

The Bombardment of Charleston and Bragg, Burnside and Rosecrans in Tennessee

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By August 1863, the Confederacy had suffered heavy losses and significant defeats at the Battle of Gettysburg in the north-eastern theatre and the fall of Vicksburg in the western theatre. Federal commanders began planning more strikes against the Confederacy. In an effort to cut off Charleston, South Carolina, the Federal Navy laid siege to Fort Sumter and Charleston. Starting on August 12, the Federal gunners fired test shots to get a judgment of distance for a more effective method of fire. Heavy Parrot rifles ferociously tore away at the brick walls of Fort Sumter. This marked the beginning of a new offensive mounted against Charleston Harbor. With the blockading of the few remaining open seaports, the Confederacy would eventually be starved out by the lack of materials for the fledgling nation.

Starting on the 13th, Federal guns began firing from land batteries on Morris Island and from naval guns. The practice firing lasted for five days and finally ended on the 16th of August. On August 17th, 1863, the first all-out bombardment of Fort Sumter was under way by eleven massive breaching batteries. The batteries on Morris Island, aided by naval armament, fired a total of 938 shots on the fort. Sumter's brick walls were blown away by the massive Parrot rifles' and the infamous "Swamp Angel's" heavy ordinance. However, providence was against the Federals when the mass of rubble made an even more impregnable bulwark against Federal fire.

Meanwhile in Tennessee, Major General Rosecrans was finally moving troops on August 16th, towards the Tennessee River. With the Army of the Cumberland underway, Rosecrans, who had delayed to forage ripening crops and repair his railroad, would begin actions against

Confederate forces under the command of General Braxton Bragg. Gen. Burnside left Camp Nelson, Kentucky and reached the Tennessee River on August 20th just in time to assist Rosecrans. This was the beginning of the Chickamauga Campaign. While Rosecrans was pillaging the ripening crops in Tennessee, General Bragg hastily called for more troops and plans were put underway to supply him with whatever units could be mustered from elsewhere. Rosecrans's intention was to cross the Tennessee River south and west of Chattanooga. While doing this, he would feint a movement north of the Tennessee. This plan would hopefully encircle Bragg between his Army of the Cumberland and Burnside's command. This campaign would be a victory for the Confederacy, a victory that would only prolong the inevitable.

A Confederate Army chaplain wrote to President Jefferson Davis and expressed the feeling of many in the Southern armies "that every disaster that has befallen us has grown out of the fact that weak and inefficient leaders have been kept in power. I beseech you to relieve us of these drones and pigmies."