



# SHATTERING THE ICON OF LINCOLN

The author's views on the subject of Abraham Lincoln were those of the overwhelming majority of Southerners both immediately before, during and for decades after the War for Southern Independence. Many in the North and the West also shared his views. Only the passage of time and the studious cultivation of the myth of Abraham Lincoln, coupled with his timely death (timely in the sense of being providential for his place in history), have caused Abraham Lincoln to be raised to the level of a sacred cow in American history.

BY SAM DICKSON

Even historically recent events show that the place and role of Abraham Lincoln in American history constitute a subject very sensitive to the establishment. When Prof. M.E. Bradford of the University of Dallas was nominated by President Ronald Reagan to head the National Endowment for the Humanities, a storm of abuse and controversy exploded. Prof. Bradford's sin: He had the effrontery to criticize Lincoln.

Obviously, Bradford touched a raw nerve when he criticized a president who has been dead for 140 years. Why, after all these years, is Lincoln's image so vitally important to the establishment, so perfumed and sacrosanct? Why has this politician been transformed into a martyr, saint and icon? Why does he preside over the mall in Washington, D.C., enshrined in a Doric temple, enthroned like Zeus or Pallas Athena, to be approached only with pious praise or awed silence?

Part of the reason for the importance of Lincoln in the iconography of the left is explained by the theory of history, shared by most leftists, that history is the history of freedom broadening down from precedent to precedent as progress is

made away from tradition, authority, monarchy and aristocracy toward democracy and egalitarianism (this is known as the Whig theory). The leftist adherents to this theory of history see Lincoln as part of a continuum running from Runnymede to the American Revolution to Bill Clinton and beyond.

The leftists are correct in viewing Lincoln and the effect of his career on the course of the United States as moving America away from a semi-aristocratic society founded upon traditions, authority, limited government and private property and toward a mass democratic society founded upon universal suffrage, equality and unlimited government-mandated social experimentation.

The creation of the Lincoln myth was aided by his violent death. Assassinated between the conclusion of the war and the commencement of a bitter and cruel peace, Lincoln could be used by all factions and opposed by none. Radical Republicans used his death, as well as a contrived propaganda campaign alleging that Southern leaders, including Jefferson Davis, had plotted Lincoln's assassination, to inflame Northern opinion and to solidify their leadership of the North in a campaign of persecution of the conquered South.<sup>1</sup>

Southerners were in no position to attack Lincoln. The

**CAPTION SYNOPSIS:** At left, Mathew Brady's "Portrait of Abraham Lincoln" taken February 23, 1861. Lincoln had only recently assumed the presidency and the nation was not yet at war. Lincoln's obsession with seeing the South subjugated by force may have driven him to make a series of bellicose moves in and around Fort Sumter in spring of 1861

designed to goad the South into taking action against the South Carolina fort. This included the provocative movement of troops and weapons. **On the cover this issue**, one feels the power of the stare of Abraham Lincoln in this lugubrious photograph taken while the Civil War was raging. Lincoln was a multi-faceted man and prone to wild mood swings.

South's situation after the war was similar to that of post-World War II Germany, that is to say, utterly defeated, prostrate, the victim of inflammatory lies. The only prudent course for Southerners was to promote those aspects of the Lincoln myth (e.g., his alleged kindness and magnanimity) so as to defuse Northern anger and work patiently for the amelioration of the condition of the South. Let us examine the real Lincoln.

### LINCOLN THE MAN

The official image of Lincoln the man runs as follows: a man of upright character and honesty, a man of peace and compassion for his Southern adversaries and a Christian of sincere religious convictions. All these notions are false.

Lincoln was a demagogue who maneuvered on all sides of many issues. Thus, in the famous debates with Stephen Douglas his position on the question of Negro equality became several positions, according to which area of Illinois was hosting the debate. His pronouncements ranged from denials of Negro equality and advocacy of an inferior and degraded state of civil rights for the Negro to affirmations of the equality of Negroes. It is my belief Lincoln was a consistent leftist but at the same time a crafty politician.

As to Lincoln's religious convictions, it is well known to students of Lincoln that he was an atheist and freethinker. But like any Machiavellian politician, Lincoln was willing to invoke the name of God to garner support.

Also Lincoln believed in omens, was often depressed by seeing blackbirds and was plagued by other superstitions. Lincoln's superstition is frequently confused with piety.

Lincoln's law partner, William Herndon, was deeply disturbed after Lincoln's death by popular portrayals of Lincoln as a Christian saint. Herndon knew Lincoln had written an essay denying the divinity of the Bible. This essay or book of Lincoln's came to be referred to as "the infidel book."

A statement of Lincoln's was discovered which he issued in reply to accusations that he was not a Christian.<sup>2</sup> Lincoln admitted he was not a member of any church, but stated that he had not denied the truth of the scriptures and had not spoken with intentional disrespect of religion in general or of any particular Christian denomination. The statement is artfully worded but does not indicate any conversion to Christianity.

Perhaps Lincoln should be admired for choosing lawyerly evasions over outright lies. Perhaps he should be praised for not concocting some vote-catching, born-again experience. Our admiration for his candor would be greater had he desisted from self-serving references to the Almighty in political speeches throughout his career.

### LINCOLN AS PATRIOT

Lincoln was not a patriot devoted to the common good of the union over every sectional and partisan interest. In fact, he routinely sacrificed the common good to Northern interests or

to the interests of the Republican Party and sacrificed Republican interests to his own political ambitions.

Lincoln's first term in the Illinois legislature coincided with the initial rumblings in Northern legislatures on the slavery issue. Responsible Americans of both sections recognized the danger posed to the union by the slavery issue and sought to head it off. One means of doing this was to have the state legislatures in both sections pass identical resolutions expressing a national consensus on the slavery issue from a moderate point of view.

Stephen Douglas, a true patriot, was among those instrumental in seeking to have the Illinois legislature pass this resolution. The resolution was overwhelmingly passed. Among the handful of opponents was a freshman member of the legislature, Lincoln.<sup>3</sup> Beginning with this incident, Douglas was to be a lifelong adversary of Lincoln.

*Lincoln was a demagogic politician who maneuvered on all sides of many issues. In the famous Douglas debates, his position on Negro equality switched according to which area of Illinois was hosting the debate.*

Incidentally, Lincoln's position on the Illinois resolution seriously impeaches those who try to make of Lincoln a white racist. The fact that Lincoln was willing to go that far, early in his career, indicates he was on the far left of contemporary American thought about the Negro and slavery issues. Furthermore, Lincoln's opposition to the resolution is strong evidence for his willingness to disrupt the union in order to promote his own faction's success.

This is not to say that Lincoln did not craftily dissemble his views on slavery and

the Negro, realizing the limitations within which he strove to realize his ideals. For instance, in late 1854 Lincoln was furious when he learned that radical abolitionist Republicans meeting in Springfield had adopted fiery anti-slavery resolutions and formed a party state central committee, on which they took the liberty of placing Lincoln's name.

Lincoln's aggrandizement of his sectional and factional advantage at the expense of the nation as a whole is most clearly evidenced by his opposition to the war with Mexico. President James K. Polk, one of the greatest presidents, was responsible for almost doubling our national territory by means of the war with Mexico. Through his efforts and through the heroism in battle of many genuine American nationalists like Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis, a whole empire was won, out of which would be carved many of our states, from Texas to California.

President Polk's war with Mexico was not universally popular, however, in the America of the 1840s. Among Polk's opponents in the matter of the war was the freshman congressman from Illinois, Lincoln. On January 12, 1848, Lincoln spoke in the House of Representatives defending the vote of his party a few days before in declaring "that the war with Mexico was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the president."<sup>4</sup> It was, in Carl Sandburg's words, a fiercely partisan speech, which led to strong criticism of Lincoln in Illinois. The result was that Lincoln was defeated for re-election to Congress due to his opposition to the war with Mexico.

It is ironic to note that in his speech attacking President

Polk, Lincoln made two statements that can be cited against him in his own conduct in the War for Southern Independence. Lincoln stated:

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. . . . Any portion of such people that can, may revolutionize, and make their own of so much of the territory as they inhabit. More than this, a majority of any portion of such people may revolutionize, putting down a minority, intermingled with, or near about them, who may oppose their movement.<sup>5</sup>

These remarks clearly can be cited to justify the actions of the South in seceding from the union. To further the irony, Lincoln condemned Polk's initiation of the war as unconstitutional on the grounds that Polk had sent American troops into battle without congressional authority.<sup>6</sup> But later Lincoln would take far more dramatic steps to initiate war by executive fiat without congressional approval.

### THE COMING OF THE WAR

As noted previously, Lincoln in the inception of his public career took a radical position on slavery by opposing the resolutions intended to soothe public feelings in both sections. The slavery issue continued to torment and divide the nation. However, it would be a mistake to focus, as do most Northern historians, solely upon the slavery issue as the cause of division between the sections.

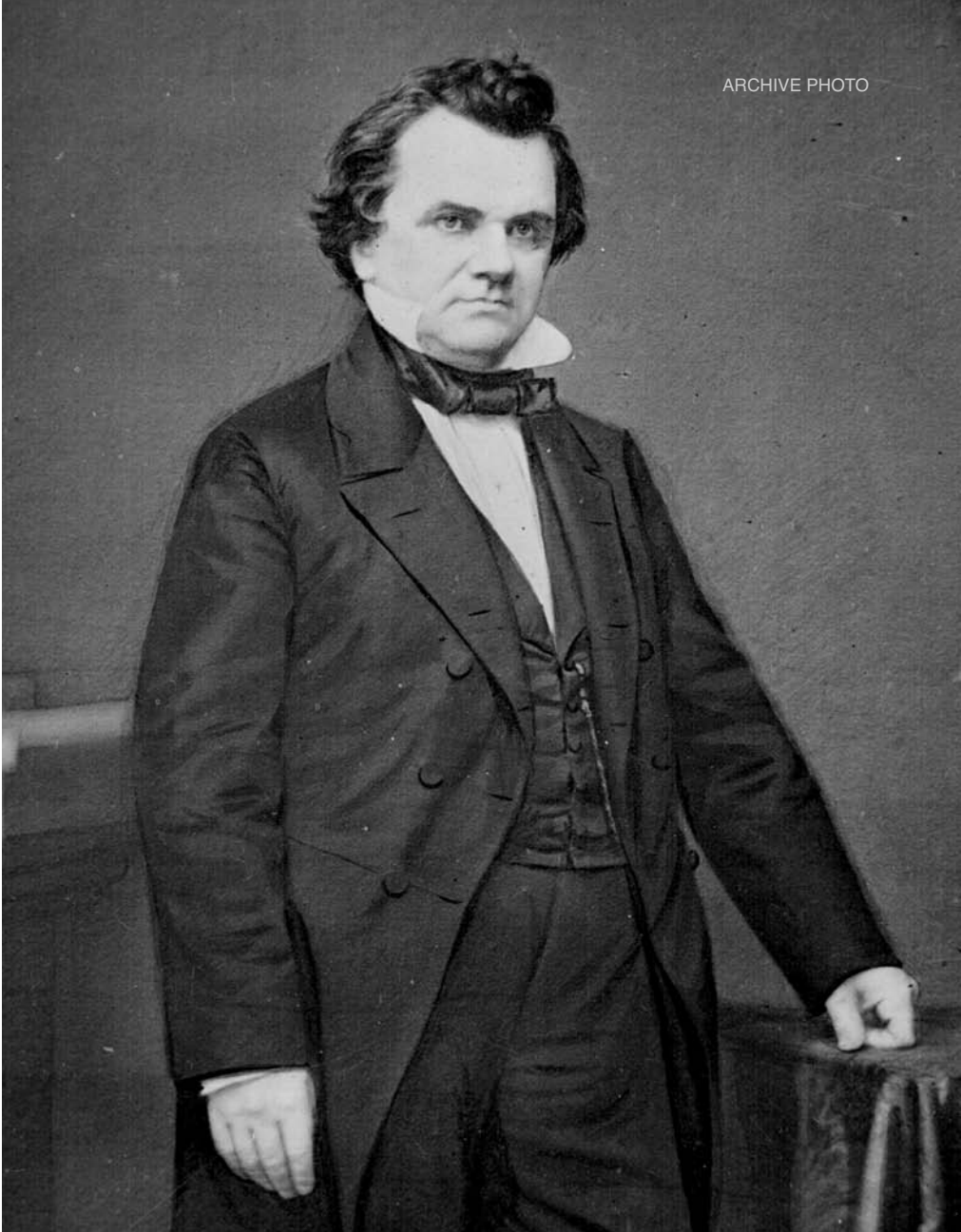
The North was already losing its character and was rapidly changing with the inundation of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants from Europe.

Mass immigration is almost always destabilizing and radicalizing, as we see in our own times.

Although the flood of German and Irish immigrants consisted of people who by today's standards were not radically different from the founding stock of America, nevertheless these immigrants had a major impact on the North and thereby on America as a whole in two noteworthy ways.

First, the newcomers were psychological and economic outsiders. Their differences made many of them adopt a "chip-on-the-shoulder" attitude toward the English stock that was native born and sometimes richer than they were. These grudges made the immigrants a natural constituency for conniving politicians eager to fish in the waters of resentment. Chief among such divisive, unpatriotic politicians was Abraham Lincoln.

Although Lincoln was himself a native-born Anglo-Saxon, in his famous debates with Stephen Douglas, he pandered to immigrant resentment. Speaking in Chicago before a predominantly



**STEPHEN ARNOLD DOUGLAS** was born in Brandon, Vermont, in 1813. He became attorney-general of Illinois in 1834, member of the legislature in 1835, secretary of state in 1840, judge of the supreme court in 1841 and member of the House of Representatives in 1847. About him the author says, "Douglas consistently sought the national advantage, having been a staunch supporter of Polk in the war with Mexico. Douglas strived to promote reconciliation and cooperation between North and South, and to develop workable compromises that avoided dogmatic impasses on either side." Had Douglas won his political race against Lincoln, there might never have been a "Civil War."

immigrant audience, the would-be senator did not merely express views favorable to Negro equality but directly appealed to the hatred of the German outsiders for the English native born by reminding them of that they were immigrants and telling them that those who would deny rights to Blacks and ally themselves with the South, as his opponent Stephen Douglas did, were the same kind of people who might deny German

immigrants rights. Lincoln presented himself to the immigrants as their champion against the native Anglos.

Nor were Lincoln's sociopathic maneuverings against his own people limited to demagogic political campaigns. As we shall see, he was to appeal for Irish mercenaries to come to America and help kill the descendants of Englishmen, a ploy which even the pope was to condemn and oppose. This kind of liberal, xenophilic, native-phobic pandering will be all too familiar to present-day Americans.

One casualty of mass immigration in the two decades prior to the war was the historic American political theory of states' rights. The theory of states' rights is nowadays associated almost exclusively with the South but this was not always so. In the early decades after the union was founded, the citizens of all 13 colonies shared a strong attachment to their individual states and jealously guarded the autonomous rights of those states against central power. This sense of being a Rhode Islander, a Pennsylvanian, a Virginian or a South Carolinian was critical if the political theory of states' rights and decentralized government was to have real power. Without such sentiments of attachment to one's own state, nobody would fight for states' rights, and a right that nobody will defend has no meaning. In America today, perhaps with some slight exceptions in states like Vermont, South Carolina and Virginia, there is no such popular sentiment and thus no practical possibility of such a doctrine being revived.

In the South there was little or no immigration. The population of the Southern states was overwhelmingly descended from ancestors who had lived in their states for generations. Thus the sentiment of attachment to one's state was alive, and the idea of states' rights was quite popular.

This was no longer so in the North, primarily because of immigration. Immigrants (including some of the author's own ancestors) did not board ships in Dublin or Hamburg—or London, for that matter—to emigrate to Pennsylvania to become Pennsylvanians or to New York to become New Yorkers. They emigrated to “America” to become “Americans.” To them the theory of states' rights was as meaningless as feudalism. To German immigrants it was probably especially unappealing, being reminiscent of the problems caused in Germany—a land of numerous small dukedoms, principalities etc—by the lack of national unity.

Furthermore, the North was industrializing, and her economic interests were in many respects antithetical to those of the South. The North desired the erection of a high tariff to enable herself to sell her industrial products with a competitive advantage over imports from Europe. Likewise, most of the nation's foreign exchange was earned by exports from the South. The tariff issue was critical in the division of the nation and probably played the major role in determining the North upon a policy of aggression and conquest.

Lincoln had always been a national Whig. His policies were those in favor of a central banking system, which he championed during his first term in the Illinois legislature.<sup>7</sup>

The Bank of the United States was similar to our Federal Reserve System. Lincoln opposed resolutions in the Illinois legislature supporting President Andrew Jackson, who had vetoed the national bank.<sup>8</sup> Lincoln also favored high tariffs, a strong, centralized government and internal improvements.<sup>9</sup>

Lincoln had a personal reason to support such policies, since he derived a significant portion of his income from serving as attorney for railroad interests.<sup>10</sup>

In 1858 Lincoln made his famous “house divided” speech, in which he declared:

A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it

and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward until it shall become alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new—North as well as South.<sup>11</sup>

Entranced by the Lincoln cult, Americans are prone to read or hear the “house divided” speech through a fog of sentimentality, impressed by its dramatic tone. Set in the context of developing regional antagonism, however, the speech seems to be that of an irresponsible demagogue.

The union had existed half slave and half free from its inception. There appears no logical reason why it could not continue to have existed in that fashion, given responsible leadership and good will on both sides, until slavery was gradually and peacefully eliminated by the progress of technology. Certainly the delivery of such a speech was irresponsible, as it did much to infuriate the South. This especially was true with Lincoln's election, which the South saw as the election of a man who seemed to have declared himself on the side of those who intended to violate the rights of Southerners and to interfere with their self-government.

Lincoln's activity with regard to the developing sectional strife contrasts sharply with that of his opponent Stephen A. Douglas. Douglas consistently sought the national advantage, having been a staunch supporter of Polk in the war with Mexico. Douglas strived to promote reconciliation and cooperation between North and South, and to develop workable compromises that avoided dogmatic impasses on either side.<sup>12</sup>

Lincoln in the Lincoln-Douglas debates was his characteristic demagogic self. In northern Illinois, in which non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants were playing a major and perhaps decisive role, Lincoln declared himself dramatically for Negro equality, raising his hands to the heavens and declaring: “In the right to eat the bread his own hands have earned he is the equal of Judge Douglas, or of myself or any living man.” However, in southern Illinois, where Southern sympathies ran strong,

*Pleas poured into Lincoln from many regions of the country imploring him to make some gesture to the South and give leadership at that critical time. He continued his “sphinx-like silence” until his inauguration.*



Lincoln declared himself opposed to granting Negroes civil rights and stated that they were in fact an inferior race.<sup>13</sup>

During the debates, Lincoln wrote a meditation that was not used in his debates and that his admiring biographer Sandburg described as a “private affair between him and his conscience.” This statement ran as follows:

Yet I have never failed—do not now fail—to remember that in the Republican cause there is a higher aim than that of mere office. I have not allowed myself to forget that the abolition of the slave trade by Great Britain was agitated a hundred years before it was a final success; that the measure had its open fire-eating opponents; its stealthy “don’t care” opponents; its dollar and cent opponents; its inferior race opponents; its Negro equality opponents; and its religious and good order opponents; that all these opponents got offices, and their adversaries got none. But I also remember that though they blazed like tallow candles for a century, at last they flickered in the socket, died out, stank in the dark for a brief season, and were remembered no more, even by the smell. . . . I am proud, in my passing speck of time, to contribute a humble mite to that glorious consummation, which my own poor eyes may not last to see.<sup>14</sup>

With his election in 1860, the real test of Lincoln’s leader-

**DISHONORING THE DEAD:** The Battle of Sharpsburg, Maryland (known in the North as the Battle of Antietam), above, was the bloodiest single-day military encounter in U.S. history. Somewhere around 23,000 Americans died that day, September 17, 1862. To put that into perspective, that’s five times the number of Americans who died on D-Day. To make matters worse, the Northerners announced that they would not allow Christian burials for Southern soldiers—an act of barbarity condemned by many in the South and in Europe. Only after the rotting corpses presented a health hazard to the people living near Sharpsburg did the North relent and let the Confederate remains be scooped up and buried in a mass grave.

ship in his country began. State after state in the South withdrew from the union, as it became obvious that the South was extremely agitated by his election. Lincoln had been elected with only 39 percent of the popular vote. No president since has ever been elected with so little popular support. Certainly no president has ever been placed in office over the determined opposition of so many of his fellow citizens.<sup>15</sup>

Had Douglas been elected, it is almost certain secession and war would have been averted.

In his campaign Lincoln avoided speaking on vital issues.

Lincoln had long believed that Southern talk of secession was nothing but bluff. In 1856 he had stated in a speech in

Galena, Illinois: "All this talk about the dissolution of the union is humbug."<sup>16</sup> He grossly underestimated secessionist sentiment and overestimated pro-union strength in the upper South and border slave regions.

After Lincoln's election, a conservative senator, John J. Crittenden of Kentucky, proposed a compromise to head off secession by extending the Missouri Compromise line dividing slave states from free states all the way to the Pacific.<sup>17</sup> Lincoln rejected this compromise and marshaled his party against all other compromises with the South. Lincoln said as follows concerning this:

Let there be no compromise on the question of extending slavery. If there be, all our labor is lost and, ere long, must be done again. The dangerous ground—that into which some of our friends have a hankering to run—is [Popular Sovereignty]. Have none of it. Stand firm. The tug has to come, and better now, than any time hereafter.<sup>18</sup>

Lincoln also instructed his legislative spokesman from Illinois in Washington not to compromise with the South.

Pleas pounded into Lincoln from many regions of the country imploring him to make some gesture to the South and give leadership at that critical time. However, as Luthin describes it, Lincoln continued his "sphinx-like silence" until his inauguration.<sup>19</sup>

The Lincoln cultists often quote a letter Lincoln wrote during this period, to Alexander Hamilton Stephens of Georgia, who later would serve as vice president of the Confederacy. Here it is, in full:

For your eyes only  
Springfield, Ill. Dec. 22, 1860  
Hon. A. H. Stephens

My Dear Sir

Your obliging answer to my short note is just received and for which please accept my thanks—I fully appreciate the present peril the country is in, and the weight of responsibility on me.

Do the people of the South really entertain fears that a Republican administration would directly, or indirectly, interfere with the slaves, or with them about their slaves? If they do I wish to assure you, as once a friend, and still, I hope, not as an enemy, that there is no cause for such fear—

The South would be in no more danger in this respect than it was in the days of Washington.

I suppose, however, this does not meet the case—You think slavery is right and ought to be extended while we think it is wrong and ought to be restricted—That I suppose is the rule—It certainly is the only substantial difference between us—

Yours very truly,  
A. Lincoln<sup>20</sup>

This letter is often quoted by Lincoln's admirers to show him in the posture of a loving father holding out his hands to



**PROMOTED:** Ivan Basilovitch Turchin, a Russian in the Union Army, so terrorized the citizens of Athens, Alabama with pre-approved rape, looting, assault and murder, that the officers under his command requested that a court-martial be convened. Brigadier General James Garfield (later President Garfield) ruled Turchin should be thrown out of the army. Lincoln blocked Turchin's dismissal from federal service and promoted him to brigadier general.

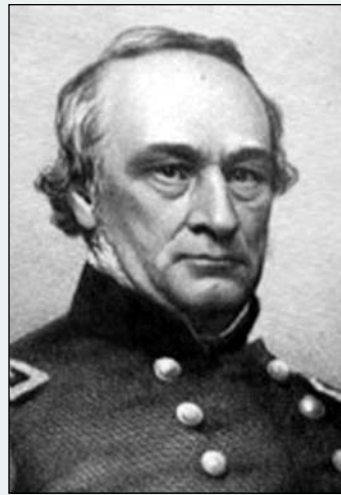
his erring Southern sons. But the interesting thing about this letter is that it was never publicized and never received any attention in the South. The reason for this is that the preamble of the letter, which Lincoln's admirers delete in the quotation, forbade Stephens, a unionist, upon his honor from showing it to anyone else, stating that the letter is for his eyes only.

Lincoln and Stephens had served together in Congress, and knew each other very well. Lincoln, it may be anticipated, knew Stephens would not make use of the letter in his efforts to keep Georgia (and thereby the South) in the union in obedience to Lincoln's urgings.

The question then arises of why Lincoln wrote the letter at all. No one can answer that question with certainty, but it appears Lincoln believed that he could entice Stephens into coming north and siding with the Union in the impending sectional war. This policy of Lincoln's worked with his later vice president, Andrew Johnson, who also served in Congress with Lincoln, representing eastern Tennessee and who went north and supported the Union during the war.

Certainly any responsible American would agree that Lincoln should have moved energetically to try to deter the secession movement. The fact is, Lincoln did not. On his way to Washington Lincoln visited with a number of the so-called "war governors" in the North. These were men like Gov. Andrew G. Curtin of Pennsylvania who were in favor of coercing the South by armed force into remaining in the union and thus remaining subject to the pro-North tariff laws.

While in Pennsylvania, Lincoln spoke at Independence Hall. He alluded to the Declaration of Independence and made clear that the Constitution was in conflict with the Declaration of Independence, and that it was his intention to reform the



**WAGING WAR:** “It is amazing that the Lincoln cultists have been able to shield Lincoln from the Northern atrocities committed during the war under his tenure as commander-in-chief of its armies,” points out Sam Dickson, the author of this article. He was referring to some of the cast of characters shown above (left to right): **Gen. John Pope**, issued general orders in 1862 allowing his troops to pillage the private possessions of civilians while marching through hostile territory; **Gen. Adolph von Steinwehr**, seized civilians as hostage so that they could

be executed if any of his soldiers were killed by unknown persons; **General Henry Halleck**, general in chief of the Union armies, modified Pope’s orders and reprimanded von Steinwehr after a letter from Gen. Robert E. Lee arrived imploring Halleck to wage war humanely or there would be severe consequences. **Gen. Benjamin Butler**, during his New Orleans occupation, issued a “right to rape” proclamation, giving his troops permission to treat the ladies of the city like ladies of the night unless they showed proper respect to authority.

Constitution to bring it in line with the principles of the declaration. Lincoln stated as follows:

I have never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence. . . . [I]f this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle [equality] I was about to say that I would rather be assassinated on this spot than to surrender it.<sup>21</sup>

These statements were not calculated to soothe the suspicions of Southern conservatives. They also reflect Lincoln’s innate radicalism and dissatisfaction with the American Constitution. His dissatisfaction with the limitations imposed on government and executive power by the Constitution was later to become evident in his precipitation of war and his conduct of the war.

As Stephen Douglas pointed out in the U.S. Senate, as the sectional secession crisis developed, there were three possible courses for the United States to take in dealing with the crisis:

- 1) The union could be saved by compromise and reconciliation between men of good will in both sections;
- 2) The South could be allowed to withdraw in peace and set up her own government independent of the North;
- 3) The South could be coerced by military force into remaining in the union.

According to Douglas, the best solution would have been one based on compromise and reconciliation. The next best would have been to allow the South to depart in peace. The

worst was to resort to violent military force to coerce the South into the union like a conquered province.<sup>22</sup>

In his inaugural address, Lincoln was ambiguous, making his famous gesture to the South in its conclusion but also containing passages stating that he would not recognize secession and would enforce the laws in all states. His original draft was much more warlike, but Seward convinced him to soften it.<sup>23</sup>

Continuing efforts were made to negotiate a peaceful separation. Virginia sent three commissioners to meet with Lincoln shortly prior to Lincoln’s attempt to resupply Fort Sumter, which led to the bombardment of Fort Sumter and the outbreak of the war. According to the Virginia commissioners, Lincoln equivocated as to whether he would resort to armed force to coerce the seceded states back into the union. Virginia at that point had not seceded but had placed her legislature in a state of continuous session to await further developments.

The Virginia commissioners had made it clear that if the Lincoln administration resorted to armed force against the South, Virginia and the other states of the South that had not already seceded would join their seceded sister states.<sup>24</sup>

Lincoln equivocated with the commissioners. However, his greatest concern voiced to them was, “What about my tariff?”<sup>25</sup> This shows once again Lincoln’s commitment to the huge vested industrial and financial interests of the North. The war in Lincoln’s mind had to be fought to establish the supremacy of that financial oligarchy. The tariff under Lincoln was enforced with vigor and was raised to unparalleled heights.<sup>26</sup> This policy of economic exploitation of the South was to be continued for

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almost 80 years after the war and was only abandoned in the face of the crisis of World War II.<sup>27</sup>

Lincoln after his inauguration temporized and maneuvered. All proposals in the so-called "Peace Congress" failed, receiving no support from the administration. It was necessary to provoke the South into firing the first shot so as to rally Northern opinion, at that point strongly divided, behind a war to coerce the South. This was achieved by dispatching resupply ships to Fort Sumter, thus breaking his commitments and assurances to the South that he would not reinforce the federal forts in the South.<sup>28</sup>

When the news of the planned resupply of Fort Sumter reached the South, the bombardment of the fort was begun. Lincoln then used the act of firing upon the American flag to rally Northern opinion to his cause and put up a public pretense that the situation in the South was merely that of a minority of conspirators preventing the expression of the true union sentiments of the loyalist majorities in the South. Lincoln may have believed this himself, because he always overestimated his ability to divide the South and to provoke animosity between the social classes there. The war had been raging for over a year before Lincoln realized that this was not to be.

After the surrender of Fort Sumter, Lincoln issued an executive proclamation calling for 75,000 volunteers to form an army to invade the South. Virginia and the other remaining Southern states withdrew and the Confederacy assumed its basic geography.<sup>29</sup>

In 1848, during his efforts to oppose the war with Mexico, Lincoln had attacked President Polk upon the floor of the House for having sent units of the U.S. Army into a disputed border region between Mexico and the United States. Lincoln said that the president's action violated the Constitution's

requirement that only Congress could declare war. Lincoln's own action in raising an army by executive order was a far greater violation of these same provisions of the Constitution dealing with the declaration of war than the alleged violations of President Polk, which he had attacked. The "Executive Order Army" could be said to be the precursor of the whole litany of executive orders that have been a favorite device of power-grabbing presidents from the Roosevelt administration onward. The war governors, nevertheless, hastened to provide Lincoln with the militia units and volunteers he needed to commence the hostilities, and the war was on.

The efforts of true American patriots like Stephen A. Douglas to save the union by conciliation and compromise had been successfully thwarted. Lincoln had achieved his opportunity to rededicate the nation to the radical principles of the Declaration of Independence and to get around the impediment of the Constitution.

#### LINCOLN'S CONDUCT OF THE WAR

It is fair to say that the War for Southern Independence was waged by the Lincoln administration with a barbarity

rarely equaled in any other war in American history until then.

Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus throughout the nation. He assumed the power to close newspapers and in fact closed hundreds of them in the North that dared criticize his policies. He arrested elected officials, including former members of Congress, who opposed him.<sup>30</sup>

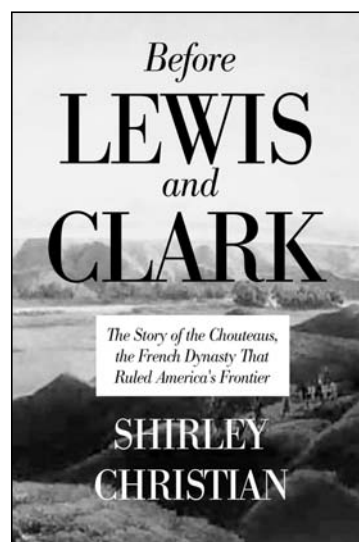
Vice President John C. Breckenridge, who finished second to Lincoln in electoral votes in the 1860 election, presided over the official election and swore in his successor, Hannibal Hamlin. Breckenridge, a Kentuckian, was opposed to disunion and to Lincoln. His criticism of Lincoln was censored, and the Associated Press was barred from reporting his remarks. Breckenridge remained in Washington until after the First

*The city of Atlanta, after its surrender, was burned to the ground, and only a handful of churches and a few residences escaped the holocaust. More than 4,000 edifices were burned, which was about 92 percent of the city.*

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**THE POPE INTERVENES IN EUROPE:** A little-known fact the author reveals about the makeup of the Union army was that it contained a large number of immigrant volunteers from Europe, mainly Germany and Ireland. The recruitment efforts of the Union could not stop at the borders; Grant's wasteful battle tactics needed a constant stream of fresh cannon fodder that could be had cheap. Pope Pius IX was so appalled at the numbers of European men enlisting to fight and die in the American conflict that he wrote a personal letter to Jefferson Davis that was read in Catholic churches in Ireland and Germany to help stem the exodus of European manhood into the ranks of the Union Army.

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invited to dinner at the house of a prominent family in Kansas City. His mother admonished him to turn the silver over and check the hallmark because, "It's probably ours."

On another occasion, Truman showed his mother his new National Guard uniform only to be ordered out of the house because the pants were blue.

In Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri, Northern troops fired on pro-Southern demonstrators, dispersed legislatures, expelled elected officials and otherwise demonstrated that no respect for constitutional rights or liberties would be shown during the course of the war.

**I**t is amazing that the Lincoln cultists have been able to shield Lincoln from blame for the Northern atrocities committed during the war under his tenure as commander-in-chief of its armies. The standard line on this point, usually implied rather than stated, is that Lincoln sat in the White House exuding love for Southerners, in blissful ignorance of what Sherman, Ewing, Pope, Butler and others were doing. This, of course, is unworthy of belief and is an impossibility, given the wide-

spread jubilant publicity in the North over the depredations of the Northern armies against the Southern people.<sup>32</sup>

Ewing's General Order No. 11 in Missouri was merely a taste of what was to come throughout the South. The most famous and widely known example of Northern atrocities was the campaign of Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman in Georgia. No portion of this country has ever felt the scourge of war like the state of Georgia experienced it.

The city of Atlanta, after its surrender, was burned to the ground, and only a handful of churches and a few outlying residences escaped the holocaust. More than 4,000 edifices were burned, which was about 92 percent of the city.

Capt. Daniel Oakey of the Second Massachusetts Volunteers recounted the burning of Atlanta as follows: "Sixty thousand of us witnessed the destruction of Atlanta, while our post band and that of the 33rd Massachusetts played martial airs and operatic selections."<sup>33</sup> Like the bombing of Dresden, this massive destruc-

Battle of Manassas, hoping and working for peace.<sup>31</sup> He later became a Confederate general.

The first taste of what was to come in the South in the course of the war was seen in the Border States. In Missouri, the Anglo-Saxon population was disarmed, and the state was garrisoned with volunteer units of Germans who could be counted on to support the Lincoln administration. The Anglo-Saxon population of the whole western tier of counties in Missouri were deported from their homes by Gen. Ewing's General Order No. 11, which depopulated the region by forcibly evacuating the women and children on the shortest of notice, along with burning their houses and stealing their property. Among those experiencing this deportation and expropriation was the mother of later President Harry S Truman. The memories of the sufferings she and her family had endured while she was a small child stayed with Mrs. Truman throughout her life. On one occasion the aspiring young politician told his mother that he had been

tion of civilian property was of no military importance. On November 15, 1864, the march of the Northern troops across Georgia from Atlanta to Savannah began. Sherman created a charred avenue over 40 miles wide, destroying all railroads, seizing all provisions, pillaging, plundering and burning. There was no military force available to obstruct his course.<sup>34</sup>

The devastation in Georgia was so bad that entire communities disappeared, never to be heard of again. Perhaps the most dramatic of these occurred at the mill town of New Manchester on Sweetwater Creek in Douglas County, Georgia. The Union forces had occupied the town without a shot being fired on July 2, 1864.

Most of the workers in the mill were women and were told to return to their homes. They were told they would be taken out of the path of the advancing army. The mill was destroyed and the town was placed under guard. On July 8, the entire town, including the homes of the workers, was burned to the ground. Having destroyed the entire town, only the population remained, most of them women and children with a few men. The women and children were separated from the men and herded into wagons. The wagon train then set off for Marietta, Georgia, some 16 miles away. During the journey the women were forced to endure the sexual advances of the Union soldiers.

In Marietta the group was joined by a similar group of deported women from Roswell, Georgia. On July 20, the entire group of women and children was shipped by train from Georgia to Louisville, Kentucky.<sup>35</sup> Not one woman or child is known to have returned to New Manchester.

Are we really to believe that Lincoln knew nothing of the depredations of Sherman's troops? The atrocious deeds of his troops were reported widely throughout the Northern press and



**NO COMBAT FOR MY KID:** Robert Todd Lincoln, Abe Lincoln's first child, became a captain on the staff of Ulysses S. Grant in 1865 after the president wrote Grant a letter requesting the appointment. His main duty was escorting visitors to various locations—no combat for the president's child.

extended over a period of many months, not ending until the final surrender of the Confederacy, by which time Sherman had similarly torched Columbia, South Carolina, and laid waste to parts of Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. Sherman, besides his legendary "war is hell" comment, wrote his wife in Savannah, Georgia, of popular opinion of the Northern liberators: "They regard us just as the Romans did the Goths, and the parallel is not unjust."<sup>36</sup> Lincoln's approval and support for the atrocious prosecution of the war is clear.

One example suffices to give the lie to the image of Lincoln as a "loving father" so assiduously cultivated by the myth-spinners. On May 2, 1862, a Russian Cossack serving as a mercenary in the federal army named Ivan Basilovitch Turchin marched four federal regiments under his command into Athens, Alabama. The townsfolk had cheered retreating Confederate soldiers as they passed through the town earlier. When the federal troops occupied their town, some

of the residents turned their backs on them and went into their houses, thereby enraging Turchin.

Turchin ordered his men to stack arms and then told them he would shut his eyes to whatever the soldiers wanted to do to the town's inhabitants, according to a reporter for *The New York Herald*. Turchin's men, unleashed on the civilian population, proceeded to loot stores, private homes, barns and smokehouses. Townspeople who rushed to the sound of breaking glass and doors were herded away at bayonet point. Women were reportedly "insulted" (a Victorian euphemism for rape). A pregnant woman was so badly abused she miscarried and died.

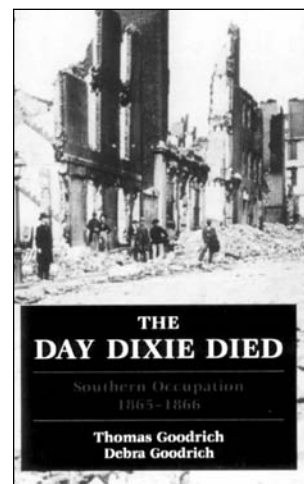
Turchin established his headquarters in the house of the J.W.S. Donnell family. Donnell's daughter was sick. Turchin

"I suffered more hardships and trials and experienced more dangers after the war had ended and peace had been declared than I had ever encountered during the four years in the field. . . . I have slept on high eminences in order that I might watch for scouring search parties who were shooting down in cold blood every man that wore the Southern uniform, and for no other reason. I have seen the horizon at night lit up with the burning houses of my friends whose only offense was that they had been soldiers in the Confederate army."

—Statement of a Texan

## The Day Dixie Died: Southern Occupation 1865-1866

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barred doctors from entering the house and treating her, and she died shortly thereafter. When the Donnells asked that the brigade band stop playing loud music, which was disturbing the sick and dying girl, Turchin told them that “patriotic music” helped speed a soul to heaven.

Turchin told fellow officers that all White Southerners would be killed and their lands divided between the slaves and immigrants.

To the credit of the North, the native-born Yankee officers serving under Turchin’s command protested his orders granting his men the right to loot, pillage, assault and rape. Disgusted by the atrocities, these officers asked Union Gen. Ormsby McKnight Mitchell to convene a court-martial to try their charges against Turchin. Turchin defended his conduct and the conduct of his men as being justified by the actions of the town’s residents in cheering the retreating Confederates and showing disrespect for his troops by even spitting at them. Such trivialities may have seemed sufficient to justify the atrocities to Turchin, but Brig. Gen. James A. Garfield

(later to be president of the United States) disagreed and ruled that Turchin should be dismissed from federal service.

Alas, the commander-in-chief in Washington had a different view of the matter. Lincoln not only blocked Turchin’s removal from the Army, he rushed through Congress a promotion for Turchin to the rank of brigadier general. Turchin was welcomed home to Chicago by a cheering mob of hate-crazed fanatics and a band playing “Lo, the Conquering Hero Comes!” Lincoln’s actions belie the notion that the atrocities perpetrated by federal troops occurred without his knowledge or approval.

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[This article is an edited version of a much longer and more comprehensive study of Lincoln by Mr. Dickson. For the full text, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to TBR, P.O. Box 15877, Washington, D.C. 20003 requesting

SAM DICKSON is a retired lawyer who practiced in the Atlanta area and is a member and founder of the Atlanta Committee for Historical Review. He is a contributing editor to TBR.

#### ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup>Davis, Burke, *The Long Surrender*, New York, Random House, 1985, 108-09, 203.

<sup>2</sup>Dwight G. Anderson, *Abraham Lincoln: The Question for Immortality*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1982, 66. Ward Hill Lamson, one of Lincoln’s closest friends, wrote: “He perceived no reason for changing his convictions, but he did perceive many good and cogent reasons for not making them public.”

<sup>3</sup>Edgar Lee Masters, *Lincoln, the Man*, Dodd, Mead & Co., New York, 1931, 40-3; Robert W. Johansen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1973, 54-5.

<sup>4</sup>Sandburg, Carl, *Abraham Lincoln*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1926, Vol. 1, 367. Sangamon Edition (referred to hereinafter as “SE.”)

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, Vol. 1, 369.

<sup>6</sup>Masters 97-8.

<sup>7</sup>Johansal 53.

<sup>8</sup>Masters 81.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>10</sup>Dee Alexander Brown, *Hear the Lonesome Whistle Blow: Railroads in the West*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1977, 10-12. This book also details the Republicans’ use of the railroads as a political tool and weapon during and after the War Between the States.

<sup>11</sup>SE, Vol. 2, 103-04.

<sup>12</sup>Johansen, see general chapters XXIX and XXX.

<sup>13</sup>SE, Vol. 2, 159.

<sup>14</sup>Carl Sandburg, Reader’s Digest Illustrated Edition, *Abraham Lincoln—The Prairie Years and the War Years*, Pleasantville, Reader’s Digest Association, New York, 1970, 136. (“RD”)

<sup>15</sup>Luthin, 238. It is worth pointing out that Lincoln got the same percentage of the vote as Fremont received in 1856 while the combined Douglas-Breckenridge slates increased the Democratic popular vote. This does not include Bell, who got nearly one third of Lincoln’s popular vote total. The Douglas-Breckenridge vote increased from 45 percent (1.8 million) to 47 percent (2.2 million).

<sup>16</sup>Luthin 242.

<sup>17</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>18</sup>Op. cit., 243.

<sup>19</sup>Loc. cit. Lincoln “pondered over patronage” while the union dissolved.

<sup>20</sup>Alexander Hamilton Stephens, *A Constitutional View of the Late War Between the States, Its Causes, Character, Conduct and Results*, National Publishing Co., New York, 1868, Volume II, 266.

<sup>21</sup>SE, Vol. 3, 73; Masters 380.

<sup>22</sup>Johannsen 850.

<sup>23</sup>Hudson Strode, *Jefferson Davis, Confederate President*, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1959, 8.

<sup>24</sup>Vaughan, C.R., D.D., editor, *Discussions by Robert Dabney, DD., LL.D.*, Volume IV (Hamsburg, Virginia Sprinkle Publications, 1979), 87-100, quoting the memoirs of Colonel John B. Baldwin, a member of the Virginia Peace Commission.

<sup>25</sup>Vaughan 94.

<sup>26</sup>M.E. Bradford, *Remembering Who We Are: Observations of a Southern Conservative*, the University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia, 1985, 147. Lincoln raised the tariff from 18.84 percent to 47.56 percent. The tariff stayed above 40 percent in all but two years from Lincoln’s administration to the election of Woodrow Wilson. The policy amounted to a brutally effective policy of treating the South as a colonial possession transferring wealth from the South to the Northern plutocrats.

<sup>27</sup>Arnall, Ellis Gibbs, *The Shore Dimly Seen*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, J.B. Lippincott Company, 1946, 165-185. Ellis Arnall was governor of Georgia from 1943 to 1947. A staunch New Deal Democrat, he was one of the most liberal governors ever elected in this history of the State. An example of what Wilmot Robertson styled an “old believer” liberal, he also appears to be that rarest of all creatures—an honest Southern liberal whose belief in multi-racialism does not include the usual hatred for his own people and region. The chapter of the book referred to in this footnote is a concise and convincing summary of the Northern exploitation of its Southern colony after the War for Southern Independence.

<sup>28</sup>Strode, *Jefferson Davis, Confederate President*, 28-

31; John Shipley Tilley, *The Coming of the Glory*, Stratford Houses, New York, 1949, 58-9. See also Masters, 390-96.

<sup>29</sup>What kind of war did Lincoln expect? The largest single field army in the Mexican War was 11,000. After calling out the 75,000 militia, Lincoln on May 3, 1861 authorized enlistment of 82,000 additional soldiers. On July 4, 1861 he asked for 400,000 volunteers. The First Battle of Manassas was not fought until July 21, 1861. What did Lincoln plan to do with over half a million troops? Ludwell H. Johnson, *Division and Reunion: America 1848-77*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1978, 89.

<sup>30</sup>Bradford, 149-150; Masters 422-23. The mayor of Washington, D.C., Congressman Vallandigham of Ohio and a large portion of the Maryland legislature were jailed.

<sup>31</sup>Davis, 69-70.

<sup>32</sup>It is worth noting that Dr. Goebbels did not overlook the Northern campaign techniques. German propaganda in World War II cited Union conduct as an example of what Europe could expect if the Americans were to begin their crusading on a broad scale. Evidently the Nazis felt the Lincoln government would be a model for the Roosevelt government. An example of this propaganda is printed in the English-language version of *Signal*.

<sup>33</sup>Joseph T. Derry, AM., edited by Gen. Clements A. Evans, *Georgia: Confederate Military History*, the Blue and Gray Press, Secaucus, New Jersey, Vol. IV, 360.

<sup>34</sup>Derry, 360-69; Masters, 455-62. See also Veale, F.J.P., *The Veale File*, Vol. 1: *Advance to Barbarism*, Institute for Historical Review, Torrance, California, 1979, 122: “Sherman only executed the most dramatic and devastating example of the strategy that was laid down by President Lincoln himself . . . That Lincoln determined the basic lines of Northern military strategy has been well established in such books as Collin R. Ballard’s *The Military Genius of Abraham Lincoln* and T. Harry Williams’s *Lincoln and His Generals*. Grant only efficiently applied Lincoln’s military policy in the field. . . .”

<sup>35</sup>*Atlanta Journal Constitution, Atlanta Weekly Magazine*, April 3, 1983, 22.

<sup>36</sup>Strode, *Jefferson Davis, Confederate President*, 125.