

Under the Guardianship of the Nation: The Freedmen's Bureau and the Reconstruction of Georgia, 1865-1870 (Freemen's Bureau and the Reconstruction of Georgia, 1865-187)

Paul A. Cimbala

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The Freedmen's Bureau was an extraordinary agency established by Congress in 1865, born of the expansion of federal power during the Civil War and the Union's desire to protect and provide for the South's emancipated slaves. Charged with the mandate to change the southern racial "status quo" in education, civil rights, and labor, the Bureau was in a position to play a crucial role in the implementation of Reconstruction policy.

The ineffectiveness of the Bureau in Georgia and other southern states has often been blamed on the racism of its northern administrators, but Paul A. Cimbala finds the explanation to be much more complex. In this remarkably balanced account, he blames the failure on a combination of the Bureau's northern free-labor ideology, limited resources, and temporary nature--as well as deeply rooted white southern hostility toward change. Because of these factors, the Bureau in practice left freedpeople and ex-masters to create their own new social, political, and economic arrangements.



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