**William T. Sherman, The March Through Georgia (1875)**

*In September 1864 Union troops under the command of General William Tecumseh Sherman captured the city of Atlanta. Two months later they began what would become known as “the march to the sea,” to Savannah on the Georgia coast. Sherman divided his troops into two columns, planning to subsist by taking food and other supplies from civilians along the route. He reached Savannah in December, and the city surrendered. He then continued his march into the Carolinas. To southerners, Sherman’s march, and the psychological warfare he employed, constituted an act of terrorism against a civilian population. In contrast, northerners portrayed Sherman as a hero.*

William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman, by Himself*, 1875

. . . The skill and success of the men in collecting forage was one of the features of this march. Each brigade commander had authority to detail a company of foragers, usually about fifty men, with one or two commissioned officers selected for their boldness and enterprise. This party would be dispatched before daylight with a knowledge of the intended day's march and camp; would proceed on foot five or six miles from the route traveled by their brigade, and then visit every plantation and farm within range. They would usually procure a wagon or family carriage, load it with bacon, corn-meal, turkeys, chickens, ducks, and every thing that could be used as food or forage, and would then regain the main road, usually in advance of their train. When this came up, they would deliver to the brigade commissary the supplies thus gathered by the way.

. . . No doubt, many acts of pillage, robbery, and violence, were committed by these parties of foragers, usually called "bummers"; for I have since heard of jewelry taken from women, and the plunder of articles that never reached the commissary; but these acts were exceptional and incidental. I never heard of any cases of murder or rape; and no army could have carried along sufficient food and forage for a march of three hundred miles; so that foraging in some shape was necessary. The country was sparsely settled, with no magistrates or civil authorities who could respond to requisitions, as is done in all the wars of Europe; so that this system of foraging was simply indispensable to our success. . . .

**Document Analysis**

1. What reasons does Sherman give for his decision to forage for supplies rather than rely on army supplies?
2. Sherman compares his tactics to those used in “all the wars of Europe.” Why was it, in his estimation, impossible for him to use European tactics?
3. How does Sherman describe the excesses that the foragers sometimes committed?

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