of the U.S. Secret Service, Department of the Treasury, a post left unfilled throughout the conflict.]

Major Albert J. Myer

Following the Federal defeat at Bull Run, Major Albert J. Myer submitted a proposal that the War Department establish a separate Signal Corps to take charge of all telegraphic duty for the Army and that specially equipped signal cars accompany every army into the field. Myer's signals organization soon had its role enlarged to include the coordination of intelligence reports and maintaining a central file for reports of interrogation of refugees, deserters and prisoners for cross-checking intelligence. By 1863, the Army had some thirty signals trains in operation and, unilateral to Myer's operation, established a civilian organization, the United States Military Telegraph, a thinly-guised extension of the American Telegraph Company. Myer protested, and was promptly relieved and sent to Cairo, Illinois, to await further orders. His successor, Lieutenant Colonel William J. L. Nicodemus, fell after issuing an annual report for the Signal Corps in which he objected that Signal instruction was being discontinued at the U.S. Military Academy and protested that field telegraph lines should be returned to military control. The report leaked before it reached the Secretary of War. He dismissed Nicodemus and seized all copies of the report and the press on which it had been printed. [Five months later Nicodemus was reinstated by President Lincoln; In 1867, President Johnson appointed then-Colonel Myer to be the Chief Signal Officer of the Army.]

The War Department Telegraph Office

Union cryptologic efforts were centered mainly in the War Department Telegraph Office in Washington. The humble effort was the channel through which President Lincoln received the intercepts of enemy communications, and in a sense became co-opted by the secret intelligence. David Homer Bates, manager of the office put it this way: "At times his anxiety would lead him to ask whether there was anything of importance coming through the mill." He also trusted the security of the installation when considering secret matters and, in fact, drafted the Emancipation Proclamation there. Each day after working on the vital document, Bates recalls, Lincoln would leave it secured in the code room to protect it from advance

disclosure by those who would attempt to thwart it.

Bates also tells the story of Lincoln's concern with the protection of sources and methods. A Confederate courier had been "doubled" by the Union, allowing the North to read dispatches he carried between Richmond and its agents in Canada. One of the messages seriously implicated the Canadian Government and Britain in covert support of the Confederate States. Secretary of War Stanton was insistent that the actual message be removed from the Southern pouch for later use as documentary evidence in supporting a U.S. demand for damages from the United Kingdom. Assistant Secretary of War Charles Dana, an experienced newspaper editor in private life, opposed the idea, fearing that to remove the document rather than just copy it would compromise the double-agent operation and end Union access to the Confederate traffic. The issue was carried to President Lincoln. Lincoln ordered that the critical document be returned to the pouch and the courier sent on his way. With protection of sources and methods out of the way, Lincoln then ordered that the courier be intercepted in Virginia and the pouch seized. The President's final step, which also proved successful, was to facilitate a believable escape of the courier, in a hail of bullets, from Old Capitol Prison and a widely-advertised reward for the Confederate agent's recapture.

Following the war, the Telegraph Office moved to an obscure Maryland town, Annapolis Junction, the present location of the National Security Agency.

The Aeronaut Corps

Although sketch artists had been transported above the battle in Europe, the Civil War saw the first communication between such aerial observers and the ground by electric telegraph. The effort was the brainchild of Professor Thaddeus S.C. Lowe who convinced War Department officials that it could be applied in the field. So effective was the overhead reconnaissance effort, that General Beauregard found it necessary to direct cover and concealment and to instruct that, wherever possible, deceptive expedients be employed to mislead the balloonists of the Federal Aeronaut Corps. It all came to an end in 1863 when Lowe resigned after the battle of Chancellorsville because of personality clashes, serious administrative problems and arguments over command responsibility. Some say that Lowe's continued nattering for more money was the real cause. [Significantly, although aerial photography had been demonstrated successfully in 1860, it was never employed during the war by either side.]

Indian Scouts

Another noteworthy development in connection with military intelligence during the Civil War was the formal creation of Indian Scout units as part of the United States Army. Originally conceived in 1864 as the Pawnee Scouts for use in engagements against the Sioux, its use was expanded for reconnaissance to detect Confederate movements into Kansas. The original company of 100 men was soon expanded into a battalion of 200 men distributed for duty along the Union Pacific railway. The Pawnee Scouts were formally mustered from the service in 1877.

The Federal Intelligence Service in Europe

In 1861, Henry S. Sanford, U.S. Minister to Belgium and a close friend of Secretary of State Seward, received a new task: "To counteract by all proper means the efforts of Confederate agents in Europe to gain recognition of the Confederate States." Sanford, in charge of Federal espionage in Europe, quickly established a surveillance system under the operational control of U.S. consular agents and took other measures to frustrate Confederate efforts.

An indication of the successes of the Sanford's Federal Intelligence Service and some of

its weaknesses are revealed in the justified complaints of James D. Bulloch, the Confederacy's naval purchasing agent in Europe:

"The extent to which the system of bribery and spying has been and continues to be practiced by agents of the United States in Europe is scarcely credible. The servants of gentlemen supposed to have Southern sympathies are tampered with, confidential clerks, and even messengers from telegraph offices, are bribed to betray their trust, and I have lately been informed that the British and French Post Offices, hitherto considered immaculate, are now scarcely safe modes of communication."

* * *

"The Consular agents of the United States had already begun to practice an inquisitive system of espionage, and it was soon manifest that the movements of those who were supposed to be agents of the Confederate Government were closely and vigilantly watched. Men known to be private detectives in the employ of the United States Consul were often seen prowling about the dockyards, and questioning the employees of Messrs. Laird and Miller in reference to the two vessels . . . I soon learned that a private detective named Maguire had taken an interest in my personal movements." [Agent Matthew Maguire was, indeed, specifically detailed to keep track of Bulloch's movements.]

* * *

"The spies of the United States are numerous, active and unscrupulous. They invade the privacy of families, tamper with the confidential clerks or merchants, and have succeeded in converting a portion of the police of this country into secret agents of the United States, who have practiced a prying watchfulness over the movements and business of individuals, intolerably vexatious, which has excited the disgust and openly expressed indignation of many prominent Englishmen, and the frequent criticism of what portion of the British press which is really neutral. These practices, though wholly inconsistent with the spirit of justice and the fundamental principles of constitutional government are directly countenanced and encouraged by the present Ministry, and the rights of British subjects are violated, and their pecuniary interests damaged by the seizure of property in their hands upon the affidavits of persons who have already perjured themselves before her Majesty's Courts."

* * *

"Mere suspicion is not, I regret to say, the basis of Mr. Dayton's [Dayton was the U.S. Minister to France] protest [about French construction of ships of war for the Confederacy]. He has furnished the French Government with copies of certain letters alleged to have passed between the builders which go to show that the ships are for us. The confidential clerk who has had charge of the correspondence of M. Voruz, one of the parties to the contracts, has disappeared, and has unfortunately carried off some letters and papers relating to the business. M. Voruz has not yet discovered the full extent to which he has been robbed, but is using every effort to trace the theft to its source, and to discover how far he can prove the complicity on the part of United States officials." [The alleged complicity was never proved; I would suspect it is now safe to admit that the clerk was an Alsatian named Petermann, and that we paid him 15,000 francs for the stolen papers.]

* * *

"Men who are employed as spies, or who are paid to give evidence in regard to matters upon which they can have no personal knowledge except what they may have acquired by

dishonest and unworthy means are easily exposed in the witness box . . . The proceedings in the case of the *Alexandra* had exposed the extent and unscrupulous character of the system of espionage the United States officials had established in this country."

After the *Alexandra* case was heard in the British courts, despite Bulloch's accurate assessment of the poor character of the Federal witnesses and the perjury of their testimony, he acknowledged to Richmond that it was obvious that no other ships could be sent out from the shipyards of England. Yet, Bulloch's efforts were not totally frustrated by the Federal agents. The *Atlanta*, later renamed the *C.C.S. Tallahassee* and later the *Chameleon*, did not arouse the suspicions of the Federal agents, sailed from England unmolested, and captured 29 U.S. vessels. Another time, Bulloch learned that the British, on the basis of Federal affidavits, was preparing to seize the *Enrica*, Bulloch arranged a party on board and took guests on a trial run. After lunch the guests were put ashore, a crew boarded, and the ship put to sea. As the *C.S.S. Alabama*, it sank or took prizes of no less than 66 ships. All in all, 111 ships made the escape. Some were iron clads intended for combat, others were expendable blockade-runners.

The most important success of the Federal agents was preventing the sailing of three rams, ostensibly being built in Britain for the Egyptian Government. James P. Baxter, in his *Introduction of Iron Clad Warships*: "If the rams had put to sea the South would probably have won its independence, and the North would almost certainly declared war on Britain."

Other Union operations in Europe ranged from covert action visits by influential persons designed to influence the political decisions of Britain and France, to the dispatch of bankers armed with a million dollars in bonds in an attempt to make preclusive purchase of war materiel destined for the Confederacy. Thurlow Weed, for example, persuaded Napoleon not to denounce the closure of Charleston harbor by reminding him of the French destruction of the harbor at Dunkirk. Others sent for similar purposes included Archbishop John Joseph Hughes, the founder of St. John's College; Bishop Pettit McIlvane, former chaplain of the U.S. Senate; and George Washington Schuyler, a prominent banker and merchant in New York. Similar agents were sent to Canada and the Mediterranean to thwart Confederate moves there.

Perhaps the most colorful operation was the Federal move to recruit General Guiseppe Garibaldi, the greatest guerrilla fighter and symbol of national unification of the time; Garibaldi, liberator of the enslaved and oppressed. The plan was to offer Garibaldi the rank of Major General and convert him into a Civil War version of Lafayette. The plan had many purposes: first, Garibaldi was a competent officer and General Winfield Scott whom he was to replace was not; second, it was a clear-cut psychological warfare move to convince the world and the South, of the liberating nature of the Federal Army; and last, it would draw recruits to the Army from the masses of European emigres who had theretofore shown no motivation or interest in subscribing to the Union cause.

The mission was so sensitive at the time that all reference to it was withheld from the Department of State volume, *Diplomatic Correspondence of the War*, published by Congress long after the event. Henry S. Sanford was given the assignment of persuading Garibaldi "to add the glory of aiding in the preservation of the American Union to the many honors which the General of Italy has already won in the cause of human Freedom." Sanford was empowered to expend one thousand pounds sterling to pay the expenses of Garibaldi and his suite, and to expand the line of credit with European banking houses if additional funds were needed to sway the General.

On September 7, 1861, Sanford, using an assumed name to enforce the secrecy of his

mission, chartered a small steamer and sailed for the island of Caprera where Garibaldi lived in semi-retirement. Unfortunately, Garibaldi's demands exceeded what Sanford had to offer. He asked that he be named Commander-in-Chief of the Union forces and be given the contingent power of declaring the abolition of slavery. To make matters worse, for political motives related to the situation in Italy, Garibaldi's aides leaked the news of the American offer. As expected, the Italian press urged Garibaldi not to go to America, the European press both endorsed and ridiculed the idea, and in America the press seemed equally divided. A regiment of Americans of Italian descent, recruited in New York, marched off to do battle as the "Garibaldi Brigade."

A year later, the matter arose again, but this time supposedly not at the instruction of Lincoln or Seward. Theodore Canisius, the American consul at Vienna who had gained the post through subtle blackmail of Lincoln, wrote to Garibaldi, renewing the offer. Garibaldi recently wounded in an abortive march on Rome was in prison. His captors thought it a great way to get rid of the general without prejudice to the interests of Italy and a way to help the United States. Garibaldi got the message. He gave up on the demand to be Commander-in-Chief, but held firmly to the requirement that he be permitted to free the slaves. Canisius proudly leaked his role in the affair to the press. Seward fired him for leaking the operation, then reinstated Canisius at the request of the Italian cabinet.

But, for Garibaldi it was all to late. Lincoln had issued his preliminary Emancipation proclamation, the war had moved past the point where an inspirational hero was important to victory. Union concerns were now focused on fixed battles, not guerilla warfare, and its current fears were of invasion by ironclad vessels being built for the Confederacy in England. When Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Garibaldi wrote him a letter of congratulations. There is no indication that Lincoln ever replied.

The Confederate States of America

Not only the Government in Washington, but the whole world, was astounded that the new Confederacy could bring at once into the field a military force superior in numbers to the standing army of the United States.

Both the North and the South were absurdly unprepared at the beginning of the war; Neither side had truly believed that sectional antagonisms would ever flare into armed conflict. The Confederate States never had secret-service type organizations as were developed by the Federal Government during the war, and yet it is probably true that in the matter of obtaining needed military information, the Confederacy was, as a whole, better served than was the North. Many of the functions of the Federal services were unnecessary in the South. It was practically free of the problem facing the North in regard to the loyalty of its populace, and the full weight of its intelligence resources could be applied to the field and in the North, rather than maintaining a quasi-police state at home.

The key intelligence figure in Richmond appears to have been General John Winder, son of the defender of Washington in the War of 1812 who had been dismissed because he retreated. General Winder, who served as Provost Marshal and acted directly under the Secretary of War, personally conducted a large-scale espionage and counterespionage system that fanned out from the Southern capital. Key to this operation was Colonel (later Brigadier General) Thomas Jordan, adjutant general of the Confederate forces under General Beauregard, who made arrangements with several Southern sympathizers at Washington for the transmission of war intelligence which in almost every instance proved to be extremely accurate.

Just as Confederate spies had operated almost with impunity in wartime Washington, their colleagues were numerous and active in the various combat theaters throughout the war. General Robert E. Lee and his principal subordinate commanders all possessed extensive intelligence organizations--with J.E.B. Stuart said to have assembled a network that provided precise information of Federal strength and intentions. But they had no equal to the Sharpe organization in the North for the centralization and coordination of the intelligence product emerged throughout the conflict. Whereas the North initially was sorely deficient in cavalry, the South hit the ground riding. Fast moving reconnaissance units helped make up for the Confederacy's shortages of arms, ammunition and supplies. A tribute to this military organization structure is the fact that the Confederate Army was never surprised in an important engagement of the war.

The Signal Corps of the Confederate Army also played an important part in the espionage field, and even organized a "secret service branch" which established a line of agents from the Potomac to Washington during the fall of 1862 to help other agents enter and leave the United States, and to convey all manner of letters, documents and newspapers from the North to Richmond. Elaborate intelligence nets were devised to assure rapid delivery of Union papers to the capital of the Confederacy; the South had been quick to learn they were one of the best sources of information on the location, strength and disposition of the enemy's forces. [President Davis is said to have received the Baltimore papers only a day late, and the New York papers the following day.] Those papers also served as a convenient vehicle for open-coded messages from its agents in the North. The Union's weakness resulting from freedom of the press was not remedied until near the end of the war when effective censorship was imposed and the more irresponsible journalists curbed.

The South eventually felt the need for a dedicated secret service bureau, forming one in Richmond in November 1864 when the war was almost over. Little is known of its activities;

Judah Benjamin, Secretary of the Treasury, burned all the intelligence records before the collapse of Richmond's defenses. About the only evidence of the shadow war, found serving as a paperweight on Jefferson Davis' desk, was a lump of what appeared to be coal but in reality was a disguised explosive the Confederates had found effective in sabotaging trains and the boilers of ships.

Throughout the war, the Confederacy had to depend on secret negotiations for recognition and the discreet purchase of the needs of war from Europe and from suppliers in Northern cities. As defeat drew near, for example, emissaries were sent to the Emperor Maximilian in Mexico with the proposal to form a confederacy of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Arkansas which would be allowed to absorb much adjacent Mexican territory. Maximilian is reported to have listened favorably to the scheme, but the operation came to an abrupt end with Lee's surrender. In France, agents of the Confederacy were afforded the full, but secret, support of Napoleon's government, partly because of the Maximilian concept, but U.S. protests soon reversed the picture and France assumed a strict neutrality. [Later, we will learn of the activities of an unlikely agent in intimating to Napoleon that the French troops in Mexico must be removed.]

In Britain, popular support was for the Confederacy, and until American diplomatic representatives reminded Britain of the importance of wheat over cotton and threatened war, that country was a supply source for all that was needed by the South and provided a ready market for its cotton and cotton bills. In 1864, the Confederates attempted to persuade Pope Pius IX to exert his influence in stemming the flood of Irish Catholics being recruited in Ireland for service in the Federal Army. [Thousands were recruited by Federal agents in Ireland with the inducement of bonuses, others were recruited at the gang-plank as they first set foot in America. Immigrant recruiting was such that it was not unexpected when the Confederates captured entire units, none of the men of which could speak English.]

But, it is another type of operation that distinguishes the Confederate services from those of the North. It falls into the category known in World War II as "morale operations." Most were directed from Canada by Jacob Thompson, the former U.S. Secretary of Interior who served in the Confederate Army until 1863, then received the special missions assignment from President Jefferson Davis. His operations were to be funded by hundreds of thousands, and perhaps millions, of dollars from the sale of contraband cotton. In addition, when the Confederacy voted a five million dollar secret service fund in 1864, one million was allocated for the Canada-based operation. As the operation progressed additional funding was obtained by force from Northern banks, trains, express company safes and Federal Army payrolls.

New York was a peculiar city during the war. Many of its merchants had strong commercial ties to the South. Even the goods that clothed and restrained slaves had been shipped by businessmen in New York and its trade rivals, Boston and Philadelphia. The city's banks held the South in mortgage, and had everything to lose if the Confederacy failed. In effect, it was a corrupt and cynical city, most of whose people didn't care who won the war as long as they profited by it. In January 1861, for example, the mayor proposed that New York and Long Island secede from the Union and become a free port to trade with both sides.

In 1863, Manhattan Island had a population of 813,669, of which more than 200,000 were Irish who had flocked to the city after the Potato Famine of 1848. As recent arrivals, these half-starved and desperate people had to contend with Negroes for the bottom jobs. Add to this smouldering cauldron Lincoln's Draft bill of March 3, 1863, and some Confederate agents. There had been a brief outburst on April 13th when Irish workingmen attacked Negroes who were their rivals for jobs. Then what have become known as the "draft riots"

began, reaching epidemic proportions before spreading to Brooklyn, Jamaica, Staten Island, Jersey City, Newark, and then on to Troy, Boston and Portsmouth, New Hampshire. In New York, the mob brought terror to blacks, seized weapons and brought the conflict to a full-scale insurrection in which at least 1200 persons, and probably many more, died. In the wake of the riots several suspicious characters were determined to have been inciting the mobs. One, a young man who had been impaled on a fence, then carried away by the mob and never identified, was noted to have worn fine clothing underneath his rough workman's garb. Another, John U. Andrews, a Virginian complete with a Southern accent, was arrested for incitement. He was sent to Fort Lafayette in New York Harbor, where he vanishes from history. One document indicates that he had been sent to Fort Warren in Boston Harbor, but that the U.S. Marshal in New York had asked that he be returned to New York for trial to silence rumors Andrews was a Federal Government agent provocateur as alleged in the Democratic press. Andrews was never heard from again. Another inciter, a New York dentist named Nelson Edwards was identified by five witnesses as exhorting the mobs to violence on several occasions, but there is no record of his ever being brought to trial.

Another plot, to upset the gold market in the North, was ordered by Judah P. Benjamin. The plan was to get people in the North to convert their paper money into gold and then withdraw it from the market. A Confederate agent armed with \$100,000 entered New York and began a cycle of purchasing gold, exporting it and then selling it for sterling bills of exchange and then converting the sterling for more gold. The operation resulted in the export of over two million dollars in gold at the expense to the Confederacy of less than \$10,000.

Confederate funds were also used to subvert certain Northern newspapers, notably the *New York Daily News*, whose editor offered to influence public opinion in favor of the Confederacy for \$25,000. A much larger sum, \$50,000 in gold, was spent in Illinois in an unsuccessful effort to elect James C. Robinson, the Peace Democrats' candidate for governor in 1864. Robinson had promised that if elected he would place control of the militia and 60,000 stand of arms at the disposal of the Sons of Liberty. From France, the U.S. Consul reported that a man carrying fifteen million dollars in counterfeit U.S. currency was being sent to New York to bribe three hundred influential men and ward heelers to buy votes there.

Twenty-one men, supplied with \$110,000 in gold were sent to Canada in 1863. They planned to embark on one of the many lake passenger ships, overpower her officers and use the captured ship to take the *U.S.S. Michigan*, the only Federal gunboat on the lakes, then use the *Michigan* to free Confederate prisoners on Johnson's Island near Sandusky, Ohio. An informer told the Canadian Government what was in contemplation, the information was relayed to Washington, and all the Lake cities put on guard. The plot had to be abandoned just as it was to be put into effect. In 1864, the plan was attempted again. A team boarded one of the lake ships, seized it, then captured another passenger steamer. They put the passengers ashore and headed for Johnson's Island. The *Michigan* was posed as if for combat and the signal rockets which were to be fired from shore did not appear [the Confederate agent who was to have fired the rockets was already under arrest]. It was evident something had gone wrong [a Federal Detective posing as a former Confederate officer had been put in charge of a hotel in Windsor in which sixty Confederate expatriates resided; his reports of their daily conversations resulted in a detailed warning to Federal officials]. The team sailed the ship for the Canadian shore and burned it.

In 1864, a team of agents launched a plan to burn New York in retaliation for the burning of Atlanta. Although Federal agents had been alerted by an informer, they failed to intercept the arsonists. After setting fires in hotels, a theater, Barnum's and some river barges, the men left New York by sleeping car for Toronto. None were apprehended at the time, although later one was captured enroute to Richmond from Canada--and hanged--and another was

captured trying to wreck a train at Buffalo--and also was hanged.

Early in the war a band of Confederates boarded a steamer at Baltimore, with their leader in the guise of a heavily-veiled ailing French woman, and a milliner's trunk loaded with weapons. They captured it, and sailed her out into the Chesapeake where they took two Northern vessels as prizes of war, then ran the ship up the Rappahannock and were rewarded with \$45,000 for the ship. The mission was successful, but on the return journey the men were recognized by a passenger of the target vessel and captured.

Another band of Confederates, disguised as wood-choppers, captured another Baltimore steamer, put the passengers ashore and ran the ship down the Chesapeake. On hearing the war had ended, they stripped and burned it.

One plan, executed in 1864, was to sabotage Union supplies in the Midwest. Greek fire was used to destroy Federal stores at Louisville, Mattoon and St. Louis.

Yet another plan to grab a ship involved a team that boarded a U.S. merchant ship in the port of Panama disguised as passengers. Their attempt was foiled, and they were sentenced to be hanged. On review, the question of the laws of war were discussed at length, and the sentences modified to life imprisonment or less.

One of the most daring raids made by the Confederates was the invasion of Vermont from Canada in October 1864. The men raided St. Albans, Vermont, robbed the bank and hot-footed it back to Canada where authorities refused extradition requests, tried them and let them go free because popular sentiment in Canada was strongly in favor of the raiders.

Another plan was to have the Confederate raider *Tallahassee* run into New York Harbor, set fire to shipping there, bombard the Brooklyn Navy Yard and then dash up the river to Long Island Sound. The plan never came off, and it was not until records of a secret Federal inquiry were released some eighty years later that the full extent of the mission was disclosed. The *Tallahassee* raid was actually to be part of an even larger scheme. During the summer of 1864, a number of Confederate topographers had been sent to the Maine Coast to pose as artists while they mapped isolated bays and harbors. Troops were to be brought to Maine by blockade runners, there to be joined by more Confederate troops from Canada. Before the plan could be executed, three of the men connected with it were captured trying to hold up a bank. One of them made a complete confession, ending Confederate aspirations of seizing Maine.

Another plan to free the prisoners on Johnson's Island near Sandusky was to be launched from Canada. Provided with \$25,000 in gold and a cargo of cotton, the expedition landed at Halifax, sold the cargo for \$76,000, then dispersed. They arrived individually at Montreal, took separate lodging and refrained from recognizing each other on the streets. There they purchased a nine-pounder cannon and one hundred Colt revolvers and ammunition. To avoid suspicion they purchased dumbbells to substitute for cannon balls and butcher knives to be used as cutlasses. The plan was to ship the arms to St. Catherine's in boxes labeled as machinery destined for Chicago. There the arms and the raiders, disguised as mechanics and laborers in search of employment at the Chicago water works, would go aboard a lake vessel which would be captured once it left port. The cannon would be mounted and the vessel headed for Johnson's Island. There, as if by accident, the vessel would collide with the Federal gunboat *Michigan*. The raiders would board the gunboat and take possession of her. In the midst of the excitement then spreading throughout the Northern frontier, a Confederate sympathizer in Montreal panicked and revealed the plans to the Canadian government. As Canadian officials descended on St. Catherine's, the team made its escape, leaving the boxes

of "machinery" to be seized by officers of the Crown.

Yet, I have saved the most overwhelming operation for last--the so-called Northwest Conspiracy. The South was aware that the midwestern states, including Lincoln's home state of Illinois, were not in sympathy with the war. Most of their lucrative trade with the South had been destroyed when the Federal Navy closed the Mississippi River. Word was received in Richmond of an impending revolt in Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa and Ohio which would result in the secession of those states to form a new, independent government. Soon word was received from one of Morgan's secret agents of "a perfect organization all over the North for the purpose of revolution," and contact was made with a delegation from the secret society, which claimed 490,000 members who were prepared support a "northwestern republic."

It was a move born of frustration. The South had been hoping for a negotiated peace, and Thompson had met with an emissary of Secretary of War Stanton. Stanton fearing Lincoln would be defeated by the Peace Democrats in his bid for reelection, had believed that the President's only chance to stave off defeat was to open negotiations with the Confederate Government. The emissary told Thompson that Stanton would make the Southern States secure in their rights if this could be done without the "ultimatum of separation." But, unfortunately, the story of the emissary's meetings with Thompson leaked to the press, Stanton was forced to deny any role in the overtures and the negotiations were discontinued.

By then, Stanton's fear of a Lincoln defeat also had diminished; the mood in the North was changing quickly as the 1864 elections drew near. The Peace Democrats were losing ground rapidly, and it now appeared that Lincoln would win at the polls. As one Confederate noted at the time:

"The temper of the Northern public mind seems to me to be as unstable, unregulated and wild as that of any savage race. It is governed by hope or fear, or some other selfish passion and not by reason or virtue. They will fight us until we are destroyed or they are exhausted . . ."

Other peace efforts involving Horace Greeley, editor and publisher of the *New York Tribune*, as an intermediary also had met with failure because Greeley, in his enthusiasm for ending the war, had not been entirely honest with either the Confederates or President Lincoln in conveying the terms of each.

Other intelligence indicated nothing could be accomplished toward a negotiated peace because immense profits were being derived by influential figures in the North who stood to gain even more from a continuance of the conflict. The Confederacy agreed to fund the secret society.

The group called itself the Secret Order of the Sons of Liberty. Clement Vallandigham, an Ohio congressman who had been banished to the Confederacy for interfering with the draft and his speeches in opposition to the war, was then in Canada and had been elected the Order's "Supreme Commander." Confederate agents handling the operation soon confirmed the group had more than two hundred thousand members set up along military lines, divisions, brigades, regiments and companies, commanded by a system of officers, and expanding daily.

The Confederate plan was, at the time of the uprising, to have two regiments march on Camp Douglas, near Chicago, to free Confederate prisoners there. Then the combined force would march on Rock Island to free the 7,000 prisoners there.

The uprising was timed for June 15th with the return of Vallandigham to Ohio for the Democratic District Convention. It was presumed that Vallandigham would be arrested by Federal agents, igniting the spark of insurrection. The Federals unwittingly foiled the effort; Only one Union agent, pretending to be a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, was sent to make the arrest. When he saw men putting their revolvers in order and surmised that hundreds of others might be armed, he left the convention without making the arrest. The detective appealed to the Governor of Ohio to authorize and support an arrest, but the Governor refused, saying he would not do it unless instructed from Washington.

The next trigger for the uprising was to be the Democratic National Convention, to be held in Chicago July 4th. It was anticipated that Abolitionists would attack the hall and set it afire. The riot that would certainly follow would be expanded and the cherished revolution would be underway. Then, for unrelated reasons, the Convention was postponed to August 29th.

Impatient with the delay, the council of leading members of the Order resolved that the uprising should take place on July 20th. The Governor of Illinois would be taken prisoner and another installed in his place. Members of the organization would seize Indianapolis and free the Confederate prisoners there. It was even conjectured that Quantrill might take command of the thousands of Confederate soldiers and lead them on a victorious invasion of the North. In the meantime, arms had been purchased in New York and shipped to the midwest in small lots, to be concealed in the homes of members of the secret order. One man in southern Indiana, for example, had a large stock of small arms, hand grenades, and two pieces of artillery in his basement, which also included a laboratory for the manufacture of "Greek Fire" incendiary devices.

The editor of the *New York Daily News* advised that if the storm burst in the West, \$20,000 could produce a diversionary riot in New York. His fellow conspirators, the former mayor of New York and the editors of the *Freemans' Journal* and the *Day Book*, were prepared to incite the seizure of the sub-Treasury, the arsenals and other Federal properties in New York and the freeing of Confederate prisoners held at Ft. Lafayette. The Governor of New York had given assurance that he would remain neutral in the matter and would refrain from calling out the National Guard. Others agreed to foment other diversionary operations, including the burning of Cincinnati and starting a "rumpus" in Boston.

Just about then, Judge Joshua Bullitt, Grand Commander of the Order in Kentucky, was arrested based on information provided the Federal government by the Grand Secretary of his state organization, Felix Stidger. Stidger, in reality a secret Federal agent, with Bullitt out of the way, succeeded as Grand Commander for Kentucky. Two days later Federal agents raided the offices of Congressman Daniel Vorhees in Terre Haute, Indiana, seizing membership lists, names of officers and other secrets of the order. [Despite this, Vorhees, who had defended one of John Brown's associates in the raid on Harper's Ferry, continued to serve in the House, and then was elected to the Senate.]

It was evident the plotters would have to move fast before higher officials of the secret order could be arrested. Members of the group took to drilling in the open in many counties in Indiana, creating a panic as farmers rushed their crops to market in expectation of hostilities. U.S. marshals arrested the Grand Commander for Indiana. A raid on an Indianapolis printing plant uncovered four hundred revolvers and 35,000 rounds of ammunition, recently arrived from New York in boxes marked "Sunday School Books."

The Confederacy gave another \$25,000 to provide travel expenses to get men to Chicago

for the big day. Seventy Confederate soldiers armed with revolvers arrived from Canada and took up lodging throughout the city. Then more bad news. Alerted, the Federals had posted a regiment of troops at Camp Douglas with several pieces of artillery made ready to fire on the prisoners-of-war if a rescue was attempted.

On the night of the 28th, the Confederate agents held a final strategy meeting, only to learn that the members of the Order were scattered all over the city and that there was no plan by the Order's leadership to converge them for action. A Confederate call for an armed attack of 5,000 men on Camp Douglas was met with excuses by the group's commanders. A similar proposal for a small operation to free the 7,000 prisoners was met with a counter-proposal by the Order's commanders that the operation be put off until the Presidential election in November. The Confederates had no choice but to agree, and to postpone the subsidized riot in New York. To make things worse, the Democratic candidate, General McClellan, reversed himself and denounced the Party's peace platform on which the Confederate agents had expended much effort and funds. [Atlanta had just been captured and McClellan followed public opinion in its wake.] The Peace Democrats pronounced that "the wolf had rejected the skin of the lamb in turning his back on the Party platform." On the other hand, Lincoln had suggested to the Peace Democrats that he would "go as far as any man in America to restore peace on the basis of the Union" and that "slavery would not stand in the way of peace." The Peace Democrats recognized that it would be far better for Lincoln to win the election, and much of the fire went out of their support for foment should Lincoln be elected.

Colonel Benjamin J. Sweet, commander of the Federal prison camp, warned of a probable uprising and the likelihood of an attempt to release his prisoners, arranged for the "escape" of Lieutenant John J. Shanks, a Confederate turn-coat. Shanks headed for Confederate gathering places and in a ruse that he desired to join in the rebellion, gained full details of the election day plans. Two days before the Presidential Election, Federal detectives, guards from the camp and local police arrested 106 persons, practically all the top Confederate agents working in Chicago and seized large stores of weapons and ammunition hidden by the agents to arm the order's members.

Eventually the Confederates gave up on exploiting the copperhead organizations, as one Confederate officer said later, because they were "as harmless as an association of children."

In New York, plans for the Confederate-financed insurrection had also gone awry. Richard Montgomery a con-man and double agent [he was the Confederate courier mentioned earlier in regard to Lincoln's decision about the incriminating correspondence from Canada] alerted authorities of what was planned for election day. General Benjamin F. Butler and 10,000 troops marched into the city. The plotters agreed that no revolution was possible as long as "Beast" Butler's troops controlled the city.

In a report of the matter to Judah Benjamin in Richmond, Thompson attributed the failure to the "vigilance of the Administration, the large bounties paid for treachery and the respectable men who have yielded to that temptation, added to the large military forces stationed in those states which make organization and preparation almost an impossibility." Although he acknowledged the aborted operation had cost him \$300,000, there was a bright side: "The apprehension of the enemy caused him to bring back and keep from the field at the front some 60,000 to watch and browbeat the people at home. The same money has effected so much in no other quarter since the commencement of the war."

Thompson left Canada and went home as the South crumbled for lack of food and ammunition.

Notice: This lecture contains copyrighted material, both of the lecturer and others, and is intended solely for student use. It should not be reproduced or cited in publication.