

The Register

Lincoln Slave Policy in Kentucky: A Study of Pragmatic Strategy

by Victor B. Howard

Abraham Lincoln did not liberate the slaves after a long devotion and laborious commitment to the cause of abolition. He came to the presidency with a record that placed him in the tradition of a conservative Whig. In 1848, when many of his more liberal fellow Whigs were joining the Free Soil party, he was speaking and campaigning for a slaveholder, Zachary Taylor, the Whig choice for the presidency. Until the end Lincoln never tired of telling friends that he was a Henry Clay Whig in his principles and philosophy. Like Clay, Lincoln was an advocate of the colonization of blacks, a position which put him in the ranks of one of the country's most anti-Negro organization during the antebellum period.

But, as a humanitarian, Lincoln rejected measures of the more vindictive wing of colonizers who incited prejudice that resulted in violence against blacks. Lincoln's approach to colonization was similar to that of Joseph C. Hornblower and Courtlandt Van Rensselear, long-time directors of the American Colonization Society, who hoped the Society could be changed into a humanitarian movement to restore individual blacks to a life of freedom and self-determinism.¹ When the Republican party was organized in Illinois in 1854, Lincoln refused to identify with the party because of the strong antislavery antecedents of the founders of the movement. During the presidential can-

Dr. Howard, a professor of history at Morehead State University, has in press a book entitled *Black Liberation and The Death of Slavery in Kentucky*. A shorter version of this paper was read at the American Historical Association convention in 1979.

¹Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (9 vols., New Brunswick, N.J., 1953-55), I, 501-16; II, 1-13, 298-99 (hereinafter, Basler, *Works*); *Illinois State Journal*, January 14, 1854; Leonard Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Antiabolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York, 1970); Mark E. Neely, Jr., "American Nationalism in the Image of Henry Clay: Abraham Lincoln's Eulogy on Henry Clay in Context," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, 73 (1975), 31-60.

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vass of 1856, although he campaigned for John C. Fremont, Lincoln's conservatism led him to keep his distance and refrain from a complete break with those who hoped to revive the Whig party.²

Recent scholars have portrayed Lincoln as maturing into a full-fledged Radical as the war developed. In his excellent study of the Radical Republicans, Hans L. Trefousse concludes that Lincoln pursued the same goals as the Radicals, but he was "more astute and possessed better political instincts than the Radicals." In the end, the president "accomplished practically everything the advanced members of the party wanted." While Lincoln "cooperated with the Radicals," his relationship was voluntary and "he always retained the upper hand."³ More recently, Peyton McCrary has examined Lincoln's reconstruction policy in Louisiana and found that, just before his death, Lincoln had decided to scrap Nathaniel Banks' moderate program, align himself with the Congressional Radicals' Reconstruction policy, and support the Louisiana Radicals in reconstructing the state.⁴

Was Lincoln a cautious Radical from the beginning of his political career? Did he mature into Radicalism with the progress of the war and the revolutionary tendencies of the struggle? Research on Lincoln's slave policy in Kentucky reveals that he remained cautious, conservative by nature and philosophy, but also pragmatic. Lincoln best expressed his personal views of servitude in his simple statement, "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong." But, being a pragmatist, he carefully distinguished between "what ought to be" and the realities of what actually was.⁵ Lincoln's conservatism arose in part from a sound sense for the progress of historical change.⁶ This was best revealed in

²Victor B. Howard, "The Illinois Republican Party; The Party Becomes Conservative, 1855-1866," *Journal of the Illinois Historical Society*, 64 (1971), 300-01.

³Hans L. Trefousse, *The Radical Republicans: Lincoln's Vanguard For Racial Justice* (New York, 1969), 265.

⁴Peyton McCrary, *Abraham Lincoln and Reconstruction: The Louisiana Experiment* (Princeton, 1978). See also Paul David Nelson, "From Intolerance to Moderation: The Evolution of Abraham Lincoln's Racial Views," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, 72 (1974), 1-9.

⁵David Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered* (New York, 1947), 133.

⁶Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York, 1954), 133.

his efforts to reconcile the views of the border state Unionists and the antislavery nationalists during the Civil War. Throughout the war Lincoln was plagued by constantly antagonistic forces: on the one hand was Kentucky with its determination to restore "the Union as it was and the Constitution as it is," and, on the other, antislavery radicalism with its commitment to destroy slavery. The difficulty of reconciling these opposing forces, which Lincoln failed to achieve, created "a problem hardly less serious than the war itself."⁷

In sympathy and culture Kentucky was tied to the South; politically, the heritage of Clay's nationalism identified the state with the Union. When its statesmen could not prevent the breaking up of the Union, Kentucky refused to join either side. On May 16, 1861, the Kentucky legislature adopted a policy of neutrality for the state, a position which presented a grave challenge to Lincoln's leadership. Informed people realized that Kentucky must ultimately throw its allegiance to either North or South. Lincoln was well aware that the ultimate destiny of Kentucky, as well as the other border states, would be determined by the stance of the Union regarding slavery. And it was a vital question, for the population advantage of the North with the border states was five to two; without them, it would be only three to two.⁸

From the beginning of the "rebellion," Lincoln felt that Kentucky "would be a turning weight in the scale of War." The Commonwealth held such a strategic position that Lincoln thought a Kentucky decision to join the Confederacy would be fateful for the Union cause. The Confederacy might have there an almost impregnable defense line along the banks of the Ohio River.⁹ Consideration of the border states, rather than the Confederacy, doubtless prompted Lincoln to remind the South, in his inaugural address of March 4, 1861, that the Republican platform of 1860 guaranteed the inviolate rights of the states "to order and control their own domestic institutions." He promised that this right would remain thus exclusively under the

⁷J. G. Randall, *Lincoln the President* (4 vols., New York, 1945-55), II, 1.

⁸Dean Sprague, *Freedom Under Lincoln* (Boston, 1965), 300; Edward Dicey, *Six Months in the Federal States* (2 vols., London, 1863), II, 70.

⁹John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History* (10 vols., New York, 1890), IV, 235; Benjamin P. Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 1968), 261.

state control.¹⁰ Lincoln seldom lost an opportunity to assure Kentucky that the war would not be conducted against slavery.¹¹

In June 1861, the Kentucky congressional elections were held. Informed observers reported that Lincoln had postponed calling a special session of Congress until July, because he feared that antislavery congressmen might provoke a conflict between pivotal Kentucky and the federal government.¹² But Lincoln's inaugural address position was sustained by Congress: on July 22, the day after the Battle of Bull Run, the House of Representatives passed the Crittenden Resolution; the Senate approved it two days later. The resolution declared that the war was "not conducted for the purpose of interfering with the rights or established institutions of the states . . . but to maintain the constitution, and to preserve the Union."¹³

Kentucky's congressional delegation, however, was less than enthusiastic about another act passed at the same time. The Confiscation Act, which freed all slaves used to support Confederate military activities, was opposed by the delegations of Kentucky and the other border states; nonetheless, the act was adopted without a division of votes.¹⁴ On Sunday, August 14, the day before the extra session of Congress ended, Kentucky representatives Robert Mallory, John J. Crittenden, and James S. Jackson called on Lincoln to urge him to veto the Confiscation Act. Although they did not secure his positive pledge to do so, the Kentuckians were reassured that Lincoln sympa-

¹⁰Basler, *Works*, IV, 263; Burton J. Hendrick, *Lincoln's War Cabinet* (Gloucester, Mass., 1965; orig. pub. 1946), 270. There is no evidence indicating that Lincoln's slave policy in Kentucky was influenced by an attachment to Kentucky because of his Kentucky birth or because of his wife's family ties in Kentucky. Mary Lincoln was well in advance of her husband on the need for freeing the slaves. See Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 1977), 363-64, 375-77, and Roy P. Basler, "Lincoln, Blacks and Women," in Cullom Davis, et al., eds., *The Public and Private Lincoln: Contemporary Perspectives* (Carbondale, Ill., 1979), 43.

¹¹In April 1861, during an interview with Congressman Garrett Davis of Kentucky, Lincoln declared that he intended to make no attack, directly or indirectly, upon the institutions or property of any state. On the contrary, he would defend them to the full extent to which the Constitution and laws permitted. See *Cong. Globe*, 37th Cong., 2d sess., Appendix, 82-83.

¹²James G. Blaine, *Twenty Years of Congress, From Lincoln to Garfield* (2 vols., Norwich, Conn., 1884), I, 309.

¹³Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, IV, 379.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 381.

thized with their views. Lincoln, with some reservations, did sign the bill, although he had grave misgivings about its timing. With Kentucky's ultimate position still in doubt, the president feared the act's potential adverse effects on the Bluegrass State.¹⁵

At this crucial moment, Union General John C. Fremont, commander of the Department of the West, issued a proclamation on August 30, freeing all Missouri slaves owned by persons resisting the United States or aiding and abetting the Confederacy. This thunderstruck Kentucky and stunned ardent Kentucky Unionists. Western Kentuckians were especially apprehensive that Fremont and the Union forces would extend the measure to their counties. Although the Fremont proclamation provided for emancipation only in Missouri, many Kentuckians feared its wider application, if sustained by the president. They foresaw that Fremont's move would convert a war for the preservation of the Union into a war for the extermination of slavery.¹⁶

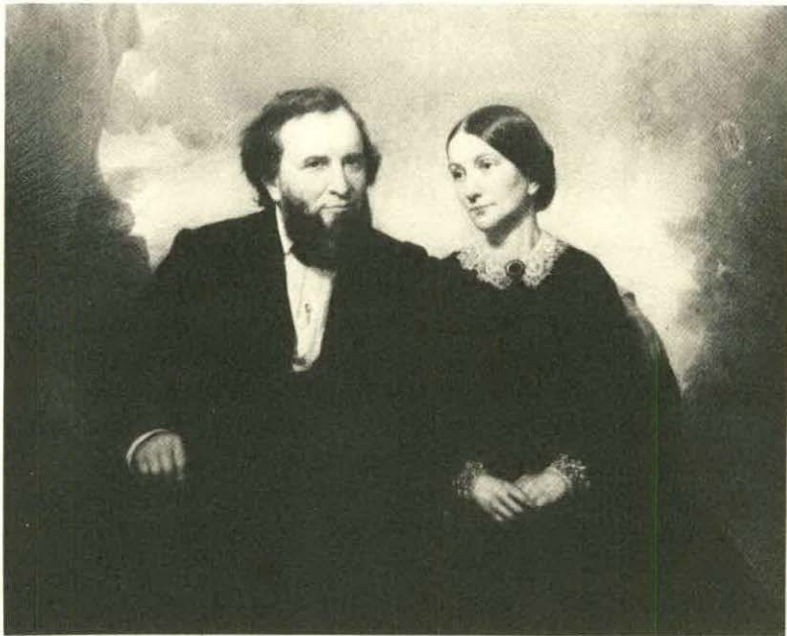
Union supporters in Kentucky flooded the national capital with their complaints against Fremont. On September 1, Joshua Speed, Lincoln's friend and roommate in Springfield from 1837 to 1841, wrote the president from Louisville: "Our constitution and laws prohibit the emancipation of slaves among us — even in small numbers. If a military commander can turn them loose by the thousands by mere proclamation — it will be a most difficult matter to get our people to submit to it." Speed reported Kentucky's fears that Fremont's proclamation might cause their slaves to claim freedom. Two days later Speed predicted that the majority of the Kentucky Unionists would leave the party if the proclamation stood: "So fixed is public sentiment in this state against freeing Negroes . . . that you had as well attack the freedom of worship in the North or the right of a parent to teach his child to read as to wage war in the state on such principles," he warned Lincoln. Garrett Davis, a powerful force among conser-

¹⁵Speech of Robert Mallory, June 15, 1864, *Cong. Globe*, 38th Cong., 1st sess., 2981-82; Hans L. Trefousse, *Lincoln's Decision For Emancipation* (New York, 1975), 22.

¹⁶New York *Daily Times*, September 28, 1861; H. Engerud, "General Grant, Fort Donelson, and 'Old Brains,'" *Filson Club History Quarterly*, 39 (1965), 201-02; Randall, *Lincoln the President*, II, 22.

vative Unionists in Kentucky, wrote Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase that the proclamation had the effect in the state of "a bombshell" and had "greatly disconcerted and I fear scattered us." Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt was told by a fellow Kentuckian of the possible unforeseen but dangerous results if the proclamation was "not disavowed by the administration"; "The hopes of our best, most talented and sanguine Union men seemed now almost destroyed."¹⁷

To impress upon Lincoln the urgency of the crisis in Kentucky, Joshua Speed solicited Holt's aid. "Several defeats like



Collection of The Filson Club
Portrait of Joshua Fry Speed and Fanny Henning Speed, by G. P. A. Healy.

¹⁷Joshua Speed to Abraham Lincoln, September 1, 3, 1861, Robert Lincoln Papers (hereinafter RLP) (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress); Gary Lee Williams, "James and Joseph Speed, Lincoln's Kentucky Friends" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1971), 15; Garrett Davis to S. P. Chase, September 3, 1861, S. P. Chase Papers (hereinafter SPCP) (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress); E. T. Bainbridge to Joseph Holt, September 10, 1861, Joseph Holt Papers (hereinafter JHP) (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress).

that of Bull Run," Speed warned, could be better endured by Kentucky Unionists than Fremont's proclamation, "if endorsed by the administration." He reported to Holt on a meeting of Union leaders and Colonel Robert Anderson, commander of the Department of Kentucky, during which all present expressed fears that the Union cause in Kentucky had been seriously weakened. Speed pleaded with Holt to use whatever influence he had to have the proclamation withdrawn.¹⁸ In Frankfort, waiting to take his seat in the Kentucky legislature, James Speed, Joshua's brother, telegraphed Lincoln that the freeing of slaves in Missouri would be condemned by the Kentucky General Assembly.¹⁹ Anderson, the former commander at Fort Sumter and a native Kentuckian, cautioned Lincoln that if Fremont's proclamation was "not immediately disowned and annulled" Kentucky would be "lost to the Union." The colonel reported that a company of Union volunteers in Kentucky had thrown down their arms and disbanded when they heard of the proclamation. From Louisville, three Unionists wired Joshua Speed, in care of Lincoln, in Washington: "There is not a day to lose in disavowing emancipation or Kentucky is gone over the mill dam."²⁰

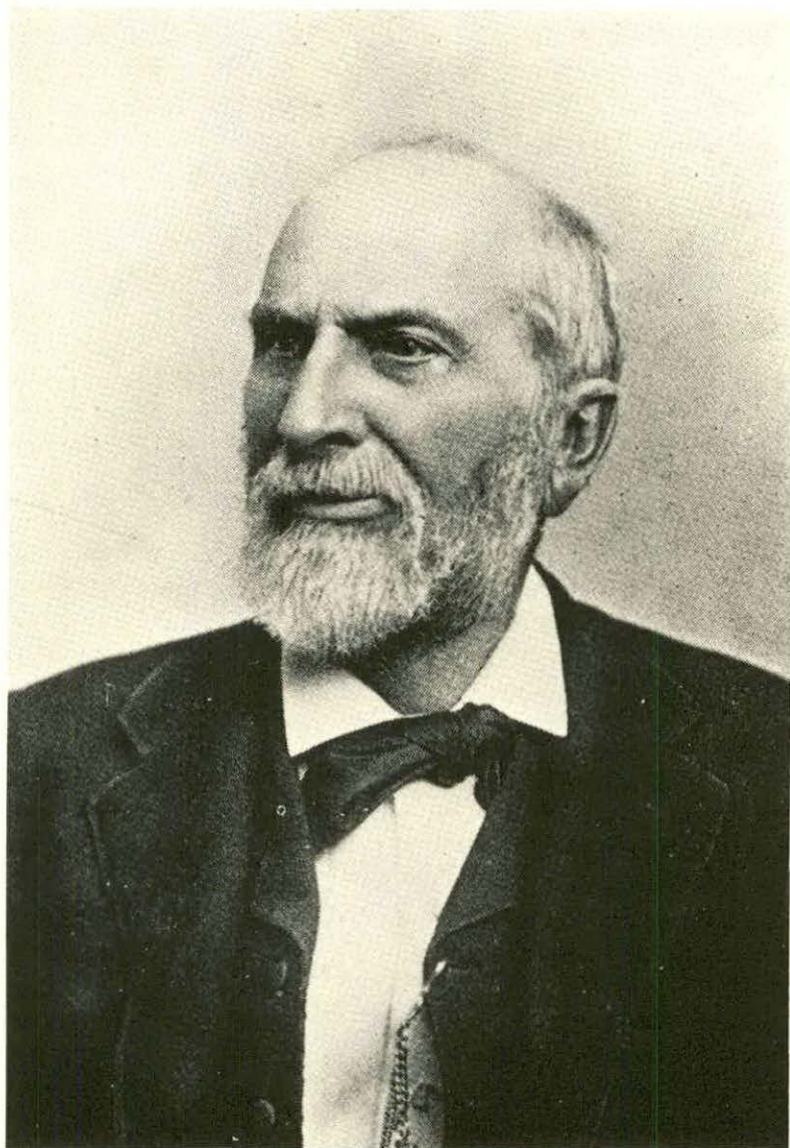
Many loyal Kentuckians expressed not only public opposition to Fremont's proclamation but strong private sentiments as well. Alfred Pirtle, James Speed's former law partner, wrote in his diary that the proclamation was "despotism, the most fearful on the globe." The diary entry of John F. Jefferson, the son of a Louisville Home Guard member, labeled the proclamation "too severe" and "generally denounced by Union men."²¹ Kentucky newspapers unanimously denounced the proclamation and incited public opinion almost to the breaking point. Editor George D. Prentice's Louisville *Journal* strongly condemned the proclamation as "dangerous and odious, and should, we trust, be promptly repudiated by the Government." The Lex-

¹⁸Joshua Speed to Joseph Holt, September 7, 1861, JHP.

¹⁹James Speed and Greene Adams to Abraham Lincoln, September 2, 1861, RLP.

²⁰Robert Anderson to Abraham Lincoln, September 13, 1861, RLP; Walter Stevens, "Lincoln and Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review*, 10 (1915-16), 798; Thomas, *Lincoln*, 275; J. R. Bullett, C. Ripley, and W. E. Hughes to Joshua Speed, in care of Lincoln, September 13, 1861, RLP.

²¹Journal of Alfred Pirtle, September 1, 1861; diary of John F. Jefferson, September 2, 1861 (both in the Filson Club, Louisville).



Thomas Speed, Records and Memorials of The Speed Family (Louisville, 1892).
James Speed (1887).

ington *Kentucky Statesman* was more severe: "Rather let the Union and the Government be destroyed a hundred times than

that the military dictator be permitted to enforce this proclamation," thundered the editor.²² As other newspapers joined in protest,²³ a correspondent to the Cincinnati *Daily Times* reported that Fremont's proclamation was the "all-absorbing" topic of the day in central Kentucky, and the measure was doing "incalculable injury" throughout the state of Kentucky. In Frankfort a petition asked the legislature to devise appropriate action against the proclamation.²⁴

Lincoln did not need to test further the border state response. In touch with "many eminent men of Kentucky, including a large majority of Kentucky's members of Congress," Lincoln declared that Fremont had exceeded his military authority in dealing with far-reaching matters of policy. The chief executive, "in a spirit of caution and not of censure," asked Fremont to revise his proclamation so that it conformed to the limited powers of the Confiscation Act of August 6, 1861. Lincoln informed Fremont that the general's action would alarm Southern friends, probably turn them against the Union, and "perhaps ruin our fair prospect for Kentucky."²⁵

The strong-minded and stubborn Fremont would not relent. In the meantime, Unionist strength in Kentucky deteriorated. The State Rights Democrats, meeting in Frankfort on September 10, denounced the proclamation as "a manifest violation of the Constitution," and called for its "unqualified condemnation" by citizens. The editor of the Democratic *Kentucky Statesman* incorrectly reported that the president's cabinet approved the proclamation and that the Washington govern-

²²Louisville *Daily Journal*, September 3, 1861; New York *Daily Times*, September 7, 1861; Lexington *Semi-Weekly Kentucky Statesman*, September 3, 1861.

²³Frankfort *Kentucky Yeoman*, September 3, 1861. There was no expression of opinion in sympathy with Fremont's proclamation in the newspapers of Kentucky or in manuscript material.

²⁴"C. W. B.," in Cincinnati *Daily Times*, September 6, 1861.

²⁵Abraham Lincoln to Beriah Magoffin, August 24, 1861; Lincoln to John Fremont, September 2, 11, 1861; Lincoln to O. H. Browning, September 22, 1861, in Basler, *Works*, IV, 497, 506, 517, 531-33; *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (128 vols., Washington, D.C., 1880-1901), Series II, Vol. I, 766 (hereinafter *OR*); Frank Moore, *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of America* (11 vols., New York, 1862), IV, 126; John G. Nicolay, John Hay, and F. D. Tandy, eds., *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln* (12 vols., Harrogate, Tenn., 1905), VI, 350-51, 353, 359-60.

ment was sustaining "the dictatorship of an anti-slavery fanatic."²⁶ By September 11, the problem had become so critical that Lincoln ordered Fremont to change the proclamation "to conform with and not transcend" the Confiscation Act of August 6. A series of letters between Holt and Lincoln written the next day indicate that Lincoln had already revoked Fremont's proclamation. These letters and Lincoln's order of September 11 were sent to James Speed and then made available to the press. The people of Kentucky thus learned that Lincoln had rejected Fremont's proclamation.²⁷

The Fremont proclamation, issued August 30, had come at a most inopportune time in the struggle for the loyalty of Kentucky. Almost immediately, Confederate General Leonidas Polk ordered his troops to occupy the strategic river port of Columbus, Kentucky. General Gideon Pillow took the city on September 4, and Union forces in turn seized Paducah. Governor Beriah Magoffin, who sympathized with the Confederacy, ordered both armies to withdraw. Lincoln revoked Fremont's proclamation on September 11; the following day, dispatches from Washington assured the Union press "that the correction desired by the Union men of Kentucky" had been secured. "The Kentucky legislature would not budge," Lincoln confessed, "till the proclamation was modified." The Kentucky General Assembly demanded a unilateral withdrawal of Confederate troops, and followed this up on September 13 by entering the war against the Confederacy.²⁸ The state legislature later extended thanks to Lincoln for the way he had resolved the Fremont matter. Dr. T. S. Bell of Louisville, one of the state's most thorough Unionists, declared: "The President handled that

²⁶Louisville *Daily Democrat*, September 12, 1861; Lexington *Semi-Weekly Statesman*, September 10, 1861; Louisville correspondent to the *New York Times*, cited by Louisville *Daily Journal*, October 16, 1861.

²⁷Lincoln to Fremont, September 11, 1861, in Moore, *Rebellion Record*, III, 126; Joseph Holt to Lincoln, September 12, 1861; Lincoln to Holt, September 12, 1861; Holt to James Speed, September 12, 1861; Louisville *Daily Journal*, September 13, 1861. The letters appeared in the Cincinnati *Daily Gazette*, September 18, 1861, and other papers. Lincoln's letter of September 11, 1861, appeared in the *New York Herald*, September 14, 1861.

²⁸Kentucky *House Journal* (September 13, 1861), 101-02; Kentucky *Senate Journal* (September 13, 1861), 99-100.

matter with an honesty of purpose, and good sense that I have never seen surpassed."²⁹

Intelligence from Kentucky had convinced Lincoln that the very arms he had furnished Kentucky might have been turned against the government, if something had not been done. "I think to lose Kentucky is nearly to lose the whole game," he wrote an Illinois senator on September 22. "Kentucky gone, we cannot hold Missouri, nor I think Maryland. These all against us, the job on our hands is too large for us."³⁰ The revocation of Fremont's decree saved Kentucky for the Union, and brought over forty thousand Kentucky soldiers into the Federal ranks. It also saved Kentucky from a bloody intrastate conflict that would have left the people of the Commonwealth permanently divided. Had the presidency been held by a man with less understanding of Kentucky's sentiment and less tact, this pivotal state might have been lost and the Ohio River might have become the battle line boundary.³¹

Yet Lincoln did not emerge from the crisis unscathed. Fremont insisted that Lincoln "openly direct" him to make the correction in the proclamation. When Lincoln published the order it caused an uproar among antislavery forces and seriously damaged his standing with evangelical religious groups.³² After Fremont was ordered to modify the proclamation, he had two hundred copies of his original decree printed for distribution throughout the country. Since the president had withheld his September 11 order from publication until its receipt by Fremont, it was included in the sequence of Holt-Lincoln correspondence prepared for Kentucky consumption; this gave the appearance that Lincoln had yielded to pressure from Kentucky.

Hostility against the suppression of Fremont's proclama-

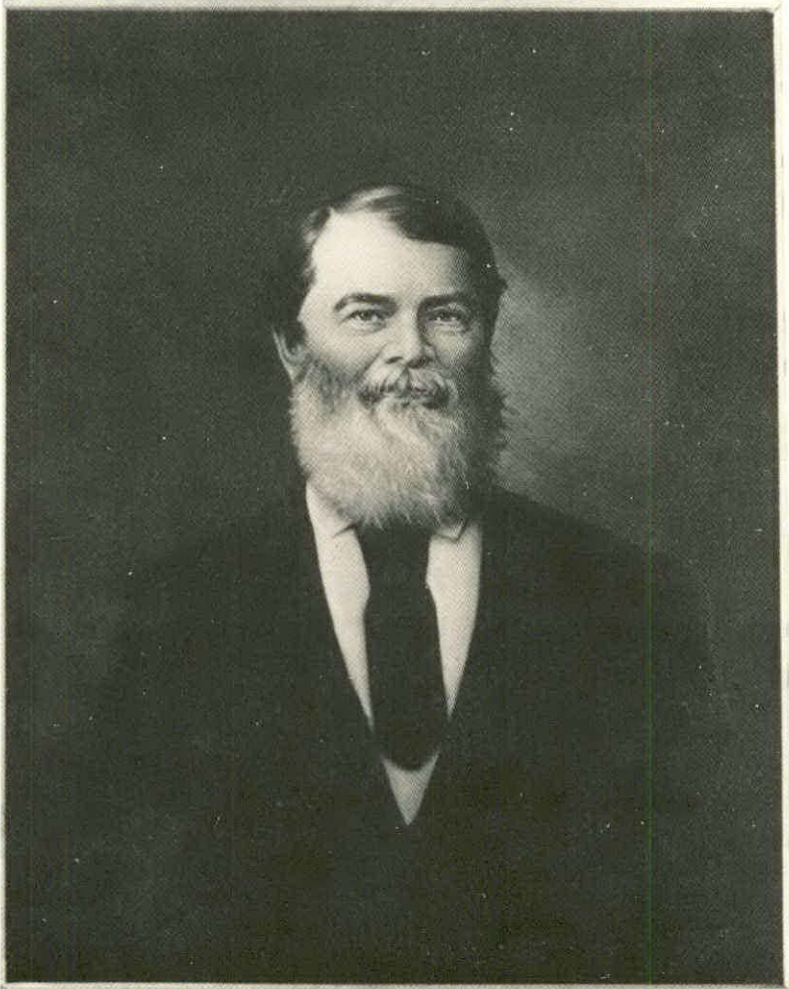
²⁹Moore, *Rebellion Record*, III, 117; T. S. Bell to Joseph Holt, September 19, 1861, JHP.

³⁰Lincoln to O. H. Browning, September 22, 1861, in Nicolay and Hay, *Works of Lincoln*, V, 359.

³¹Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, IV, 425, VI, 350-51; Randall, *Lincoln the President*, II, 7.

³²For an example of the severe criticism and protest, see correspondence from September 17 to October 3, 1861, RLP.

tion was thus directed primarily against Kentucky instead of Lincoln. James Russell Lowell asked the people of the North, "How many times are we to save Kentucky and lose our self-respect?" George Hoadly, a future governor of Ohio, privately warned a member of Lincoln's cabinet: "Let Mr. Lincoln, while he is conciliating the contemptible state of Kentucky, a state which ought to have been coerced long ago, bear in mind that



Governor Beriah Magoffin

Kentucky Historical Society Collection

the Free States may want a little conciliation, that they are not wasting their substance to secure niggers of traitors."³³ Kentucky became a pariah to the antislavery North. If this sentiment became dominant in the government, the consequence for Kentucky would be dire.

Fremont's removal from command on November 2, 1861, did not resolve the controversy over emancipation. In a speech on November 13 to his regiment, Colonel John Cochrane, nephew of abolitionist Gerrit Smith, took ground in favor of "the military necessity of unconditional emancipation." Secretary of War Simon Cameron was present and spoke approvingly of Cochrane's doctrine, which included the arming of slaves. A new crisis immediately developed in Kentucky and Cameron became the target of the attack launched against emancipation.³⁴ During the last ten days of November, opposition to the secretary of war intensified in Kentucky. A correspondent to the Louisville *Democrat*, in agreement with the editor's endorsement of Cameron's removal, stated "I go for direct removal," and added that the men of Oldham County "would not fight with Negroes and abolitionists." On November 23, a convention of Union men in Kentucky met in Frankfort and condemned proposals to arm blacks for military service. Copies of the resolution were sent to Crittenden and Lincoln.³⁵

On December 1, Cameron issued the *Annual Report of the War Department* and mailed copies to the press before sending it to the president. When the president learned of Cameron's recommendations — of emancipation and arming of slaves — he required the secretary to recall and revise the report. Some copies were not returned, however, and the unrevised recommendations began to appear in print. When the president presented his own annual message, he asserted that he adhered to the congressional act on confiscation of property used for insurrectionary purposes. If new laws were proposed on the matter,

³³Allan Nevins, *Fremont* (2 vols., New York, 1928; reissued 1955), II, 574; George Hoadly to S. P. Chase, September 18, 1861, SPCP. See also J. R. Hawley to Gideon Welles, September 17, 1861, Miscellaneous Manuscripts (Illinois Historical Society).

³⁴Louisville *Daily Journal*, November 15, 21, 22, 1861.

³⁵"Look Out," LaGrange, Kentucky, in Louisville *Daily Democrat*, November 23, 1861.

he said, he would duly consider them. Yet he argued that the nation should not hastily adopt "radical and extreme measures" affecting the loyal as well as the disloyal.³⁶

The Louisville *Daily Journal* saw no difference between the president's message and Cameron's report. "The billows of anti-slaveryism are running mountain high in Washington," warned the editor, "the . . . raging sea of fanaticism is thundering against the barriers of the constitution. . . . Behind these barriers stands the President alone. . . . He bends before the storm. . . . Let . . . the conservative sentiment of the nation come up promptly and resolutely to the support of the President."³⁷ From the Northern press came cries that Kentucky had forced the revision of Cameron's report.³⁸ On December 7, the Kentucky General Assembly adopted and forwarded to Lincoln a resolution urging Cameron's removal from the cabinet.³⁹ Many Northern journals condemned this action as an attempt to exercise sovereignty over the federal government; some charged that Kentucky was dictating the slave policy of the army. When Cameron did resign on January 11, 1862, the Cincinnati *Gazette* correspondent expressed his belief that the removal was engineered by the "neutrality kitchen cabinet" in Kentucky. "The path to Washington," he asserted, "was kept warm with the feet of the kitchen cabinet officers."⁴⁰

By January 1862, Lincoln was convinced that some executive action on slavery was necessary and that a conservative stance could best be taken by moving toward gradual emancipation through state action. Lincoln's friend James Speed had introduced in December 1861, in the Kentucky legislature, a bill that would allow the army to confiscate the slaves of rebels and turn them over to the state for periodic disposal. Calculated to give control over confiscated slaves to the state, the bill was in

³⁶Louisville *Daily Journal*, December 5, 1861.

³⁷*Ibid.*, December 6, 1861.

³⁸New York *Tribune*, cited by *Alton* (Illinois) *Telegraph*, January 17, 1862; "Agate," Frankfort, Kentucky, in Cincinnati *Daily Gazette*, December 9, 1861; Cincinnati *Daily Commercial*, December 10, 1861.

³⁹Kentucky *House Journal* (December 7, 1861), 401; Nat. Gaither to Lincoln, December 23, 1861, RLP.

⁴⁰Cincinnati *Daily Gazette*, January 20, 1862.

reaction to Lyman Trumbull's Second Confiscation bill, introduced in the U.S. Senate on December 2, 1861. Speed's own bill caused an uproar in the state senate and was tabled.⁴¹ Lincoln, determined to seek a solution to the slavery problem through state action, sent a special message to Congress March 6, 1862, setting forth his new program. The president reiterated his statement about radical measures and hinted that such might be necessary if the war continued. But, "in my judgment gradual, and not sudden emancipation is better for all," he reasoned.

Lincoln asked Congress to pass a joint resolution offering federal compensation to any state that adopted gradual abolition of slavery. The Kentucky delegation, taking the lead in opposing the president's measure when it was introduced, called a special meeting to consult on the proposal. With the border states united in opposition, the president requested that their delegation meet with him on March 11. He pointed out that "the conflict concerning slavery in the border states was a serious annoyance to him and embarrassing to the progress of the war"; that it "kept alive a spirit hostile to the Government" and strengthened Confederate hopes that the border states would eventually join them. Lincoln believed that gradual emancipation in these states would shorten the war. Although Congress adopted the Lincoln resolution, the Kentucky delegation remained unconvinced.⁴² Congressional enactment on March 10 of a new article of war, prohibiting use of military force to return fugitive slaves, also fell especially heavy on Kentucky because of its extensive free state boundaries.⁴³

⁴¹James Speed to Lincoln, December 22, 1861, RLP.

⁴²Basler, *Works*, V, 144-46. In the House, Crittenden spoke the sentiments of all the Kentucky delegation when he asked why Kentucky should be requested to surrender "her domestic institution" after she had given up so much for the Union. The reaction in Kentucky can best be judged by a letter Crittenden received from a Kentucky correspondent. It revealed that emotions had reached the boiling point in the state. "For goodness sake keep those critters off the niggers if they go ahead, we shall have trouble in Kentucky," the writer warned. See Blaine, *Twenty years of Congress*, I, 372-73; Uncle Tom to John J. Crittenden, May 8, 1862, John J. Crittenden Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress). For the Border State Conference, see Charles M. Segal, *Conversations With Lincoln* (New York, 1961), 164; John G. Nicolay's memorandum, March 9, 1862, John Nicolay Manuscripts (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress); and Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, V, 212-13.

⁴³Moore, *Rebellion Record*, IV, 55. See Special Orders No. 27, March 21, 1862, *OR*, Ser. II, Vol. 5, pt. 1, 486, 810.

The bill abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, which the Congress passed on April 16, Lincoln considered unfortunate in its failure to provide for gradual emancipation; he regretted that "families would at once be deprived of cooks, stable boys, etc." After some hesitation, Lincoln signed the bill, but not before he had given Kentucky's Charles A. Wickliffe sufficient time to remove two slave families from Washington so that they would not be freed by the act.⁴⁴

On May 19, 1862, Lincoln voided General David Hunter's emancipation and arming of slaves in the South Atlantic area, but he partially nullified the conservatism of that order by including an appeal to the border states to accept his proposal on a system of gradual emancipation. "You cannot if you would, be blind to the signs of the times," he pointed out.⁴⁵ As the war reached a stalemate, Congress moved to its most radical position on July 17, when it passed the Second Confiscation Act and the Militia Act. The latter gave the president the power to make military use of blacks, although Lincoln chose not to use that power in 1862.⁴⁶

By July, tensions between federal authorities and the Kentucky slaveholding population and their supporters had reached a breaking point. Northern pressure on Lincoln was mounting. Since the border states had failed to respond to his appeals, and, with more radical measures pending in Congress, the president on July 12 again summoned their congressmen to the White House to urge their support for a plan of gradual emancipation. "If the war continues long as it must . . . the institution in your states will be extinguished by mere friction and abrasion," he warned. Lincoln assured the border statesmen that he was speaking of gradual emancipation, with colonization in South America. Aware that colonization was a popular movement in the border states, Lincoln realized that his advocacy of coloni-

⁴⁴*U. S. Statutes At Large*, XII, 592, 599; Theodore C. Pease and James G. Randall, eds., *The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning, 1850-1881* (2 vols., Springfield, Ill., 1925-1931), I, 541. The aid Lincoln gave Wickliffe was a callous act for one so capable of showing so much humanity.

⁴⁵Basler, *Works*, V, 222-23.

⁴⁶Mary F. Berry, *Military Necessity and Civil Rights Policy: Black Citizenship and the Constitution, 1861-1868* (Port Washington, N.Y., 1977), 41-42.

zation would soften the opposition to antislavery measures and was in harmony with his efforts during 1861 to establish colonies in South America. With the Kentucky delegates taking the lead, a large majority of the border state lawmakers rejected the president's proposal, however.⁴⁷ Lincoln had made his last effort to salvage his border state policy.

One day after the border states conference, Lincoln revealed to two cabinet members that he was considering issuing an emancipation proclamation abolishing slavery in the secession states, a proposal he presented in a July 22 cabinet meeting.⁴⁸ To James and Joshua Speed, who were in Washington at the time, Lincoln read a draft of the emancipation document and asked their opinion. Joshua advised against issuing the proclamation because it would alienate most of the people of Kentucky; James insisted the measure was impracticable, that "the negro cannot be emancipated by proclamation." Lincoln ultimately did not heed the Kentuckians' advice.⁴⁹ Cassius M. Clay of Kentucky, also in Washington during the summer of 1862, tried to convince Lincoln that he should emancipate the slaves. Later asked by the president to determine the Kentucky legislature's position on emancipation of slaves in the Confederate states, Clay returned from Frankfort to report that Kentucky would not be a problem.⁵⁰ Although Lincoln had already determined to issue the proclamation, he kept his options open through the first half of September.⁵¹

Lincoln's proposal to emancipate the slaves of the Confederate South was a "new departure."⁵² "Things had gone from

⁴⁷Basler, *Works*, IV, 561-62, V, 318-19. For the involvement of Kentucky in colonization as a means of ending slavery see James P. Gregory, "The Question of Slavery in the Kentucky Constitutional Convention of 1849," *Filson Club History Quarterly*, 23 (1949), 89-110; Victor B. Howard, "The Kentucky Presbyterians in 1849: Slavery and the Kentucky Constitution," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, 73 (1975), 217-40; and idem, "Robert J. Breckinridge and the Slavery Controversy in Kentucky in 1849," *Filson Club History Quarterly*, 53 (1979), 328-43.

⁴⁸Howard K. Beale and Alan W. Brownsword, eds., *Gideon Welles' Diary* (3 vols., 1960), I, 71; Basler, *Works*, V, 336-37.

⁴⁹Joshua Speed to William Herndon, February 9, 1866, Herndon-Weik Collection (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress).

⁵⁰Cassius M. Clay, *The Life of Cassius Marcellus Clay*. . . (Cincinnati, 1886), 310.

⁵¹Basler, *Works*, V, 423.

⁵²Beale, *Welles' Diary*, I, 71.

bad to worse" until Lincoln felt he had "reached the end of his rope" on the plan of operations he was pursuing.⁵³ He had to choose between the growing radicalism of the North and the stubborn unwillingness of the border states. More important, however, were the military developments in relation to the slave policy in the border states. Northern soldiers and slaves in Kentucky had reduced Lincoln's Kentucky slave policy to a shambles.

Lincoln had urged a cautious slave policy in Kentucky from the beginning. When Don Carlos Buell was put in command of the Department of Ohio in November 1861, General George McClellan had instructed him to refrain from interfering with slavery in Kentucky, for political affairs in the state were probably more important than military. "I know I express the feelings and opinions of the President," McClellan wrote.⁵⁴ Buell cooperated with owners who came into the camps to reclaim their slaves and, when Henry Halleck took command in the West, the policy of not interfering with slavery became more pronounced.⁵⁵

The Kentucky slaves, however, refused to recognize military orders and the Northern soldiers complained about being assigned to guard them. By spring 1862, the complaints of soldiers against the Kentucky slave policy had become virtually unanimous. When the Confederate invasion of Kentucky that year caused a general stampede of Kentucky slaves, the Northern soldiers progressed from making covert use of slaves to a systematic integration of blacks into the work details of the regiments. Finally, by the last quarter of 1862, many regiments were overtly acting to destroy slavery in Kentucky.⁵⁶ Lincoln knew that his generals in Kentucky had been cooperating with slave-

⁵³Francis B. Carpenter, *The Inner Life of Abraham Lincoln: Six Months in the White House* (Boston, 1894), 20-21.

⁵⁴George B. McClellan to D. C. Buell, November 12, 1861, *OR*, Ser. I, Vol. 4, 355.

⁵⁵See General Orders No. 3, General H. W. Halleck, November 20, 1861, *OR*, Ser. II, Vol. 1, 778; and Special Orders No. 46, H. W. Halleck, February 22, 1862, *ibid.*, Ser. I, Vol. 8, 564. John Nicolay and John Hay wrote in 1886 that while General Benjamin Butler in Virginia "was virtually freeing colored fugitives," Sherman and Buell in Kentucky were declaring they had nothing to do with slaves. Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln* IV, 395.

⁵⁶Thomas M. Stevenson, *History of the 78th. Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry* (Zanesville, Ohio, 1865), 187; Sylvester C. Bishop to Mother, September 5, 1861, Sylvester C. Bishop Civil War Letters (Indiana Historical Society); *Reminiscences of Levi*

holders by returning fugitive slaves in violation of the Second Confiscation Act of July 17, 1862, but Northern soldiers and blacks in Kentucky and the border states forced Lincoln's new departure.⁵⁷

While the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation of September 22, 1862, exempted Kentucky from the decree, Lincoln quoted from the new Article of War of March 13, prohibiting the return of fugitive slaves, and section nine of the Confiscation Act of July 17, 1862, freeing slaves of rebels. He "enjoined upon and ordered all persons engaged in military and naval service to observe and enforce" these acts "within their respective spheres of service." The War Department issued General Orders, No. 1391, September 24, 1862, to enforce these laws. Since the Union Army was then in control of all of Kentucky, the full effects of the general order immediately applied, but General H. G. Wright failed to implement it and left his generals to their own devices. In violation of the proclamation, Generals Green Clay Smith and Q. A. Gillmore in the Central District of Kentucky issued orders that aided slaveholders in securing return of their slaves, as did General J. T. Boyle, commander of the Western District.⁵⁸ The department orders engendered explosive tensions between the soldiers and citizens in several Kentucky centers.⁵⁹

Coffin (New York, 1968; orig. pub. 1876), 608-09; Bruce Catton, *Grant Moves South* (Boston, 1960), 296; Benjamin P. Thomas and Harold Hyman, *Stanton, The Life and Times of Lincoln's Secretary of War* (New York, 1962), 230; Armstead L. Robinson, "Day of Jubilo: Civil War and the Demise of Slavery" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1977).

⁵⁷Edward McPherson, *The Political History of the United States During the Great Rebellion* (Washington, 1876), 210-11; John David Smith, "The Recruitment of Negro Soldiers in Kentucky, 1863-1865," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, 72 (1974), 364-90.

⁵⁸Basler, *Works*, V, 434-35; General Orders, No. 1391, September 24, 1862, War Department; G. C. Smith to Moses Wisner, October 19, 1862, Order No. 5, October 15, 1862, Q. A. Gillmore, in *Reminiscence of Levi Coffin*, 611.

⁵⁹George S. Bradley, *The Star Corps; or Notes of An Army Chaplain During Sherman's "March to the Sea"* (Milwaukee, 1865), 66; Paul M. Engle, ed., *Three Years in the Army of the Cumberland: The Letters and Diary of Major James A. Connolly* (Bloomington, Ind., 1959), 27; Journal of Oliver Spaulding, November 4, 1862; Asa Slayton, *Civil War Journal*, December 5, 1862; and *Civil War Diary of William Boston*, April 15, 1863, page 27, all in *Civil War Collection* (University of Michigan); Randolph C. Downes, ed., "The Civil War Diary of Fernando E. Pomeroy," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly*, 19 (1947), 144.

The constant complaints, charges, countercharges, and denials had become a serious annoyance to Lincoln by March 1862, and, after issuance of the preliminary decree in September, the tempers of the controversialists had become more inflamed. One lawyer had filed fifteen suits against Northern regimental officers for obstructing the enforcement of Kentucky's fugitive slave law.⁶⁰ Not only was there a failure to enforce the Articles of War and the Confiscation Act in Kentucky, but Lincoln seemed to go out of his way to accommodate Kentuckians on slavery matters when problems arose elsewhere.

The most bitter controversy was between Kentucky Court of Appeals Justice George Robertson and William L. Utley, commander of the Twenty-second Wisconsin Regiment. Colonel Utley, who refused to return a fugitive slave against his will to Robertson, insisted in a letter to Lincoln that he was acting in accord with the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation and War Department orders. Lincoln personally offered to pay the judge five hundred dollars to set the slave free so the controversy could be resolved.⁶¹ There was no end to the distractions; such disputes in Kentucky were increasingly becoming a plague on the president.⁶² The Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, split the Union party in Kentucky. The Radicals, who withdrew from the Union convention because the conservatives would not endorse the Proclamation, elected congress-

⁶⁰Nicolay and Hay, *Works of Lincoln*, VIII, 122; Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, V, 212; *Ninety-Second Illinois Volunteers* (Freeport, Ill., 1875), 45, 46-47, 49; Charles Partridge, ed., *History of the Ninety-Sixth Regiment, Illinois Volunteer Infantry* (Chicago, 1887), 60, 62.

⁶¹Abraham Lincoln to George Robertson, November 26, 1862, in Basler, *Works*, V, 515; W. L. Utley to Lincoln, November 19, 1862; W. L. Utley to A. W. Randall, November 19, 1862, RLP.

⁶²In October 1862, Colonel Lyman Guinnip, commander of the 79th Illinois Regiment, was indicted for aiding a slave to escape. Lincoln asked his friend, Joshua Speed, to "see if you can not slip him through." John Speed, brother of Joshua, was foreman of the grand jury. Guinnip put up bond and forfeited it by not appearing for trial. See Lincoln to Joshua Speed, March 17, 1863, in Basler, *Works*, VI, 140, and Jefferson County Circuit Court, Book Order No. 9, May 1863. In January 1864, a civilian employee of the army, in charge of refugee blacks at Cairo, Illinois, was found guilty and sentenced to five years imprisonment for turning over one of his charges to a loyal Kentucky master. Although Lincoln did not doubt his guilt, and despite the secretary of war's vigorous protest, Lincoln pardoned the man. See Basler, *Works*, VII, 144, 167, 187, 256, 362, 389; and Senate Executive Document, No. 51, 38th Cong., 1st sess. (1864), 20.

men in four of the five districts in which they ran candidates; and the governor-elect, Thomas E. Bramlette, was considered an administration man.⁶³

Since December 1862, Lincoln had determined to make military use of the slaves. He viewed this as a conservative measure, one which would hasten peace, forestall more extreme action, and possibly prevent revolutionary developments.⁶⁴ By early 1863 the enlistment of blacks was well under way. During the last week of June, probably after Stanton conferred with Lincoln, the Provost Marshal General quietly and cautiously ordered the enrollment of free blacks in Kentucky. Washington was flooded with telegrams from that state. Generals J. T. Boyle and A. E. Burnside pleaded with Lincoln to withdraw the order and save Kentucky for the Union. Lincoln forwarded Burnside's second telegram to Stanton and noted: "I really think the within is worth consideration."⁶⁵ Enrollment of free blacks was halted before it got underway in some Kentucky districts. On October 1, 1863, Stanton sent Lincoln a memorandum which, according to the secretary, conformed to the views expressed earlier by the president. The memorandum stated that blacks, both free and slave, would be enlisted in Tennessee, Maryland, and Missouri, but not in Kentucky because military authorities in the Bluegrass State had impressed some six thousand blacks to build military roads.⁶⁶

After the passage of the Conscription Act of February 24, 1864, the Provost Marshal General again ordered the enrollment of blacks in Kentucky on March 7, 1864. As soon as that order became known, threats of civil and military resistance were made. Frank Wolford, colonel of the (U.S.) First Kentucky Cavalry, took the lead. At Lexington on March 10, Gov-

⁶³E. M. Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Gloucester, Mass., 1966; orig. pub. 1926), 171, 176.

⁶⁴Thomas and Hyman, *Stanton*, 256.

⁶⁵J. T. Boyle to J. B. Fry, June 25, 1863, *OR*, Ser. III, Vol. 3, 416; A. E. Burnside to Lincoln, June 26, 1863; J. T. Boyle to Lincoln, June 26, 1863, *RLP*; A. E. Burnside to Lincoln, *OR*, Ser. III, Vol. 3, 419-20; Lincoln to E. M. Stanton, June 28, 1863, in Basler, *Works*, VI, 299.

⁶⁶E. M. Stanton to Lincoln, October 1, 1863, and General Orders No. 329, October 3, 1863, the Negro in the Military Service of the U.S. Microfilm Chapter 5, Vol. 3, pt. 1, 1642-44, 1654-56 (hereinafter NMSUS) National Archives.



**"One Good Turn Deserves Another." Cartoon in London (England)
Punch, August 9, 1862.**

ernor Bramlette, a friend and political ally, sat on the platform while Wolford made a speech suggesting that enrollment should be resisted. Two days earlier, Bramlette had sent a telegram to Robert J. Breckinridge urging him to come to Frankfort for a conference, and the president was notified that the governor would enforce the laws of Kentucky against all who attempted

to take slaves without the owner's consent. When Breckinridge arrived in Frankfort, the governor had drafted a proclamation advising forcible resistance to the enrollment of slaves. In an all-night session Breckinridge, General S. G. Burbridge, T. S. Bell, and editor A. G. Hodges persuaded the governor to revise his draft and to advise Kentuckians to submit quietly to the enrollment of blacks and rely on the ballot box and the next Congress for justice. J. M. Kelley, a military telegraph operator in Danville, Kentucky, who accompanied Breckinridge to the conference with the governor, declared that Bramlette's proclamation otherwise would have had the effects of a firebrand thrown among the people.⁶⁷

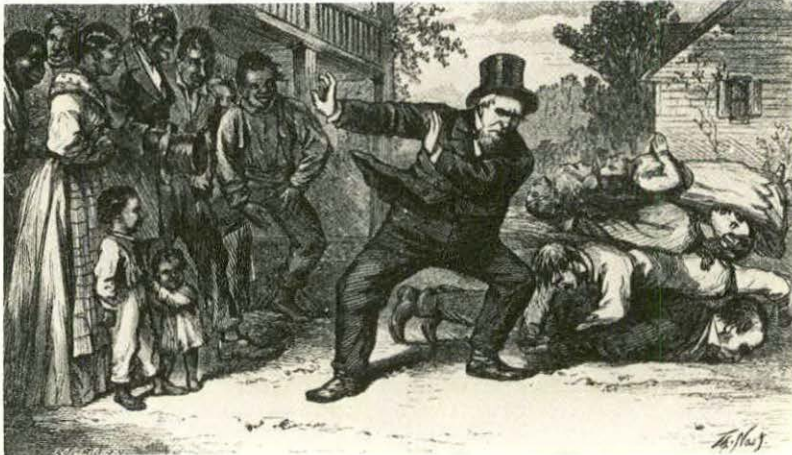
On March 22, Bramlette, former U.S. Senator Archibald Dixon, and A. G. Hodges left Frankfort to confer with Lincoln on the application of the draft to blacks in Kentucky. The group asked the president to refrain from enrolling and enlisting blacks in Kentucky. Lincoln did not underestimate the Kentuckians' prediction of the confusion and violence that would result from a program to draft slaves in Kentucky. White enlistments would dry up in the state.⁶⁸ When the president informed the secretary of war that he thought Bramlette's requests reasonable and urged him to give the governor a full hearing, the efforts to enroll slaves in Kentucky were briefly shelved.⁶⁹

The Bramlette-Lincoln agreement broke down because most of the Kentucky districts did not meet their quota with white volunteers, and a draft was necessary. On April 18, General Burbridge initiated the enlistment and drafting of Kentucky slaves. Enlistment did not come without resistance: from May 13 through July 1864, eight slaves were murdered in Nelson County alone for attempting to volunteer; in the course

⁶⁷J. M. Kelley's notarized statement concerning the Capital Hotel conference, April 1, 1864, and other documents in the Breckinridge Family Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress); Cincinnati *Daily Commercial*, April 1, 1864; Smith, "Black Soldiers in Kentucky," 381-82. Governor Bramlette insisted that the revised proclamation remained unchanged in substance from the original. Although the original is not extant, the evidence is overwhelming that the original, if issued, would probably have caused great disorder and violence in Kentucky.

⁶⁸Basler, *Works*, V, 357.

⁶⁹Lincoln to E. M. Stanton, March 28, 1864, RLP; Smith, "Black Soldiers in Kentucky," 383-84.



The Kentucky slaveholders' reaction to the Emancipation Proclamation, as depicted by cartoonist Thomas Nast.

of the war seven Kentucky provost marshals were slain.⁷⁰

At the Democratic convention in 1864, Bramlette became one of the most dedicated supporters of the nominee, George McClellan.⁷¹ Following McClellan's election defeat, Lincoln sought once more to find common ground with the governor and Kentucky. New difficulties relating to slavery, however, prevented cordial cooperation. General Burbridge had appointed James S. Brisbin, an antislavery man, as superintendent of Kentucky's black troops. With Burbridge's assistance, the superintendent set out to destroy slavery in Kentucky through a massive enlistment program that freed whole families under a law enacted early in 1865. Brisbin accepted almost all males regardless of age or physical condition. After the Kentucky legislature failed to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment, Brisbin increased his enlistment activities. He informed B. F. Wade that "if left alone" he would "kill slavery in Kentucky."⁷²

⁷⁰General Orders, No. 34, April 18, 1864, *OR*, Ser. III, Vol. 4, 233-34; NMSUS, 2490-91.

⁷¹*Louisville Daily Journal*, May 26, 1864.

⁷²James Brisbin to B. F. Wade, February 21, 1865, Benjamin Wade Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress).

Complaints poured into Washington against Brisbin, his recruiting officers, and General Burbridge. Governor Bramlette informed Lincoln that Burbridge was destroying any possibility of reconciling Kentucky and asked that the general be removed. Union men who had supported Lincoln in 1864 came to Burbridge's aid and warned Lincoln that his removal would not only destroy the Republican party in Kentucky, but would also expose administration supporters to violence against their lives and property. Both sides sent delegations to Washington. After Secretary of State William H. Seward and General William T. Sherman sustained Burbridge, he returned to Kentucky with the appearance of having been vindicated. Determined to pacify Kentucky, Lincoln saw ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment as the greatest hope of settling the turmoil in the state. The Burbridge affair promised to broaden his support in Kentucky; after a reasonable lapse of time, Lincoln removed Burbridge.⁷³

As early as November 1864, Bramlette had been aware of Lincoln's plan to have the Thirteenth Amendment brought before Congress. Lincoln, determined to use every political tool at his command to secure congressional approval and state ratification, was informed that the Kentucky governor was receptive to the idea of the ratification of the amendment.⁷⁴ When the Kentucky General Assembly convened, Bramlette asked for ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, with compensation.

⁷³*Cong. Globe*, 38th Cong., 2d sess. (January 9, 10, 1865), pt. 1, 160, 161-62, 165. For letters of support for Burbridge and warnings of the consequences of removing the general, see RLP from December 11, 1864 to February 23, 1865. Burbridge's execution of Confederate sympathizers in reprisal for guerilla raids and his commercial regulations were factors in creating hostility against him in Kentucky. Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 218, 223, 232-33.

⁷⁴*Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, February 10, 1865; *Frankfort Semi-Weekly Commonwealth*, February 14, 1865; A. G. Hodges to Lincoln, December 1, 1864, RLP. In December 1864, Lincoln had a conference with James S. Rollins of Missouri. He asked Rollins to talk to all the border state delegations in Congress and persuade them to vote for the Thirteenth Amendment. "The passage of this Amendment will clinch the whole subject," he said. See I. N. Arnold, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Chicago, 1885), 358-59. When the amendment was adopted by Congress, Lincoln expressed the belief that the passage of the amendment would be "the king's cure all for all evils." *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, February 2, 1865. In 1866, Leonard Swett, a close friend of Lincoln, recalled that when Lincoln set out to achieve the approval of the Thirteenth Amendment, he resorted "to almost any means" to secure its adoption and ratification. See Leonard Swett to W. H. Herndon, January 17, 1866, Herndon-Weik Papers.

After he failed to secure even that, Bramlette, in his message to the legislature on March 1, reminded the Assembly that their failure to ratify would simply defer the question to the people in the August election and to the next legislature. Bramlette sent Lincoln a copy of his message and, after the legislature adjourned, canvassed the state urging the people to vote for those who would ratify the amendment.⁷⁵

The removal of Burbridge, considered an important leader of the administration party in Kentucky, had demoralized the Union forces in the legislature. Before his removal, Unionists had been able to mobilize forty-five votes in the General Assembly for L. H. Rousseau, their candidate for Kentucky's U.S. Senate seat. After the general's dismissal, Unionists could muster only twenty-three votes in favor of the Thirteenth Amendment. "Many of our friends, not feeling disposed to stand a fire both in the front and rear have gone and given up the contest," a disillusioned Radical Unionist informed Massachusetts Senator Henry Wilson. The editor of the Lexington *National Unionist* charged that Lincoln and Bramlette had struck a bargain on the Thirteenth Amendment, and with the removal of Burbridge the administration had "given a stab to the Union cause in Kentucky" that he feared "no subsequent acts" could repair.⁷⁶ It was common knowledge in Kentucky that Bramlette had made overtures to Lincoln suggesting that if the General were removed, "he [the governor] would have the Amendment . . . ratified by the Legislature."⁷⁷ Burbridge was using the army as a tool for the destruction of slavery in Kentucky, an act which was the essence of radicalism. Lincoln preferred the conservatism of the constitutional process of amendment, and he

⁷⁵T. E. Bramlette to Lincoln, March 2, 1865, RLP; Chicago *Daily Tribune*, June 2, 1865; *Semi-Weekly Reporter*, March 4, 1865. For Bramlette's canvass, see Cincinnati *Daily Enquirer*, June 30, 1865, and Cincinnati *Daily Commercial*, June 14, 30, July 1, 18, 1865. E. H. Ludington, War Department Investigator who was sent to Kentucky for an investigation in 1864, reported that Bramlette was motivated in his action by the desire to be senator. See E. H. Ludington to E. M. Stanton, December 7, 1864, *OR*, Ser. I, Vol. 45, pt. 2, 93-94.

⁷⁶*Semi-Weekly National Unionist*, January 3, February 24, 1865; W. R. Kinney to Henry Wilson, February 23, 1865, and T. E. Bramlette to Lincoln, March 2, 1865, RLP.

⁷⁷*Semi-Weekly National Unionist*, February 24, 28, 1865.

left no stone unturned to accomplish his objective. The Thirteenth Amendment offered a law-and-order solution to the problem of slavery; the elimination of slavery by use of the army was a violent denial of law-and-order.⁷⁸

By 1865, the president was preoccupied with the restoration of the Union. The avoidance of bitterness and the cessation of agitation in Kentucky were foremost. Lincoln's approach had always been to convert opponents to a cause, instead of alienating them. In 1842, he had advised a group of reformers that "if you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend. Therein is a drop of honey that catches his heart. . . , and which, when once gained, you will have little trouble in convincing his judgment of the justice of your cause."⁷⁹ The Frankfort *Commonwealth* explained Burbridge's removal: "Mr. Lincoln had to change his commanders here, or give the whole of his time to the management of Kentucky affairs."⁸⁰ Lincoln's choice was either to sustain the administration party in Kentucky and rely on a local military solution to the slavery problem, or to secure broader support for the Thirteenth Amendment in the state and wait for a national resolution of the slavery problem. He chose to desert the Kentucky Radicals.

Throughout the war Lincoln remained consistently conservative, yet he pragmatically changed with the progress of events. He kept compensation in mind as a possible solution to the difficult problems that faced the president and the nation.⁸¹ Lincoln considered the support of Kentucky and the border states essential to a conservative Union policy, and the keystone had been compensation and colonization. The president urged compensated emancipation on the border states as a measure to head off military emancipation. But when his proposal was rejected, he was "driven to the alternative of either surrendering

⁷⁸George Fredrickson, "The Search For Order and Community," in *The Public and Private Lincoln: Contemporary Perspectives*, 95.

⁷⁹Basler, *Works*, I, 272-73.

⁸⁰Frankfort *Semi-Weekly Commonwealth*, February 24, 1865.

⁸¹Allen Rice, ed., *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln By Distinguished Men of His Times* (New York, 1909), 224; Alexander McClure, *Abraham Lincoln and Men of War-Times* (Philadelphia, 1892), 106.

the Union, and with it the Constitution, or of laying strong hands" upon the slaves. In April 1864, in a conversation with the governor of Kentucky, Lincoln confirmed that his approach to the slavery problem was less than radical. "I claim not to have controlled events," he said, "but confess plainly that events have controlled me."⁸² Three days later, while conferring with a group of abolitionists and Radicals in reference to enlisting border state slaves in military service, Lincoln confessed: "I have done what no man could have helped doing standing in my place."⁸³

There is much truth in C. Vann Woodward's argument that Negro equality "never gained from Lincoln even the qualified support he gave to abolition."⁸⁴ With public sentiment in benevolent circles leaning toward a more progressive stance where black soldiers were involved,⁸⁵ Lincoln pragmatically altered his moderate position in Louisiana to a willingness to permit the provisional governor of that state to grant black suffrage to the intelligent, literate, French-speaking blacks who had fought for the Union.⁸⁶ Lincoln felt that this select use of black suffrage would be backed by public opinion and would check the Radical drive. Lincoln's position on Reconstruction in Louisiana was in keeping with his past actions and the position he took in Kentucky in 1865. Up to the end, the president was driven to harmonize his policies with the broad American sentiment and public opinion on the slavery question. When action was demanded, Lincoln instinctively opted for the less radical solution; but when this failed or necessity demanded, he pragmatically moved to check the progression of more radical developments by placing himself solidly in an advanced position.

⁸²Basler, *Works*, VII, 282.

⁸³Carpenter, *Inner Life of Lincoln*, 75-79; Segal, *Conversations With Lincoln*, 309.

⁸⁴C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge, 1960), 75.

⁸⁵Rice, *Reminiscences*, 224; McClure, *Abraham Lincoln*, 106.

⁸⁶Basler, *Works*, VII, 243; VIII, 403.