



TOTAL WAR

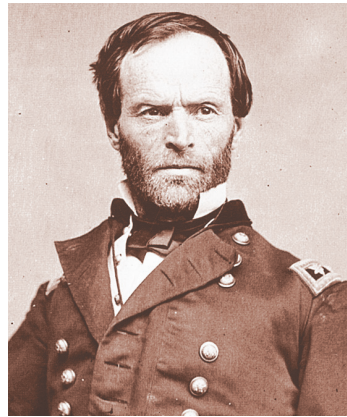
New Union strategy aimed at crippling Confederacy's will, ability to fight

Photos National Archives

By Jason Navarro, Educator, Wheaton High School, Wheaton, Mo.

By March 1864, the Civil War had stretched on for nearly three tiring years, and President Lincoln was determined to end it. That spring, Lincoln appointed Ulysses S. Grant as commander of all Union armies. Already the mastermind of several impressive victories in the Western Theater, Grant came east to assume command of the Army of the Potomac. His rise to the top signaled a dramatic change in the way the Union would carry out the rest of the war. Rather than trying to destroy the Army of Northern Virginia in one decisive battle, Grant planned to wear down the Confederacy by attacking it economically and psychologically as well as militarily. With the help of his most trusted officers, he waged **total war** on the South.

Total war was a **controversial** move. The plan was to not only destroy the Confederate military, but also its ability to feed and supply its armies. To accomplish this goal, Union commanders marched through Southern territory destroying crops, livestock, railroads, factories, bridges, and



William Tecumseh Sherman's comments about his actions in Georgia don't appear to indicate much remorse. Interestingly, however, Sherman's own emotional intensity led to a breakdown early in the war, forcing him to return home to Ohio to recover. After regaining his health, Sherman returned to the war with his zeal for victory still intact.

any other economic resource or **infrastructure** that would help the Southern cause. In doing so, the Union army lived off the **bounty** of Southern lands, taking what they

needed and destroying the rest.

One of the earliest experiments with total war took place in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, which was well-known for the **agriculture** that supplied much of the food for the Confederacy. Grant sent General Philip Sheridan and his **cavalry** to drive the Confederates out of the valley. Sheridan gained control of the area by September 1864, then slowly retreated across the valley destroying crops, barns, and mills as he went. These **scorched earth tactics** destroyed some of Virginia's best farmland, leading to difficulty feeding both civilians and the army.

Far more famous were the actions of General William Sherman in November 1864. Sherman was Grant's most trusted general who was placed in charge of the western Army of Tennessee when Grant went east. Sherman marched deep into Georgia in 1864, capturing Atlanta just before the presidential election and giving Lincoln the good publicity he needed to win a second term. After securing Atlanta, Sherman then took his force on a 300 mile march to the sea that

ended with the capture of Savannah, Ga. This march of destruction was unlike anything the South had ever seen.

In a letter to a friend, Sherman boasted that "I am going into the very bowels of the Confederacy, and propose to leave a trail that will be recognized fifty years hence." Indeed he did. Sherman's troops fanned out into a 60-miles wide column and destroyed anything of military value along the way.

Not only did the devastation **deprive** the Confederate armies of supplies, it **traumatized** the citizens of the South. Many of them lost their will to fight, which is what Sherman counted on when employing such tactics. Southern wives wrote to their husbands with news that their crops and livestock had been destroyed and their slaves had escaped. Many Confederate soldiers deserted the army to return home and try to support their families. Sherman's "March to the Sea" did much to damage Southern **morale**.

Sherman once wrote that "If the people raise a howl against my barbar-

ity and cruelty, I will answer that war is war and not popularity seeking. If they want peace they and their relatives must stop the war." While the tactics of Sheridan and Sherman do seem **brutal**, they were effective to that end. Most historians agree that these tactics shortened the war.

With the South in ruins, Grant concentrated on destroying the Army of Northern Virginia. He fought Lee several times in 1864 and early 1865, wearing out Lee's underfed and undersupplied army. In these final days, many Confederate soldiers marched without shoes and others deserted by the thousands.

Unable to put up a strong fight, the Confederates abandoned the capital of Richmond to Grant, who captured it on April 3, 1865. Less than a week later, Grant caught up with the **remnants** of Lee's army at Appomattox Court House, Va. Unable to continue the fight, Lee **capitulated** to Grant on April 9, 1865. An **armistice** between most other armies after Lee's surrender marked the end of four horrible years of the Civil War.

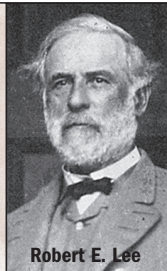


SURRENDER OF GEN. LEE!

"The Year of Jubilee has come! Let all the People Rejoice!"

200 GUNS WILL BE FIRED
On the Campus Martius,
AT 3 O'CLOCK TO-DAY, APRIL 10,
To Celebrate the Victories of our Armies.

Every Man, Woman and Child is hereby ordered, to be on hand prepared to Sing and Rejoice. The crowd are expected to join in singing Patriotic Songs-
ALL PLACES OF BUSINESS MUST BE CLOSED AT 2 O'CLOCK.
Hurrah for Grant and his noble Army.
By Order of the People.



Four agonizing years of Civil War effectively came to an end when Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant in Appomattox Court House, Va. In a gesture of generosity Lee never forgot, Grant sent food to Lee's hungry army and allowed Confederate soldiers who owned horses to take them home rather than confiscating them. This meant the horses could be put to plow for the spring planting, thus helping to rebuild Southern farms and feed starving families. For the rest of his life, Lee never allowed anyone to speak unkindly of Grant in his presence.



1854

The Kansas-Nebraska Act leads to the "Bleeding Kansas" border war and the formation of the Republican Party.

1859

John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry increases tensions between the North and the South.

1860

Abraham Lincoln is elected President. South Carolina secedes from the Union.

1861

The Confederate States of America is formed. Fort Sumter is captured and the Civil War begins.

1862

Missouri is successfully defended by the Union at Pea

Ridge, Ark. Union victory at Antietam leads Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation.

1863

Victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg turn the war in favor of the Union.

1865

Lee surrenders at Appomattox. Lincoln is assassinated at Ford's Theater.

1867

Radical Reconstruction begins in the South.

1877

The Compromise of 1877 ends Reconstruction. Without military support, Reconstruction governments collapse in the South.

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