

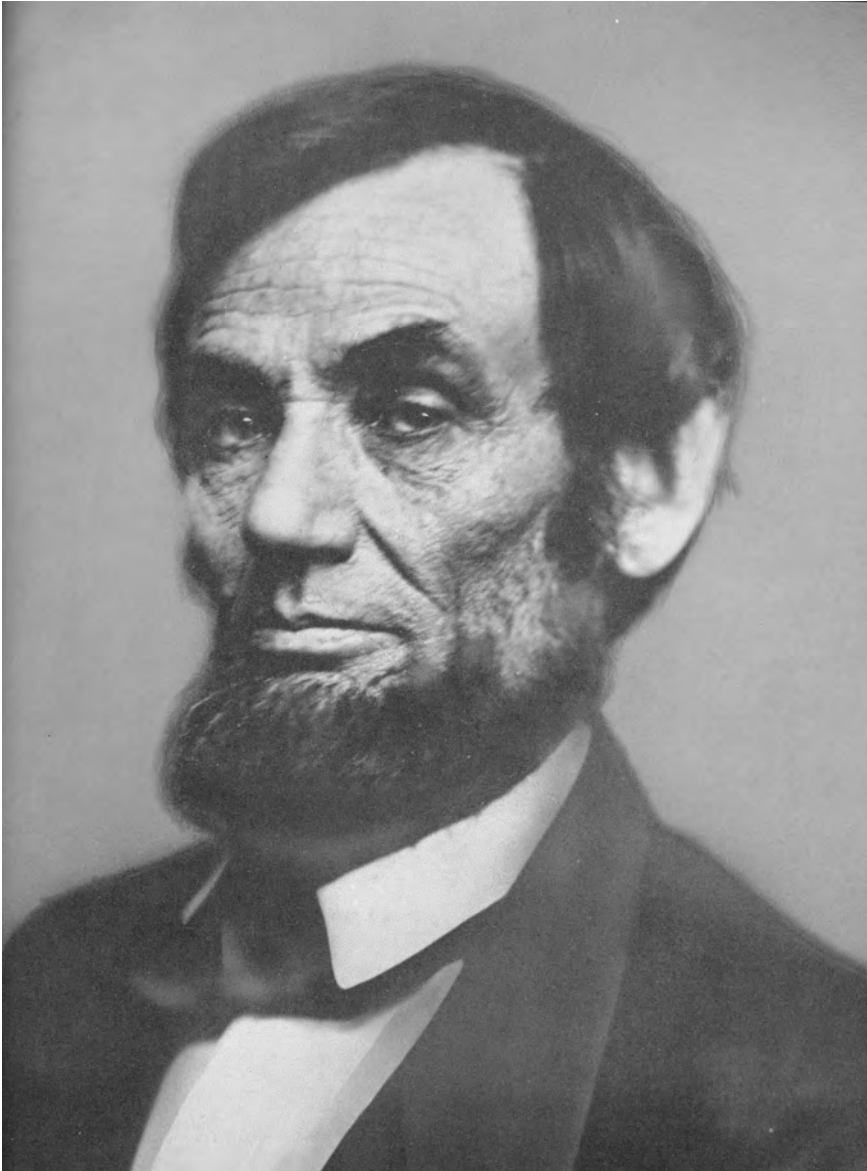
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Abe Lincoln: His Sordid Political Career

Save The Union! (The Constitution Be Damned!)

Save the Union! That phrase was simply Abe Lincoln's way of saying, I shall deny the American citizens of some fifteen Southern states their constitutional right to secede from the Union. I shall deny them the freedom to pursue their own destiny, as guaranteed in the Constitution, even if I have to wage a terrible war and kill over three hundred thousand of their citizens to do it. I need those Southern states to carry out my own economic plans, and by God I shall have them, the Constitution be damned!

But despite his many sins as president, the image of Abraham Lincoln has grown to such heroic proportions since his death in 1865 that today it is difficult to find a truly objective portrait of the man. Yet one notes that in many of the biographies and histories of Lincoln, especially in those that most idealize him, historians do not attempt to simply record his behavior as much as they try to rationalize or excuse his behavior. This is especially true among the revisionist, or Marxist, historians. To them Lincoln has become so intertwined with the Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s, that to attack one is to attack the other, and to attack either has become an unforgivable sin. Indeed, say the revisionists, Lincoln fought a great Civil War for no other reason than to free his beloved black Americans. That war remains for our revisionists the number one most-heroic Civil Rights act of all time. To attack Lincoln, in their eyes, is to attack Civil Rights and to label oneself an inveterate racist.



The Great Emancipator, who denied civil liberties to citizens throughout the North. Was he so fixated on his own economic policies that he pushed the nation into a great Civil War just to attain those policies? Library of Congress

The revisionists, unfortunately, are wrong. Lincoln, like most politicians, had his blemishes. In fact, he had a great many blemishes, as any objective study will prove. In evaluating Abraham Lincoln, the first thing to remember is that throughout his political life he was first and foremost a Whig. Indeed, his hero and model during his formative years was Henry Clay, and like Clay he was totally devoted to an economic system that Clay had earlier labeled “the American System,” sometimes referred to as mercantilism. From 1832, when Lincoln first ran for the state legislature in Illinois, until his death in 1865, he repeatedly declared his devotion to the American System, which meant that he advocated protectionist tariffs, taxpayer subsidies for railroads, and other corporations, as well as the nationalization of the money supply to help pay for those subsidies.

But the Whig’s (and Lincoln’s) big problem in realizing their economic dream prior to the War Between the States had been the Constitution, as one president after another vetoed internal improvement and national bank bills. Indeed, from Thomas Jefferson onward, it had been the Southern congressmen who led the opposition to the Whig’s American System, prompting politicians like Clay and Lincoln to seethe with anger and frustration.

But then came the defeat of the South in 1865, and with that defeat came an immediate and fundamental change in American government. Prior to the war the government had been the highly decentralized, limited government established by our Founding Fathers, a nation of individual states that firmly believed in states’ rights. But the end of the war sounded the death knell for states’ rights and the birth of the highly centralized, all-powerful federal government we see today. As historian Richard Bense points out in his work *Yankee Leviathan*, “Any study of the origins of the American state should begin no earlier than 1865.”

Of course Lincoln and his Whigs did not think of themselves as dark subversives but as enlightened heirs to the Hamiltonian political tradition, which preached a strong centralized government, with Washington giving all the orders. It would be Washington that would plan the nation’s economic

development with corporate subsidies financed by protectionist tariffs and the printing of money.

This idea enjoyed little success during the first seventy years of America's existence, again thanks to the Constitution, but it was fully implemented during the first two years of Lincoln's administration. This was what he had always wanted, and he would brook no interference from anyone in seeing it become a political reality.

Indeed, as early as 1832, when Lincoln first ran for the Illinois state legislature, he stated in a speech:

I presume you all know who I am. I am humble Abraham Lincoln. I have been solicited by many friends to become a candidate for the legislature. My politics are short and sweet, like the old woman's dance. I am in favor of a national bank, in favor of the internal improvements system and a high protective tariff.

This was also a statement of the Whig Party's political-economic agenda, dedicated as they were to protectionism, government control of the money supply through a nationalized banking system, and government subsidies for railroad, shipping, and canal-building businesses. One notes that Lincoln rarely spoke of slavery prior to 1854, but he did speak frequently with great conviction on the Whig economic agenda.

When the Whig Party dissolved in 1855, Lincoln switched to the Republican Party, though he repeatedly assured his Illinois constituents that there was little difference between the two. Having labored for the past twenty-five years to affect Clay's American System, the program that associated economic development with a strong centralized government, Lincoln was not about to surrender.

Perhaps the best description of Lincoln and his American System economic policies was written by Edgar Lee Masters, the Illinois poet, author, and law partner of Clarence Darrow, in his work *Lincoln the Man*.

Henry Clay was the champion of that political system which doles favors to the strong in order to win and to keep their adherence to the government. His system offered shelter to devious schemes and

corrupt enterprises. . . . He was the beloved son of Alexander Hamilton with his corrupt funding schemes, his superstitions concerning the advantage of a public debt, and a people taxed to make profits for enterprises that cannot stand alone. His example and his doctrines led to the creation of a party that had no platform to announce, because its principles were plunder and nothing else.

For the American System to work we must have a strong centralized government. For that reason the American System had been a controversial issue from the time of the founding until 1861. At that point, with the coming of the War Between the States, a war that Lincoln badly needed and wanted, the debate over states' rights versus a strong centralized government came to a sudden halt: Lincoln and his cohorts won the debate by force of arms.

Another facet of the American System was the quest for empire. In this regard the Republican Party's treatment of Native Americans from 1865 until 1890 is a fine example. In order to take lands earlier granted to the Plains Indians, and thereby exploit the gold and oil being found in the Western territories, the Republicans, with almost no debate, simply dispatched the Federal army to the West, where they systematically exterminated any Native Americans (men, women, and children) who refused to be moved to those great wastelands so euphemistically known as reservations. Reading that black chapter in our history today, one is tempted to ask, was the Holocaust of Adolph Hitler during World War II any worse than what the Republicans perpetrated against Native Americans in the late nineteenth century?

Lincoln and the Negro

As the consummate politician, Lincoln had an innate ability to say one thing to one audience and the opposite to another. Indeed, economist Murray Rothbard, in his work *America's Two Just Wars, 1776 and 1861* writes, "Lincoln was unsurpassed as a politician, which means that he was

a master conniver, manipulator, and liar.” The finest example of his duplicity possibly lies in his attitude towards racial equality. Indeed, prior to 1863 Lincoln, “the Great Emancipator,” stated repeatedly that he was opposed to racial equality. For example, in his debate with Stephen Douglas in Ottawa, Illinois, in 1858, Lincoln stated,

I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and black races. There is a physical difference between the two, which, in my judgment, will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality; and inasmuch as it becomes a necessity that there must be a difference, I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior position. I have never said anything to the contrary.

In that same revealing debate with Stephen Douglas, Lincoln stated that he

was not and never had been in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people. Anything that argues me into his [Douglas's] idea of perfect social and political equality with the Negro is but a specious and fantastic arrangement of word, by which a man can prove a horse chestnut to be a chestnut.

If Lincoln was not in favor of racial equality, as he repeatedly stated, then what was his solution to the problem of slavery and slaves? According to Lincoln, Afro-Americans should first be freed, then colonized. Which was another idea he inherited from Henry Clay.

During the war he was asked what should be done with the slaves if they were ever freed. He responded that he would “send them to Liberia, to their own native land.” To that end, during his presidency, he developed plans to send every black person back to Africa, Haiti, or Central America.

This colonization idea was the brainchild of Henry Clay, who was the founding member and president of the American Colonization Society. Upon Clay's death in 1852, Lincoln presented a eulogy in which he pointed out that Clay's colonization ideas did not die with him, but would

live on with Abe Lincoln. To that end, in an 1862 message to Congress concerning the problem presented by thousands of freed slaves now flooding into the North, Lincoln stated, "I cannot make it better known than it already is, that I strongly favor colonization."

But Lincoln's ideas concerning colonization cannot be dismissed as simple racism. To the contrary, he was truly troubled by the possibility that freed blacks would be competing with whites for the limited number of available jobs, especially in the Western territories. In his Cooper Union speech of February 20, 1860, he advocated "the peaceful deportation of blacks, so that their places be filled up by free white laborers." Some three years earlier, in 1857, with apparently this same goal in mind, he had urged his colleagues in the Illinois legislature to appropriate money to remove all free blacks from the state of Illinois. Where they were to go Lincoln did not say, but the important thing was to get them out of Illinois. According to Roy P. Basler in his *Abe Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, Lincoln in 1857 explained to his fellow Illinois state legislators that "eliminating every black person from American soil would be a glorious consummation."

In 1862, when slavery was finally abolished in Washington, D.C., Lincoln had Congress appropriate six hundred thousand dollars to fund his plan to export these freed blacks to the Danish West Indies, Dutch Guiana, British Guiana, British Honduras, Guadeloupe, Ecuador—anywhere but the United States. He asked Sen. Samuel Pomeroy to supervise his resettlement efforts, and the senator later suggested that these blacks be sent to a Central American location to be called "Lincolnia."

As for the institution of slavery, certainly Lincoln had no intention of making any moves to eradicate that dismal chapter from our history, or at least he had no intention of interfering with *Southern* slavery. In his First Inaugural Address he stated, "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. *I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so*" [emphasis added].

Indeed, none of the four candidates for president in 1860

advocated the abolition of Southern slavery. They were aware that to do so would first be to violate the Constitution and second to commit political suicide. True, there existed a small abolitionist movement in the North, but for the most part there was very little public support for interfering with Southern slavery. And indeed when politicians at that time spoke of banning slavery, they were speaking not of banning slavery in the Southern states but of prohibiting slavery in the new Western territories. Their opposition to extending slavery to the West was based not on moral grounds but on fears that black labor would compete with white labor for a limited number of jobs. Lincoln spoke on this point to the Illinois state legislature in 1854:

Whether slavery shall go into Nebraska, or other new territories, is not a matter of exclusive concern to the people who may go there. The whole nation is interested that the best use shall be made of these territories. We want them for the homes of free white people. This they cannot be, to any considerable extent, if slavery shall be planted with them. Slave states are the places for poor white people to go and better their condition.

Lincoln, in his above statements, sets forward very accurately the position of the Republican Party in 1860. Indeed, *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, a staunch Republican and rabid abolitionist, explained in an 1860 editorial that “all the unoccupied territory shall be preserved for the benefit of the white Caucasian race—a thing which cannot be except by the exclusion of slavery.”

Paul M. Angle in his *Lincoln Reader* quotes Lyman Trumbull, a senator from Illinois and a Lincoln supporter, on this point:

We, the Republican Party, are the white man's party. We are for the free white man, and for making white labor acceptable and honorable, which it can never be when Negro slave labor is brought into competition with it.

When we say that all men are created equal, we do not mean that every man in organized society has the same rights. We don't tolerate that in Illinois.

It might also be pointed out that the Republicans of 1860 feared the political impact of extending slavery to the Western territories. The three-fifths clause in the Constitution allowed every five slaves to count as three white citizens when it came to determining the number of Congressional seats in each state. The Republicans pointed to Maine and South Carolina as examples of the unfairness of this law, saying that while Maine had 581,813 white citizens, South Carolina had only 274,567; yet both were accorded the same number of representatives in Congress because South Carolina also counted 384,984 slaves. Thus, to extend slavery to the new territories would be to worsen this Congressional imbalance in favor of the Democrats, which is another reason that Lincoln led Republican opposition. Yes, Lincoln and his Republican Party opposed the extension of slavery, but not on moral grounds. They were intent on protecting their own political hides.

Officially, at least according to the revisionists, the War Between the States was fought to eradicate slavery from our great nation. But the facts suggest that the revisionist are only partly correct. It is true that there existed a strong abolitionist movement in some parts of the North, but it was a very small movement. So small, in fact, that politicians like Lincoln would not risk their political futures by associating themselves with it. Note for example that no abolitionist was ever elected to any major political office in any Northern state. Indeed, the vast majority of white Northerners cared nothing for the welfare of the slaves and treated the freed blacks who lived among them with contempt and sometimes violence. As Eugene Berwanger wrote in *North of Slavery*,

In virtually every phase of existence in the North, Negroes found themselves systematically separated from whites. They were either excluded from railway cars, omnibuses, stagecoaches, and steamboats or assigned to special "Jim Crow" sections; they sat, when permitted, in secluded and remote corners of theaters and lecture halls; they could not enter most hotels, restaurants, and resorts, except as servants; they prayed in "Negro pews" in the white churches, and if partaking

of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, they waited until the whites had been served the bread and wine. Moreover, they were often educated in segregated schools, punished in segregated prisons, nursed in segregated hospitals, and buried in segregated cemeteries. Racial prejudice haunts its victim wherever he goes.

Too, Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* wrote that "the prejudice of race appears to be stronger in the states that have abolished slavery than in those where it still exists; and nowhere is it so intolerant as in those states where servitude has never been known."

And there were those Black Codes that had existed in the North for some forty years before such cruel laws were enacted in the South during the Reconstruction period (1868-1877). *The Revised Code of Indiana of 1860*, for example, prohibited freed Negroes and mulattos from entering the state; all contracts with Negroes were null and void; any white person who encouraged blacks to enter the state was subject to a fine of up to five hundred dollars; Negroes and mulattos were not allowed to vote; no Negro or mulatto having even one-eighth part of Negro blood could legally marry a white person, an act punishable by ten years' imprisonment and a fine of up to five thousand dollars; any person counseling or encouraging interracial marriage was subject to a fine of up to one thousand dollars; Negroes and mulattos were forbidden from testifying in court against white people, from sending their children to the public schools, or from holding any political office. In other words, the freed slave in Indiana in 1860 had no rights. He could not operate a business, for example, for if he did and that business was robbed or plundered by a white man, there was nothing the black owner could do since he could not testify against a white in a court of law. And certainly, since he could not vote, he had no political representation. Yes, perhaps he was a freed slave, but such state laws that were prevalent throughout the North in 1860 made a mockery of his freedom.

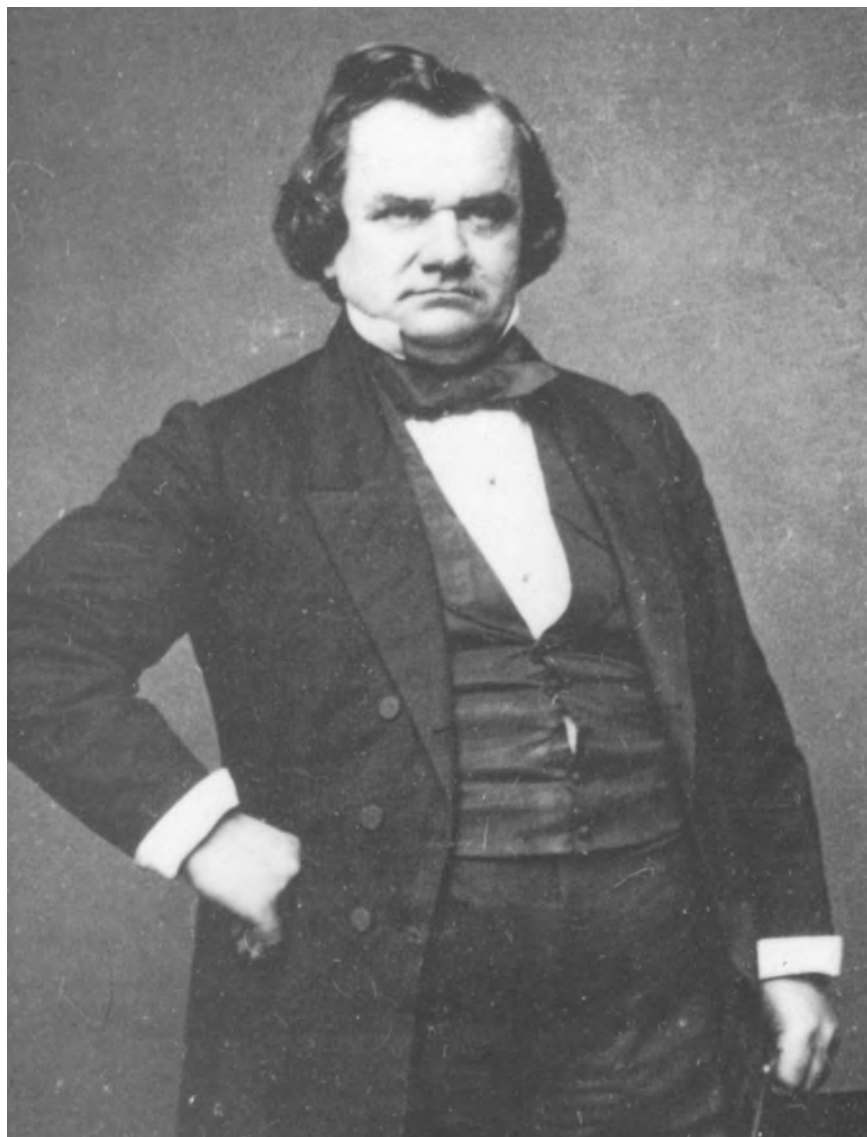
In 1860 the only Northern states that allowed blacks to vote were Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine. And only Massachusetts allowed blacks to serve on

juries. That same year, Illinois, Indiana, and Oregon amended their state constitutions to prohibit the emigration of freed blacks into those states. Illinois senator Lyman Trumbull explained, "There is a great aversion in the West—I know it to be so in my state—against having free Negroes come among us. Our people want nothing to do with the Negro."

In fact when Virginia statesman John Randolph had freed 518 slaves in 1847, the state of Ohio prohibited their resettlement there. An Ohio congressman threatened that if any black tried to cross the border into Ohio "the banks of the Ohio River will be lined with men with muskets on their shoulders to keep off the emancipated slaves."

With such laws and attitudes so prevalent throughout the North, it is not difficult to understand Lincoln's opposition to the spread of slavery into the new territories. From Lincoln's political standpoint, the best course, the safest course, was not to mention slavery at all. He would certainly win no friends in the North by doing so.

Of course such racism was not limited to the population at large but extended to even well-educated newspaper editors. On November 22, 1860, the *Philadelphia Daily News*, bemoaning the fact that freed slaves were flocking to Philadelphia, would state, "It is neither for the good of the colored race nor of our own that they should continue to dwell among us to any considerable extent. The two races can never exist in conjunction except as a superior and inferior. The African is naturally the inferior race." And on December 7, 1860, the *Daily Chicago Times*, also frightened at the prospect of freed slaves migrating to Illinois, commented: "Evil and nothing but evil, has ever followed in the track of this hideous monster, Abolition. Let the slave alone. Send him back to his master where he belongs." And speaking of the blessings of slavery, on March 11, 1861, the *New York Herald*, which had the largest circulation in the country at the time, would write, "The immense increase in the numbers of slaves within so short a time speaks for the good treatment and happy, contented lot of the slaves. They are comfortably fed, housed and clothed, and seldom or never overworked."



Stephen Douglas, the candidate of the northern Democrats for president in 1860. We can only wonder how the nation's history would differ today had he defeated Lincoln for the presidency that year. Library of Congress

As for Lincoln's plan to colonize the blacks of America, the *Concord (N.H.) Democrat Standard* lent their support when their editor wrote on September 8, 1860, "The proposition that the Negro is equal by nature, physically and mentally, to the white man, seems to be so absurd and preposterous, that we cannot conceive how it can be entertained by any intelligent and rational white man." Then two weeks later the *Boston Daily Courier*, fearing apparently that the mulatto had somehow been ignored in all the racial controversy raging about the country, added, "We believe the mulatto to be inferior in capacity, character, and organization to the full-blooded black, and still farther below the standard of the white race."

The foregoing discussion is intended to contradict the popular myth that morally outraged Northerners elected Lincoln to the presidency in 1860 as a result of their deep concern for the welfare of black slaves in the South. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Blacks in the North suffered terrible discrimination at the hands of their white neighbors and were deprived of the most basic human freedoms by the Black Codes in effect in most of the Northern states. Considering the racist attitudes so prevalent in the North, it is absurd to assume that any concern for black slaves would motivate hundreds of thousands of young Northerners to sacrifice their lives on foreign battlefields. To the contrary, they were fighting merely to preserve the Union.

Lincoln and Secession

From the very beginning our Founding Fathers believed that among our most fundamental rights was the right of any state to secede should that state feel that it was in its best interests to do so. In fact, the Declaration of Independence is little more than a justification for the secession of the American states from the British government. Our Founding Fathers, in other words, were themselves secessionists. With such precedence, Southern secessionists of 1861 quoted the

Declaration of Independence as a basis and justification for their belief in states' rights and as the most powerful defense against a strong centralized government.

Citizens sometimes forget that America has fought two wars of secession: 1776 and 1861. In 1776 the thirteen colonies seceded from the tyranny of the British government. In 1861 eleven Southern states seceded from what they considered the tyranny of Washington, D.C., using as their reasoning the words of Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, who stated that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed and that whenever a government becomes destructive of the rights of life, liberty, and property, citizens have a right to secede from that government and form a new one. In fact, in his First Inaugural Address in 1801, Jefferson declared, "If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this Union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it."

Abraham Lincoln himself in an 1848 speech before the Illinois state legislature declared his own belief in the inalienable right of any state to secede from the Union:

Any people anywhere, being inclined and having the power, have the right to rise up and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better. This is a most valuable, a most sacred right—a right which we hope and believe is to liberate the world. Nor is this right confined to cases in which the whole people of an existing government may choose to exercise it. Any portion of such people, that can, may revolutionize, and make their own of so much of the territory as they inhabit.

Alexis de Tocqueville in his *Democracy in America* also commented on the unique right of any state in this Union to secede should it be in that state's best interest to do so:

The Union was formed by the voluntary agreement of the States; and in uniting together they have not forfeited their nationality, nor have they

been reduced to the condition of one and the same people. If one of the states chooses to withdraw from the compact, it would be difficult to disprove its right of doing so, and the Federal Government would have no means of maintaining its claims directly either by force or might.

Of course de Tocqueville had no way of knowing that in 1861 Abe Lincoln would dispatch his Federal army to invade and kill some three hundred thousand Southerners to prevent them from exercising their constitutional right to secede, a right that had traditionally been the very foundation of American government. Recall that at the beginning of the Revolution, each state declared its independence from Great Britain on its own, and following the war each state was individually recognized as sovereign by the defeated British government. These states then formed the Articles of Federation and Perpetual Union, which created a federal government to act as an agent for the thirteen states. But when the Constitution was adopted, the states dissolved the Perpetual Union, and the words "Perpetual Union" do not appear anywhere in the Constitution. From the very beginning each state was sovereign and each state remained so until 1861.

By 1861 the constitutional right of a state to secede was well known in the North as well as in the South. And the pervasive sentiment in the North was to allow the South to go in peace. Edward Everett, who had campaigned as vice president with John Bell on the Constitutional Union Party ticket in 1860, voiced the common Northern attitude towards the South and secession: "To expect to hold fifteen States in the Union by force is preposterous. The idea of a civil war, accompanied as it would be, by a servile insurrection, is too monstrous to be entertained for a moment."

In Maryland in April of 1861, immediately following the firing on Fort Sumter, state leaders favored peaceful secession for the Confederate states, but President Lincoln, who had suspended the writ of habeas corpus, had all those leaders arrested and thrown in jail before they could assemble in the state legislature to even discuss secession. Lincoln ordered the Federal army to occupy the state and

posted armed guards at the doors of the State House to prevent the state legislature from meeting to discuss secession. The governor of Delaware was warned that Delaware must support Abraham Lincoln and the Union or else the state would be bombarded by the Union gunboats sitting in the harbor.

Though Lincoln employed forceful means of preventing secession, newspaper editors throughout the North favored a peaceful exit for the Southern states. A sampling indicates the following attitudes:

On November 17, 1860, the *Providence Evening Press* editorialized, "Sovereignty necessarily includes what we call the right of secession. This right must be maintained lest we establish a colossal despotism against which the founding fathers uttered their solemn warnings."

On November 21, 1860, the *Cincinnati Daily Press* wrote, "We believe that the right of any member of this Confederacy to dissolve its political relations with the others and assume an independent position is absolute."

On December 17, 1860, the *New York Tribune* would write, "If tyranny and despotism justified the Revolution of 1776, then we do not see why it would not justify the secession of five million Southrons from the Federal Union in 1861."

On February 5, 1861, the *Tribune* would take an even stronger position:

Lincoln's latest speech contained the arguments of the tyrant—force, compulsion, and power. Nine out of ten people in the North are opposed to forcing South Carolina to remain in the Union. The great principle embodied by Jefferson in the Declaration is that governments derive their just power from the consent of the governed. Therefore, if the Southern states want to secede, they have a clear right to do so.

Following the revolution our Founding Fathers, who had just fought a great war against a highly centralized government, had absolutely no intention of creating another such monster of their own. Even during the war the Continental Congress was nothing more than a standing committee of the various states that coordinated the war effort. And these colonial delegations

even awaited instructions from home before approving the Declaration of Independence. All of which is to say that there can be no doubt that the individual states created the Constitution and delegated certain powers to the Federal government as their agent while reserving the right to secede from that compact should it be in their best interests to do so.

Prior to 1861 our Constitution always presented a great obstacle to those politicians who advocated a powerful centralized government (with themselves, of course, wielding the power). But in order to protect the individual states from such centralized power, that is exactly the way our Founding Fathers wanted it.

There was one way to circumvent the intentions of our Founding Fathers. Beginning with Daniel Webster, another of Lincoln's fellow Whigs, and continuing through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, those politicians who advocated an all-powerful federal government simply rewrote American history to meet their own political ends. In 1833, Webster, angry at losing political battles with Andrew Jackson over the nationalized banking system, apparently decided that a rewriting of our history would greatly increase his chances of achieving his political agendas. Thus he began telling his great lie, that the federal government had somehow created the states.

Donald W. Livingston of Emory University states in his *Secession Tradition in America* that Webster's words constituted not only a lie but a "spectacular lie." It was this "spectacular lie" that Abraham Lincoln adopted as his justification and rationale for denying the right of secession to the Southern states in 1861.

Too, argued Lincoln, to allow the Southern states to secede would destroy the federal government. But the events of the next four years would prove how erroneous that statement was, as the federal government immediately fielded one of the largest, most well-equipped and powerful armies in the history of the world. Without doubt, despite Lincoln's dire warnings of catastrophe, the federal government grew and prospered more than ever following the departure of the Southern states.

The Gettysburg Address

Oddly enough in his Gettysburg Address, Lincoln argued that the war was being fought in defense of “government by consent,” but in fact the opposite was true. Under Lincoln the Federal government fought to deny Southerners the right of government by consent. Indeed, in 1930, the great American satirist H. L. Menken, in an essay entitled simply “Gettysburg,” took Lincoln to task for misleading a gullible public in his Gettysburg Address:

It is poetry, not logic; beauty, not sense. Think of the argument in it. Put it into the cold words of everyday. The doctrine is simply this: that the Union soldiers who died at Gettysburg sacrificed their lives to the cause of self-determination—that government of the people, by the people, for the people, should not perish from the earth. It is difficult to imagine anything more untrue. The Union soldiers in the battle actually fought against self-determination; it was the Confederates who fought for the right of their people to govern themselves. The Confederates went into battle free; they came out with their freedom subject to the supervision of the rest of the country—and for nearly twenty years that veto was so efficient that they enjoyed scarcely more liberty, in the political sense, than so many convicts in the penitentiary.

Lincoln's War

By the spring of 1861 it had become obvious to almost everyone that Abe Lincoln wanted a war with the South. But it must not appear that the North was the aggressor. In order to quiet criticism in the North, he must find a way to compel the Confederates to fire the first shots. And that he very cleverly did, despite the fact that the last thing the Confederacy, one of the weakest nations on earth, wanted was a war with one of the world's most powerful nations. In hopes of avoiding a war, Pres. Jefferson Davis in March 1861 dispatched five peace commissioners to Washington to negotiate with Lincoln. They were to offer to pay the government

for any Federal property located on Southern soil that the Confederacy might confiscate. They were also to offer to pay the government the Southern share of the national debt. Lincoln, rather than negotiating with them, refused to meet or acknowledge them. Napoleon III of France, who happened to be in New York at the time, offered to mediate the dispute, but he was also snubbed by Lincoln, who refused to meet with him as well.

Certainly newspapers throughout the North understood that Lincoln was itching for a war and that he was trying to maneuver the South into firing the first shots. On April 13, 1861, the day following the opening of hostilities at Fort Sumter, the *Providence Daily Post* stated, "For three weeks the administration newspapers have been assuring us that Fort Sumter would be abandoned, but Mr. Lincoln saw an opportunity to inaugurate civil war without appearing in the character of an aggressor, and so did just that." And on April 16, 1861, the *Buffalo Daily Courier* editorialized that "the affair at Fort Sumter has been planned as a means by which the war feeling at the North should be intensified." The following day the *New York Evening Day Book* wrote, "The event at Fort Sumter was a cunningly devised scheme contrived to arouse, and, if possible, exasperate the northern people against the South."

But one of the most damning and accurate portrayals of Lincoln's actions during this period appeared in the *Jersey City American Standard* on April 12, 1861. Writing of Lincoln's decision to send an unarmed ship to Charleston to supply the garrison at Fort Sumter, the *Standard* editorialized, "There is a madness and ruthlessness in Lincoln's behavior which is astounding. This unarmed vessel is a mere decoy to draw the first fire from the people of the South, which act by the pre-determination of the government is to be the pretext for letting loose the horrors of war."

And of course the *Standard* was absolutely correct. After all, what did the Confederacy have to gain by a war with the United States? Obviously, they had nothing to gain, and everything to lose. By April 1861 the Confederate states

already had what they most desired—freedom. At that point, following their secession, they were free of an oppressive federal government, free to pursue their own destiny. Would they be foolish enough to risk their freedom, their very existence, by starting a war with the United States over Fort Sumter? Not unless they had been driven beyond endurance into firing the first shots. And that is what Lincoln engineered. He was aware that the Confederacy could no more tolerate a Federal fort sitting in Charleston Harbor than Boston could tolerate a British fort sitting in its harbor. Jefferson Davis already had informed Federal authorities that the Confederacy did not consider Fort Sumter to be a military threat, but it did consider it a threat to the Confederacy's bid for national sovereignty, especially at a time when the Confederacy was struggling for international recognition.

Lincoln was most aware of the Confederacy's touchy position in this matter, and he easily could have negotiated the peaceful surrender of the fort to the South (the Confederacy already had offered to purchase it). After all, what was the Federal government's purpose in constructing Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor in the first place? The answer is obvious: to protect Charleston and its citizens from foreign invasion. But now, with South Carolina no longer a state of the Union, the protection of Charleston and its citizens was no longer the responsibility of the Federal government. Such protection was now the responsibility of South Carolina. Thus it would seem that the Federal government would be happy to relinquish that responsibility (and expense) to South Carolina. But such would not have served Lincoln's purposes. In order to achieve his secret agenda, he must have a great civil war, and thus he goaded the Confederacy into making the initial hostile move.

Lincoln's personal secretary, John Hay, also agreed that Lincoln very cleverly maneuvered the South into firing the first shots of the war. In Charles Ramsdell's *Lincoln and Fort Sumter*, Hay was quoted as having written, "Abstractly it was enough that the Government was in the right. But to make

the issue sure, Lincoln determined that in addition the rebellion should be 'put in the wrong.'"

Of course Lincoln's hopes were realized. Not only determined to have a war, Lincoln seems to have been convinced that this war would last only a short time before the Confederates were forced to beg for peace. Indeed, in a speech before Congress on July 4, 1861, Lincoln very piously stated, "Having thus chosen our course without guile and with pure purpose, let us renew our trust in God, and go forward without fear and manly hearts."

However, Jefferson Davis and his cabinet were not fools. For the most part they were highly respected statesmen who had earlier held responsible positions in the national government, and they knew exactly what Lincoln planned. On April 9, 1861, Confederate secretary of state Robert Toombs warned his fellow cabinet members that to fire on Fort Sumter "is suicide, murder, and you will lose every friend in the North." But Davis and the others felt that their backs were to the wall. They had been maneuvered into giving the Federal government an ultimatum, and there was no way they now could retreat gracefully. To do so would be to lose face with England, France, and the other European countries where the Confederacy was seeking recognition.

But Toombs was quite right. Not only did the firing on Fort Sumter diminish support among much of the general population of the North, it also quieted many of the newspapers that had openly supported the right of the Southern states to secede. Once the war began, it was considered less than patriotic to offer any support for the South—and it could land editors in jail. Following the firing on Fort Sumter, the Lincoln administration imprisoned without trial thousands of war opponents and shut down or destroyed dozens of newspapers that opposed Lincoln or his war policies. Without question, it was Lincoln's suspension of civil liberties in the North that squelched public support for the constitutional rights of the South.

To say that he was leading a great crusade to abolish the abysmal institution of slavery would have proven a convincing

justification for Lincoln's going to war with the South. But he never made such a case. Throughout the war and until the day he died, Lincoln insisted that the war was being fought to prevent Southerners from seceding from the Union. Preventing the spread of slavery, said Lincoln, was only a byproduct of the war's real purpose, "saving the Union." Following Fort Sumter, he immediately called up seventy-five thousand troops to put down a rebellion, not to free the slaves.

Confederate vice president Alexander Stephens, in his postwar book *A Constitutional View of the Late War Between the States*, explained that since the Northern abolitionist movement was so small in numbers and the federal government was powerless to put an end to slavery, it is likely that "not one in ten thousand" Northerners who voted for Lincoln did so because they thought he would end slavery. Nor was the war fought over slavery. Said Stephens:

The contest, which ended in the War, was indeed a contest between opposing principles; but not such as bore upon the policy of African subordination. . . . They involved the very nature and organic Structure of the Government itself. The conflict, on this question of Slavery, in the Federal Councils, from the beginning, was not a contest between the advocates or opponents of the Peculiar Institution, but a contest, as stated before, between the supporters of a strictly Federative [decentralized] Government, on the one side, and a thoroughly National one, on the other.

From the South's point of view, in addition to states' rights and slavery, there also existed the issue of fiscal and trade policies, which the national government has been unfairly imposing on the South for many years. Indeed, the primary source of federal revenue at that time was derived from tariffs. Since the South had a very limited manufacturing base, it purchased most of its manufactured goods from the North so that in 1860 the South was paying 80 percent of all tariffs. But the vast majority of this money was being spent in the North, which led Southerners to feel that they were being plundered. And now Lincoln was promising his Northern constituents, to whom he owed his political existence, that

he would impose even higher tariffs. To Southerners, whom Lincoln owed absolutely nothing, this meant the plunder would prove even greater.

The idea that they were being plundered from a fiscal standpoint was widespread throughout the South, and on January 18, 1860, the *Vicksburg Daily Whig* editorialized, "The North has been aggrandized, in a most astonishing degree, at the expense of the South, taxing us at every step, and depleting us as extensively as possible without actually destroying us." To continue in this vein, stated Southern statesmen, was intolerable. Something must be done.

And in March 1861 an editor in Montgomery wrote of the new Confederacy, "No more to pay duties to enrich Northern industrialists at Southern expense, and to pour money into Washington's treasury. This new nation will give the South a chance to profit from their own wealth and prevent the North from siphoning away an estimated \$100,000,000 annually."

Citizens of the North did not deny that Southerners were being unfairly penalized for their lack of manufacturing, and on March 18, 1861, on the eve of war, the *Boston Transcript* wrote:

It does not require extraordinary sagacity to perceive that trade is perhaps the controlling motive operating to prevent the return of the seceding States to the Union. Slavery is an issue, yes, but the mask has been thrown off, and it is apparent that the people of the principle seceding States are now for commercial independence.

The *Transcript* went on to warn that the Confederate constitution forbade protectionist tariffs, which meant the South would be devoted to free trade. If free trade were permitted to exist in the Southern states, then merchants in New Orleans, Charleston, and Savannah would soon take all the trade from Boston, New York, and other Northern ports. Such a thing would prove devastating to Northern merchants, and therefore secession must not be allowed.

It was a widespread belief throughout the country that this battle between the protectionist North and the free trade South was the real motive for Lincoln's pushing the South

into the War Between the States. In hindsight, it appears that Lincoln and his Republican cronies were strongly motivated to impose a highly centralized mercantilist state on the people of the United States, a goal that seemed within their grasp in 1860—but only if they could subjugate the Southern politicians who stood in their way. To Southerners on the other hand the only escape from Lincoln and his oppressive political and economic policies was secession. In the end, they would pay an enormous price for their bid for social and economic freedom.

In the beginning, the South made their bid for freedom by forcing the evacuation of Fort Sumter following a day of heavy bombardment. They had fired on the United States flag, yes, but they had done the same earlier, back in January 1861, when they opened fire on *The Star of the West*, the Union ship that had attempted to resupply the fort, and absolutely nothing had come of that. The Federal government had not used that incident as a pretext for going to war. Thus the Confederate government felt confident that the forced evacuation of Fort Sumter would be viewed in the same manner.

Ah, but they reckoned without Abe Lincoln and his supporters in Washington. It must be remembered that Buchanan was president when *The Star of the West* had been fired on, but now Abe Lincoln was president, having been sworn in less than a month earlier. And Fort Sumter was just the excuse he was looking for. Nor could he have found a more ideal time to put his plan into action. For in April 1861, Congress was in recess, and Lincoln would be spared having to face a bevy of politicians who doubtlessly would have been aghast at the thought of unleashing a great war on the Southern states of America. However, with Congress in recess, he could play a lone hand.

It must be admitted that Lincoln was as clever as he was unscrupulous, and he had a most creative mind when it came to destroying an enemy. No one could deny that the Confederates had fired the first shots, and the Union had been attacked by the Southerners; thus Abe Lincoln had no choice but to defend the Union, as much as he dreaded the

thought of shedding American blood.

Lincoln wasted no time. On the same day that Fort Sumter was fired upon, April 14, 1861, he drew up a proclamation of war. The next day he issued an executive proclamation ordering the Federal army and navy to cross the state lines of Maryland and Virginia and force the Confederacy to submit to Union authority. He also ordered the Northern states to furnish seventy-five thousand soldiers to enforce that proclamation.

The text of the Lincoln's proclamation follows:

By the President of the United States.

A PROCLAMATION

Whereas the laws of the United States have been for some time past and now are opposed and the execution thereof obstructed in the States of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas by combinations too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings or by the powers vested in the marshals by law: Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, in virtue of the power in me vested by the Constitution and the laws, have thought fit to call forth, and hereby do call forth, the militia of the several States of the Union to the aggregate number of 75,000, in order to suppress said combinations and to cause the laws to be duly executed.

The details for this object will be immediately communicated to the State authorities through the War Department.

I appeal to all loyal citizens to favor, facilitate, and aid this effort to maintain the honor, the integrity, and the existence of our Federation and the perpetuity of popular government and to redress wrongs already long enough endured.

I deem it proper to say that the first service assigned to the forces hereby called forth will probably be to repossess the forts, places, and property which have been seized from the Federal Government; and in every event the utmost care will be observed, consistently with the objects aforesaid, to avoid any devastation, any destruction of or interference with property, or any disturbance of peaceful citizens in any part of the country.

And I hereby command the persons composing the combinations aforesaid to disperse and retire peaceably to their respective abodes within twenty days from this date.

Deeming that the present condition of public affairs presents an extraordinary occasion, I do hereby, in virtue of the power in me vested by the Constitution, convene both Houses of Congress. Senators and Representatives are therefore summoned to assemble at their respective chambers at 12 o'clock noon on Thursday, the 4th of July next, then and there to consider and determine such measures as, in their wisdom, the public safety and interest may seem to demand.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this 15th day of April, A.D. 1861, and the independence of the United States the eighty-fifth.

By the President: ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

It should be noted that in his proclamation Lincoln very cleverly avoided mentioning the Confederacy by name, referring to that free and independent foreign nation as "combinations too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings." He also avoided mentioning Fort Sumter. Instead, he wrote that a state of rebellion existed in seven American states and suggested that the states of the North were in danger of suffering great harm from those seven states. He also demanded seventy-five thousand soldiers "to conquer the persons composing the combinations."

According to the Constitution, only Congress has the authority to declare war, and the Constitution clearly forbade Lincoln from using military force against a state government. But in his proclamation Lincoln used highly esoteric legal language intended to circumvent both Congress and the Constitution. In fact, to ensure that his war was well underway and in no danger of being nullified by a pesky Congress, Lincoln closed his proclamation with a call for Congress to reconvene at noon on July 4, 1861, some three months down the road, at a time when his unconstitutional war would be too far advanced to be halted by Congress or anyone else.

It should also be noted that as justification for his proclamation Lincoln drew on "The 1792 Act for Calling forth the Militia" invoked by George Washington to suppress the so-called Whiskey Rebellion in Pennsylvania during that year.

This, despite the fact that the secession of seven Southern states in no way resembled the rebellion of several hundred Pennsylvania moonshiners who refused to pay tax on their homemade whiskey. Despite his best efforts, Lincoln could find no other legal justification for his unconstitutional move to invade the South.

In Montgomery, Jefferson Davis and his cabinet were stunned when they were informed of Lincoln's latest move. These men, former members of the United States government, certainly were very familiar with the Constitution, which states, "The House and Senate shall have power to provide for calling forth the militia to execute the laws of the Government, suppress insurrections, and repel invasions." Clearly, no such power was vested in the chief executive. Davis and his cabinet realized that with Congress in recess Lincoln had simply usurped their authority. He was determined to have a war whatever the cost.

Freedom to Abe Lincoln

It has already been demonstrated that in 1861 the vast majority of Americans agreed that the Constitution granted the right of secession to individual states. However, immediately upon taking office, Lincoln launched a series of unconstitutional acts that still stun historians. He launched an invasion of the South without consulting Congress, as required by the Constitution; declared martial law; blockaded the Southern ports; suspended the writ of habeas corpus for the duration of his administration; imprisoned without trial thousands of Northern citizens; arrested and imprisoned critical newspaper publishers and editors; censored all telegraph communication; nationalized the railroads; created several new states without the consent of the citizens of those states; ordered Federal troops to interfere with elections in the North by intimidating Democratic voters; and confiscated private property and firearms, a violation of the Second Amendment. His ideas at that time were considered quite radical, yet he

had many of those radical ideas put into practice despite the fact that they had not been debated in Congress or by the courts. Indeed, Lincoln had no respect for constitutional liberty.

He generally excused his suspension of constitutional liberties by equating the Constitution with the Union. Thus, whatever action he felt necessary to "preserve the Union" he also considered constitutional. The fallacy in this reasoning is that the Constitution makes no mention of such a Union as Lincoln advocated. To the contrary, the Constitution very clearly grants each state the right to secede should that state desire to do so. With such actions, rather than the Great Emancipator, Lincoln very quickly became the Great Dictator.

It was Lincoln's suspension of the writ of habeas corpus that gave him a license to perform almost any act he chose, no matter how illegal. If anyone protested, he simply had that person arrested. One of the first victims of Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus was Francis Key Howard of Baltimore (the grandson of Francis Scott Key), who was imprisoned at Fort McHenry after his newspaper criticized Lincoln's decision to invade the South without the consent of Congress as well as Lincoln's suppression of civil liberties in Maryland. Howard remained in that Federal prison without being charged and without trial for over two years. Following the war, he would write a book about his experiences titled *The American Bastille*.

How Lincoln justified such unconstitutional and dictatorial actions is difficult to understand. But it must be remembered that he was aided and abetted by such political thugs as Secretary of State William Seward and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. Together these three radical and extremely clever politicians discovered unheard-of means of manipulating the Constitution. They discovered that the commander-in-chief clause of the Constitution, when combined with the duty of the president to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed," gave Lincoln a license to ignore laws. He could even ignore the Constitution itself in the name of "war powers."

The Suspension of Habeas Corpus

Initially, there was widespread sympathy in the North for the South and her efforts to secede peacefully from the Union. This was especially true among the abolitionists, for they wanted more than anything to disassociate themselves from the slave-owning states. Opposition to Lincoln's using military force was almost universal, and the Union army's terrible defeat at First Manassas merely intensified that opposition.

It was at that point that Lincoln decided he must silence his critics, otherwise he would be forced to make peace with the South or resign from office. He wanted to do neither. As a viable alternative, on April 27, 1861, just a few days following the opening of hostilities at Fort Sumter, he issued a declaration that he was suspending the writ of habeas corpus. This allowed him to order the military to arrest and jail anyone who voiced disagreement with his war policies—and in time, even his domestic policies.

The writ of habeas corpus is, of course, a most important part of the rule of law in a free country. It protects citizens from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment by the state for political reasons. Thanks to the writ of habeas corpus, American citizens accused of a crime have a constitutional right to a speedy public trial by an impartial jury, to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation, to be confronted with witnesses against them, to bring witnesses in their favor, and to have the assistance of legal counsel. As of April 27, 1861, American citizens no longer enjoyed such legal protection. Nor would they as long as Lincoln lived.

In England the suspension of habeas corpus could be enacted only by an act of the legislature, and legal scholars always had assumed the same was true in this country as well, that the writ of habeas corpus could only be suspended by a majority ruling of Congress. According to James Randall in his *Constitutional Problems under Lincoln*, the chief justice of the Supreme Court, Roger B.

Taney, answered Lincoln's order suspending habeas corpus by issuing an opinion that the president of the United States lacked such legal authority. He pointed out that the provision regarding habeas corpus is located in a section of the Constitution that pertains to legislative, not executive, powers and explained that our Founding Fathers would never have given an American president "more regal and absolute power" over the personal liberties of the citizens than any king of England ever enjoyed.

Taney went on to state that even if Congress did support the suspension of habeas corpus, such support still would not justify holding a citizen in jail indefinitely without trial, as Lincoln was doing. Even treason, argued Taney, should be dealt with by the normal judicial process. If not, then "the people are no longer living under a government of laws; but every citizen holds life, liberty and property at the will and pleasure of the army officer in whose military district he may happen to be found." As a final parting shot, Taney admonished Lincoln to see that the laws were faithfully executed and that the civil processes of the United States were respected and enforced.

Taney's decision was delivered to Lincoln personally by courier. The courier later reported that Lincoln read the decision, then in a fit of rage tore the pages to pieces. Before the day was out, Lincoln would meet with William Seward and Edwin Stanton. Their advice? Ignore Taney's decision and continue his measures against his critics. Which is what Lincoln did.

At this time Secretary of State William Seward established a secret police that arrested thousands of citizens suspected of disloyalty, which meant that those citizens had somehow expressed disagreement with Lincoln's war policies. For the most part, those arrested were not told why they were being arrested, no one investigated the charges against them, and no trials were held. An Episcopal minister in Alexandria, Virginia, was arrested, for example, for failing to pray for the president of the United States during his church service as required by the Lincoln administration. And in New Orleans, Gen. Ben "the Beast" Butler hanged a citizen for removing an American flag in front of his business establishment.

In May 1861 a special election was held to fill ten empty seats in the Maryland House of Representatives. The ten men elected were some of Maryland's leading citizens, but because Seward suspected them of having secessionist sentiments, they were arrested and sent to Fort Lafayette, where they remained for the next two years though no charges were ever brought against them.

Despite Lincoln's interference with free elections throughout the North, on November 7, 1861, the Maryland legislature issued a proclamation declaring that

the war now waged by the government of the United States upon the people of the Confederate States is unconstitutional in its origin, purposes and conduct; repugnant to civilization and sound policy; subversive of the free principles upon which the Federal Union was founded, and certain to result in the hopeless and bloody overthrow of our existing institutions.

Of course this proclamation fell on deaf ears. In fact, the Federal military used Maryland as a major launching pad for their excursions into the South for the rest of the war.

Lincoln and the Free Press

Once Lincoln sent Federal troops into Virginia in June 1861, he saw anyone who disagreed with his war policies as a possible traitor. These so-called traitors included dozens of newspaper editors and owners throughout the North. Lincoln's response was to have such miscreants imprisoned and their newspapers shut down.

His suppression of the press began with the big New York City newspapers, which dominated much of the nation's news. In particular, the *Journal of Commerce* and the *New York Daily News* were extremely critical of Lincoln's war policies, and their articles and editorials were reprinted in newspaper across the North. In May 1861 the *Journal of Commerce* printed a list of over one hundred Northern newspapers that had editorialized against going to war. Lincoln

gleefully responded by ordering the postmaster general to forbid these newspapers the use of the mail for their deliveries. Within a week every one of those one hundred newspapers was out of business.

As for the *New York Daily News*, its editor was Ben Wood, the brother of New York City mayor Fernando Wood. In June 1861, Wood denounced Lincoln as “an unscrupulous Chief magistrate whose recent message to Congress was an ocean of falsehood and deceit.” Lincoln responded by having Federal marshals confiscate the *Daily News* in cities throughout the North. At that point the *Daily News* went into bankruptcy.

In Washington, D.C., Federal soldiers were dispatched to destroy the offices and printing facilities of the *Democratic Standard* after it criticized military blunders during the Battle of First Manassas. A day later the same thing happened to the *Bangor Democrat*, only this time the soldiers also attempted to hang the editor.

As the war progressed, brave newspapers across the North renewed their efforts to persuade the Lincoln government to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. In response, Lincoln increased his repression of the free press, squelching any further mention of peaceful solutions.

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation

In January 1863 Lincoln's much-heralded Emancipation Proclamation was to be put into effect. According to revisionist historians, that edict proved Lincoln's humanitarian regard for the slaves of America. But that was decidedly not the case. In fact, Lincoln cared little if nothing for the slaves, and he was certainly not about to give them their freedom—at least not in those areas loyal to the Union.

As early in the war as the summer of 1861 Gen. John Frémont was in charge of Federal military operations in Missouri. In a move to deter Confederate guerilla operations in that state, Frémont issued a proclamation in August 1861 imposing martial law throughout the state and declaring

that anyone who resisted the Federal army would have their property confiscated and their slaves freed. Those loyal to the Union, however, would be allowed to keep their slaves.

When Lincoln was informed of Frémont's proclamation, he furiously wired the general that he must immediately nullify that part of the proclamation dealing with the freeing of slaves. Several days later Lincoln informed Frémont that he was relieved of command. He was, to put it bluntly, fired.

When informed of Lincoln's actions, Sen. Ben Wade of Ohio wrote, "The president don't object to General Frémont's taking the life of the owners of slaves, when found in rebellion, but to confiscate their property and emancipate their slaves he thinks monstrous."

In a well-known letter to *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley in 1862, Lincoln wrote:

My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union.

This letter is primarily of interest because in it Lincoln contradicts the statements he made in his First Inaugural Address, where he explicitly pointed out that he lacked the constitutional authority to free any slaves. But by late 1862 Lincoln paid little attention to the Constitution and cared even less. Indeed, his Emancipation Proclamation, issued in January 1863, was in total conflict with the constitutional rights of citizens throughout the Confederacy, as Lincoln was certainly aware. It did not free a single slave in any of the states loyal to the Union. It applied only to slaves then being held in the Confederacy. And even at that, Lincoln exempted from emancipation those areas of the Confederacy then occupied by the Federal army: Missouri, Maryland, Kentucky, West Virginia, and large parts of Virginia and Louisiana.

In other words, the Emancipation Proclamation was nothing more than a political gimmick that freed few

slaves, leading the *New York World* to editorialize on January 7, 1863:

The President has purposely made the proclamation inoperative in all places where we have gained a military footing which makes the slaves accessible. He has proclaimed emancipation only where he had notoriously no power to execute it. The exemption of the accessible parts of Louisiana, Tennessee, and Virginia renders the proclamation not merely futile, but ridiculous.

Even Lincoln's most trusted collaborator, Secretary of State William Seward, as recorded in James Randall's *The Civil War and Reconstruction*, had the audacity to jeer, "We show our sympathy with slavery by emancipating slaves where we cannot reach them and holding them in bondage where we can set them free."

Basically, the proclamation says that no man can own slaves in America, unless he is loyal to the Federal government, in which case he is exempt from that mandate. Even Lincoln himself admitted on several occasions that his proclamation was not sanctioned by the Constitution. It was, he said, a "war measure." He was aware that most of the great nations of Europe had recently abolished slavery peacefully, and they would be unlikely to recognize or support the Confederacy if emancipation was one of Lincoln's objectives in the war. In January 1863 the Confederacy had recently enjoyed great successes on the battlefield, and Lincoln was desperate. At that point, had England or France offered economic assistance to the Confederacy or offered to negotiate a peace deal, Lincoln might have been pressured to end the war. Now, hopefully, his Emancipation Proclamation would keep England and France at bay—at least for a while.

At home, Northerners, many of whom prided themselves on their anti-black sentiments, were shocked and outraged by the Emancipation Proclamation. This was the first they had heard that they were dying by the tens of thousands on distant battlefields to free black slaves whom they despised. Their anger finally erupted in New

York, in July 1863. Terrible race riots erupted, with thousands of furious white ruffians running through the streets beating and killing any blacks unfortunate enough to cross their paths. The mob was also protesting the new conscription law, which declared that any man who could afford to pay three hundred dollars to the government would be exempted from the draft, which meant that only the poor would be doing the fighting.

Col. Arthur Freemantle, a British emissary to the Confederacy, was in the city awaiting passage back to England when the riots were in full force. In his later work *Three Months in the Southern States* he wrote of the riots:

The reports of outrages, hangings, and murder, were now most alarming, the terror and anxiety were universal. All shops were shut: all carriages and omnibuses had ceased running. No colored man or woman was visible or safe in the streets, or even in his own dwelling. Telegraphs were cut, and railroad tracks torn up. The draft was suspended, and the mob evidently had the upper hand.

The people who cannot pay \$300 naturally hate being forced to fight in order to liberate the very race who they are most anxious should be slaves. It is in their direct interest not only that all slaves should remain slaves, but that the free Northern Negroes who compete with them for labor should be sent to the South also.

The mob burned down an orphanage for black children and began searching tenement houses by the waterfront for black men and boys, whom they beat unmercifully. They also turned their wrath on anyone associated with the Republican Party and began to burn down expensive Republican homes on Lexington Avenue. Then they remembered that one of the most prominent Republicans in the country, Horace Greeley, was in New York. Thus they made their way to Greeley's *New York Tribune* office and burned down the newspaper. They then lynched a black man named William Jones and burned his body. Other murders followed.

When informed of this great insurrection and fearing that his proclamation and new draft law would unleash a backlash

throughout the North, Lincoln immediately dispatched five regiments of troops to New York, where they shot over a thousand citizens in order to quell the riot.

In Gary Gallagher's *The Confederate War*, Gallagher states that the Emancipation Proclamation caused over two hundred thousand Federal soldiers to desert the army and almost one hundred thousand Northern men to avoid conscription by fleeing to Canada or to the mountain areas of Pennsylvania. "They were willing to risk their lives for the Union, they said, but not for black freedom."

But Lincoln cared nothing for the emancipation of the slaves. To him emancipation was only a means of achieving his real goal: the consolidation of government power. State governments must become subordinate to the federal government, and all power must rest in the hands of the federal government. This was a theme Lincoln mouthed repeatedly, but he made it more palatable to Northern citizens by calling it "saving the Union." Of course the Union could only be saved by destroying that decentralized, voluntary union of states known as the Confederacy.

The War's Consequences

In his First Inaugural Address, Lincoln underscored the fact that it would be unconstitutional for the government ever to attempt to free the slaves in the South, and he originally had no intention of doing so. His invasion of the South in 1861 had nothing to do with abolishing slavery. To the contrary, Lincoln and other leaders of the Republican Party were in favor of Southern slavery, for they feared the possibility of a million freed slaves moving into the Northern states. Illinois, for example, Lincoln's home state, had recently amended its state constitution to prohibit the emigration of black people into the state, as had several other Northern states. And almost all the Northern states, with the exception of Massachusetts, had adopted Black Codes that discriminated terribly against freed

blacks. There had been few blacks in the North prior to 1861, and Northern politicians and voters wanted it to remain that way.

Once the war began Lincoln and his Republicans were only opposed to the *extension* of slavery into the new territories. They felt that the territories must remain the domain of the white man. Also, Lincoln feared the three-fifths clause of the Constitution, which might have increased the number of Democrats in Congress had blacks been permitted to live and vote in the territories.

No, according to Lincoln, the war had nothing to do with freeing slaves. His purpose, he repeatedly stated, was to "save the Union." Which meant, accurately translated, that he wanted to destroy once and for all the belief in federalism and states' rights that had frustrated ambitious politicians like himself since the founding of the republic, politicians who wanted a highly centralized and enlarged federal government. As a Whig-Republican, it was Lincoln's ambition to dispense taxpayers' money to corporations and finance them with protectionist tariffs and a nationalized banking system (the American System).

Such a revolutionary idea had been strongly opposed since the founding of the republic by such Southern statesmen as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, and John C. Calhoun. But with his Republican Party in power, and the Southern states seceded from the Union, Lincoln and his Republicans were at last free to enact those economic policies they had been refused for so long. And this, most modern historians agree, was the real reason that Lincoln wanted to unleash his war against the South and why he repulsed all overtures from the South to peacefully end the dispute. He wanted a war. He *needed* a war.

At the beginning of 1861 he believed that such a war would last only a few months at most. Once the Confederacy had capitulated, he and his Republicans could easily accomplish their goal of a centralized federal government and do so without even addressing the issue of slavery. This turned out to be the greatest and most

tragic political miscalculation in the history of this nation.

Lincoln preached Daniel Webster's theory that the Union had created the states, a theory with no factual basis. He then waged the most costly and bloodiest war in history to prove his theory. Approximately 620,000 young men lost their lives in that war, including one-fourth of all the white males in the South between eighteen and forty years of age. Viewed in terms of today's population, that number would translate into the deaths of over five million young men, nearly a hundred times the number of young Americans who were killed in Vietnam over a ten-year period.

Despite Webster and Lincoln's theory, our Founding Fathers determined that states' rights should be an integral part of the federal system they created. Later, this idea would be debated at great length by Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, and for the first seventy years of the country's existence it was the Jeffersonians who easily had the upper hand. By 1865, the Hamiltonians, now calling themselves Republicans, had finally won this argument by emerging victorious in the terrible war they had imposed on the nation. Now they could impose their mercantilist American System on the entire country even if they had to destroy much of the nation in the process.

Thanks to Abe Lincoln and his great victory over the South, states' rights was essentially erased from the Constitution. Thanks to Lincoln's all-powerful federal government, the people would no longer be sovereign. The federal government became the citizens' master, rather than servant. Indeed, thanks to Lincoln's war, the federal government had the authority to draft young men into military service and the right to impose federal income taxes on its citizens—revolutionary and oppressive measures at best.

But the very word "Union" suggests a voluntary confederacy of states, which is what our citizens had until the empowerment of Abe Lincoln. He forced the states to remain in the Union, violating the very tenets of choice and freedom upon which the Union was based. It's admirable to desire to preserve your family, but what kind of a family

would you have if you had to destroy eleven cousins in order to force them to remain in the family?

The Execution of Abraham Lincoln

Despite Lincoln's many sins, he is still remembered in the South for the very humane Reconstruction program that he planned for the Confederate states once the war ended. By April 1865, Lincoln was publicly advocating a complete return to constitutional government for the defeated Southern states. They would be welcomed back into the Union, said Lincoln, with all the constitutional rights guaranteed citizens of every other state. There would be no military occupation. There would be no carpetbag government. Southerners would immediately become American citizens again.

Edwin Stanton and the Radical Republicans in Congress were aghast. In promising a Reconstruction policy of reconciliation for the South, Lincoln took a political direction that was opposite that planned by the Radicals in Congress. The Radicals wished to punish the Southern states for having the audacity to secede from the Union. Even more, they viewed Reconstruction as a license to continue their robbing and pillaging of the South. They were extremely self-righteous, highly opinionated men who truly despised anyone who disagreed with their opinions. Lincoln, in their eyes, had not merely disagreed with them, he had absolutely betrayed them. After four long years of preaching punishment for the South, Lincoln was now changing his stance, doubtlessly for political reasons. They now saw Lincoln as a traitor, and these Radicals were men who did not suffer traitors gladly, especially when the issue involved taking control of the prostrate Southland, a vast empire consisting of millions of acres of rich cotton land and millions of dollars in commerce and trade. Indeed, the Southland had become a deal the Radicals and their Northern capitalist supporters eyed greedily.

As for the bankers, businessmen, and industrialists of the North, the newly risen capitalist class, they were truly

impatient to reap the wealth awaiting them. But first, the South must be occupied by the Union army, placed under the new regime of the North. Under the new political system, the lands of formerly wealthy plantation owners could be confiscated and auctioned off at a great profit to Northern capitalists to build their mills and factories. Their cotton would be purchased by Northern entrepreneurs, then sold at incredible profits to the European nations in great need of the white gold, thereby enriching all involved. As for cheap labor, those Southerners who had lost their farms and were watching their families starve would take jobs at whatever wages their carpetbag bosses wanted to pay. But such financial windfalls could only come about if Abe Lincoln and his ideas of clemency for the South could be superseded. Perhaps our capitalists should talk with Edwin Stanton.

And in the Union army, there were numerous glum generals who saw their chances to rule over these occupied Southern territories, a quarter of the country, quickly fading away. And what would they do when peace and self-rule returned to the nation? There was nothing they could do. America would disarm and demobilize while its generals were relegated to lesser tasks, waiting to retire—probably as colonels. But, if Lincoln, that great Rebel-lover, should be removed somehow, things would be different. Then the Federal military would remain the most important element of American society.

And as soon as the South was occupied, which would require only a small part of that massive Federal army, those generals could set their sights on conquering the Western territories and gaining access to that area's oil and gold deposits. Soon those territories would become states, Republican states, and America would become a vast Republican empire stretching from sea to shining sea. The generals pondered the problem. Their horizons were certainly limitless, but only if Abe Lincoln should somehow pass suddenly from the scene. Perhaps they should speak with their secretary of war, Edwin Stanton.

As for the Radicals, doubtlessly it also occurred to them to secretly sit down with Secretary Stanton, a wise and

experienced politician and a member of Lincoln's cabinet, to discuss just what could be done to terminate Lincoln's presidency. After all, he had just been elected to his second term less than six months before, which meant that he had another three and a half years before the next election. Far too long. By then the Civil War would be a distant memory, and the Radicals' opportunity to benefit from Reconstruction would be just a distant memory.

Stanton, as it turned out, was far more outraged by Lincoln's conciliatory policies towards the South than anyone else. In fact, according to Lafayette Baker's secret papers (see chapter II), Stanton was already taking steps to solve the problem. Indeed, not only must Lincoln be eliminated, but his chief ally, William Seward, must also go.

Yes, Booth pulled the trigger. But standing close behind Booth were Col. Lafayette Baker, Maj. Thomas Eckert, Edwin Stanton, and Vice Pres. Andrew Johnson.

Indeed, in his landmark work, *Why Was Lincoln Murdered* (1937), Otto Eisenschiml writes:

Congressman Julian, a leader of the Radical Republicans, boldly stated that the accession of Andrew Johnson to the presidency would prove a blessing to the country. In this sentiment he was not alone. On April 15, only a few hours after Lincoln's death, a caucus of Republican leaders was held, at which the tragedy was described as a gift from Heaven, and it was decided to get rid of Lincolnism. Ben Butler was chosen Secretary of State. Unfortunately for that plan, William Seward's injuries were not fatal, and his position did not become vacant. Blunt Senator Wade told the new President: "Johnson, we have faith in you. By the gods, there will be no trouble now in running the government!" Johnson had been ranting for weeks past that secession was treason, that treason must be made odious, and that all Confederates should be hanged.

Congressional Republicans, led by the Radicals in their midst, feared that citizens of the Southern states, if allowed their constitutional rights, would vote a solid Democratic ticket in 1868. Combine these Southern Democrats with those Democrats in the Northern and Border states, and in

1868 the Republican Party would likely be overwhelmed at the polls, and the tremendous power and prestige they had enjoyed during the war years would be erased. And if there is anything a congressman cannot bear to contemplate, it is the thought that he might be defeated in an upcoming election, that he might lose his power and prestige. If it took the death of Abe Lincoln to avoid such a disaster, then so be it.

Besides, in the end Lincoln had proven a traitor to his party; therefore he totally deserved whatever might happen. After all, traitors generally are executed, aren't they? Once Andrew Johnson, that old Rebel-hater, was seated in the president's office, things would return to normal. The South could once again be slated for punishment and pillage, and the Republicans could maintain their power and prestige for decades to come.

Unfortunately for the Republicans, once Johnson ascended to the office of the presidency, he seemed to forget his stringent Reconstruction policies for the South. With his eyes cocked on the election of 1868, Johnson began advocating a return of all constitutional rights to the seceded states. At the same time, he began courting Southern statesmen, powerful politicians who could easily arrange for Johnson to receive the Democratic nomination for president in 1868, and would do so if he would veto all Reconstruction programs for the South. A smiling Andrew Johnson said that he was more than eager to do so. As always, he only wanted to do the right thing.

So what could the Republican congressmen do? They had just executed one traitor. To shoot another at this point might appear suspicious. Thus in 1867 they began impeachment proceedings against Johnson, accusing him of every sin imaginable, including the assassination of President Lincoln. Luckily for Johnson, he avoided conviction by one vote. Still, following his impeachment hearing, Johnson became a nonentity in Washington, and in 1868 Congress passed, over Johnson's veto, a Reconstruction bill for the South that ushered in one of the most wretched decades in the history of this great nation, a disgraceful era that is still remembered with great bitterness by Americans across the South.