



TOTAL WAR

New Union strategy aimed at crippling Confederacy's will, ability to fight

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Primary Source

William Sherman ordered the citizens of Atlanta to evacuate just before capturing the city. Atlanta city officials wrote Sherman protesting the order. General Sherman's reply clearly states his position on the war:

"We must have peace, not only at Atlanta, but in all America. To secure this, we must stop the war that now desolates our once happy and favored country. To stop war, we must defeat the rebel armies which are arrayed against the laws and Constitution that all must respect and obey. The use of Atlanta for warlike purposes is inconsistent with its character as a home for families. Why not go now, when all the arrangements are completed for the transfer, instead of waiting till the plunging shot of contending armies will renew the scenes of the past month?... I assert that our military plans make it necessary for the inhabitants to go away, and I can only renew my offer of services to make their exodus in any direction as easy and comfortable as possible.

"You cannot qualify war in harsher terms than I will. War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it; and those who brought war into our country deserve all the curses and maledictions a people can pour out. I know I had no hand in making this war, and I know I will make more sacrifices today than any of you to secure peace. But you cannot have peace and a division of our country..."



The destruction of Sherman's march to the sea is visible in the many images created based on that event. This illustration by F.O.C. Darley was one of the most well-known and widely used images. Illustration National Archives



During his campaign of destruction, the path of which is shown above, Sherman paid particular attention to destroying the many Atlanta railroads that were the lifeblood of the Confederacy. These rail lines stretched and connected to numerous cities and towns throughout the South. By striking at the railroads, Sherman choked off Atlanta's vital supply lines, helping ensure the fall of the Confederacy.

CRITICAL THINKING & RESEARCH

1. Is total war a justified strategy of warfare? Why or why not?
2. General Philip Sheridan participated in the Indian Wars after the Civil War. Some believe his tactics against the Native Americans were similar to those he used in the Shenandoah Valley. Research Sheridan's actions during the Indian Wars and compare them to total war. Are they the same?
3. Research the use of total warfare throughout history. In what other wars was total war used as a strategy? How effective were these tactics in other conflicts?

VOCABULARY

Define each vocabulary word, then write a sentence using each word.

Total war	Controversial	Infrastructure	Bounty
Agriculture	Cavalry	Scorched earth	Deprive
Traumatized	Tactics	Morale	Brutal
Remnants	Capitulated	Armistice	

VOCABULARY WORD SEARCH

Find and circle each of the vocabulary words listed above.



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