LINCOLN ATTACKED AND DEFENDED IN THE SOUTH

THAT LINCOLN "deliberately and personally conceived" what in the South is sometimes called "the Confederate War," and that "he was personally responsible for forcing the war on the South" is a charge made in Richmond, Va., that arouses anew the sectional discussion regarding the causes of the war between the North and South. If the question is to be examined anew there need be, says the New York *World* "no more danger of reviving personal or sectional animosities than in discussing the merits of other famous historic causes gallantly lost." A news dispatch from Richmond, however, states that the United Confederate Veterans in convention there adopted unanimously a report declaring the war to have been initiated in the manner exprest above, and recommending that school children of the South be taught the truth of the matter. The dispatch contains this statement:

"The report, which was submitted by C. M. Walker, Chairman, concluded by saying that 'the young children of the South will now be taught that the South was right, eternally and everlastingly right, in fighting for principles upon which our glorious country was founded.'

"The text of the committee's report referring to Lincoln reads as follows: 'Your committee would especially commend for use in the schools of the South a pamphlet by Colonel Huger W. Jackson of Curryville, Ga., the "Truth of the War Conspiracy of 1861," and published by the great-hearted Southern historian, Miss Mildred Rutherford. This presents the official evidence gathered principally from the United States Government archives, which proves the Confederate War was deliberately and personally conceived and its inauguration made by Abraham Lincoln, and that he was personally responsible for forcing the war upon the South.'"

As we have not space to give both the Northern and Southern comment, it might be said that the Northern press condemn this proposal, often in violent and indignant terms. Then we pass to the Southern comment, because it shows the public opinion of the region concerned. So far as we have seen the printed comment of the South on this happening it seems to agree with the Norfolk *Ledger-Dispatch* in holding that the Confederate Veterans "went a little farther than the sober and generous judgment of Southern people will follow in recommending . . . the teaching that Lincoln deliberately and personally conceived the war between the States and forced it on the South." It adds:

"Reverence for the honorable and heroic traditions of the Confederacy does not require acceptance of such a teaching. With the desire to perpetuate a fair and just understanding of the deeds and ideals of the Southern States in the war, every son and daughter of the South sympathizes. The valor of the men in gray, the courageous endurance of Confederate women have brought to Southerners a heritage of honor such as few peoples have had, and it would be an unworthy son of the South who would wish to forget that heritage or who could see the record dimmed without an effort to restore its luster.

"But the true and final glory of the South is not based on a denial of the equal glory that enshrouds the name of Lincoln. His name is as high in the Southern States to-day as anywhere in the nation. There has been little thought of sectionalism in the thought or speech where Lincoln was concerned. Few persons there are who do not hold the memory of the tall, gaunt, human man from Illinois in highest reverence and respect. There are few in the South who do not regard him as the one man from whom this distracted section might have obtained justice after the surrender of the Southern armies. Many Southerners rank Lincoln and Lee as incomparably the greatest men who came through the trying days of internal conflict."

It is most unfortunate, says the Birmingham *Age-Herald*, that the veterans show a disposition to fight the Civil War over again, asking:

"What has come over the old soldiers at this late day, that they should be guilty of such a foolish and uncalled-for attack on Lincoln, at a time when all Civil War animosities should be dead beyond resurrection?

"It has been 57 years since Lee surrendered. Surely the handful of veterans who survive have lived long enough to have cultivated a spirit of charity and fairness? It is said that the historical committee which reported the resolution gathered facts to support the charge against Lincoln, but if that is true, these facts are something new in history.

"Lincoln was determined at any cost to preserve the Union, and in that he was wise, as subsequent events have shown beyond question. That he was a bitter and designing foe of the South is so contrary to all we know of his life and character that it will not be credited, except by a few Confederate veterans and others misled by sectional prejudice, which should no longer exist in this country.

"Even if Lincoln were guilty of the accusations made against him, it would be both untimely and unwise to revive ill feeling engendered by a conflict that ended nearly sixty years ago. It is better to forgive and forget than to fight on forever."

Should the school histories contain "false interpretations" of the facts of history, the Asheville *Times* thinks it "extremely doubtful" if the Confederate Veterans "are correcting these inaccurate versions" by their resolution. Lincoln is again defended:

"President Lincoln did not want war. There were many firebrands in the North who wished to discipline the South with fire and sword. Lincoln was not of this number. He held out against them as long as he could. He was willing to go to war to preserve the Union and to prevent the Southern States from exercising the reserved right of secession.

"Events got out of hand and Lincoln soon found himself in a position where he was faced with the alternative of either recalling his ultimatum or of declaring war. He did not 'deliberately and personally' conceive the war and he was thrown into the depths of misery when his own policies bore fruit in violence. He would have undoubtedly submitted to any personal sacrifices that might have averted the conflict.

"The Confederate veterans wish to keep the records straight. They do not wish to be cast by the historians in the rôle of the instigators of the war. This is a commendable desire and is in happy accord with the facts. But in their resentment of historical inaccuracies, they should not allow themselves to be carried to the other extreme and should not take the position that Lincoln 'deliberately and personally' conceived the war."

Many of those who still believe that the South was right in the conflict, says the Baltimore *Sun*, will regret the attack on Lincoln—

"partly because of its tendency to revive sectional animosity, partly because it is so plainly foolish. To say that the Civil War 'was deliberately and personally conceived by Abraham Lincoln' is to fly in the face of facts within the memories of many persons still living. The war had been in the making for years before Lincoln came to the Presidency. Even if the preservation of the Union had not seemed to him the supreme question of his generation, neither he nor any other man in his situation could have resisted the public pressure upon him from the North and West. Had he dared to do anything but what he did, he might have fallen at the beginning of his Administration by the bullet of an abolition fanatic instead of by that of a Southern sympathizer. He was essentially a man of peace and kindly impulses, and if he could have found any other way than war he would have gladly chosen it.

"The Civil War was an 'irrepressible conflict,' as Seward truly phrased it. It was brewing for many years. It was not a one-man war on either side. Lincoln was not more responsible for it than Jefferson Davis, nor Jefferson Davis than thousands of other men in his section. It was a battle of conflicting principles, convictions and interests, and the responsibility for it cannot be placed on the shoulders of any one or half dozen individuals. Lincoln merely voiced the thoughts and feelings of his section as Davis did of his."

From Richmond later comes a dispatch to the New York *Herald* containing a statement signed by Gen. Julian S. Carr of Durham, N. C., Commander-in-Chief of the United ConfederateVeterans, and Gen. C. B. Howry, Commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, and explaining that "neither voted for certain resolutions passed in some confusion just before the adjournment of the veterans." Their statement adds:

"Abraham Lincoln had no more responsibility in bringing on the war than Jefferson Davis had for the sentiment of the Southern people in resisting coercion. The Southern people very generally, from the very day they learned that Lincoln had been stricken by the hand of an assassin, deplored the tragedy, and, in common with almost every Confederate soldier and every one in the South, we exprest the opinion and have ever since inclined to the belief that the death of Lincoln was the greatest misfortune that could have been put on a stricken people, because it was the generally accepted idea that Lincoln was as magnanimous as Grant, and was as kindly disposed to extend a helping hand as any man in the Northern States.

"These sentiments have pervaded the Southern people ever since, and the representatives of the South in Congress have participated in making appropriations for the memorial erected to the memory of Abraham Lincoln as a good and great man with our hearty approval."

In fact, the South is forever enshrined in Washington, for the new Lincoln monument is cut from Georgia marble. Those intending to make light of the matter refer to the veterans as "following a fashion of the times—one much in vogue in our best circles," who insist on having history rewritten to "suit group prejudices." The Milwaukee *Sentinel*, giving heed perhaps to the Stracheian school of history, thinks that "history is distinctly a gainer by the whole controversy," saying:

"A great English writer avowed a preference for 'biased history' as against dry and colorless impartiality. To make history a party pamphlet may not be the best way to write it, but it keeps history alive and saves it from the tomb of the dry-as-dust shelves. Besides, the antidote is always at hand, inasmuch as most great issues have been commented on by historians of opposite persuasions. We expect a lively delving into Lincoln's writings as a result of the Confederate criticism. If people have an argument on hand, they will read books they might never read otherwise except by compulsion."