

RE-CREATING THE REPUBLIC

How Abraham Lincoln Organized Victory for the Union

by H. Graham Lowry

Historian Graham Lowry, a longtime associate of Lyndon LaRouche, and author of How the Nation Was Won: America's Untold Story, Volume I, 1630-1754, died on July 28, 2003. During that year, despite worsening illness, he gave several classes to regional offices of the LaRouche movement, on his ongoing research on Abraham Lincoln. He was particularly eager to impart to the burgeoning LaRouche Youth Movement, the real history of their nation—the history that they are not taught in schools, where they learn that the Founding Fathers were slaveholders, and Lincoln was a racist

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*who only wanted to save the Union and didn't really care about abolishing slavery. The following article, which was edited by his wife, Pamela, draws from classes he gave in Arlington, Virginia; New York City; and Baltimore, Maryland, as well as from notes for an article he had intended to write. This article was first published in *EIR* on August 29, 2003. Embedded links have been added.*

The United States in 1860 was on the brink of total destruction. Abraham Lincoln knew it; a handful of other patriots knew it on one level or another; and the plotters seeking to overthrow the government were becoming bolder every day. What was the threat to the



Virginia Tourism Corporation

When President Lincoln learned that the Union Army had taken possession of the Confederate capital, he exclaimed, "Thank God, that I have lived to see this!" Although the area was still dangerous, Lincoln insisted on visiting Richmond—not as a conqueror, but to heal the wounds of war and reunite the nation. Shown here is the statue in Richmond, commemorating Lincoln's visit to the city in April 1865, with his son Tad. The statue was unveiled in April 2003.

constitutional republic in 1860? Secession? The spread of slavery? Civil war? These dangers by then had been broadly recognized—even openly promoted by leading Southerners. But these were secondary aspects of a planned coup d'état to bring the constitutional republic of the United States to an end. Abraham Lincoln dared to shoulder the unique responsibility for simultaneously defending the republic from its enemies and creating the conditions for a lasting peace. As he said in his Cooper Union [address](#) in 1860:

Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the Government, nor of dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.

Who was this Lincoln, this ugly duckling who told rollicking frontier tales and wrote in the beautiful language of the English Renaissance?

The Mind of Abraham Lincoln

Now, what I am going to try to do, is to enable you to actually exist within the mind of Abraham Lincoln, for a while, and, of course, if you keep working on it, you can keep doing it for a long time. Not merely is Lincoln one of the most significant examples of the leadership principle in the American historical tradition; but he is that, anywhere in world history.

In a crisis such as this nation and the world face today, the advantage that you have, is that you can turn to a model of the leadership principle, in the sense that I'm going to demonstrate with Lincoln. And you will find that all kinds of, say, lieutenants; and rank and file, good citizens, and so forth, whose efforts on behalf of keeping something called "human," something worthwhile about human life going forward, do it through their grandchildren, either literally or figuratively. We have the responsibility now to ensure the future of those children two generations into the future. You don't wait around and see if they can work it out when they're 20 years old, because by that time there may not be a future.

That's what makes you human: that you take the responsibility to extend the efforts that people made before you, and you start projecting them forward, and working to ensure them for another good span of time to come. And then, you find that these historical people

are with you, not in some mumbo-jumbo sense, but in the sense that they will be resources that you can bring back into the war, that will live again through you, and that you'll be stronger because of them. And then people will recognize: "Wait a minute, there's something different about this person. This person represents something I can trust, and something that I will follow."

And that is what people did see in Lincoln; it took a while for him to develop it, but when he did, it was unmistakable. It's why we defeated the British-inspired slave empire called the Confederacy, and kept it from destroying the only republic in the history of the world, a Constitutional Republic, that had as its principle, the sacred creative potential of each individual citizen. I'm sure you've read something about the principle of the general welfare, the good of the whole society, and that the only purpose of government is to ensure that for the present and the future as well. If you have a government that starts saying, "Who can we go kill tomorrow? Let's find someplace where we don't like the way the people look, or the color of their skin, and then we'll bomb 'em! Torch 'em! Imprison 'em! Create dictatorships, create an empire." That's not the United States of America; that is not our mission in history.

And the people who've known what the mission was, have been the people who have come to the fore, when it was threatened. Lincoln had to do it. Franklin Delano Roosevelt had to do it, and Lyndon LaRouche has had to do it his whole life. And now, the enemies of the republic are at the end of their strength, and if we act in the right way now, they're going to lose. The question is, do we all go down with them, or do we save something we would call a human future, in contrast to this barbaric dark age that will be the only thing to follow, without us?

The Wellsprings of Inspiration

Let me give you a sense of three things about Lincoln: the sources of his own inspiration, in this American Intellectual Tradition, as we call it; his personal sense of mission; and then one of the best kept secrets, which is that he personally organized the Union Army to win the Civil War.

First, to find out about what inspired him, we must travel back to the year 1838. It was then that he made an address to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois on the subject of "the perpetuation of our political institutions." Much had happened since those political institutions were founded in the wake of the American

Revolution. Our inveterate enemy, the British Empire, hadn't waited long to try to reconquer the United States. In the course of the War of 1812 they burned the White House and the Capitol, hurled their Indian allies against the American frontiers, and tried to conquer New Orleans as a way of controlling the Mississippi and stopping any further westward settlement by Americans.

Without the Americans setting up agriculture and industry in the western lands, the British would be free to expand the basis for a slave empire that would include the American South and Southwest, Mexico, and on down through Central America and beyond. This scheme would remain British policy through the Civil War and furnished much of the motivating force behind the development of the Confederacy. It had also been a factor in the Nullification crisis in the early 1830s, when arch-slave-state South Carolina attempted to nullify the Constitution of the United States.

Despite early and very successful efforts, such as the Erie Canal, to develop American infrastructure, the Presidents after John Quincy Adams, such as Andrew Jackson and Martin van Buren, traitorously blocked internal improvements. In 1837, America suffered a manipulated financial panic, which led to a serious depression and, in some cities and towns, mob violence.

Lincoln was worried that the living memory of the American Revolution, which had sustained so many Americans, was almost gone, and that the new generation was unprepared to face the mounting threats. In his 1838 [speech](#), he asked:

At what point shall we expect the approach of danger? By what means shall we fortify against it? Shall we expect some transatlantic military giant to step the ocean and crush us at a blow? Never! All the armies of Europe, Asia, and Africa combined, with all the treasure of the earth (our own excepted) in their military chest, with a Bonaparte for a commander, could not by force, take a drink from the Ohio, or make a track on the Blue Ridge, in a trial of a thousand years.



“Washington Crossing the Delaware,” by Emanuel Leutze. From boyhood, Lincoln was inspired by Washington, as he told citizens at Trenton, New Jersey in 1861. “I recollect thinking, boy even though I was, that there must have been something more than common that those men struggled for.”

At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer, if it ever reach us, it must spring up amongst us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide.

The danger is, he says, that the Revolutionary War generation is almost gone, and the memories of that struggle

cannot be so universally known, and so vividly felt,” as they were by the generation just gone to rest. At the close of that struggle, nearly every adult male had been a participator in some of its scenes. The consequence was, that of those scenes—in the form of a husband, a father, a son, or a brother—a *living history* was to be found in every family.... But *those* histories are gone. They *can* be read no more, forever. They *were* a fortress of strength; but what invading foemen could *never do*, the silent artillery of time *has done*, the leveling of its walls. They are gone.

The challenge he then puts forth to this audience is that they have to re-create, themselves, the props to sustain these institutions and these higher principles for which so many gave their lives. He says,

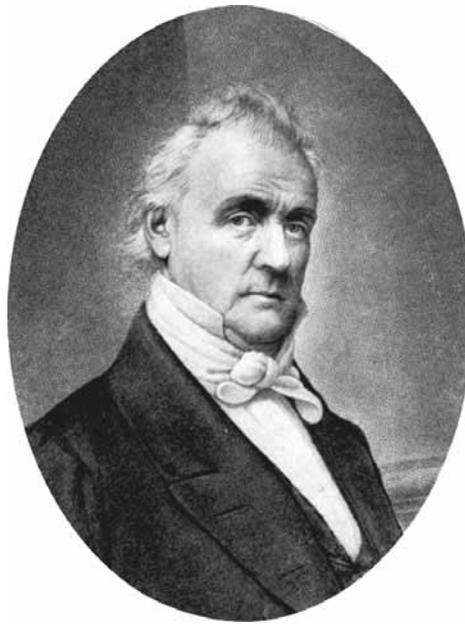
Let those [materials] be moulded into *general*

intelligence, [sound] morality, and in particular, a reverence for the Constitution and laws;...

Upon [these] let the proud fabric of freedom rest, as the rock of its basis; and as truly as has been said of the only greater institution, “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Years later, on his way to his inauguration as President in 1861, Lincoln stopped to address the New Jersey Legislature at Trenton, a city which held special meaning for him. He told them:

In the earliest days of my being able to read, I got hold of a small book, such a one as few of the younger members have ever seen, *Weem’s Life of Washington*. I remember all the accounts there given of the battle fields and struggles for the liberties of the country, and none fixed themselves upon my imagination so deeply as the



President James Buchanan, Lincoln’s predecessor, had fallen in with British plans for extending slavery throughout the Americas. A coup d’etat was under way in Washington, even as Lincoln arrived for his inauguration in 1861.

struggle here at Trenton, New Jersey. The crossing of the river; the contest with the Hessians; the great hardships endured at that time, all fixed themselves on my memory more than any single revolutionary event....

I recollect thinking then, boy even though I was, that there must have been something more than common that those men struggled for. I am exceedingly anxious that that thing which they struggled for; that something even more than National Independence; that something that held out a great promise to all the people of the world to all time to come; I am exceedingly anxious that this Union, the Constitution, and the liberties of the people shall

be perpetuated in accordance with the original idea for which that struggle was made, and I shall be most happy indeed if I shall be an humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty,

Lincoln on Slavery: The Dred Scott Decision

In 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court passed its infamous Dred Scott decision, allowing a slaveholder to cross state lines, into a free state, to reclaim his “property”—a former slave who had gained his freedom. Chief Justice Roger Taney wrote in his opinion on the case, that the Declaration of Independence did not apply to the Negroes, who “had no rights that the white man was bound to respect.”

Lincoln, in a [speech](#) in Springfield, Illinois, on June 26, 1857, had this to say on the matter:

In those days [of the American Revolution], our Declaration of Independence was held sacred by all, and thought to include all; but now, to aid in making

the bondage of the negro universal and eternal, it is assailed, and sneered at, and construed, and hawked at, and torn till, if its framers could rise from their graves, they could not at all recognize it. All the powers of earth seem rapidly combining against him. Mammon is after him; ambition follows, and philosophy follows, and the Theology of the day is fast joining the cry. They have him in his prison house; they have searched his person, and left no prying instrument with him. One after another they have closed the heavy iron doors upon him, and now they have him, as it were, bolted in with a lock of a hundred keys, which can never be unlocked without the concurrence of every key; the keys in the hands of a hundred different men, and they scattered to a hundred different and distance places; and they stand musing as to what invention, in all the dominions of mind and matter, can be produced to make the impossibility of his escape more complete than it is.



Photograph by Alexander Gardner

Lincoln with his Army at Antietam on Oct. 3, 1862 (Gen. George B. McClellan is the young braggart facing off against him). The battle was one of the bloodiest of the war, in which General Lee's advance into Maryland was thrown back, but McClellan allowed the Confederates to escape across the Potomac into Virginia, ignoring Lincoln's explicit orders. The battered soldiers were heartened by the personal concern shown them by the President; they said he looked "serious and careworn," and their hearts went out to him. For the first time, they began to refer to him as "Father Abraham."

and of this, his almost chosen people, for perpetuating the object of that great struggle.

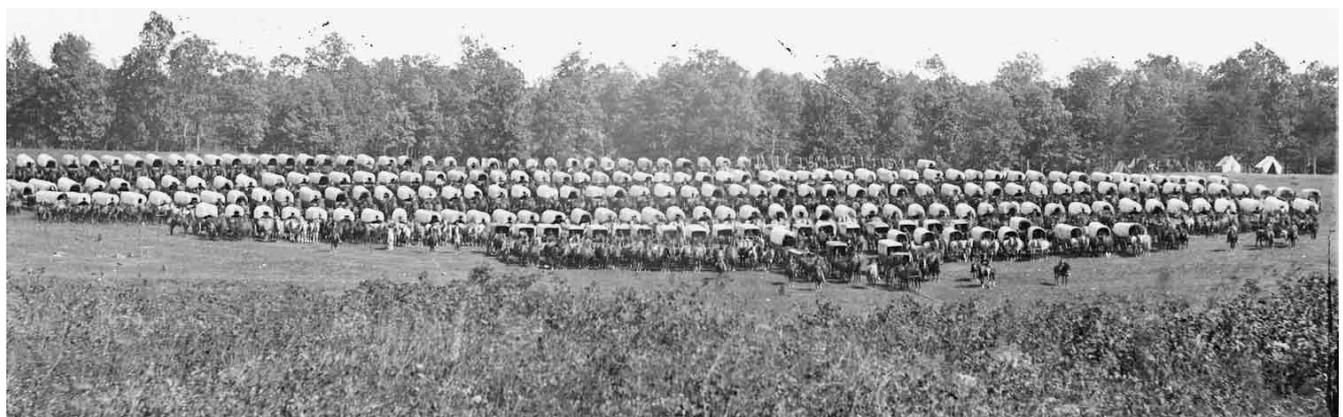
What Lincoln liked most about George Washington was that Washington would do the impossible. When it looked like the Continental Army was totally lost, had no chance at all, he said, "What don't they think we can do? We'll go do it." And that was how we attacked Trenton on Christmas Day, coming across the icy Delaware in shallow-draft boats, and surprising the whole drunken Hessian mercenary encampment. Then, Washington withdrew silently at night from right in front of a large British Army come to trap him and captured

Princeton. At the beginning of the campaign, the British held all of New Jersey, but after two such battles, they withdrew from the entire state into the "safety" of disease-infested New York City! Lincoln knew that Washington was someone to emulate and trust.

Lincoln's Sense of Mission

Leaving Springfield, Illinois in February 1861 for his inauguration, Lincoln said:

I now leave, not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the



Photograph by Timothy H. O'Sullivan

In May 1864, some 4,300 supply wagons followed the Union Army as it moved south to The Wilderness battlefield in Virginia. Creating the massive infrastructure required to sustain the troops, who were fighting deep in enemy country, was one of the colossal achievements that made victory possible.

assistance of that Divine Being, who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well.

Yet even as he boarded the train, American intelligence agents were discovering a wide-ranging plot to assassinate him and take over the government. Since Lincoln's 1838 speech, an even more outrageous group of traitors had occupied the Presidential office, culminating in James Buchanan. Buchanan had been a very limp-wristed minister to the Court of St. James, and had fallen right in with the British plans for a slave empire by signing the [Ostend Manifesto](#), which called for the occupation of Cuba and the extension of slavery.

Once the slave-holding states saw that Lincoln had been elected, they started to secede, but President Buchanan made no attempt to keep them from seizing all the Federal property they could get their hands on, including arsenals, forts, Navy yards and ships, and Federal buildings of all descriptions. Not content with that, Buchanan's Cabinet members openly spoke of how to keep Lincoln from being inaugurated, while the official government newspaper, subsidized by the Administration, called for the "insulted" slave owners to secede!

Buchanan's [message](#) to Congress on Dec. 3, 1860, presented a government in willful paralysis. Secession, he said, was unconstitutional, but there was no power in Congress or the Executive to compel a state to remain in the Union. It was the duty of the President to enforce the laws, but in the existing situation in South Carolina it was utterly impossible for him to do so. "The fact is," Buchanan wrote, "that our Union rests upon public opinion, and can never be cemented by the blood of its citizens shed in civil war."

Even worse, Buchanan had just finished hosting an "unofficial" visit by the British Prince of Wales, the future Edward VII, and his large party of lordly advisors. These British peers met with secessionist leaders as Edward made a triumphal tour of the South, and stayed not only for the American Presidential Election, but tarried on and on, supposedly while their ship underwent repairs, in order to monitor the various plans for a coup d'état. Buchanan added insult to injury by taking the British nest of vipers to visit George Wash-

On the Declaration of Independence

Lincoln's speech in Springfield, Illinois, on June 26, 1956, addressed the intent of the Founding Fathers, in including in the Declaration of Independence the phrase, "all men are created equal":

They meant to set up a standard maxim for free society, which should be familiarity to all, and revered by all; constantly looked to, constantly labored for, and even though never perfectly attained, constantly approximated, and thereby constantly spreading and deepening its influence, and augmenting the happiness and value of life to all peoples of all colors everywhere. The assertion that "all men are created equal" was of no practical use in effecting our separation from Great Britain; and it was placed in the Declaration, not for that, but for future use. Its authors meant it to be—thank God, it is now proving itself—a stumbling block to those who in after times might seek to turn a free people back into the hateful paths of despotism. They knew the proneness of prosperity to breed tyrants, and they meant when such should re-appear in this fair land and commence their vocation, they should find left for them at least one hard nut to crack.

ington's tomb at Mount Vernon.

When Lincoln's inaugural train reached Philadelphia, he was told of the assassination plot against him in Baltimore, where European Mazzinians had combined with Secessionists to plan an attack as he rode through the city. Yet in his [speech](#) at Independence Hall the next day, Lincoln did not waver:

I have often inquired of myself, what great principle or idea it was that kept this Confederacy [union of states—ed.] so long together. It was not the mere matter of the separation of the Colonies from the mother land; but something in that Declaration giving liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but, I hope, to the world, for all future time. It was that which gave promise that, in due time, the weights should be lifted

from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance. This is the sentiment embodied in that Declaration of Independence.

Now, my friends, can this country be saved upon that basis? If it can, I will consider myself one of the happiest men in the world if I can help to save it. If it cannot be saved upon that principle, it will be truly awful. But, if this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle, I was about to say *I would rather be assassinated on this spot than to surrender it.*

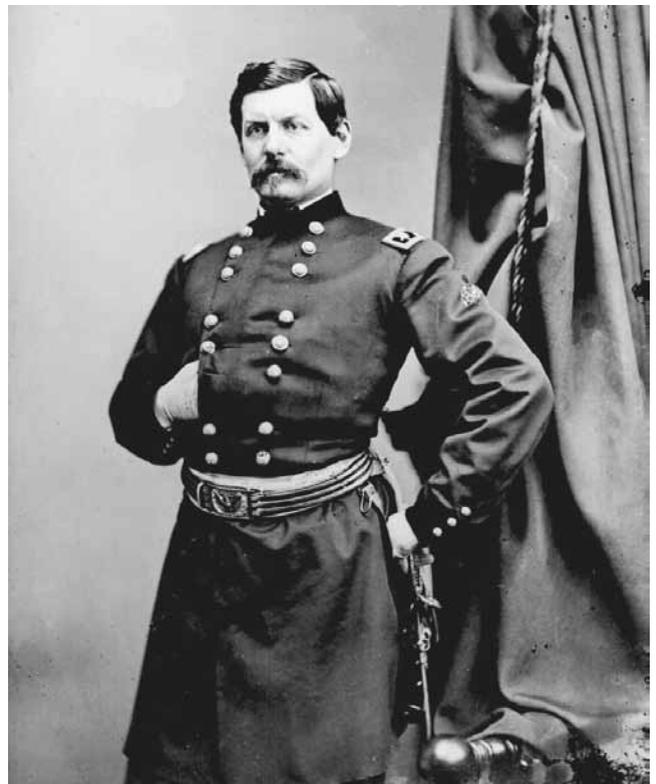
Now, this is someone you can look at and say, “I think this man means what he says. I think we’d better follow him, because nobody else has a clue about what we are going to do.”

The situation was indeed dire—almost the entire South was seceding in open declaration of war against the United States, armed to the teeth, bankrolled to the maximum that the coffers would bear, by Britain. If you ever get a chance to tour West Point, go to what they call Trophy Point, overlooking that wide expanse of the Hudson, and there you may see a row of gleaming cannons from the Civil War, and on every single one of them is stamped “Made in Birmingham” or “Made in Manchester.” They’re all British-made cannons, that were captured from the Confederates during Union victories.

Lincoln talked about his mission, and the mission of the nation, in his address to Congress on December 1, 1862. He said,

Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this Administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We, even we here, hold the power, and bear the responsibility.

In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which,



National Archives

Gen. George McClellan, the “Little Napoleon.”

if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless.

Lincoln and the Army

Lincoln has some problems to solve in dealing with the American population. He has to establish an understanding in the people, that when you are fighting to preserve the union, you are fighting for yourself; you’re fighting so that you may have a future. Secondly, Lincoln has to somehow, personally, organize the Union Army. And he has to organize the people and the Army in such a way, that they are able to understand that he is the personal, living embodiment of everything that they cherish, or should cherish, and could come to cherish, about this country, about this human purpose.

Now, as long as he is travelling through the country on his way to the inauguration, he is able to speak to thousands of people about what they must do. At Indianapolis, he says:

To the salvation of this Union there needs but one single thing—the hearts of a people like yours. When the people rise in masses in behalf

of the Union and the liberties of their country, truly may it be said, “The gates of hell shall not prevail against them.”

In all the trying positions in which I shall be placed—and doubtless I shall be placed in many trying ones—my reliance will be placed upon you and the people of the United States—and I wish you to remember now and forever, that it is your business, and not mine; that if the union of these States, and the liberties of this people, shall be lost, it is but little to any one man of 52 years of age, but a great deal to the 30 millions of people who inhabit these United States, and to their posterity in all coming time....

I, as already intimated, am but an accidental instrument, temporary, and to serve but for a limited time, but I appeal to you again to constantly bear in mind that with you, and not with politicians, not with Presidents, not with office-seekers, but with you, is the question, “Shall the Union and shall the liberties of this country be preserved to the latest generation?”

But once in Washington, and under war conditions, Lincoln rarely spoke to large audiences. But there was a way to organize the Army, and, through them, the civilians as well. How? Well, every Army unit that was not meant for the western theater of operations reported to Washington, D.C. to be trained. Lincoln made sure that he greeted every unit as it paraded by the White House, and sometimes he was able to speak at length with them. The White House itself was open to all, and many a soldier sat himself down in a chair or at a desk and wrote a letter home. Civilians, too, flocked to talk to the President, whether asking for a job or a pardon for a deserter. Often, Lincoln would delay talking to his Cabinet in order to speak to the citizens who flooded his office.

Sometimes, the President would become impatient when a new unit was scheduled to arrive by boat up the Potomac, and he would commandeer a vessel to go and meet them before they would even land. By the end of June in 1861, Lincoln had already been seen by tens of thousands of arriving soldiers in the Union Army. Many of them were young—born in the 1840s—and had had precious little to value about their government leaders. The enlisted soldiers called themselves “the boys,” and their officers were “the men.” Lincoln did more than just talk about the Union cause: He promoted the hospitals and medical care they would need, visited them in

their encampments, and came to see them after their battles. He also went out of his way to include [in the Army] as many elements of society as possible, including the foreign-born and men from the slave states. He also stretched or cut red tape in order to form an army as soon as possible; perhaps even to convince the Confederates to turn from their course. “We are in no condition to waste time on technicalities. The enthusiastic uprising of the people in our cause, is our great reliance; and we cannot safely give it any check, even though it overflows and runs in channels not laid down in any chart.”

After the terrible Union defeat at Bull Run on July 21, 1861, when the picnicking Congressmen who had come to watch the battle turned tail and fled back to Washington, Lincoln got in a carriage and went from camp to camp, making short speeches of gratitude and hope. A Wisconsin soldier, Robert Beecham, wrote home:

There was stamped on his face a fresh, vigorous, healthy, and courageous look that inspired confidence. We certainly needed some encouragement. It was good to be impressed with the fact that the President on whose shoulders rested this mighty burden of war, with its vast train of results, either for weal or for woe to the people of a hemisphere, was not discouraged with the outlook.

Beecham dubbed Secretary Seward’s platitudinous speech as “Taffy,” but when Lincoln spoke, “he only said in a mild, gentle way, that he had confidence in the ability and patriotism of the American people and their volunteer army to meet and overcome every enemy of the republic.”

When Lincoln stopped speaking, the soldiers rushed his carriage, each one wanting to shake his hand. Beecham tried to reach him, but finally gave up. “I felt like shaking hands with Mr. Lincoln myself,” he wrote, “but on second thought it seemed best not to assist in wearing the poor man’s life out.”

The Commander-in-Chief Takes Norfolk

Gen. George McClellan, the commander of the Union forces at the beginning of the war, was an excellent drillmaster for the troops, but he seemed almost completely incapable of moving those troops in the direction of the enemy. He finally floated the Army of the



Photograph by Alexander Gardner

Lincoln and McClellan at Antietam on Oct. 3, 1862. McClellan was relieved of command shortly thereafter, and became, in 1864, the Democratic Party candidate for President, running on a platform of "peace": Let the South go, let slavery continue.

Potomac down to the Peninsula of Virginia, but there he sat, immovable, while he demanded 100,000 more men, and then another 100,000. His dispatches to Lincoln complained constantly about the weather, the mud, the overpowering numbers of the Confederate Army, and his manpower weakness.

At first, Lincoln tried humor. He said that McClellan was an admirable engineer, "but he seems to have a special talent for the stationary engine." One day, someone called on Lincoln and stated that he had a family problem. His sick relative lived in Richmond, and he asked for a pass that would take him behind the enemy lines. Lincoln asked, "Are you going to really use the pass?" "Of course, Mr. President." "Because I gave George McClellan 125,000 'passes' to Richmond and he still hasn't used them." Finally, Lincoln sent General McClellan a note saying, "My dear McClellan, if you don't want to use the Army, I should like to borrow it for a while."

At this time, Lincoln had no replacement for McClellan, so he didn't want to fire him. One day in 1862,

Senator Wade from Ohio came to the White House and demanded that Lincoln immediately fire General McClellan. Lincoln answered, "Senator, who would you put in McClellan's place?" "Anybody," snorted Wade. "Wade," replied Lincoln, "anybody will do for you, but I must have somebody." It was at this time that Lincoln started to borrow books on military theory from the Library of Congress. He also began an almost daily inspection of new weapons systems, and he was especially interested in the design and construction of the Union ironclad, the *Monitor*.

In May 1862, with McClellan still sitting on the Peninsula and making no move toward Richmond, Lincoln took Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase with him down to Hampton Roads, Virginia. McClellan sent word that he was "too busy" to see his Commander-in-Chief, so Lincoln inspected the *Monitor* and decided to embark on a campaign of his own—to the delight of the soldiers and sailors. Although Fort Monroe had been successfully held for the Union by Gen. John Wool, and the Union Navy filled Hampton Roads with ships, the Confederates still held the town and Navy yard of Norfolk.

Since the famous battle two months before between the *Monitor* and the Confederate ironclad *Merrimac*, the *Merrimac* had been lurking at Norfolk, threatening the Union ships. Lincoln proposed that the Navy ferry a contingent of Union troops over to Norfolk in order to capture the town. Naval officers protested, however, that the shallow water would not allow them to get within a mile of the shore.

Lincoln, who in his youth had twice helped steer a flatboat down the treacherous Mississippi from Illinois to New Orleans, carefully studied a map of Hampton Roads. He consulted with General Wool, a 78-year-old veteran of the War of 1812 who was still full of fight, and he approved the plan. So on the night of May 10, Lincoln and two Cabinet secretaries pulled away for Norfolk in a small boat to the spot that Lincoln had chosen. The water, indeed, was deep enough, and Lincoln jumped ashore and took a walk on enemy territory. Lincoln reported his findings, and General Wool's troops went ashore the next day only to find that the

Confederates had gotten wind of Lincoln's maneuver and had abandoned the city! All they saw was the Mayor of Norfolk walking toward them holding out the keys to the city. Left without a base, the crew of the dreaded *Merrimac* blew her up and fled.

"So ended a brilliant week's campaign by the President," recorded Chase, "for I think it quite certain that if he had not gone down, Norfolk would still have been in the possession of the enemy, and the *Merrimac* as grim and defiant as ever."

The headlines in the New York newspapers hailed "President Lincoln's First Military and Naval Operation—Its Great Success."

The episode was not a major victory, but it made a considerable impression on the men at Fort Monroe. A soldier wrote of seeing "Mr. Lincoln driving past to take possession of Norfolk." "It is extremely fortunate that the President came down as he did," wrote an officer of the *Monitor* that day; "he seems to have infused new life into everything." In what had been a scene of inactivity, he saw Lincoln "stirring up the dry bones."

Still unable to see the incredibly busy General McClellan, Private Lincoln boarded a steamer up the Chesapeake, standing on the deck with his hat off, bowing to the cheering sailors on the *Monitor* and the other Navy vessels that he passed.

Nine days later, Lincoln quietly signed the [Homestead Act](#) into law. Vetoed by President Buchanan in 1860, the law provided for the transfer of 160 acres of unoccupied public land to each homesteader for a nominal fee if he and his family lived there and worked the land for five years. Even while the Civil War continued to rage, thousands of pioneers were flooding west across the Mississippi, fulfilling Lincoln's vision for the peace which was to come.

'We're Coming, Father Abraham'

General McClellan eventually moved the Army to Maryland, where one of the bloodiest battles of the war was fought at Antietam Creek, on September 17, 1862. Confederate commander Gen. Robert E. Lee had moved his Army into Maryland, and McClellan had fortuitously captured his plans, but McClellan threw away his advantage by poor planning, and turned the battle into a bloodbath by insisting on sending wave after wave of Union troops over a narrow bridge, with

Confederate cannons before them and Confederate sharpshooters above them. Lee and his men escaped across the Potomac, because McClellan ignored Lincoln's orders to pursue and cut off the Potomac crossings. If this had been done, Lee's Army could well have surrendered *en masse*.

Lincoln was bitter about the unnecessary bloodshed, and he was furious when he received information about a court martial being conducted of a certain Maj. John Key. Asked why McClellan did not go after Lee and crush him, Key had replied, "That is not the game." Instead, he said, the intent in the Army was merely "that neither army shall get much advantage of the other; that both shall be kept in the field till they are exhausted, when we will make a compromise and save slavery."

Lincoln insisted on questioning the man himself, and the officer repeated the same viewpoint to the President. "If there was a 'game' ever among Union men, to have our Army not take an advantage of the enemy when it could," Lincoln said, then he was going "to break up that game." He determined to go once more to the Army in person. Lincoln counted those present for duty at over 88,000, even after the recent losses, but there they sat on the fields around McClellan's tent. That night he climbed a ridge with his friend Ozias Hatch, and asked Hatch what he saw. "The Army of the Potomac," he replied, but Lincoln retorted, "So it is called, but that is a mistake; it is only McClellan's bodyguard."

McClellan scheduled a review of the troops for October 3. "Mr. Lincoln was manifestly touched," observed an officer in the 6th Wisconsin, "and he, himself, looked serious and careworn." Lincoln kept bowing low in response to the salutes from the ragged banners, but some of the soldiers felt their hearts going out to him, instead. "How the smile from a care-worn and anxious face touched the hearts of those bronzed, rough-looking men," wrote another. Almost every soldier who kept a diary or wrote a letter home after the review made some mention of his own sight of the President. One soldier of the newly dubbed Iron Brigade of Wisconsin said, "Altogether he is the man to suit the soldiers." And now, for the first time, the soldiers begin to refer to Lincoln as "Father Abraham."

When Lincoln arrived in Gettysburg the night before he delivered his immortal address, throngs of soldiers and citizens filled the streets singing, "We Are Coming, Father Abraham" until 1:00 in the morning. In 1864, General McClellan, now relieved of command, was to be the Democratic candidate for the Presidency against

Lincoln. Lincoln was, as the soldiers had written, very “care-worn,” but he had to run again. Henry Wing was a young reporter for the *New York Tribune* who covered the war at the front, and whenever he returned to Washington, Lincoln wanted him to come see him and “tell me all you hear and see.” On one of these visits before the 1864 election, Lincoln said,

There’s many a night, Henry, that I plan to resign. I wouldn’t run again now if I didn’t know these other fellows couldn’t save the Union on their platforms, whatever they say. I can’t quit, Henry. I have to stay.

In August of that election year, Lincoln addressed the 166th Ohio Infantry Regiment when it returned from the front:

It is not merely for today, but for all time to come that we should perpetuate for our children’s children this great and free government, which we have enjoyed all our lives. I beg you to remember this, not merely for my sake, but for yours. I happen temporarily to occupy this big White House. I am a living witness that any one of your children may look to come here as my father’s child has. It is in order that each of you may have, through this free government which we have enjoyed, an open field and a fair chance for your industry, enterprise and intelligence; that you may all have equal privileges in the race of life, with all its desirable human aspirations. It is for this the struggle should be maintained, that we may not lose our birthright—not only for one, but for two or three years. The nation is worth fighting for, to secure such an inestimable jewel.

There was jubilation over Lincoln’s defeat of McClellan in the 1864 election. The Army had voted for Lincoln by an overwhelming margin of better than two to one. Now, among the soldiers, he was almost universally referred to as “Father Abraham.” But, there was also another note. The men saw in the President’s victory what a Pennsylvania artilleryman regarded as an assurance that “the sacrifices that the soldier has made, have not been in vain, and that the war will continue until the parties who brought our present National troubles upon us, will be compelled to submit to the law and the cause of our troubles removed forever.” And not for

the first time, the soldiers compared Lincoln to another President. “Future history will place Mr. Lincoln’s name next to Washington,” a Pennsylvania volunteer said two weeks after the election. “The first the founder, the second the preserver of our country.”

Richmond, At Last

In late March 1865, Lincoln steamed down to Fort Monroe and then up the James River to his Army’s headquarters at City Point. He wanted to spend all of the final days of the war with the Army. Then news came that Lee had marched out of Richmond, and Union Gen. Godfrey Weitzel was marching in to take possession of the Confederate capital. “Thank God,” said Lincoln, fervently, “that I have lived to see this! It seems to me that I have been dreaming a horrid dream for four years, and now the nightmare is gone. I want to see Richmond.”

Adm. David Porter, a supporter of Gen. McClellan and not a warm friend of the President, wrote an account of Lincoln’s journey. Lincoln was warned that there might still be Confederate troops or sharpshooters in the area; there were fires still burning, and no one knew exactly what the situation in the city was. But he was adamant, and after the channel was cleared of torpedoes, a flotilla of boats set off up the James River. All were jockeying in order to be the first one into the city, but all were grounded one after the other. Adm. Porter took Lincoln and his young son Tad onto his barge and, with a small number of marines, they beat everyone to the city.

As Lincoln stepped onto land, holding the hand of his son, a small group of Negroes digging with spades recognized him from a picture which they had kept for four years. They fell on their knees before him, but Lincoln, embarrassed, said,

Don’t kneel to me. That is not right. You must kneel to God only, and thank him for the liberty you will hereafter enjoy. I am but God’s humble instrument; but you may rest assured that as long as I live no one shall put a shackle to your limbs and you shall have all the rights which God has given to every other free citizen of this Republic.

Porter said that as Lincoln said this, although he was not a handsome man, and ungainly in his person, “yet in his enthusiasm he seemed the personification of manly beauty.” Porter realized they had to move on, and asked the patriarch of the group to withdraw and let them

pass. The now ex-slaves joined hands in a circle and sang a hymn, and as they did so, the formerly deserted streets were now filled with ex-slaves, all joyously trying to get a glimpse of Lincoln.

Porter reported that the crowd could not be made to understand that they were detaining the President, for “they looked upon him as belonging to them, and that he had come to put the crowning act to the great work he had commenced. They would not feel that they were free in reality until they heard it from his own lips.”

Lincoln spoke again:

My poor friends, you are free—free as air. You can cast off the name of slave and trample upon it; it will come to you no more. Liberty is your birthright. God gave it to you as he gave it to others, and it is a sin that you have been deprived of it for so many years. But you must try to deserve this priceless boon.

This was the same thing he had told those young men in Springfield, 27 years before:

Let the world see that you merit it, and are able to maintain it by your good works. Don't let your joy carry you into excesses. Learn the laws and obey them; obey God's commandments and thank him for giving you liberty, for to him you owe all things. There, now, let me pass on; I have but little time to spare. I want to see the capital, and must return at once to Washington to secure to you that liberty which you seem to prize so highly....

Winning the Political Fight Today

If you think of the way that Lincoln set out, you see that he defines the problem in the only way you can define it: We're not trying to defeat the enemy because they're evil. I have to do this because the posterity of all time to come depends on it. Everyone who has gotten



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Lincoln entering Richmond, April 4, 1865. He was surrounded by huge, jubilant crowds of freed slaves. "My poor friends," he told them, "you are free—free as air. You can cast off the name of slave and trample upon it; it will come to you no more."

us this far—the Founding Fathers, the Nathaniel Greenes, the Robert Fultons, you name them, the Daniel Boones, the Benjamin Franklins, every one of them, if we do not win, we will effectively deny their existence; we take away their posterity.

Whether you know it or not, you are already part of a mission to do the greatest good, perpetuate the greatest good that's ever been done in the history of the human race. If that statement is too big for you, then you do have to study more American history, and you'll see that it's true. That is an ironclad truth. And the way you get at it is not to find out the whos and whats and the years, and the these and the those and the thems. You have to start to say, “Wait a minute, I can get inside the mind of this person; I can re-experience how they solved a problem.”

What makes you human is the ability to re-create in your own mind, the greatest creative output of the greatest minds in any period of history. What you find is happening, is that these people become so familiar to you that they are your friends! You've got 'em. They're there to rely on.

Then when you read something by Lincoln, you don't just say, “Those are nice words. What a great idea. Nice poetry!” No, you start to look at his mind and say, “Look what this man pulled in, in terms of the significance of his life, and carried it to the limit of anything you could imagine.” But to him, that is what he was; that was who he was; normal; that was human. That was his mission; his mission was to become a true human being.

So Lincoln typifies, at the highest level, somebody who could get this through to other people; so that he created, or he improved, a lot of really wonderful people. There are a lot of other friends out there, waiting. You've got to bring them back into the war. And if we get them back into the war, the way Lincoln did—and we won the Civil War because Lincoln did that—then we will win this war too. There's no other way to do it.