

**Volume 19**

**Number 002**

**A House Divided: The Collapse of the  
Confederacy – II**

**Lead: One hundred and fifty years ago the Republic was facing its greatest crisis. This continuing series examines the American Civil War. It is "A House Divided."**

**Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: With the prospect of their dream of independence teetering on the brink of disaster, in the winter of 1865 Confederate leaders began to consider a solution to their military manpower problem that would have been unthinkable just four years**

**before. They debated and then passed a bill offering freedom to African Americans who would fight in the rebel ranks.**

**In the heady days of 1861, with their Constitution clearly affirming the value and permanence of slavery, the whites of the South dreamed of being able to either go peacefully from the Union or resist the attempt of the Federal government to defeat them by force of arms. Even at that juncture, perceptive observers echoed the sentiment of Carolina diarist Mary Boykin Chesnut, “Free our Negroes and put them in the Army.”**

**Yet the military machine of the South, for all its brilliance and clear**

**victories, in 1862 and spring 1863, soon began to succumb to the clear advantages that the Union could bring to bear. They began to lose and lose badly. No European nation would recognize the South as long as it bore the stain of slavery, particularly after the Emancipation Proclamation put the North so clearly on the side of freedom. As the South began to experience defeat after defeat, the ranks of its armies began to suffer mounting desertions. Demoralized Southern soldiers increasingly voted with their feet and Southern states and the central government could not compel enough whites into the ranks to stem the steady Union onslaught. Yet, there was a source of manpower available if the South was willing to**

**abandon one of its reasons for  
existence. Next time: Southern  
emancipation.**

**At the University of Richmond's  
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Studies, I'm Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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