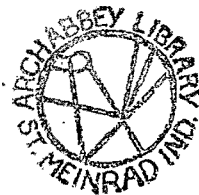


Abraham Lincoln:
A Coming to Emancipation

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Introduction

At two o'clock P.M. on January 1, 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. After he had signed the document he remarked to his Secretary of State, William H. Seward, that, "If my name ever gets into history, it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it."¹ One-hundred and ten years later we see that Lincoln was right. But the question is how did Lincoln come to issue such a proclamation. This thesis will examine Lincoln's coming to a policy of immediate emancipation.

In the first chapter I will look at Lincoln before his election to the presidency. His attitudes toward the slavery question will be discussed. The second chapter will consider his coming to issue the Proclamation and its signing. Chapter three will deal with the reactions of the North, the South, and Europe. In the conclusion I will look at the effects of the Proclamation.

Through this paper I hope to come to an understanding of Lincoln's view of the institution of slavery and the problems which he encountered with the issuing of such a proclamation. Problems were of both a personal and public nature. And finally I hope to arrive at some understanding of the reactions and effects of the Proclamation.

Chapter I:
The Man
and His Attitudes Toward Slavery

Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809, in a log cabin just south of Hodgen's Mill, Kentucky. His father, Thomas Lincoln, was a carpenter by trade and had moved his family from Elizabethtown to the South Fork of Nolin Creek in December of 1808. Little is known of Lincoln's early years in Kentucky except that he was saved from drowning by a neighbor boy. When Lincoln was a candidate for President of the United States he was asked by the biographer John Scripps about his boyhood years, he replied: "Why, Scripps, it is a great piece of folly to attempt to make anything out of my early life. It can all be condensed into a single sentence and that sentence you will find in Gray's Elegy--'The short and simple annals of the poor.'"²

In 1816 Thomas Lincoln again moved his family but this time he was forced to move because of land claim problems. The Lincolns made their new home in southern Indiana near Gentryville. The area was mostly unsettled and because they had moved to Indiana in the winter only a "half-faced camp" could be constructed which meant a minimum of comfort. But before the winter had ended Thomas Lincoln had finished the construction of a simple dirt floor log cabin and the family had settled into

a pioneer existence.

During the autumn of 1818 a disease known as the "milk-sick" had spread into southern Indiana. Lincoln's mother had been taking care of neighbors who had caught this disease and she soon fell ill and died of milk-sickness on October the fifth. She was buried on a knoll next to the neighbors she had nursed not far from where the cabin stood. Of his mother Lincoln said, "She was a noble woman, affectionate, good, and kind rather above the average woman, as I remember women in those days."³

Without the influence of a mother the family lived in squalor. So in the winter of 1819 Thomas Lincoln made a journey to Elizabethtown to take a second wife, Sarah Bush Johnston, a widow with three children. This stepmother had a great influence on Lincoln which was made evident by his statement about her, "All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother."

By April of 1827 Thomas Lincoln had finished payments on his farm and had begun thinking about moving. On March 1, 1830 the family began their trip to central Illinois after selling the farm for \$125 to Charles Grigsby. When they reached Illinois and their destination, settling down was made easier because a cousin of Nancy Hanks Lincoln had moved some years earlier and prepared for their arrival when he had heard they were coming.

Lincoln had come of age now and began to look for work when he reached Illinois. One of his first jobs was to transport cargo belonging to Denton Offutt to New Orleans. Lincoln had impressed Denton Offutt, so Offutt planned to open up a

store and put Lincoln in charge when he returned. In New Orleans Lincoln witnessed his first slave auction. Years later John Hanks related Lincoln's reaction to the auction. "Lincoln was so distressed by a slave auction that he declared: "If I ever get a chance to hit that thing, Ill hit it hard."⁵

After working in the store for some time Lincoln became well known throught-out the area, and because of this he decided to enter politics and run for the State Legeslature (1832). He campaigned for only two weeks because he had enlisted in the state militia to fight in the Black Hawk war. Although he did not win the election he did have a good showing (running eighth) considering there were thirteen candidates and it was the first time he had run for legislator. Two years passed and again Lincoln put himself up for a candidate for State legislator. In the time which had passed since the previous election Lincoln had been part owner of a general store in New Salem, which only put him into debt, and postmaster, a post he held until 1836. This time Lincoln won the election.

Winning this election was to mean more to Lincoln than just serving as a legislator. Due to the encouragement of a a fellow legislator, John Stuart, Lincoln began studying law to become a lawyer. On September 9, 1836, Lincoln passed his bar examination and received his license to practice law. As a lawyer Lincoln worked hard and long. Each spring he rode the circuit going from one county to another arguing mostly petty cases and receiving small wages. The importance of his work was summed up by law partner William H. Herndon when he said:

"His ambition was a little engine that knew no rest."⁶ Lincoln served in the Illinois State Legislature for four terms and once in the United States Congress. He had hopes of becoming the United States Senator from Illinois which lead him into the debates with Stephen A. Douglas. During this time he developed an attitude toward slavery which would affect his issuing of the Proclamation of Emancipation.

To understand Lincoln's attitude toward slavery, from his election to the Illinois state legislature to the debates with Douglas, one would do well to study Lincoln's public record. His public record would include his voting record, speeches, and official correspondences. Lincoln's private letters and testimony from people who knew him can also help one to understand Lincoln's attitude toward slavery at this time.

During Lincoln's second term as Illinois state legislator (1836) he expressed himself in regard to a resolution on slavery which had passed the assembly. His writing was in the form of a protest and was co-authored with Dan Stone, a fellow representative from Sangamon County.

Protest in Illinois Legislature on Slavery March 3, 1837. Resolutions upon the subject of domestic slavery having passed both branches of the General Assembly at its present session, the undersigned hereby protest against the passage of the same.

They believe that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy; but that the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than to abate its evils.

They believe that the Congress of the United States has no power, under the constitution, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the different states.

They believe that the Congress of the United States has the power, under the constitution, to

abolish slavery in the District of Columbia; but that that power ought not to be exercised unless at the request of the people of said District.⁷

This protest is significant because at the age of twenty-eight Lincoln made his view on slavery public. In his autobiography of 1860 Lincoln wrote that the protest "briefly defined his position on the slavery question;...."⁸ Years later J.P. Usher, Lincoln's Secretary of the Interior from 1863 to 1865, summed up Lincoln's attitude toward slavery as State Legislator. "He believed that the slavery of men was wrong in principle, and impossible of justification, and he held in profound veneration and respect the founders of the State of Illinois, who had, by constitutional provision, forever prevented the existence of that institution in the State."⁹

In 1847 Lincoln won election to the United States Congress and moved to Washington D.C. On his arrival he saw what he described in a later speech as a "sort of negro livery stable, where droves of negroes were collected, temporarily kept, and finally taken to southern markets, precisely like droves of horses."¹⁰ During the last few months as a United States congressman Lincoln was given a chance to strike out at slavery in the District of Columbia. He had hoped to introduce a bill that

would have liberated and placed under apprenticeship all children born to slave mothers of the District after January 1, 1850, and also provided for voluntary compensated emancipation of other slaves within the District, the whole project to be contingent on the consent of the people of the District.¹¹

Lincoln did not introduce this bill because he had lost support which he had counted on. However he did vote on a bill which would prohibit the District from dealing in the slave trade.

As Lincoln left office and returned to private law practice the slavery question was soon to be settled, for the time being, by Henry Clay's compromise of 1850. At the death of Henry Clay in June of 1852 Lincoln delivered a eulogy at the Hall of Representatives in Springfield. He spoke of Clay's feelings toward slavery and in doing so revealed his own.

He ever was, on principle and in feeling, opposed to slavery. The very earliest and one of the latest public efforts of his life, separated by a period of more than fifty years, were both made in favor of gradual emancipation of the slaves in Kentucky. ...And yet Mr. Clay was the owner of Slaves. Cast into life where slavery was already widely spread and deeply seated, he did not perceive, as I think no wise man has perceived, how it could be at once eradicated, without producing a greater evil, even to the cause of human liberty itself. His feeling and his judgement, therefore, ever led him to oppose both extremes of opinion on the subject. Those who would shiver into fragments the Union of these States; tear to tatters its now venerated constitution; and even burn the last copy of the Bible, rather than slavery should continue a single hour, together with all their more halting sympathisers, have received, and are receiving their just execration;.... But I would also, if I could, array his name, opinions, and influence against the opposite extreme--against a few, but an increasing number of men, who, for the sake of perpetuating slavery, are beginning to assail and to ridicule the white-man's charter of freedom--the declaration that "all men are created free and equal."¹²

By 1854 the slavery question had become a controversial issue again with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. It was Stephen Douglas who introduced this Bill in the Senate, and since its passage Douglas had returned to Illinois to defend it. On October 16 Lincoln replied to a speech made by Douglas at Peoria on the same day. In his long speech Lincoln examined the Missouri Compromise, the slave trade in the District of

Columbia, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act and in doing so showed how the spread of slavery was wrong.

This declared indifference, but as I must think, ~~covert~~ covert real zeal for the spread of slavery, I can not but hate. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world—enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites—causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity, and especially because it forces so many really good men amongst ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty—criticising the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest.¹³

In another part of his Peoria speech Lincoln warned his audience of the repercussions of the extension of slavery.

Slavery is founded in the selfishness of man's ~~nature~~ nature—opposition to it, is his love of justice. These principles are an eternal antagonism; and when brought into collision so fiercely, as slavery extension brings them, shocks, and throes, and convulsion must ceaselessly follow. ...It still will be the abundance of ¹⁴man's heart, that slavery extension is wrong;....

In June of 1858 the Illinois Republicans held their convention to name their candidate for U. S. Senator Abraham ~~Lin~~ Lincoln was the man they choose. At the conclusion of the convention Lincoln delivered his now famous "house divided speech". In it, he predicted the course which slavery would take. The Union would be either all free or all slave. Lincoln was behind the forces that would make the Union free.

We are now far into the fifth year, since a policy was initiated, with the avowed object, and confident promise, of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only , not ceased, but has constantly augmented. In my opinion, it will not cease, until a crisis shall have been reached, and

passed. "A house divided against itself can not stand." I believe this government cannot endure, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery, will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the States old as well as new—North as well as South.¹⁵

Also, with this speech Lincoln placed himself squarely against his opponet Stephen Douglas on the slavery issue.

During the campaign Lincoln challenged Douglas to a series of debates. In all, seven debates were agreed on. The debates basically dealt with the constitutional right to own slaves, and the extension of slavery into the new territories. But during the sixth and seventh debates Lincoln emphasized the moral question of slavery. At the last debate Lincoln said: "The real issue in this controversy—the one pressing upon every mind, is the sentiment on the part of one class that looks upon the institution of slavery as a wrong, and of another class that does not look upon it as a wrong."¹⁶ The crucial difference between Lincoln and Douglas was an ethical one.

Chapter II:
~~The~~ Promulgation
of the Emancipation Proclamation

I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so. Those who nominated and elected me did so with full knowledge that I had made this, and many similar declarations, and had never recanted them. And more than this, they placed in the platform, for my acceptance, and as a law to themselves, and to me, the clear and emphatic resolution which I now read: 'Resolved, that the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the states, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of power on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depend; and we denounce the lawless invasion by force of the soil of any State or Territory, no matter under what pretext, as among the gravest of crimes.'

This passage is from Lincoln's first inaugural address. He states that he has no intention of touching the institution of slavery where it exists. But on January 1, 1863, three years later, we find him issuing a proclamation which frees the slaves. In this chapter, I will examine Lincoln's reversed stance in regard to immediate emancipation. For the sake of clarity I have divided his progression of change into three major areas: his original plan, his answers to the charges of anti-slavery pressure groups, and his final complete metanoia.

Lincoln knew that somehow the slavery question would have

to be settled. He believed that he had the right to emancipate slaves in order to save the Union. But he believed that if emancipation was proclaimed early in the war the loyal border states might rise up against the North.

At the outset of the war the border slave states... hung in the balance. It seemed to Lincoln essential that these states be kept loyal to the Union, and it also seemed to him that a forthright antislavery program might incline them toward the Confederacy.¹⁸

While Lincoln held back, his generals and Congress went ahead. On August 30, 1861, General Fremont published a proclamation declaring the confiscation of the property "of all persons in the State of Missouri who shall take up arms against the United States, or who shall be directly proven to have taken an active part with their enemies in the field."¹⁹ And he declared their slaves to be freemen. Lincoln sent Fremont a letter on September 3, stating that he modify the proclamation so that it only apply to property and slaves put to hostile use. In another instance, General Hunter, in May, 1862, declared that "the persons in... Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina heretofore held as slaves are therefore declared forever free."²⁰ This time the President issued a public notice saying the order was void. In a letter of April 1864, Lincoln wrote:

When, early in the war, Gen. Fremont attempted military emancipation, I forbade it, because I did not then think it an indispensable necessity. ...When, still later, Gen. Hunter attempted military emancipation, I again forbade it, because I did not yet think the indispensable necessity had come.²¹

During the summer of 1861 Congress passed a confiscation act which freed all slaves that were put to use in the military.

The next summer a second confiscation act was passed which declared all slaves free whose owners were in rebellion, regardless if the slaves were used for military purposes or not.²² Lincoln was not in agreement with these bills, but he did not veto them. Instead he failed to have them carried out.

Lincoln did, however, want to see the emancipation of slaves. But his idea of emancipation, as we have seen, was not to be immediate without consideration to states rights. The form of emancipation Lincoln favored was nearest to satisfying his sense of what was statesmanlike, equitable, and legally sound.²³ "This was gradual emancipation by voluntary action of the States with Federal cooperation and compensation."²⁴ On March 6, 1862, Lincoln sent to Congress a message which urged them to pass a resolution pledging financial aid for the purpose of emancipation. He wrote:

I recommend the adoption of a Joint Resolution by your honorable bodies which shall be substantially as follows: "Resolved that the United States ought to co-operate with any state which may adopt gradual abolishment of slavery, giving to such state pecuniary aid, to be used by such state in its discretion, to compensate for the inconveniences public or private, produced by such change of system."²⁵

Lincoln went on to state that it was up to the states if they wanted to start such a program. He concluded by saying: "While it is true that the adoption of the proposed resolution would be merely initiatory, and not within itself a practical measure, it is recommended in the hope that it would soon lead to important practical results."²⁶ Congress passed the resolution on April 10, 1862, but the reply to the proposal was unfavorable at the

state level. It had been Lincoln's hopes that the border states would act favorably toward this proposal. Another part of Lincoln's plan for the Negro was colonization. He believed this was the best thing to do in light of differences between the two races. At an address to a deputation of Negroes he said:

You and we are different races. We have between us a broader difference than exists between almost any other two races. Whether it is right or wrong I need not discuss, but this physical difference is a great disadvantage to us both, as I think your race suffer very greatly, many of them by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence. In a word we suffer on each side. If this is admitted, it affords a reason at least why we should be separated.²⁷

Lincoln's entire plan of emancipation consisted of five major points which have been summarized by Richard N. Current:

First, the states themselves must emancipate the ~~slaves~~ slaves, for in his opinion slavery was a "domestic" institution, the concern of the state alone. Second, slaveowners must be paid for the chattels of which they were to be deprived. Third, the federal government must share the financial burden by providing Federal bonds as grants-in-aid to the states. Fourth, the actual freeing of the slaves must not be hurried: the states must be given plenty of time, delaying final freedom until as late as 1900 if they wished. Fifth, the freed Negroes must be shipped out of the country and colonized abroad but they must be persuaded to go willingly. State action, compensation, Federal aid, gradual emancipation, and voluntary colonization—these were the indispensable features of the Lincoln plan.²⁸

From the time Lincoln became the President until he issued the Proclamation, he was continually beset by clamoring abolitionists. It is difficult to ascertain how much the abolitionists influenced Lincoln's decision to issue the declaration, and therefore this section will not attempt to do so. But an

examination of the correspondences between the President and the anti-slavery movement can and does reveal what Lincoln thought of immediate emancipation.

One of the most uncompromising of all the abolitionists was, Charles Sumner, a leading Republican Senator from Massachusetts. As early as December of 1861, Sumner, had talked to the President about emancipation. At one such meeting Lincoln had told Sumner that he was just a few weeks behind him. Sumner wrote the Governor of Massachusetts, John Andrew, saying: "Let the doctrine of Emancipation be proclaimed.... In this way you will help a majority of the Cabinet, whose opinions on this subject are fixed, and precede the President himself by a few weeks."²⁹ It seems that as early as December 1861, Lincoln had considered issuing a proclamation.

A religious group known as the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church called at the White House in July of 1862, with a copy of resolutions on slavery. Lincoln answered them with an analogy, he said:

Were an individual asked whether he would wish to have a wen on his neck, he could not hesitate as to the reply; but were it asked whether a man who has such a wen should at once be relieved of it by the application of the surgeon's knife, there might be diversity of opinion, perhaps the man might bleed to death, as the result of such an operation.³⁰

Horace Greeley, the editor of the New York Tribune, and a foe of slavery, wrote an editorial in which he attacked the President's slavery policy. He charged that Lincoln was not taking action by enforcing the Confiscation Act which had been recently passed. Lincoln's reply was not a refutation but a

statement of policy:

My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help save the Union.³¹

At a meeting on September 7, involving Christians of all denominations from Chicago, Lincoln explained that he had given much thought concerning the question of emancipation, and told them that he was pressured enormously. He went on to indicate the problems that would arise with general emancipation; such as, what should be done with the slaves once they were freed, and how they could be cared for. In regard to the more basic problem of enforcement he said: "I do not want to issue a document that the whole world will see must necessarily be inoperative.... Would my word free the slaves, when I cannot even enforce the Constitution in the rebel states?"³²

Things had gone from bad to worse (the war), until I felt that we had reached the end of our rope on the plan of operation we had been pursuing; that we had about played our last card, and must change our tactics, or lose the game! ...determined on the adoption of the emancipation policy; and without consultation with, or knowledge of the Cabinet, I prepared the original draft of the proclamation....³³

Lincoln now realized that he had done everything he could concerning slavery short of issuing a proclamation of emancipation. His plan for gradual compensated emancipation had been rejected by the states, and he was under pressure to issue a proclamation. In early June, Lincoln, went to the telegraph

room of the War Department, and asked Thomas T. Eckert, who was in charge, for a piece of paper so that he could write something special. For several weeks Lincoln returned to write. When he had finished writing the draft, he told Eckert he had been writing a draft "giving freedom to the slaves in the South for the purpose of hastening the end of the war."³⁴ On July 22nd, the President called his Cabinet together so that he could inform them of his intentions to issue a proclamation freeing the slaves. He intended to issue the proclamation on the following day, July 23rd. But later that night Thurlow Weed, a political leader from New York, met with the President, and talked him into postponement until the North saw military success. The victory came two months later when McClellan's forces defeated Lee at Antietam on September 17. The Proclamation of September 22, 1862, was preliminary, it warned:

That on the first day of January in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any state, or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free....³⁵

A few days after he issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, a group of Washington citizens serenaded the President; honoring him and the Proclamation. At this occasion he said: "What I did, I did after very full deliberation, and under a very heavy and solemn sense of responsibility.... It is now for the country and the world to pass judgment on it, and, maybe, take action upon it."³⁶

Judgment was passed on the Proclamation by the country.

And the action which was taken was in the form of the Republicans loosing important states in the elections of 1862. The Democrats carried Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, New York, Illinois, Delaware, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, and California.³⁷ With this setback at the polls, Lincoln changed his emphasis. In his second annual message to Congress, Lincoln proposed a resolution to amend the Constitution providing for compensated emancipation. He believed this plan would shorten the war, help bring about national prosperity, and make it unnecessary to issue a final Proclamation.³⁸ However, Congress did not act favorably toward this resolution in the month it had left. So on Thursday, January 1, 1863, President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in the presence of a few friends.³⁹ Just before he signed the document he said: "I never, in my life, felt more certain that I was doing right than I do in signing this paper."⁴⁰

In response to a letter from Major General McClelland, who was stationed in Arkansas at the time, concerning the Proclamation, Lincoln wrote:

...to use a coarse, but an expressive figure, broken eggs can not be mended. I have issued the emancipation proclamation, and I can not retract it. After the commencement of hostilities I struggled nearly a year and a half to get along without touching the "institution"; and when finally I conditionally determined to touch it, I gave a hundred days fair notice of my purpose, to all the States and people, within which time they could have turned it wholly aside, by simply again becoming good citizens of the United States. They chose to disregard it, and I made the peremptory proclamation on what appeared to me to be a military necessity. And being made, it must stand.⁴¹

In another letter dated the 31st of July 1863, Lincoln wrote:
"I think it is valid in law, and will be so held by the courts.
I think I shall not retract or repudiate it. Those who shall
have tasted actual freedom I believe can never be slaves, or
quasi slaves again."⁴² And yet in another letter, Lincoln ex-
pressed his desire that no slave be returned to slavery, or that
the Proclamation be retracted." "For my own part I think I shall
not, in any event, retract the emancipation proclamation; nor,
as executive, ever return to slavery any person who is free by
the terms of that proclamation."⁴³

Chapter III:

Reactions to the Proclamation

The reactions and comments to the issuance of the Proclamation of Emancipation on January 1, 1863, were indeed varied. This chapter will consider those reactions and comments in the following order. I will begin with an analysis of the northern reaction. This will be followed by the Southern comment, and I will conclude with a look at the British perspective.

The first reactions in the North came from the newspapers. Even before the Proclamation was issued, the Washington National Republican issued a statement which asked the people to get behind Lincoln's Proclamation; it said the emancipation policy must be "Cordially sustained by all patriotic citizens without regard to former differences of opinion.... Let bygones be bygones. Slavery is a thing of the past. It has no place in the future of America."⁴⁴ Other papers which favored the President's Proclamation praised it in unqualified terms; this was especially true of the Washington Daily Morning Chronicle and the New York Tribune. Among its remarks the Morning Chronicle said, "President Lincoln now destroys the right arm of rebellion—African slavery."⁴⁵ The paper went on to comment on the President's act calling it a

...great moral landmark, a shrine at which future visionaries shall renew their vows, a pillar of fire which shall yet guide other nations out of the night

of their bondage.... Abraham Lincoln...is entitled to the everlasting gratitude of a despised race enfranchised, the plaudits of a distracted country saved, and as inscription of undying fame in the impartial records of history.⁴⁶

Horace Greeley, the editor of the Daily Tribune, was slightly critical yet enthusiastic. About the slaves and the Proclamation he said, "This Proclamation makes them active, unsleeping enemies of the Slaveholder's Rebellion, and we trust will go far to lower its pride and diminish its power. We hail it as a great stride toward the restoration of the Union."⁴⁷ There were many papers that came out in favor of Lincoln's move, among them were the New York Times, the Boston Liberator, and the Cincinnati Daily Gazette. There were of course many northern newspapers that attacked the President's Proclamation; some of them being the Washington National Intelligencer, the New York World, the New York Herald, and the Boston Courier. Of these papers the Boston Courier was the most critical. It described the Proclamation as being an invitation to crimes and horrors which the world has yet to experience.

The overall reaction in the North was unfavorable.⁴⁸ There were those whites who felt that the emphasis of the war had changed and it was not on saving the Union but on freeing the black man. For this reason some soldiers resigned rather than continue in the struggle. The Proclamation did not supply a motivation for the Northern soldiers. "...on the side of the North, there is no evidence that it provided any significant inspiration to many of the Northern soldiers."⁴⁹ The abolitionists were not pleased because it seemed to be just another

compromise and did not really do what they had struggled for, namely the complete death of slavery.

The South's reaction to emancipation was very predictable; it was absurd for the President to suppose that anyone could declare private property free from ownership. This reaction was most clearly in the adamant condemnation of a certain prominent Southerner who ably represented the thought of that people.

Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States, addressed the Confederate Congress on January 12, 1863. His address was deeply charged with emotion. He called the Emancipation Proclamation "a measure by which several millions of human beings of an inferior race, peaceful and contented laborers in their sphere, are doomed to extermination."⁵⁰ He proposed that Federal officers captured in the areas cited in the proclamation should be turned over to state officials; "that they may be dealt with in accordance with the laws of those States providing for the punishment of criminals engaged in exciting servile insurrections."⁵¹ The Vice-President of the Confederacy, Alexander Stephens, saw the matter pessimistically. He was sure that the Emancipation Proclamation was irrevocable; that a people could not be returned to slavery after the war.

The reaction of the slaves to emancipation was mixed. There were many blacks who were devoted to their masters and had no intention of having an uprising. In the white household the slave had a social status, and in fact his social status was more secure than the free Negro. Walter L. Fleming the author of Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama wrote: "To the last

day of bondage the great majority were true against all temptations. With their white people they wept for the Confederate slain, were sad at defeat, and rejoiced in victory."⁵² It appears to me that the truest picture of the slaves reaction to their newly proclaimed freedom was written by Benjamin P. Thomas in his book entitled Abraham Lincoln. He wrote,

While some slaves welcomed "Lincum's" proclamation with wild rejoicing, others especially in the deep South shared their masters' fear and hatred of Yankees. Most slaves in the interior regions of the Confederacy continued to work faithfully for the white family that fed and clothed them."⁵³

The British perspective was looked upon with more than just a passing interest. It was important because the British could recognize or assist the Confederacy which would mean the possibility of an armistice or compromise. If this were to occur the peace would probably not be a lasting one. Therefore, "the Proclamation was a strategic move to forestall the efforts of peacemakers at home and abroad."⁵⁴ In fact, the relations between the British and the Confederacy were at a dangerous point, as far as the North was concerned. "Already the clandestine assistance that the British had given Confederate privateers had seriously injured Union shipping. Added to this was the expressed admiration for the Confederacy on the part of some highly placed British...officials."⁵⁵

The first hint of how the British reacted to the Proclamation came from the press. For the most part, it was of a critical nature: "...declaring that it was without legal force, that it was a high-handed proceeding, and that it betrayed Lin-

Lincoln's waning power."⁵⁶

Official Britain, in the person of Lord Russell, the Foreign Minister, thought the Proclamation to be very strange. He said: "There seems to be no declaration of a principle adverse to slavery in this Proclamation. It is a measure of war, and a measure of war of a very questionable kind."⁵⁷ The British feeling, though, was against slavery and when knowledgeable Britons criticised the Proclamation it was in the context of its issuance as a war measure, and as being legally without much force. What began to take place after the Proclamation had been considered for awhile was that the pro-Confederate sentiment began to slip, and an anti-slavery support of the North sentiment began to grow.

The support of the Proclamation and the North came from the working classes; this was reported by Charles Francis Adams, the United States Minister to Britain. He wrote: "It has rallied all the sympathies of the working classes, and has produced meetings the like of which, I am told, have not been since the days of the corn laws."⁵⁸ The Emancipation Society of London met on January 15, 1863, and passed a resolution which strongly favored the Proclamation. It went on to state that the society understood the limitations of such a Proclamation.⁵⁹ At another emancipation meeting in Exeter Hall, London, "the name of Lincoln was cheered and the cause of the South denounced."⁶⁰ The Duke of Argyll expressed the hopes of many Britons when he said: "Let it be enough for us to pray and hope that the contest...shall bring with it that great blessing to the

white race which shall consist in the final freedom of the black." ⁶¹ In the rest of Europe the Proclamation was viewed very favorably. The European countries had come out denouncing slavery. French ministers called for a "great and peaceful demonstration of sympathy for the black race, so long enchained and debased by Christian nations." ⁶² Italy's military hero, Guiseppe Garibaldi, called Lincoln a "Pilot of Liberty" and greeted the slaves by saying "the freemen of Italy kiss the glorious marks of your chains." ⁶³ Finally the Russian newspaper Vedomosti called the Proclamation "a great benevolent deed." ⁶⁴

Conclusion

In actuality the Emancipation Proclamation did not free a single slave. It declared free all slaves held in rebellious areas, but these areas were not under federal control. And it specifically excluded from emancipation slaves held in loyal states or areas under military control. The number of slaves legally "freed" was over three million, and the slaves legally held, in the border states, was about 800,000. The justification for this document was self-contained: "...I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me invested as Commander-in-Chief ...in time of actual armed rebellion against authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure...."⁶⁵ It had little immediate effect, and was equal to the second Confiscation Act of July 17, 1862.⁶⁶

What the Emancipation Proclamation ultimately did, was to confuse the South and take from the Confederacy its laboring force at a time when it was needed. It was diplomatic, in the sense that it got the English and European laborers behind the Northern cause. Most importantly, in my opinion, the Proclamation gave hope to the black man that freedom lay ahead. The problem of military emancipation had been settled, and it brought the federal government a step within constitutional emancipation. That step was taken on January 31, 1865 when the

Thirteenth Amendment was approved by Congress, and the Amendment ratified by the States on December 18.⁶⁷

'I know very well that the name connected with this document will never be forgotten,' Abraham Lincoln said afterward in reference to the Emancipation Proclamation. If he had had to be more conservative than others to win the presidency and halt secession, then he could also be more liberal than others to meet military necessity and rid the nation of slavery. As President of all the United States he felt he could not allow personal desire to lead him towards a goal without being convinced that the nation would support his action. As a practical politician, he had to await the coalescence of divergent forces before acting against slavery; to have done so prematurely would have endangered both freedom and union. The growth of abolitionist sentiment, the willingness shown by "contrabands" to work and fight to free themselves, the need to put new meaning into a deteriorating war situation, the increasing pressures of European opinion on American diplomacy—these were some of the forces that began to congeal late in 1862 and that made possible Lincoln's proclamations, the Thirteenth Amendment, and the final drive toward victory. Lincoln's astuteness and wisdom and his successful conduct of the war insured the permanency of both the Union and emancipation, and in this lies his claim to glory.⁶⁸

Appendix

The Emancipation Proclamation

January 1, 1863

By the President of the United States of America:

A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twentysecond day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, towit:

"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

"That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States."

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for

the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. Johns, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New-Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South-Carolina, North-Carolina, and Virginia, (except the fortyeight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth-City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk & Portsmouth)); and which excepted parts are, for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of

the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

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

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

By the President:

William H. Seward, Secretary of State.

Abraham Lincoln

Footnotes:

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³Caroline T. Harnsberger, ed., The Lincoln Treasury (Chicago: Wilcox & Frollett Co., 1950), p. 199.

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⁵Thomas, Abraham Lincoln, p. 24.

⁶Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition (New York: Random House, Inc., 1948), p. 99.

⁷Roy P. Basler, ed., The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln Vol. I (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1959), pp. 74-75.

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¹⁰Thomas, Abraham Lincoln, p. 115.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 126-127.

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¹³Harnsberger, The Lincoln Treasury, pp. 287-288.

¹⁴Basler, The Collected Works, Vol. II., p. 271.

¹⁵Ibid., Vol. II., pp. 461-462.

¹⁶Thomas, Abraham Lincoln, p. 191.

¹⁷Basler, The Collected Works, Vol. IV., p. 263.

¹⁸~~Richard~~

¹⁸Richard N. Current, The Lincoln Nobody Knows (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., Inc., 1958), p. 220.

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²⁰Ibid., p. 354.

²¹Basler, The Collected Works, Vol. VII., pp. 281-282.

²²Current, The Lincoln Nobody Knows, p. 221.

²³Randall, Constitutional Problems, p. 365.

²⁴Ibid., p. 365.

²⁵Basler, The Collected Works, Vol. V., pp. 144-145.

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²⁸Current, The Lincoln Nobody Knows, pp. 221-222.

²⁹John H. Franklin, The Emancipation Proclamation (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1963), p. 22.

³⁰Basler, The Collected Works, Vol. V., p. 327.

³¹Ibid., Vol. V., p. 388.

³²Ibid., Vol. V., p. 420.

³³Franklin, The Emancipation Proclamation, p. 32.

³⁴Ibid., p. 33.

³⁵Basler, The Collected Works, Vol. V., p. 434.

³⁶Ibid., Vol. V., p. 438.

³⁷Franklin, The Emancipation Proclamation, p. 80.

- ³⁸Ibid., p. 81.
- ³⁹See appendix page 27.
- ⁴⁰Franklin, The Emancipation Proclamation, p. 90.
- ⁴¹Basler, The Collected Works, Vol. VI., pp. 48-49.
- ⁴²Ibid., Vol. VI., p. 358.
- ⁴³Ibid., Vol. VI., p. 365.
- ⁴⁴Franklin, The Emancipation Proclamation, p. 112.
- ⁴⁵Ibid., p. 112.
- ⁴⁶Ibid., p. 113.
- ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 113.
- ⁴⁸John H. Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom (2nd ed.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1964), p. 278.
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- ⁵¹Ibid., p. 48.
- ⁵²J.G. Randall, Lincoln the President Vol. II. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1956), p. 197.
- ⁵³Thomas, Abraham Lincoln, p.360.
- ⁵⁴Colin R. Ballard, The Military Genius of Abraham Lincoln(New York: The World Publishing Co., 1952), p. 139.
- ⁵⁵Franklin, The Emancipation Proclamation, p. 123.
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⁵⁸Thomas, Abraham Lincoln, p. 360.

⁵⁹Franklin, The Emancipation Proclamation, p. 126.

⁶⁰David Donald, and J.G. Randall, The Civil War, p. 391.

⁶¹Franklin, The Emancipation Proclamation, p. 139.

⁶²Ibid., p. 127.

⁶³Ibid., p. 128.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 128.

⁶⁵Basler, The Collected Works, Vol. VI., p. 29.

⁶⁶Board of Education of the City of New York, The Negro in American History (New York: Board of Education of the City of New York, 1964), pp. 58-59.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 59.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 59.

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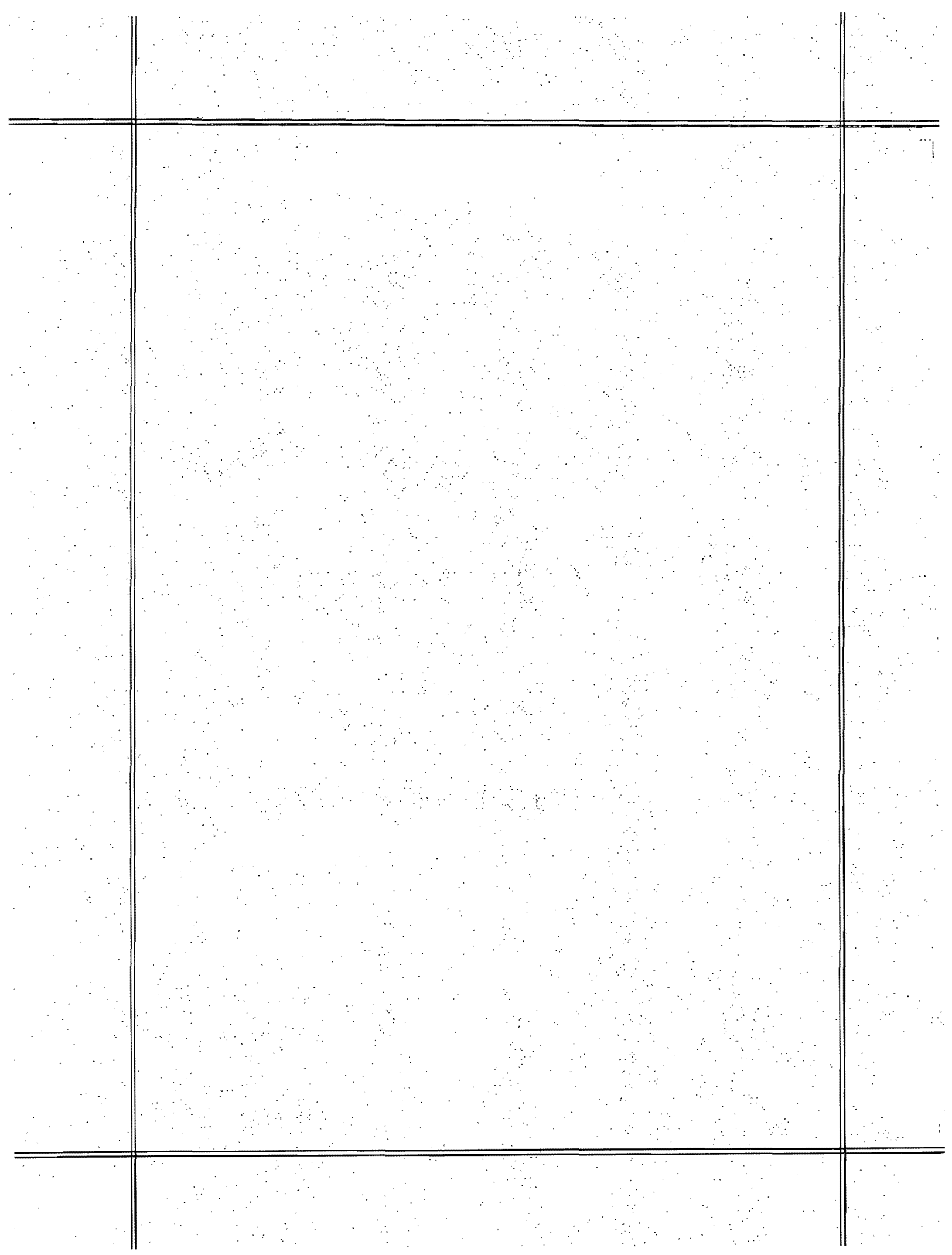
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