

I. Slavery--A Fading Institution

A. Emancipation in the Air

For 75 years prior to the Civil War emancipation was in the air on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Latin American Revolutions of the early 19th century brought in their wakes emancipation and freedom for slaves in the New World. Formal emancipation came in Mexico in 1829; two years later Bolivia emancipated her slaves. In 1842 the slaves in Uruguay were set free. The momentum continued for liberation and in the 1850s Columbia and Argentina followed suit with emancipation and Venezuela and Peru abolished slavery in this decade. By the time the American Civil War broke out slavery existed in only Cuba and Brazil among the Latin American countries.

The British had already started on the path of emancipation and uprooting of her slave system in the West Indies in the 1830s.

IN Santo Domingo and Haiti slavery was overthrown by rebellions and revolutions.

In 1861 Czar Alexander began the emancipation of the Russian serfs-- the last vestige of forced labor in Europe/

By 1861 the United States, the leader in political independence, was lagging far behind in the cause of human freedom. The existence of slavery in the the US put this nation in the company of the backward places of the world like Cuba, Brazil and parts of Saharian Africa and Asia where slavery still flourished. This was a rather dubious distinction of which an increasing number of Americans were not proud.

II. Slavery Caught in the Vortex of War

A. Northern War Aims:

The aims of the North was at the beginning of the struggle strictly pragmatic--to end secession and restore the Union. . . Nothing more or less. These aims were implied in the Lincoln inaugural address when he explicitly denied that he entertained any purpose to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it existed. His emphasis in the Inaugural Address was upon the negative aim of preventing secession and the disruption of the Union.

In July (1861) the House of Representatives a resolution declaring that "this war is not waged . . . [for] the purpose of overthrowing or interfering with the . . . established institutions of those States, but to maintain . . . the . . . the States unimpaired; and that as soon as these objects are accomplished the war ought to cease." The Senate backed this sentiment up with a similar resolution.

At the beginning the war was levelled against secession it was a war to maintain the Union--that, and nothing more.

A "Policies Action"

B. The Problem of the "contrabands."

Of course as soon as the Union forces began to penetrate the South the limited aims of the North were in jeopardy. It was simply impossible to fight a war in the Slave South without getting all tangled up in the institution of slavery. As soon as Northern troops moved in the neighborhood blacks on the plantation began to ~~vote~~ vote against slavery and Ole Massa with their feet by pouring into the Union lines for protection and to escape from their oppressors.

Some of the Union Commanders--like McClellan and Halleck--returned the fugitives to their masters. This was not a war to end slavery. They were in many cases also strongly anti-Negro. Other Union officers took a different tact.

In Louisiana General Ben Butler freed run-aways and used them in his command. The same thing occurred with General Fremont in Missouri. Fremont proclaimed martial law and declared the slaves "contraband of war" and forfeit to their owners who were supporting the Rebellion.

General David Hunter (perhaps the most popular Union General among the Northern Abolitionists) was the commander of Union forces occupying the coastline of So. Carolina, Florida and Georgia--the so-called "Department of the South."

*"Please Don't
limit to the
in combat"*

Hunter on his own steam in May (1862) issued orders freeing all slaves in those ~~states~~ states in the Department of the South/

C. Lincoln's Reaction

Here was Lincoln faced with a new set of circumstances/ The war was turning into a moral crusade for freedom for the 4,000,000 slaves in the South. A crusade that Lincoln did not prepare for nor was he in favor of at this stage in the hostilities. By 1862 the limited war aims were as far as Lincoln was prepared to go. But pressure from the ~~field~~ field--Union Commanders--was transforming the war and Lincoln feared that it might get out of control.

His immediate reaction was fear that the actions--unauthorized by Generals like Butler, Fremont and Hunter--might lose the Border States. These states (Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, Delaware) were slave-holding states but they were still loyal to the Union. Lincoln desperately wanted to keep them on the Union side. The old joke--Lincoln would like to have God on his side in this struggle, but he had to have Missouri. Emancipation of slaves as an emergent war aim would jeprodize all this.

Lincoln removed Fremont from his command in Missouri; when he read in the newspapers what Hunter was up to he forced him to rescind his order freeing slaves in the Department of the South. . . . Against the advice of Cabinet officers like Chase and Stanton. He was determined to keep the war aims of the Union limited aims--to end secession and restore the Union.

D. Pressure from Behind the Lines

By 1862 the war was going badly for the Union. Except for General Grant in the West Lincoln could not put together a winning combination to met the Southern armies on the field.

With the war going badly for the Union there emerged pressures in the North to hit the South where she lived--in her peculiar institution.

In April of 1862 Congress moved to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia. Lincoln insisted that the masters be compensated for the loss of their property. Legislation was passed that provided payments of up to \$300.00 for emancipated slaves in the Capitol. . . . In June of 1862 Congress abolished slavery in the territories. Then on July 1862 Congress took the biggest step by passing the Confiscation Act declaring free the slaves of persons supporting the rebellion. The question was how

this new act would be enforced.

The point is: That Congress had now bit the bullet. The emergency of the war situation forced the Legislative branch for military and psychological reasons to direct their attack upon the central institutional structure of the South--the slave system.

In addition to the pressure from Congress Lincoln felt the heat from Radicals within his own party (Summer, Wilson, Stevens, who urged him to revolutionize the war by taking a stand for freedom).

Leaders of the free black community in the North like Frederick Douglass in an article in the Black Press entitled "How to End the War" pledged with the President to use black troops to march into the heart of Dixie and raise the banner of Emancipation.

The popular and powerful editor of the New York Tribune (August 20, 1862) wrote a scathing editorial about Lincoln's reluctance to change the Union war aims and wage a unlimited war against rebellion and traitors. His editorial entitled "The Prayer of Twenty Millions" [see addendum].

Lincoln's reply pretty candidly set forth what was going on in the President's own mind at the time: [see addendum].

III. Lincoln the Reluctant Emancipator

A. The Reluctant Lincoln

Lincoln in the summer of 1862 was struggling with the dilemma. . . If he went ahead and proclaimed that a new war aim was part of the Union war effort--freedom of the slaves--there might be a serious and dangerous backlash. Lincoln was after all responsible--ultimately for the course of the war and the restoration of the Union.

Would emancipation lead to the loss of the border states.

If the war turned into a crusade to liberate the bondsmen in the South would this impact upon the morale of the Union armies. Would Union troops be willing to fight for the freedom of blacks?

Once the slaves were freed what would be their fate in a racist nation. (Lincoln was already toying with the idea of colonization of free blacks. He entertained schemes of colonization--pilot projects--in the Chiriqui project of 1862 and the Isla de Vaca. Both turned out to be disastrous schemes.)

In the Spring of 1862 he was involved in his border state strategy--He tried to convince the loyal border states (Delaware especially) to take the lead in launching a gradual emancipation program with compensation from the Federal Government. The Border states refused this offer.

While Lincoln was privately indulging in his colonization schemes and border strategy he was at the same time writing the draft of the Emancipation Proclamation. He would slip over to the telegraph office in the War Department where he could find the peace and quiet to compose this momentous document.

Finally in September 1862 the Emancipation Proclamation was ready for public consideration.

B. The Provisional Emancipation Proclamation

the struggling man

The significant feature of the EP was the provision that called for the emancipation of slaves on January 1, 1863, in those states or parts of states that were then still in rebellion against the Union. Those states ~~not~~ in rebellion or already under Union control the EP would not apply (Delaware, Missouri, Kentucky, New Orleans,) Lincoln would develop some plan of voluntary immediate or gradual emancipation for these areas.

*on Basis of
Mrs Powers' slave*

The point is that the EP was a military measure aimed at undermining the Southern war effort by hitting the South in her vitals--her slave institution. It was paramount a piece of psychological warfare. But the humane and moral connotations were not lost on Lincoln. . . . He had always been an opponent of slavery but he had seen his role as first assuring the Union victory by any means possible.

The fact that it was first a military measure was revealed in the timing of the Emancipation Proclamation. It was delivered right after the news of the Union success ~~at~~ --highly qualified--at Sharpsburg or Antietam

Aug. 1962

The fact that the Emancipation Proclamation was not to go into effect for 100 days implied that Lincoln was still unsure of whether this was the right ~~to~~ course to pursue. He was moving with the drift of events that were too strong to oppose. . . But would it accelerate the defeat of the South and end the rebellion . Or was his course fraught with pitfalls and delays that might weight against the defeat of the Confederacy ?

C. Reaction to the Proclamation in the North

There was a great backlash to the new course the Administration had taken with the announced intention of revolutionizing the war. . . .

Some of the Union commanders resigned rather than continue under the new circumstances.

Most noticeably there was a northern backlash that was evidenced in the October and November elections. The Republican party lost out in the elections in states like Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana. . . Partly because of the emancipation issue. But the party gained votes in states like Kansas, Michigan, and in New England. . . It was a mixed reaction

In December 1862 Lincoln revealed that his heart was really in his plan of gradual emancipation and not in the revolutionary step he was forced to take in proclaiming the radical immediate emancipation that was to take place on the first of the year.

In his state of the Union address to Congress he urged the legislature to adopt a constitutional amendment granting compensation to any state that undertook to abolish slavery over a thirty-seven year period, . . . That is, to inaugurate a plan of gradual emancipation that would be completed by 1900. This was an appeal to the rebellious southern states to return to the Union and accept Lincoln's gradual emancipation plan with compensation as an alternative to the war policy of the administration--of immediate and uncompensated emancipation.

Support for this position was not forthcoming. . . . The dye was cast; and history moved along another line than the one Lincoln so desperately wanted.

Reaction to Lincoln's ~~State of the Union~~ message.

*Granting Suspensions for Frederick & Norman
Clements.*

Lincoln and the Missouri Case [1847]

W. Phillips - Lincoln was a "firm-ute second-rate man"

IV. War Becomes Revolution

A. Victory More Certain

1. Day of Days-- January 1, 1863. . . .

The impact within the Black community was overwhelming. . . . This was the Day of Days. . . . There was no distinction among slaves about free and non-free areas. Father Abraham wanted them all to be free and they would oblige. Blacks from Maryland, Delaware, and other surrounding slave states poured into the District of Columbia. In the South they walked off the plantations. . . . there were reports of "general strikes". . . . and slave disloyalty throughout the Southland.

The Emancipation Proclamation ~~also~~ despite its qualifications--meant in fact that chattel slavery was finished in the United States. The very idea of slavery existing in certain exempt pockets while the rest of the nation was free of the peculiar institution was an impossibility. . . .

The enactment of the EP also threw off any restrictions that held before about the recruitment of black troops in the war now that the black community had a real stake] in the outcome of the struggle. By 1863 the recruitment of black troops went on a pace. By the end of the War about 180,000 blacks had served in the Union Army. Many distinguished themselves in combat roles at places like Ft. Wagner, Brice's Crossroads, Deep Bottom, Honey Springs, Nashville, Petersburg, and Port Hudson. . . . Sustaining heavier casualties in relation to their numbers than white Union forces. They played a significant role in the military defeat of the South.

After January 1, 1863 the war was on a new plane. It was no longer merely a war against something, but a war for something, a war for something greatly cherished in the American tradition and creed, a war for freedom. What had begun as a police action had been converted into a crusade. In short, the new war aim raised morale in the Union Army to heights it had not experienced in the first two years of the struggle. An aura of glory descended upon the common cause that sometimes lifted men out of themselves, exalted them, . . . and was an inspiration to many of the men in Union blue who were somewhat perplexed about what the war was all about. Many Union troops who were hostile or uncertain about fighting a war to free the blacks were encouraged to change their attitudes once the black troops were in the field. . . .

*Recd.
John Brown's
Body*

Impact of the Emancipation Proclamation on the international scene. Especially important in England where the working classes now came out in support of the Union effort. The fact that the "no bodies" and the "no bodies" were behind the Union effort gave the British ruling classes pause about the recognition of the the Confederacy. . . .

The Point is: That the War became a dual purpose war:

A war for Union and for freedom. But Emancipation was only the penultimate climax of a long-term crusade launched especially by the northern abolitionists in the 1840s. The Emancipation Proclamation gave the black his freedom. . .but this was only a PAPER freedom. Before the nation was still the massive job of reconstruction--human reconstruction. . . of aiding 4,000,000 bondsmen to enter a new life of freedom and equality.

The fact that the North held back on the question of equality after the war was the tragedy of the War and the story of the the postwar period--the so-called Reconstruction era. After 1863 the Union did fight the war on borrowed moral capital--that is, on the promise of freedom,. . . But freedom without equality would prove a default; a repudiation of the debt.