

Our History and Their Myth: Comparing the Confederacy and the Union

By Dr. Clyde N. Wilson

Part One: The So-Called "Myth of the Lost Cause"

Only the atheist regards success as the measure of right. —Rev. Robert Lewis Dabney, theologian and aide to Stonewall Jackson

If they had behaved differently; if they had come against us observing strict discipline, protecting women and children, respecting private property and proclaiming as their only object the putting down of armed resistance.... But they could not help showing their cruelty and rapacity, they could not dissemble their true nature, which is the real cause of this war. If they had been capable of acting otherwise, they would not have been Yankees, and we should never have quarreled with them.

—Judah P. Benjamin as Confederate Secretary of War

There was a long period in the 20th century when the Confederacy and its heroes were considered an honorable part of American history, when the War was viewed as a great national tragedy with good and bad on both sides, a necessary step in creation of a stronger nation. That was the spirit of the Centennial in the 1960s. In case you have not noticed, the times have changed.

That way of understanding the

biggest event in American history (in both scope and importance) began even before the end of the fighting — among the soldiers, for brave men respect brave enemies. It by no means spread easily to Yankee politicians, but by the beginning of the 20th century this conciliatory view of shared national experience was something of a consensus, although there were holdouts on both sides, especially in the North. (The Republican party platform in 1900 was in favor of ruthless war against the Filipinos who, like the evil Southerners before them, had resisted domination by "the best government on earth.")

Southerners generally embraced this consensus after Reconstruction. They naturally wanted to move on. And they were a generous people who tended to put the best face on things. The consensus interpretation allowed respect for their efforts and sacrifices and it seemed a reasonable concession to put aside past grievances and cooperate for a better future. Since then, Southerners have shown strongly their loyalty to the United States, a loyalty which has not been reciprocated.

Today the *mainstream* or accepted view of the War between the States has been replaced, in *scholarship*, education and public discourse, by a revival of the old Black Republican view of a

righteous North vanquishing an evil South. Our forebears have been put into a dark little corner of American history labeled "slavery and treason." There have even been those who have revived the position of wartime and Reconstruction Yankee clergy that Southerners should have been annihilated for their treason. (You cannot think much of a *historian* who does not understand the men who followed Lee and Forrest would not have sat around waiting to be hanged, or that secession could be proved to be "treason.")

The change in interpretation of the War has nothing to do with the Confederacy or with an advance of historical knowledge and understanding. It has to do with a shift of power in American society and a revival of hatred and blame directed at the South, an attitude which long preceded the War itself. Southerners felt anger at the way they were treated, but seldom blanket hatred of Northerners. But hatred of Southerners was relentlessly preached before, during, and after the war by some Northerners. The historians who are these days painting the blackest possible picture of the Confederacy are not more benevolent or more learned than earlier generations. Indeed, they are conspicuously less so, and more willing to engage in conscious distortion of historical evidence.

Confederate-bashing has become an academic fashion, and careers can be advanced by finding yet one more way to minimize our forebears.

Never doubt, historical interpretations are political weapons. Among academic historians today Cultural Marxism is the predominant, if not universal mode. By this view the purpose of historical study is not to find what is true but to put down evil reactionary elements (like us), to strike blows in the march toward what they imagine will be a better egalitarian world. Thus the invasion and destruction of the South, however unjustified and accompanied by however much of what normal people would consider evil, is to be celebrated as a good thing. Such historical interpretations are also a way to assert their feeling of superiority over us. In regard to the Confederacy, Cultural Marxism and the old Puritan program of "trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored" go together beautifully. Both are attitudes which require somebody to hate.

Current historians of the War between the States operate under an invention called "the Myth of the Lost Cause." They start with an assumption that anything favorable anyone believes about the Confederacy is false manufactured propaganda. According to this, your and my ancestors were evil people who tried to destroy the best country on earth in order to perpetuate and expand slavery. Not only were Confederates evil, they were also weak and stupid. They made a pathetic effort which was inevitably defeated. Then, after the war, it is claimed, our

evil ancestors made up a phony story about an honorable and heroic "Lost Cause" which never existed. In other words, they covered up their bad deeds with a pack of lies. If you are watching the new books coming out, you will notice a number of titles like *The Myth of Bedford Forrest*. Nearly every aspect of Confederate history has now been reinterpreted in terms of "the Lost Cause Myth."

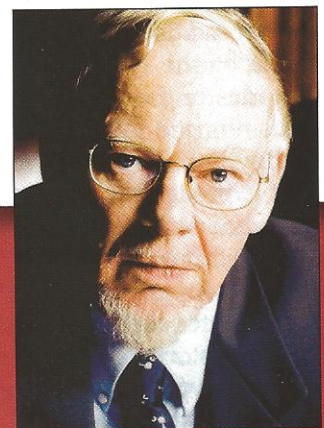
According to the Lost Cause interpretation, Confederate soldiers were not committed, brave and enduring, nor were they usually outnumbered. Lee was not a great general — he lost, didn't he? There was nothing valid in Southern views of the Constitution and complaints of economic exploitation: these were just excuses made up after the fact for evil motives and deeds. There was no real Southern culture worthy of defense: everything rested on slavery. The Southern people did not really support the Confederacy but were only dupes of a few large slaveholders. Even the feminists have got into the picture. Southern women did not really support the Confederacy either but were in secret rebellion against their domineering patriarchs.

Set aside their misuse of the term *myth* as describing something that is false — properly understood a *myth* is not a falsehood but a kind of poetic, non-literal truth. It is interesting that these historians contend everything positive we (or anyone) believe about the Confederacy is untrue. It proves the old wisdom that we humans are likely to ascribe our own worst failings to others. For nothing could be more *mythological* than the great story of a

righteous war to "save the Union" and emancipate the suffering black people. The Southern writer Robert Penn Warren, during the centennial, called such a belief, which most Americans have been taught, "the Treasury of Virtue." It is child's play to show massive evidence that the "treasury" is full of wooden nickels and counterfeit bills.

To start with, no character in history has received more false positive buildup than Lincoln. This moody corporation lawyer, relentlessly ambitious and crafty politician and profane atheist, responsible for immense bloodshed, has been made into a saint. One Southern wit remarked Lincoln was worshipped when he was dead because nobody (including his closest supporters) liked him when he was alive. Another has commented that Lincoln miraculously became a Christian after his death.

Sensible observers have always known that Lincoln was not the handsome, idealistic young prairie lawyer impersonated by Henry Fonda, who bravely and wisely met the challenge of a war cruelly thrust upon his innocent soul. Rather he was the first president to be elected without previous achievement or service, but by manipulation of the electoral process and promises of payoffs, the first to make cagey statements which could receive more than one interpretation. Always conveniently forgotten is that Lincoln, his agenda, and his potential to cause conflict



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were rejected by more than 60 percent of the American people in 1860 and there might not have been a war without his election.

Our mission as the SCV is not to study battle maneuvers like the Civil War Roundtable. Our mission is to defend the Confederate soldier and the cause for which he fought. It is time we stopped being nice and started once more looking at the War without the Northern mythology which we have accepted in our desire to be good Americans. The new regime has freed us from the obligation to be deferential and allows us to recover old truths which we politely put aside. We now have the opportunity to refresh our understanding of what happened in 1861-1865 and start once more defending our fathers as they should be defended. It is useless to say Confederates were brave and skillful soldiers and then fail to understand and defend their cause, for then we are accomplices in the lie that they were brave in a bad cause.

The war of 1861-1865 occurred on a vast scale and the records which it left are immense. It is easy to cherry-pick incidents which support whatever claim one wants to make. But an honest historian will consider the weight of the evidence. Where there is conflict he will carefully consider the testimony of both sides, allowing as much as is humanly possible for any distortion from his own likes and dislikes. What the new trend does is totally disregard our side of the case through the invented idea of the "Lost Cause Myth." There is no need to consider Southern testimony in the weighing of evidence since it is predefined as contaminated by falsehood, though, of course, it is meritorious to show new ways in which it is supposedly false. This approach violates several of the foremost canons of historianship — the requirement to explore primary sources, investigate both sides of a conflict, and seek the weight of the evidence. Long ago and far away in another galaxy this was considered the proper role of historians.

How easy it has been to overlook the most basic fact about the War! It

"Preserving the Union" was a fraud from the get-go. Everyone had long understood you could not save the Union by waging war to overthrow the elected, constitutional, legitimate governments of fifteen States and conquer their citizens.

was not a war between well-meaning gentlemen which the bigger side won. It was a brutal war of invasion and conquest, waged against millions of Americans who only wanted to be let alone to enjoy the self-government bequeathed by their fathers and grandfathers of the War of Independence. For centuries Christian thinkers had been setting forth the criteria for a "just war." Northerners bent on invasion and conquest were not supported by any of the criteria. A just war must be defensive or waged to arrest a great evil. But the South offered no threat to the North. No Southerner ever had the slightest desire to dictate to or control the North. They only wanted to be left as they were. Lincoln, in a consummate act of dishonesty, celebrated the fall of Vicksburg with a declaration that the Mississippi River was now "free." But the Confederacy welcomed Northerners to have free access to the River. It was Lincoln who wanted to prevent Midwesterners from using it to reach a free trade port in New Orleans. The only threat was to the revenue enjoyed by Northern politicians and industrialists from the tariff.

Just war doctrine demands that all efforts for peace be exhausted before war is resorted to. The Confederacy made good faith offers to negotiate, to pay its portion of the federal debt and for the federal property in the South. These offers were never considered but were treated disingenuously. The Republicans torpedoed all compromise measures in Congress, which would have been approved by an overwhelming majority of Americans,

North and South. Wars undertaken for political and military advantages and territorial conquests are not just. War to remove a great evil — like slavery? For the first two years of aggressive invasion Lincoln and his Congress declared firmly the war was not to emancipate the slaves but to "preserve the Union." But when things did not go well, it was discovered they were, after all, engaged in a noble war to end slavery. Even so, the domestic servitude of the South, which had existed for centuries, was not the threatening evil envisioned in just war doctrine. And even if it had been, war was not the appropriate remedy.

Christian doctrine calls for war-makers to observe limits to the use of violence and respect civilians. From the first day the North oppressed non-combatants in disregard of the rules of civilized warfare which had been slowly built up for two centuries preceding. It was a war on a people, not, as Lincoln claimed, putting down a bunch of lawbreakers. A just war should not be undertaken if the damage to be expected is greater than the evil to be opposed. Was "preserving the Union" (i.e., establishing a supreme central government under Northern control) worth the almost incalculable damage inflicted on the American people North and South by Lincoln's war?

"Preserving the Union" was a fraud from the get-go. Everyone had long understood you could not save the Union by waging war to overthrow the elected, constitutional, legitimate governments of fifteen States and conquer their citizens. That would be to destroy the Union and substitute something else. Davis and Lee loved the Constitution and Union. For the Northern war-makers they were just means to serve their power and profit.

The primary purpose of the conquest without any question was to maintain and expand the economic interests of ruling elements in Northern society, despite all the blather then and now about slavery. In fact, the ruling Republicans of the North at the time boldly proclaimed and welcomed a war of conquest, to crush resistance



THE LOST CAUSE.

to government, to establish a powerful state, and to promote the economic interests of the North. Opposition to slavery was a function of hatred of the South, not of a non-existent concern for the welfare of black people. (The North's leading guru, Ralph Waldo Emerson, wrote privately in his diary: "The abolitionist wishes to abolish slavery, but because he wishes to abolish the black man.") Lincoln's pretty and deceptive words about "government of the people" are endlessly quoted because they skillfully put a happy face on a great crime. Lincoln and his friends also inaugurated government financial corruption on a vast scale which the United States has never fully recovered from.

No honest student of history can accept a monocausal explanation for so vast and complex an event as the war of 1861–1865, its causes and its aftermath. Even if we grant that the secession of the first seven States was

in some sense a defense of slavery, the invasion of the South was not about slavery. It was about the supremacy of the federal government. Whether the Union was a voluntary association resting on the consent of the people or a *government* which existed eternally by its own will. Government triumphed, and it was established the "consent of the governed" could only be used one time, like a bus ticket. For ever after, obedience was required to whoever temporarily had control of the federal machinery.

The Northern mythology tells us their soldiers marched to war idealistically for the Union and the slaves, while the Southerners were materialists defending their slave property. This is the exact opposite of the truth. It was the Southerners who were idealists (sometimes to their own disadvantage), and the Northerners who were serving their material interests. Furthermore, Confederates were defend-

ing their homes and their freedom. Northerners were at best fighting for a vague and dangerous abstraction, "the nation," which seemed to have a divine existence apart from the real American people.

Here is something else to keep in mind as a vital part of our history. It took 22 million Northerners (with access to the wealth and population of the world) four years of the bloodiest warfare in American history to conquer five million Southerners. We mobilized 75 percent of our men and lost a quarter. Not only our self-government but more than half our property was lost. The war impoverished the previously prosperous South and enriched the politically connected in the North. Foreign visitors to the North said they could see little sign there was a war going on except for increased business activity. The British journalist Frank Vitezelly, arriving in Washington, reported: "The only persons who

seemed to display any activity are the hordes of hungry contractors."

Sacrifice and suffering was immense in the South for both black and white, during and after the war.

I propose here to examine the weight of the evidence in regard to several aspects of the War between North and South. Not much need be said about the subject of prisons. A number of writers have exposed the truth. The death and suffering in Northern prisons equaled or exceeded that in Southern. The official War Department statistics show that 26,500 Confederates perished in Yankee prisons while 22,576 Northern prisoners died in the South. The difference is that the Southern situation was due to lack of resources, an unhealthy climate for newcomers, the low moral character of many Northern soldiers, and the US government's refusal to exchange or even allow in medicine for their prisoners. (An example of Grant's great military leadership — at the expense of his own men.) The suffering and death of Confederates in Northern prisons was to a considerable degree a matter of deliberate policy. And remember the Yankee prisons held many women, black Southerners, and other civilians, often seized by the army for only the flimsiest offenses, like whistling *Dixie*, and without the least observance of cherished due process of law.

Camp Douglas in Chicago, where the bodies of 6,000 dead Confederate prisoners were thrown into the swamp, is said to be the largest mass grave in North America. This was the prison where Yankee entrepreneurs erected bleachers where people, for a small fee, could look over the walls and gawk at the starving and freezing Rebels, the place Northern doctors described as an extermination camp. At the camp in Elmira, New York, the decent people in the vicinity considered the prison guards to be ruffians and deplored the treatment of the POWs.

Another subject on which the weight of evidence is overwhelmingly conclusive is that of the Northern army's systematic war crimes against the civil population of the Confederacy and border states, and even some of their own people. Looting, burning,

hostage-taking, executions of civilians, bombardment of cities, were not a character only of Sherman's March or Sheridan in the Valley. They were practiced from the first day and became systematic policy when it became clear the Southern armies could not be defeated by military means and war must be made on the people. Compatriot Brian Cisco's book on Yankee war crimes is definitive. Even so, the book only samples atrocities which could easily take ten volumes to record.

Of course, the weight of evidence means nothing to people whose emotional attachments, self-love, and political agenda depend on falsehood. Remarkable the lies which have been and continue to be told by those in denial of this obvious truth about Union war crimes. They still want to say Columbia was burned by the Confederates or by accident, not by Sherman. A *History Channel* production recently claimed Sherman on his great March only took necessary supplies from the civilians. Several historians have contended Union soldiers only looted "rich plantations," suggesting they were motivated in their destruction by antislavery sentiment. Of course, rich homes were plundered — that was where the best loot was. But also thousands of ordinary and poor women and children were made homeless and starving. And when a plantation is destroyed, the black people as well as the white are left in desperate circumstances. The black butler is the first person to be tortured by the benevolent liberators to disclose where the silver is buried.

An Indiana soldier named Hillory Shiftlett writes home from Tennessee in February 1863:

"Hit is a shocking sight to see how the soldiers sarve the farmers[,] tha [They] take everything before them[,] I saw them today go into a hous and take everything tha cood lay their hands on and then went for the chickens outdoors and the worst of all hit was a poor widow woman with fore little children. I was mity sorry for her. She begged them not to take her things for her little children would starve if they took her provishion[,] but tha went ahead and took. I hav saw a heepe such cases as that tell

[until] I am tired out of such doings . . . if I was at home I could tell you a heepe such things as I hav seen."

There are hundreds of similar tales told in the letters of Union soldiers. You can prove Northern war crimes without touching a single Southern testimony. The historians I am discussing are not even honest about their own side's sources. So much for the "Lost Cause Myth" as the final judgment on the most important event in American history.

One suspects many Americans imagine the liberating boys in blue and the black people of the South rushing joyfully into each other's arms. This is the purest fantasy of something which never was and never could have been. The plantation was not a prison, it was a home. The evidence is overwhelming that most Northern soldiers viewed the black people with sentiments ranging from dislike to contempt to hatred. Many blamed them for the war. The evidence is not at all clear as to what degree black men left home to go with the Union army in its countless raids against undefended towns and homes of no military significance, and to what degree they were forced to go, to be used as labor or enlisted in forlorn hopes like the Crater. Vitezelly reported from captured Vicksburg: "The Yankees were guilty of every kind of vandalism." They stole money and everything else from the black people and rounded them up to work.

Ambrose Bierce, a hard-fighting Union soldier for the entire war, said the only black people he saw were Northern officers' concubines and servants. It is certain the slaves and the many free black people of the South were brutalized and robbed by the Union army as much or more than the white people. Union soldiers were first puzzled and then delighted to find that many slaves had valuable personal property like money, watches and fine clothes which could be liberated. The many who had come from the impoverished slums of Northern cities no doubt felt spiteful envy of the slaves as well as of Southern white people. The wonderful film *Gods and Generals* sounds its only false note here. A

Fredericksburg family has their bondswoman tell the Yankees that the house belongs to her so that its destruction might be averted. In reality, Northern soldiers would be more likely, not less likely, to attack the property of black people. They aroused less sympathy and were less likely to make successful complaints. Sherman moaned frequently about the presence of "the inevitable Sambo" and without doubt the "nation" he was fighting for did not include black people.

Black Southerners, who were perhaps wiser than anyone thought, by no means found the appearance of the *liberators* in blue an unmixed blessing. As difficult as it is for 21st century people to understand, many black people offered great service to the Confederacy. (Emerson once more: "But the secret, the esoteric of abolition — a secret, too, from the abolitionist, is that the negro and the negro-holder are really of one party.") History is full of examples of servants who aided their masters against the masters' enemies. The South was no exception. Kent Masterson Brown's classic *Retreat from Gettysburg* estimates more than 5,000 black men accompanied the Confederate army to Pennsylvania and back. When the survivors came back from the Pickett-Pettigrew Charge, they were met by a sea of black faces. An observer counted at least 70 black men imprisoned with the Confederates at Point Lookout. Certainly, even under the disruptions of total war, there was never anything like a slave insurrection.

Another trick of historians who want to cover up federal war crimes is to claim elaborately that "there were atrocities on both sides." One equates Stonewall Jackson's desire for relentless war against invading soldiers with Sherman's burning of Columbia. You see, both sides fostered atrocities and advocated "total war." But, of course, Jackson's opinion, never official or fully implemented, is not the moral equivalent of Sherman's deliberate war against women and children. Even in Quantrill's raid on Lawrence, Kansas, no women were harmed, despite the fact the Kansas Republicans had not observed such niceties in their

attacks on Missouri, even before the War. Apparently the historians I am discussing have never heard the high-spirited love of homeland in *Dixie* and compared it with the blasphemous hatred of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. The dead women and children in the streets of Vicksburg and Atlanta are great testimony to the noble intentions and fighting prowess of American soldiers.

A historian from Boston recently congratulated the American people on how they rallied to the cause after Fort Sumter, Pearl Harbor and 9/11. Hold on! The reduction of Fort Sumter was preceded by a gentlemanly warning, targeted no civilians, resulted in no casualties, and the garrison were allowed to march out with honors and return home. Does this equate with sneak attacks on Americans by foreign enemies? This historian obviously puts us in the same category as Tojo and Islamic jihadists, enemies of real Americans like himself. One does not know which is worse, the ignorance or the arrogance. This historian has never encountered the fact that Lincoln's prominent supporters were welcoming war and demanding an attack on the Southern ports to collect the tariff, *even before the firing on Fort Sumter*. Not surprising. Northerners for 30 years had heard in sermons and speeches and read in tracts that Southerners were not fellow Americans who shared in a Union, but only alien, subhuman obstacles to be eliminated. The Southern writer William Gilmore Simms wrote that the Yankees had been fed on tiger's meat, and it was not surprising they were ferocious.

Every historian who has carefully studied the scenario leading up to Sumter understands that Lincoln maneuvered disingenuously, hoping the Confederacy would fire the first shot and allow him to declare war, which he thought he could easily win. The firing on Sumter was a Confederate public relations setback, but entirely understandable. After all, the fort had been built with our tax money to defend us against foreign attack. Why allow it to be used as a base to attack and exploit us, especially since the other side refused our offers to negoti-

ate honestly. These were real considerations, while the (temporary) hysteria in the North, somewhat artificially stirred up in response to "firing on the flag," only aroused vague nationalistic emotions among people who did not understand the American Constitution.

But the real blunder was Lincoln's — what he thought would be an easy victory became the greatest catastrophe in American history.

Another inevitable pillar of the Northern mythology is the South was a backward, impoverished society ruled by a few large slaveholders. There has never been much evidence to support this but it must be maintained — if secession was really the broad-based democratic will of the Southern people, then its crushing by massive attack is hard to justify. The antebellum South was not a perfect society, for such a thing has never existed except in the minds of over-proud Americans. Neither was the South backward, poor, and ignorant.

The highly productive economy of the South provided nearly all the exports of the United States. Because of the tariff on imports the return trade from Southern exports supported the federal government, the building of Northern infrastructure, and the monopoly profits of Northern businessmen, which they well knew. Foreign visitors generally did not find the South backward and unpleasant, at least no more so than they sometimes found the rest of the US. Some, by no means all, Northerners perceived backwardness because people with a puritan cast of mind always condemn folks who are not like them. They did not understand that it was not backwardness that made Southerners prefer a rural society but an affection for a way of life which had existed since even before Thomas Jefferson. Southerners were almost always the first to settle new territory. After it was safe, the New England schoolmarm and traders came in and blamed frontier conditions on Southern "barbarians."

Southern culture was not inferior in any respect except where urbanism and money counted. The inventions and industrial achievements of South-

ern scientists when the war turned their attention to such matters were world-class. A good account of this is given in the history of the Confederate Navy by Raimondo Luraghi, the leading European historian of the American war, a work which deserves more attention from compatriots.

Elections in the South were open to all white men, as in the North, and were free and hotly contested. Contra Lincoln, secession was not the conspiracy of a few but a decision taken after grave and open debate and deliberation such as control by political machines never allowed in the North. The average slave-holding was small — two to five people who lived, worked, and went to church with the family. Large slaveholders had no more influence than their personal merit called for. Generally they were very reluctant secessionists — rich men tend to be cautious. Stephen Burbridge, one of the largest slaveholders in Kentucky, had been repeatedly rejected by his fellow citizens for high office. He became a Union general notorious for his unwarranted executions of other Kentuckians.

Of the numerous free black people in the South, many were prosperous and property owners (some even slave owners) and accepted members of their communities. Generally speaking, free black people in the North were despised, unwanted, and at the lowest end of the social scale by every measure. Some Northern states, like Lincoln's, barred and punished them for entering the state.

We human beings are strange creatures, half angel and half animal, as someone has said. Alone among creatures we have a consciousness of ourselves, of our situation, and of our movement through time. We have language, and by symbols can communicate knowledge to one another and across generations. We can learn something about ourselves from the divine revelations of Scripture and from science. But most of what we know about humanity is contained in our past, our history. We live forward but we can only think realistically by looking back. People without knowledge of their past are scarcely human.

Never let yourself be put down by a so-called expert who claims to know more about your ancestors than you do.

It has been truly said we are what we remember. What we take from the past is crucial to our identity. Thus, as Dr. Samuel Johnson wrote long ago, there is hardly any worse crime against humanity than to falsify its records.

History is the story of human experience. You do not have to be an expert to have an understanding of human experience. Academic historians belong to a club which listens only to itself and is to a considerable extent governed by fashion. Never let yourself be put down by a so-called expert who claims to know more about your ancestors than you do. The qualities for understanding history are not some special expertise. They are the same qualities you look for in a good juror — the ability to examine all the evidence and weigh it fairly.

It is right we honor our forebears because they are ours — but not only because they are ours. We descendants of Confederate soldiers are especially fortunate in our forefathers (and our foremothers, too). Our forebears have long had the admiration of everyone in the civilized world who values courage, skill, sacrifice, honor and an indomitable spirit in defense of freedom. Our Confederate sires are intrinsically admirable and universally respected to an extent seldom granted to a "Lost Cause."

By proclaiming the truth about our Confederate ancestors we not only defend the South, we do a great service to America as well by helping it find its true history. Given the ongoing distortion and replacement of all American history by multiculturalism, our Southern heritage is fast becoming the only American heritage left. There is plenty of true history available to us. It should be our job to take advantage of it.

In Parts 2 and 3 of this essay we will try to shed light on other aspects

of the now fashionable slander of the Confederate soldier and the cause for which he fought.

SOURCES: Ambrose Bierce, *Shadows of Blue and Gray: The Civil War Writings of Ambrose Bierce* (2003); Richard F. Bense, *Yankee Leviathan* (1990); Douglas W. Bostick, *The Confederacy's Secret Weapon: The Civil War Illustrations of Frank Vizetelly* (2009); Kent Masterson Brown, *Retreat from Gettysburg* (2005); Walter Brian Cisco, *War Crimes Against Southern Civilians* (2007); Susan-Mary Grant, *North Over South* (2000); Michael Horgan, *Elmira: Death Camp of the North* (2005); George Levy, *To Die in Chicago: Confederate Prisoners at Camp Douglas, 1862-1865* (1999); Ludwell H. Johnson, *North Against South*, (1993); Raimondo Luraghi, *A History of the Confederate Navy* (1996); William Marvel, *Mr. Lincoln Goes to War* (2006); John B. Walters, *Merchant of Terror: General Sherman and Total War* (1973); Clyde N. Wilson, *Defending Dixie* (2006); www.ncwbts150.com.

[A number of sources which are not as well-known to compatriots as they should be and are rich in true Southern history. Honorary compatriot Bernhard Theursam of Wilmington has a marvelous, ever-growing collection of material at www.ncwbts150.com. Compatriot Harold Ray White of Charlotte has established a treasure trove of "True American History" at <http://vimeo.com/channels/235993>. Compatriot Michael Bruce of Macon has good material at www.youtube.com/user/DixieNetll/videos. The website of the Abbeville Institute (www.abbevilleinstitute.org) archives a veritable library of lectures and articles by credentialed scholars. Especially notable are the lectures by Professor Donald Livingston on the slavery question. I would here like to thank Confederate grandson Brooke Cadwallader of Metz, France, for having led me to many useful sources. A newly established organizations of Independent Southern Historians has a useful guide to Southern reading at www.southernhistorians.org.]

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Our History and Their Myth

Part Two: The Union: Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. —Matthew, 7:18

The philosopher Orestes Brownson, a strong supporter of the Union, wrote thus shortly after the war:

"Nothing was more striking during the late civil war than the very general absence of loyalty or feeling of duty, on the part of the adherents of the Union, to support the government because it was the legal government of the country, and every citizen owed it the sacrifice of his life, if needed. The [Lincoln] administration never dared confide in the loyalty of the federal people. The appeals were made to interest, to the democracy of the North against the aristocracy of the South; to anti-slavery fanaticism, or to the value and utility of the Union, rarely to the obligation in conscience to support the legitimate or legal authority; prominent citizens were bribed by high military commissions; others, by advantageous contracts for themselves or their friends for supplies to the army; and the rank and file by large bounties and high wages. There were exceptions, but such was the rule."

The Russian ambassador in Washington put it more bluntly early in the conflict:

"Peace, no matter what the terms, is the only way of resolving this situation. But leaders in charge of affairs do not want it. Their [Republican] slogan is all-out war. Any compromise would endanger their political existence. They are politicians of low caliber — men without conscience, ready to do anything for money, individuals who have achieved high rank in the army and others who still have hopes of obtaining high commissions. They constitute the swarm of speculators, suppliers of material, war profiteers through whose hands pass a large portion of the millions of dollars spent daily by the federal government. Aside from these and a few fanatics, practically everybody desires the cessation of hostilities."

Many thousands of Northerners agreed with this characterization and said so, privately and sometimes courageously in public.

We are led to believe that the North rose as one man in righteous anger after Fort Sumter and marched shoulder to shoulder forward, singing the *Battle Hymn*, to "save the Union" and emancipate the slaves. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The extent of Northern opposition to Lincoln's war is the best-kept secret in American history. The launching of a massive invasion to suppress the constitutionally asserted will of the people of many states was a revolutionary break

with American traditions and values, as many Northerners understood. Lincoln's party acted throughout the war and Reconstruction like a dictatorial revolutionary cabal which was never sure of its support. Why else the warrantless imprisonment of thousands of civilians by the army, suppression and wrecking of newspaper offices, seizure of the telegraph lines, vigilante actions against antiwar people, a secret police unprecedented in America, brutality against dissenters (including Congressmen), by Republican mobs, and the importation of 300,000 or so foreigners to fill the ranks of the armies? Read the private communications of Lincoln's most fervid supporters and you will see they saw a "traitor" behind every Northern bush. The Radical Republican governor of Illinois complained: "Springfield is full of secessionists." By which he meant people who were not on board the Republican war policy.

A substantial case can be made from contemporary sources that Lincoln would have failed of reelection without army control of the polling places. Our Russian minister in Washington, Baron de Stoeckl, reported in 1864: "Mr. Lincoln and his adherents are sure of winning the forthcom-

Continued on page 56

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Our History and Their Myth

ing election... If the vote were free, the chances would certainly be in favor of General McClellan, but with the powers which the government possesses, it will find means of controlling the election."

It is often claimed in *standard* histories that opposition to the war consisted only of a few sneaking conspirators — "Copperheads." Untrue. It included many distinguished people who spoke forthrightly and in some cases were brutally punished. (Lambdin Milligan of Indiana, disabled and gravely ill, was imprisoned in a pigpen. His arrest was later declared illegal by the Supreme Court.) Anti-Lincoln sentiment was especially strong among people of Revolutionary heritage, like Governor Horatio Seymour of New York, who publicly deplored the criminal conduct of the government in killing Southern fellow countrymen who had always been good citizens and had always aided the North against foreign enemies. Former President Franklin Pierce condemned Lincoln's war in a fiery oration at Concord, New Hampshire, on July 4, 1863, while the battle was going on at Gettysburg. The few Republican members of Philadelphia's first families' gentlemen's club were made so uncomfortable they departed. At the same time in Philadelphia, the mayor and police abetted Republican mobs in administering severe beatings to those who spoke against the war and then arrested the victims.

Here are excerpts from three public speeches of a Democratic leader in suburban New York in 1864, published in a fearless antiwar journal, *The Old Guard*:

"... events have taught us to despise the authors and abettors of this foul war. We say foul because neither its object nor the manner in which it is conducted can be endorsed by patriotism or Christianity.... [It is] a war against the Constitution of our country, and against Christian civilization.

War, conducted by cowards and as-

sassins.... Mr. Lincoln's abolition generals have no more right to burn the wheat fields of the citizens of the South — no more right to destroy their pianos, steal their spoons, jewels, pictures, books and clothing, all of which they have done from the beginning of hostilities — than they have to commit these same thefts in time of peace.

The re-election of Abe Lincoln is ruin. Ruin alike to the material, moral and political status of the land. Indeed, he has already driven the shaft of destruction so deep into the vitals of the Republic, that it would seem that even now nothing is left for it but to die."

No Confederate could have put it any better.

In a more subtle vein, the North's greatest writer, Herman Melville, a New York Democrat, wrote an admiring poem about Mosby and one criticizing the Union's use of the gigantic "Swamp Angel" cannon to bombard the people of Charleston. After the war he wrote another, respectfully honoring Lee's conduct during an inquisition by a Congressional committee.

What are we to make of this not untypical letter home by the New Jersey private, Oliver Giberson? He sends his greetings to two ladies whom he evidently wants to see again. Then he writes:

"I hope the time will not be very long before we will have the pleasure of seeing each other again, and may we have as happy times together as we used to have in times of peace, but peace now is out of the question altogether for it is all discord and strife — a once loving and happy nation parted in sunder and nearly ruined by nothing at all but the abolisist party. It has ruined our country and now it will take as long as it did in the first place to rebuild it up again."

Ten months later, Private Giberson was dead of typhus in an army hospital — a sacrifice to "preserving the Union."

Then again it is often suggested that the war was mainly opposed by poor Irishmen who feared the competition of free black labor. This is a back-handed way of suggesting that such people were "racists," but that most Northerners had a compassionate attitude toward the black people. Absolutely untrue. If Northerners of all opinions were agreed on one thing, it was keeping the black people out of Northern territory. During the war the US army found refugee freedmen accumulating at army posts. It was proposed some of these be settled temporarily in the North. The Radical Republican governors of Illinois and Massachusetts, rabid abolitionists and supporters of the war, went postal. Such a thing must not be. Black people would be much happier in the South than in Massachusetts, wrote the long-time abolitionist governor of that state. Thus Lincoln's respectable supporters were quite as "racist" as the poor Irishmen. The Homestead Act passed by the Republicans during the war gave free land in the West to any citizen or foreigner who would live on it. None of the millions of free acres were available to the black people. If the federal government was to give any land to the black people, it could only be that taken from Southern whites. Nevertheless, our current historians have declared that opposition to Lincoln was the result of "racism," as if there were no other issues involved.

There was a flurry of federal volunteering following the shelling of Fort Sumter. It has recently been shown the biggest factor in this was not patriotism but widespread unemployment in the Northeast due to cotton shortage. The Russian ambassador comments:

"Mr. Lincoln told me himself one day that in case of necessity he could count upon two or three million men. Experience has demonstrated that such estimates



THE POLITICAL "SIAMESE" TWINS
 THE OFFSPRING OF CHICAGO MISCEGENATION.

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are inaccurate. At the outset the armed services absorbed the adventurous types, the poor, the unemployed laborers, and the foreigners who filled the large cities. Not many of these classes remain. The new recruits must come from the farmers, businessmen and, in general, the prosperous classes who are opposed to the war ... Those who volunteered at the outset never dreamed of the privations and dangers that awaited them. It was generally believed that the mere presence of the Northern army would coerce the South into rejoining the Union. The ever-increasing number of mangled, sick, crippled or maimed soldiers who have returned to their homes has opened the eyes of Northerners to the horrors of war. Men no longer volunteer for military service. Bonuses of \$250 to \$300 are being offered to volunteers without stirring enlistments."

In early August 1864, the chief of staff General Halleck wrote to Grant: "Pretty strong evidence is accumulat-

ing ... to make forcible resistance to the draft in New York, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Kentucky, and perhaps some of the other States. The draft must be enforced for otherwise the army cannot be kept up. But to enforce it, it may require the withdrawal of a considerable number of troops from the field."

A few days later, Grant replied: "If there is any danger of an uprising in the North to resist the draft ... our loyal governors ought to organize the militia at once to resist it. If we are to draw troops from the field to keep the loyal States in harness, it will prove difficult to suppress the rebellion in the disloyal States. My withdrawal from the James River would mean the defeat of Sherman."

It was at this time President Davis remarked that even with Grant at Petersburg, Washington seemed to be more in danger than Richmond. There is a real sense in which Lincoln had to

make war on the North as well as the South to achieve his agenda.

The plain fact is that no affluent Northerner ever served in the war unless he wanted to. Three hundred dollars, a year's wages for a working man, bought complete exemption. Then too, it was possible to discover a burning need to study in Europe or pressing business affairs in Canada. Or one could buy "draft insurance," guaranteeing the purchase of a substitute if one's number came up. Some "gentlemen" did serve, like Joshua Chamberlain and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. Their service was motivated by a sense of duty and by the desire not to miss out on the most important happening of their lifetime, not by allegiance to Lincoln's agenda. Holmes was wounded several times but then resigned, expressing disgust for the war and admiration for his brave and honorable enemies. Chamberlain saluted surrendering Confederate sol-

diers at Appomattox while Republican politicians and preachers were calling for their extermination. It was good Northern men like these who made a degree of reconciliation possible after Reconstruction.

Ambrose Bierce, said to be the second man to enlist after Sumter and a hard-fighting Union soldier for the whole war, was once captured. He liked his gentlemanly Confederate captors and was repulsed by the foreigners who were his fellow prisoners. After the war he went to Alabama to help the people hide cotton from the federal agents who were stealing it. When an unburied Confederate soldier was found in the vicinity, Bierce wrote that he went over and apologized.

It was not a Confederate general who was called "Butcher" by his own men like Grant. And it was not a Confederate general whose name made famous a term for the world's oldest profession.

Many of the Northerners who did serve had only six-months or one-year enlistments, usually safe in occupation posts. There are cases of regiments with expiring enlistments marching away from battle. And, of course, every impoverished free black man recruited for the famed 54th Massachusetts meant one less Boston abolitionist who had to endure the discomfort of service. Every Northern state had agents swarming over "liberated" areas of the South trying to enroll black men against the quota of their state. There were always plenty of poor Irishmen to be met at the boat and offered citizenship for enlistment and plenty of non-English-speaking Germans with a European peasant mentality who believed it when they were told that Southerners intended to enslave them like the blacks.

Lincoln ordered drafts four times during the war. Professor Ludwell H. Johnson in his *North Against South*, a book which should be on the shelf of every compatriot, presents statistics for the "enrollment" of 1863. Men called up numbered 776,829. Of these 21 percent failed to show; 11 percent were dismissed for unstated reasons (a little cash under the table?); and 41

percent were exempted. Only 27 percent were declared liable for service. Of these, 42 percent paid the \$300 commutation and 35 percent bought substitutes. Only six percent of those originally called were enlisted. During the war 200,000 men who were drafted disappeared before being sworn in; 250,000 deserted; 86,724 paid the \$300, including Lincoln's son at Harvard; and 117,986 bought substitutes. Some 655,000 Northern men eligible for the draft never served although an estimated 300,000 foreigners did. Johnson observes:

"The history and statistics of Union recruiting show that approximately one-third of the men in blue joined up without compulsion or extraordinary inducements. ... it is easy to understand why the North, with four times the South's military manpower, was scarcely able to achieve a two to one battlefield superiority."

Note these remarks by the abolitionist Samuel Gridley Howe, husband of Julia of *The Battle Hymn*, who, of course, did not himself serve:

"Our men in the field do not lack food, or clothing, or money, but they do lack noble watchwords and inspiring ideas. The Southern soldier has what at least serves him as such; for he believes that he fights in defense of country, home, and rights; and he strikes vehemently and with a will. Our men, alas! Have no such ideas. The Union is to most of them an abstraction, and not an inspiring watchword. The sad truth should be known — that our army has no conscious, noble purpose; and our soldiers generally have not much stomach for fight.... the Northern army is better equipped, better clad, fed and lodged; and is in a far more comfortable condition, not only than the Southern army, but any other in the world; and yet, if the pay were stopped in both, the Northern army would probably mutiny at once, or crumble rapidly; while the Southern army would probably hold together for a long time, in some shape, if their cause seemed to demand it. The animating spirit of the Southern soldier is rather moral than pecuniary; of the Northern soldier it is rather pecuniary than moral."

More often than not, when Confederate soldiers attacked, they drove the enemy away. This was true even during the Appomattox campaign and at Bentonville. It was this experience which caused General Lee to miscalculate on the third day at Gettysburg.

The lack of support for Lincoln's agenda in the Border States, which are generally cited as Unionist, was many times greater than in the North. Remember, they were occupied by military force throughout the war. It is possible that more Union soldiers confronted and dominated women and other civilians on occupation duty than ever faced armed Confederates. In fact the Union forces used for occupation were usually larger than those in the field. Concentration camps for women and ethnic cleansing were resorted to in Missouri. Union officers in Kentucky complained constantly they were surrounded by rebel sympathizers. The army controlled elections in Maryland and Delaware and elsewhere. All Confederate soldiers from the Border States were volunteers who risked much. Many, if not all, of the Union soldiers were reluctant draftees. In Kentucky, fathers stayed home to protect the property while sons joined the Confederate army — an old Irish custom. Voting statistics and other evidence indicate that even in East Tennessee, where there were more Unionists than elsewhere in the South, much of the population was pro-Confederate.

Moreover, Border State support for the Union war declined as the war went on and as it was realized the Republicans were after things other than "preserving the Union." Most tellingly, after the war the Border areas, even West Virginia, elected former Confederates to their highest offices. At one point in the 1880s former Confederate generals were serving as governors of both Kentucky and Missouri. Maryland adopted the flag and song of its Confederates as the state's emblems. The Missouri monument at Vicksburg does not take sides but it is placed where the state's Confederates were during the siege.

There were several solutions resorted to for Union recruitment in

view of the lack of enthusiasm for the war. The most important was the bounty system. Bonus payments, which rose steadily, were offered by the government as an inducement for enlistment. States and localities added additional cash, and sometimes rich men added on yet more for their workers. The total bounty could sometimes add up to \$1,000 in an economy in which laborers made a dollar a day. Expenditures for recruitment bounties by the federal government were a staggering 25 per cent of the total war expenditure. Many localities and states were left with debts in the millions of dollars, acquired buying substitutes or paying bounties to meet their quotas. Quite obviously, the Lincolnites of the North sought to man their armies in the same way they manned their factories — with the poor and immigrants.

"A rich man's war and a poor man's fight," has often been charged against the Confederacy. Here is Sherman complaining to his Senator brother about the Confederate troops opposing him: "Their devotion is wonderful. Men of immense estates have given up all and now serve as common soldiers in the ranks. Why cannot we inspire our people with the same ardor?"

The 1860 census showed in New York City there were 60,000 unemployed, 40,000 homeless, hundreds of grog shops where the poor could drown their sorrows and brothels where girls as young as 13 could try to survive. These figures tell us some-

thing about the source of Lincoln's soldiers. Child mortality in the city was 50 percent, much higher than for either black or white in the South. The vital statistics of health and longevity for the slave population in the South were only fractionally inferior to the white population, the difference being the same as that today.

Many Southerners had been to New York. Some had seen the horrific slums of London. They felt no need for shame or guilt about their home country.

Derision of Confederate soldiers is pervasive in the new "Myth of the Lost Cause" historical school, sometimes in subtle ways. The supposed *definitive* work on Petersburg, when it discusses Confederate soldiers, tells us that they are "vicious," that they "rampage," and that they have a false "idealized self-image." The book does not bother to mention the Confederate prisoners who were marched away after the Battle of the Crater and never seen again. Another war historian tells us Confederate soldiers were entirely "deluded" about themselves while entertaining a falsely negative image of Union soldiers. Golly.

This kind of language permeates even supposedly impartial narrative military history these days. It is so constant that even readers who know better hardly notice. Those who write this stuff do so without even thinking about it. It merely expresses their automatic attitude toward Confederates.

Also, they are aware that to tell lies about Confederates is rewarded while saying anything positive can lead to a blighted career. Try arguing with one of these about the evidence for the Fort Pillow "massacre." Facts are useless. "Massacre" fits their pre-existing mental picture of General Forrest and of Confederate soldiers so it must be true — whether it is true or not.

One of the bad historians I have been describing whines that somehow, even though he and other brilliant experts have declared the truth over and over again, yet people still continue to admire the Confederacy. Why they still write novels and songs about Lee, and even about his horse! Why doesn't anybody write about Grant and his men like that? Why do so many of us poor deluded fools disobey our betters and still believe in that Lost Cause? One must, I suppose, sympathize with the spiritual impoverishment of a person who cannot understand why someone might prefer Lee to Grant.

SOURCES: Ambrose Bierce, *Shadows of Blue and Gray: The Civil War Writings of Ambrose Bierce* (2003); Orestes Brownson, *Selected Political Essays* (1989); George M. Frederickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union* (1965); Ludwell H. Johnson, *North Against South* (1993); William Marvel, *Mr. Lincoln Goes to War* (2006) and *Lincoln's Darkest Year* (2008); Albert A. Woldman, *Lincoln and the Russians* (1952); www.newbts150.

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com. The website of the Abbeville Institute (www.abbevilleinstitute.com) contains lectures from its Scholar Conference of 2012 by 11 scholars on various aspects of Northern opposition to the Union war. These and other contributions will become a book, *The Fire in the Rear: Lincoln's Other North*.

Part Three: The Confederacy: Unsurpassed Valor and Devotion

"So that the Confederate States, while, in truth, fighting the cause of the world, have the whole world to fight against."

— Rev. Robert Lewis Dabney, theologian and aide to Stonewall Jackson

The well-known British journalist Frank Vitezelly visited America during the War for Southern Independence, first the North and then the South. He reported:

"I never saw anything of the Southern people until I landed at Memphis.... I believed from all I heard that the Secession movement was only skin deep.... I have been surprised by the unity displayed by all on the one subject of separation.... The more I see of the Southern Army the more I am lost in admiration of its splendid patriotism, its wonderful endurance, and its utter disregard of hardships which, probably, no modern army has been called on to bear up against."

The British officer Arthur J.L. Fremantle and British journalist William Howard Russell in their first-hand observations generally agreed with Vitezelly about Southern solidarity and determination.

A major part of the Northern myth is that the Union won because it had the superior generalship of Grant and Sherman and because the people of the South did not really support the Confederacy. Both of these beliefs are spectacularly false. Traditionally, a great general is one who with economy of resources skillfully outmaneuvers and defeats an equal or superior enemy. This describes Lee, Jackson, Forrest, and other Confederate commanders. Grant's great military genius consist-

ed primarily in the bloody expenditure of his own men to wear down an enemy much inferior in numbers and resources. Because that enemy had repeatedly outmaneuvered and defeated the greater force.

We quite often see Sherman's March touted as a great feat of arms. In fact, the March was opposed only by scratch forces of cavalry and home guards (who several times checked the advance). It was primarily a looting and terrorism campaign carried out against civilians. And when Sherman's mighty force reached Bentonville, it was stopped by the remnants of a Confederate army. As the Southern editor Edward A. Pollard wrote: "Where there is nothing to oppose an army, the mere accomplishment of distance is no great wonder or glory."

How pathetic that this even now should be celebrated as a great American military achievement! War against American women and children! The truthful judgment of Sherman's great feat was given by a civilian, a Georgia lady: "We know what terrible means." Another Georgia lady remembered Yankee officers' wives swishing through her home and picking out what of her furniture they wanted.

It will be well to refresh our memories about the odds with which the battles were fought. The Confederates repeatedly won battles in which they were badly outnumbered; the Union almost never. Even Northern victories like Sharpsburg and Gettysburg were not victories but stalemates. In the Gettysburg campaign General Lee's force maneuvered freely in the enemy's territory; attacked and narrowly failed to defeat a superior force on its own ground; and returned home virtually unmolested with a fifty-mile-long wagon train and enough supplies to last a year.

The Civil War Battlefield Guide, edited by Frances H. Kennedy, gives as accurate account as we are likely to get of the numbers confronting each other in the major battles and it bears out completely what I have said. But this does not tell the whole story. When the Union army came to battle, many of its troops were fresh; there was usually another large Northern army within

a day or two's marching distance; and the Northern forces on the coast and rivers were supported by a naval fleet with heavy guns with a range greater than anything the Confederacy had.

After the war, General Don Carlos Buell, one of the more honest of the Northern commanders, warned his fellow countrymen not to be too puffed up about their victory:

"It required a naval fleet and 15,000 troops to advance against a weak fort, manned by less than 100 men, at Fort Henry; 35,000 with naval cooperation, to overcome 12,000 at Fort Donelson; 60,000 to secure victory over 40,000 at Shiloh; 120,000 to enforce the retreat of 65,000 after a month's fighting and maneuvering at Corinth; 100,000 were repelled by 60,000 in the first campaign against Richmond; [it took] 70,000 with a powerful naval force, to inspire the campaign which lasted nine months against 40,000 at Vicksburg; 90,000 to barely withstand the assault of 60,000 at Gettysburg; 115,000 sustaining a frightful repulse from 60,000 at Fredericksburg; 100,000 attacked and defeated by 50,000 at Chancellorsville; 85,000 held in check for two days by 40,000 at Antietam; 70,000 defeated at Chattanooga, and beleaguered by 40,000 from Chattanooga to Atlanta; and finally 120,000 to overcome 60,000 with exhaustion after a struggle of a year in Virginia."

And as for commanders: Viscount Garnet Wolseley, military historian, on Lee: "He is stamped upon my memory as being apart and superior to all others in every way." General John Sedgwick of the Union Army: "Jeb Stuart was the greatest cavalry officer ever foaled in America." General Sherman: "After all, I think Forrest was the most remarkable man our Civil War produced on either side."

Continual frustration in defeat made a good many Yankee officers prone to childish fits of rage directed against defenseless people. Brigadier General Thomas B. Smith, CSA, was an unarmed prisoner after the Battle of Nashville. A federal officer attacked him with a sword, leaving him brain-damaged for life. The Louisiana diarist Sarah Morgan reports that a woman friend tried to return to her home af-

ter the Battle of Baton Rouge. She was met on her own doorstep by a Yankee colonel who "put a pistol to her head, called her an old she devil, and told her he would blow her brains out if she moved a step." The colonel ranted that Southern women "had put the men up to fighting" and were to blame for the war. Such incidents are recorded quite often. You would be hard put to find any evidence of similar behavior by Confederates.

One of the popular themes among the South-hating "Myth of the Lost Cause" historians that I have been discussing in this series is to dwell on disaffection in the Confederacy. Of course, as in all human groups subjected to tremendous pressure, there were some slackers. But the real story of the Confederacy is how little disaffection there was among a people subjected to such great sacrifices.

A Union officer who had been a prisoner writes in late 1864:

"The end of the war is some time sense [sic], as the idea of the Rebs giving up until they are completely subdued is all moonshine. They submit to privations that would not be believed unless seen."

Sherman and many other officers made the same observation. Very late in the war, when defeat seemed inevitable, Northern generals were complaining the Confederate soldier refused to give in and admit defeat, that Southern women remained indomitable in spirit, and that Southerners from the richest to the poorest were determined to keep on.

What would have been the morale of the North if it had suffered a comparable extent of occupation, devastation, and death as the South had by 1863, instead of a quiet and prosperous homefront? Imagine New York (instead of New Orleans) and Chicago (instead of Memphis and Nashville) occupied. Imagine Cleveland and Buffalo (instead of Charleston and Mobile) blockaded and under siege. Imagine Pennsylvania and Ohio (instead of Virginia and Tennessee) overrun and ravaged. Imagine Washington (rather than Richmond) under constant attack. Imagine privation and sacrifice

instead of profits the order of the day everywhere, thousands of homeless civilians, and nearly the whole male population from 15 to 60 under arms. What would the Northern morale have been in 1863? Under such conditions the Southern people remained overwhelmingly game.

The Scots' traveler and missionary David MacRae traveled through the South not long after the war, meeting many Southerners, both prominent and average. He reports:

"Evidence was everywhere that the South had maintained the desperate conflict until she was utterly exhausted.... Almost every man I met at the South, and especially in North Carolina, Georgia and Virginia, seemed to have been in the army; and it was painful to find how many even of those who had returned were mutilated, maimed or broken in health by exposure. When I remarked this to a young Confederate officer in North Carolina, and said that I was glad to see that he had escaped unhurt, he said, "Wait 'til we get to the office, sir, and I will tell you more about that." When we got there, he pulled up one leg of his trousers, and showed me that he had an iron rod there to strengthen his limb, and enable him to walk without limping, half of his foot being off. He showed me on the other leg a deep scar made by the fragment of a shell; and these were two of seven wounds which had left their marks upon his body ... he said, "Try to find a North Carolina gentleman without a Yankee mark on him."

MacRae went on to describe the extreme sacrifices made willingly by the civilian population. "When there was a danger of any place falling into the hands of the enemy, the people with unflinching hand, dragged out their last stores of cotton, tobacco and turpentine, and consigned them to the flames."

Back during the War Between the States Centennial I remember a local newspaper running up some statistics about Confederate casualties. It went something like this: 12,000 North Carolinians were killed in World War II. To have the same impact on the state's male population as did the War Between the States would have required

300,000 casualties.

Our War is not just an interesting field for the study of battles and campaigns. It was the desperate struggle of a people against a ruthless invader. The Confederate soldier was not a pawn on a game board. The soldiers of the two sides cannot be compared, only contrasted. It is clear that most Union soldiers had only a vague idea of why they were fighting. This was never a problem for Confederates. The Southern author Thomas Nelson Page explained the extraordinary performance of the Confederate soldier thus:

"It was not discipline, it was not esprit de corps, it was not traditional renown, it was not mere generalship which carried the army through. It was personal, individual courage and devotion to principle which welded it together and made it invincible, until it was almost extirpated."

The Reverend Robert Lewis Dabney had a similar thought in mind when he remarked in his biography of his friend Stonewall Jackson that Jackson cannot be understood simply as a military genius. "His character cannot be appreciated, nor his fame receive its just estimate from history, without a full understanding of the merits of the [South's] case."

The late Southern philosopher M.E. Bradford expressed a similar idea:

"It is well that we should remember, when asked about the South, that even in war, during its brief experience of political independence, the Southern Confederacy behaved more like a society than like a state. In the field the Confederate Army was an extension of the region's social character, not the embodiment of a separate and anti-septic military "profession" or martial juggernaut. Under generals who were more patriarchs than imitations of Napoleon or Frederick the Great, it resembled in spirit a collection of Scottish Highland clans."

Many Southerners made significant sacrifices to come home and defend their people. General Simon B. Buckner gave up very valuable real estate holdings in Chicago. Colonel George W. Rains, the talented scientist who headed the Confederate powder

and arms installation in Augusta, left behind a large iron works which he owned in Newburgh, New York. Many men living safely in Europe risked the blockade to come home and join the Confederate army. (The movement of affluent Northerners was in the reverse direction.)

According to the historians of the "Lost Cause Myth," the story of Confederate heroism and sacrifice is all hogwash. All the foreign writers who have considered the Army of Northern Virginia one of the finest military forces in history are just another bunch of dupes of Southern wishful thinking. But consider, Northern armies were usually well-supplied (except for massive corruption among Lincoln's appointees and contractors), and got thousands of recruits from abroad. Man for man, the average Confederate soldier made more hard marches, suffered more privations, risked his life more frequently, was wounded more times, and died more often than the

average Union soldier. Outnumbered and out-supplied, Confederate generals had to show more skill and audacity and take more risks and in a number of cases developed rare genius which was unknown on the Northern side.

One could easily make up a whole book of tributes to Confederate heroism made by combat-veteran Union soldiers during and after the war. And unwilling compliments of frustrated Northern commanders to Confederate achievements. Roughly speaking, Confederate manpower losses, from privates to generals, were close to 25 percent, and the long-term effects of wounds are incalculable. Northern losses, higher than the American count in any other war, were 10 percent by comparison — less for generals. The Northern civilian population was scarcely touched. In the South the loss of civilian life was great and the suffering beyond measure.

The effort and sacrifice made by

the Southern people in their war for independence has never, ever been remotely approached by any other large group of Americans at any time. That is the true "Lost Cause" and it is no myth. Although the cause was lost, it was a good cause and still has a lot to teach the world

SOURCES: Douglas W. Bostick, *The Confederacy's Secret Weapon: The Civil War Illustrations of Frank Vizetelly* (2009); *Fifteen Southerners, Why the South Will Survive* (1981); *The Fremantle Diary* (1954); Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (1997); Ludwell H. Johnson, *North Against South* (1993); Frances H. Kennedy, *The Civil War Battlefield Guide* (1990); Sarah Morgan, *The Civil War Diary of a Southern Lady* (1992); Allen Nevins, ed., *America Through British Eyes* (1948); William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South* (2001); Clyde N. Wilson, *Defending Dixie* (2006); www.ncwbts150.com



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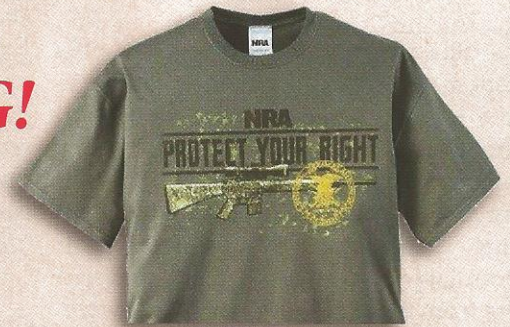
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