



WOODS: Was it 2002 that you released *The Real Lincoln*?

DILORENZO: Yeah, the hardback came out in 2002 at sort of the end of the year, and then it sold out very quickly, and then paperback came out in March of 2003.

WOODS: Okay, so naturally the question that will arise from some of your faithful readers is why, in 2020, another book on Lincoln. Let's just get that out of the way.

DILORENZO: Well, if they are a faithful reader, they'll know that for the past 18 years, I spent a good bit of time researching, writing, speaking, debating, and also reading research by other people, including a lot of very good books that take a critical look at Lincoln, like I did. And so I've incorporated what I've learned over the past 18 years into writing up this book, which originally publishing, by the way, approached me about it. I didn't make a proposal to them; they contacted me and asked me if I thought it was time for another book on Lincoln. And so the rest of it is history.

WOODS: Well, indeed. All right, I want to try to this time maybe cover some things we haven't done in the past, even though I think the last time we talked about Lincoln was many, many hundreds of episodes ago. So if there is some overlap, I don't think anybody's going to hold that against us, because I definitely will want to spend some time on the chapter-nine Saint Lincoln material, some of that, just the way the Lincoln legacy has been used by some people is very important, I think, for some people to see clearly what's going on.

Well, how about we just start with this? The standard view that people have — now, I understand that professional historians know things about Lincoln that the average person does not, so a professional historian, you have to have a different tack, because, they'll say, *We're not idiots. Of course we know that the Civil War was not launched to free the slaves. We all know that.* But the average American obviously does not know that. Or if you say Lincoln held the following views about black Americans, yeah, again, historians will say, *Yeah, we can read. We see the Lincoln-Douglas debates. We know what Lincoln said about these things.* Now some of them may say he had to say that in order to get people on his side or whatever, but at least they acknowledge that he said it. But again, the average person doesn't know any of that.

So why don't we just get out of the way for anybody listening who may still have some lingering attachment to the Schoolhouse Rock view of Lincoln, if there is one, what's the standard view of Lincoln that the average person, not the historian, but that the average person holds, and what's wrong with it? I know we could do a whole episode on that, but give me your elevator pitch.

DILORENZO: Well, the average person has been taught since elementary school that he saved the Union and freed the slaves. And of course, the Union was a voluntary union, the Union of the founding fathers. Article 7 of the Constitution says that the Union shall be constitutionally ratified by the citizens of the states, which it was. They were the sovereigns, but they delegate certain powers to the federal government for their benefit. And Lincoln's war destroyed that. The Union became a coerced union, held together by violence, much more similar to the old Soviet Union than to the original American union.

And then he freed the slaves. Well, I include an appendix that has the complete Emancipation Proclamation in my new book, *The Problem with Lincoln*. And as the historians know, it specifically exempted all the areas of the country where the Union Army was in control at the time, including the entire state of West Virginia, the last slave state in the Union, which means it was unable to free anybody. And the older generations of historians said this in their writings, but it's been sort of covered up and we were all just taught this mantra: free the slaves and save the Union.

But no, and I even got a [inaudible] by David Donald who's the big preeminent Lincoln scholar in the last generation, who writes in his biography of Lincoln that Lincoln's role in getting the Thirteenth Amendment passed was greatly exaggerated by most historians. He actually did very little, according to David Donald, to do that, even though Steven Spielberg made a whole movie based on supposedly his genius in getting the Thirteenth Amendment passed after his death.

WOODS: All right, so I wanted to get that out of the way. Again, there's so much material here, and I'm trying to figure out the best way to do all of it, because you could talk about the way the war was conducted, you could talk about Lincoln's racial views, you could talk about peaceful emancipation, why that wasn't tried, you could talk about Lincoln and the Constitution, you could talk about the Hamiltonianism at the heart of it. I don't even know what to — you know what? You tell me what we should do next, because I'm at a loss.

DILORENZO: Yeah, well, I do cover a lot of ground in a relatively short book. But one thing that I think readers will find interesting is I've provided in appendices the first inaugural address of Jefferson Davis and then the first inaugural address of Abraham Lincoln. And if you want to know why there was a war, first of all, you have to understand that secession, per se, does not necessitate war. When the Russian satellites seceded peacefully, there was no war. With the breakup of the Soviet Union, Norway and Sweden, Maine and Massachusetts, there were no wars over secession. So secession itself does not necessarily lead to war.

But if you just read these first inaugural addresses of the two presidents, Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln, what they both say, especially Lincoln, Lincoln bent over backwards to say: I have no intention of disturbing Southern slavery. He supported in that same speech the Corwin Amendment, which would have prohibited the federal government from ever interfering with slavery. But when it came to tariff collection, he threatened the war. He used the words "invasion" and "bloodshed" to describe what would happen to the people of any state that refused to collect the tariff on imports, which had just been more than doubled two days earlier. And that was the primary source of federal income at the time and accounted for more than 90% of all federal revenues.

And then you read alongside that Jefferson Davis' first inaugural address, and he says basically the same thing from the opposite perspective. He says we are a trading society, we engage in commerce throughout the world, and we're willing to defend ourselves against an invasion of any country, any government that wants to interfere with that. And so there's actually no mention of slavery in Jefferson Davis' first inaugural address, because both men understood that what was threatening war at the time — and the war, of course, was imminent within weeks — was the dispute over tariffs. And so that's one thing that I do in much more detail in this book than the original.

WOODS: Let's say something, because since your book came out, Jim Powell's book, *Greatest Emancipations*, came out in 2008, and I've had him on to talk about how slavery ended in most of the world. It's an interesting story, of course, and related to this story. So you in chapter five talk about what you call Lincoln's greatest failure. So let's talk about that, particularly in light of the kinds of examples that Jim gives in his book.

DILORENZO: Yeah, in a recent article of mine on LewRockwell.com, I cited Thomas Fleming, the historian Thomas Fleming. He wrote a book called *A Disease in the Public Mind*. And he's a famous historian. He wrote histories of both World Wars, a biography of George Washington,

and he's very prominent man. And he was perplexed by the fact that the United States was the only country in the world in the 19th century that ended slavery in a way that involved in a war, especially a war that killed as many as almost 750,000 people, according to the latest research.

And so on the issue — and this is another thing that most Americans just simply don't know. In my experience, they just assume that when slavery ended in the British Empire, the Spanish Empire, the French, the Danes, the Dutch, there must have been some great war of emancipation in all these countries, because Americans are very bad at studying European history, let alone American history. And that's simply not true.

Again, Jim Powell's excellent book, *Greatest Emancipations*, is chapter and verse of all the countries of the world, including the northern states in the United States ending slavery peacefully. New Hampshire passed a law for gradual emancipation in 1857, four years before the Civil War started. And basically, that's what happened. They figured out some way of compensating slave owners as a way of avoiding conflict.

And in my book, I write, well, yes, there are a lot of libertarians who are deeply offended by the very idea of the use of tax dollars to be given to slave owners. But what I say about this is: can you think of a better use of tax dollars than purchasing the freedom of slaves, one, and two, a bad act, avoiding a war that kills hundreds of thousands of people? Because that was the alternative in our history. And so it's hard to think, in my view, of a better use of tax dollars than purchasing the freedom of slaves, and then ending it once and for all like the British did.

WOODS: Well, since you did mention the other option, which was a war that killed many people — and I think since your book, there's been a slight uptick among historians in the number of people they take to have died, because I think people used to say 620,000 and now it's gone up a bit.

DILORENZO: Yes.

WOODS: Can we say something about the way the war was conducted?

DILORENZO: Well, yeah, the original war plan was called the Anaconda Plan. And Lincoln's war plan, it was to starve out the South, civilians included, with blockades. And basically, total war was waged on the civilian population of the South for four years. I quote James McPherson, who's now retired from Princeton, but he was considered for many years to be the dean of civil war historians. And even in his book *Battle Cry of Freedom*, he estimates that some 50,000 Southern civilians died in the war.

And since the publication of *The Real Lincoln* 18 years ago, one book that I cite that came up after that was [*War Crimes Against Southern Civilians*] by Walter Brian Cisco. And he uses a lot of primary sources, including the official records of the war held by the US government, to talk about this, and I cite him very extensively in that one chapter. And some of the atrocities that occurred, such as Sherman standing outside of Atlanta after the Confederate Army had left and literally having his army lobby literally thousands of artillery shells on the civilians who were left in the city of Atlanta in November of 1864, and that sort of thing. And you read the reports of this and people being cut in half, the corpses of children in the streets, and Sherman more or less smiling at it and saying this will quicken the end of the war. And that's the kind of people who waged the war.

And I also make a point to cite that it took a particular type of soldier — quote, "soldier" — to wage this kind of war. And I cite some mainstream historians as noting that a lot of the European governments emptied out some of their prisons and sent these people to America and signed up in the Lincoln's army. And they're the ones who participated in the rape, pillaging, and plundering of Georgia and South Carolina to a large extent with Sherman's army and then with others at the same time. So I do devote a whole chapter to that as even more severe, I would say, than what I wrote about in *The Real Lincoln*.

WOODS: I've skipped ahead a bit because there's a quotation that I liked on page 132, and this is a quotation actually from a book written in 1943 by Ira Cardiff called *The Deification of Lincoln*. Now, that title must have jumped right out at you when you saw that.

DILORENZO: Right.

WOODS: Cardiff writes this, that "most Americans" — and this is a quotation — "are not at all interested in the truth about Lincoln. They desire a supernatural Lincoln, a Lincoln with none of the faults or frailties of the common man. A biography of Lincoln which told the truth about him would probably have great difficulty finding a publisher." Well, that's an interesting and revealing remark.

So, let's say something about it, because there's so many aspects of Lincoln as a saint. I mean, one of them that derives from it is there are all these fake Lincoln quotations, and of course, people are inclined to believe them all because they know Lincoln was a great man, so he must have said all these brilliant, insightful, and prescient things. And then we can just go on down the list. Or because Lincoln was so saintly, I can cite him on behalf of whatever it is, national service programs, whatever it is, because if I have Lincoln on my side, who can be against me? That kind of thing.

So let's start there. And by the way, the fake Lincoln quotes are just — my rule for fake Lincoln quotes or fake founding fathers quotes is that if a quotation sounds like it could have been uttered yesterday, it probably was.

DILORENZO: Very true, yeah. So you want to talk about the quotes?

WOODS: Well, I don't want that — because there are a lot of them. I want to talk about this process, first of all, by which Lincoln goes from being a politician like any other to being basically the great re-founder of the country. And then secondly, I'd like to talk about, once that's done, what use is this put to by some people?

DILORENZO: Well, since *The Real Lincoln* was published, there's a book that came out called *The Unpopular Mr. Lincoln* by Larry Tagg, and he makes the case based on primary sources that Abraham Lincoln was by far the most hated and reviled of all American presidents during his lifetime. And he's talking about the northern population. He's not talking about the South. Nobody would argue that he did not have that reputation in the South during his time.

And so the question is, well, how did this happen? How did he become the most saintly figure of all American presidents? And it began with the deification of Lincoln, and I write about how just about everybody who knew Lincoln knew that he was an atheist. He didn't believe in God, never belonged to a church, barely stepped into a church. His wife said that his law partners called him an infidel, and on and on, and even Doris Kearns Goodwin, who wrote a big, long, thousand-page biography of Lincoln, *Team of Rivals*, which was supposedly the basis of Steven Spielberg's movie, she says that: poor Lincoln, he didn't believe in an afterlife; therefore, he must have suffered more than most during the war, knowing that he would not be able to see his loved ones after he died.

And so historians know this. They know that he was an atheist. They still keep running books with titles like *Abraham Lincoln, Man of God* or *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President*. And this occurred almost immediately after his death with his funeral, which was conducted basically by William Seward, who ordered that the corpse should not be touched up, so that it would look as gruesome as possible. And they took it on a 1,600-mile train trip around the country. And then all of a sudden, Lincoln became a saint. There were images of him with angel's wings ascending to heaven and things like that. And he was literally deified. And I make the case in the book that led to a deification of the presidency and of the federal government in general.

And then I quote also literature on what's called the treasury of virtue, that the US government was said to have a treasury of virtue by virtue of the actions of Abraham Lincoln

and the Civil War. So the whole government became hyper virtuous in theory by this never-ending drumbeat of about Saint Abraham that we have. So the idea was that virtually anything the government did was virtuous by virtue of the fact that it was the US government doing it. And whether it's entering World War I, entering World War II, invading Afghanistan, and to this day, even foreign dictators invoke Abraham Lincoln when they want to do something tyrannical. I quote Musharraf, the former dictator of Pakistan, when he declared martial law in his country as saying: well, Abraham Lincoln did it. And so therefore, we're supposed to all say, well, it has to be not only a good idea, but a moral idea if Abraham Lincoln did it. And as I said, even foreign dictators have caught on to this.

WOODS: I think that, at least for my money, one of the most arresting aspects of all this a story you tell, I don't know how many years ago it was, but in one of your articles you talked about Eric Foner, who I managed to avoid studying with while I was at Columbia. But he is considered to be one of the more important American historians around, but he's also a Marxist, and not the kind of Marxist to say the Soviet Union isn't real communism, but instead no, his whole family had been apologists for the communist regimes for their entire lives. And well, you know what? Why don't you finish telling the story, what happens with the breakup of the Soviet Union and Eric Foner?

DILORENZO: Yeah, he published an article on *The Nation* magazine, February 11th, 1991, entitled "Lincoln's Lesson," in which he opposed the breakup of the Soviet Union. He called it a dismemberment, and he said Lincoln would never have allowed such a thing to happen like Gorbachev was doing. And he called Soviet communism a noble experiment. And like you said, his whole family, he comes from a family of communists. So this was 1991. It's sort of at the end of the dismemberment, not to use Foner's word, of the Soviet Union, and he was very depressed about the whole thing. And so like you said, Eric Foner is one of the giants in so-called Civil War history in America, and he taught at your alma mater Columbia for many years.

WOODS: Right, and that type of remark is so shockingly revealing. Now, at the same time, there will no doubt be — I mean, remember, we're dealing with a lot of people in the US who, when 9/11 occurred, thought that history began on September 11th, 2001. There was no context for this. They just thought, apparently, out of the blue, they'd been attacked for no particular reason. They couldn't even account for why it could have happened. Or when — was it Jimmy Carter? I'm trying to remember when — it might have been Jimmy Carter, when the Iran hostages were taken in 1979. Somebody said, well, remember, there's still some festering resentment over the coup in 1953 pushed along by the CIA. And I think it was Jimmy Carter, who said, "Well, that's ancient history." Ancient history, 26 years ago. So this is going to seem like ancient, ancient history. So why does it matter that we get this right today in 2020?

DILORENZO: Well, I was just thinking this morning in writing my next article for LewRockwell.com with the title of "Did the Civil War Guarantee That We'll Have Another One?" Because one of the effects of Lincoln's war was basically to destroy the system of federalism and decentralized government, the Jeffersonian system, and to put in its place highly centralized, monopolistic government. And so ever since then, politics has been all about this great competition to take total monopolistic control over this gigantic government. And of course, it wasn't gigantic in 1866 compared to today, but today, it certainly is.

So when we look at the impending presidential election in a few months, there are a lot of people all over the internet and elsewhere warning of another civil war. Well, why is that? Well, the people who have such a violent hatred of Donald Trump are not going to accept his reelection. And then the people who support Trump, which is about half of the voters, are certainly not going to support the party of Antifa and if he loses.

And so I'm not predicting a civil war, but a lot of other people are, and I think what happened at the end of the first Civil War cemented into place this inevitable, never-ending acrimony in politics because of the centralization of power. And I'm hoping it'll end more in a similar way

to the way the Soviet Union ended, in a devolution of power, maybe not putting power in the hands of the oligarchs like they did eventually in Russia, but a devolution of power in the direction of freedom rather than ruled by oligarchs, as opposed to another bloody civil war. I think Lincoln's war cemented that system into place of a monopolistic, highly centralized government and rendered federalism irrelevant basically, because the principles of secession and nullification were destroyed.

WOODS: Now, this is a tough one to end on, because maybe there's a lot of material to cover, but at least again in brief we could address, since you just mentioned secession, the claim that anybody seceding from the Union is a "traitor," which is such a fourth-grade kind of accusation. *You traitor. You're not following our ruling class.* Like, oh, wow, really? I'm not following the American ruling class. Well, that's the worst possible thing you could say about me? Really? Wow. Go tell the teacher I'm not following the ruling class. Just that a bizarre, emasculating thing to say: *you traitor*. But it's actually not treason. I mean, clearly, clearly and obviously, when you look at the actual history and not slogans, it clearly isn't. So how do you address the "Lincoln was fighting against treasonous people"?

DILORENZO: Well, I quote the Constitution. Article 3 Section 3 defines treason as — they use the word "only" — "only levying war upon the United States" or giving aid and comfort to their enemies. And the key word here is "there," because it means the words United States, as in the plural. And what that means is the individual states, the free and independent states as they're called in the Declaration of Independence. And so "levying war upon the free and independent states" is the only definition of treason in the Constitution, and that's exactly what Lincoln did. He levied war upon the Southern states in the United States. And so it was the Union Army and Lincoln and the Republican Party who are guilty of treason.

But during the war, Lincoln took it upon himself to redefine treason as meaning criticism of him and his administration. So when they mass arrested, when they suspended habeas corpus and mass arrested thousands of Northern states' citizens for speaking up against him and his administration and his war, that's the reason they used. They said this is treason, but they had a unilaterally and unconstitutionally and illegally redefined treason to mean *criticism of me*. And that's where this comes from: criticism of the government. But that's not the definition of treason that's in the Constitution.

WOODS: All right, well, actually, you handled that much faster than I thought, so in that case, I'm going to throw one more question at you, which is this: for some reason, with topics other than the war, any topic in American history, any topic in the news, right now — well, Trump throws this a little bit out of kilter, which is the idea that generally people can see nuance. Now, with Trump, they can't. So let's just say up till the year 2016, people could see nuance. So if you were to say this is a great struggle between good and evil, describing whatever, a lot of the sophisticated people would just mock you, because they know that there's — so if you were to say the Cold War was a struggle between good and evil, oh, all the sophisticated people would just roll their eyes at you. But for some reason, you get to the Civil War, and yeah, it's just angels and devils and so on.

So I think we've thrown a little cold water on that, but what I want to do is, as we close, just talk about some of the more mundane reasons that somebody might have supported Lincoln. I mean, we know that yeah, there's opposition to slavery in the North, but in terms of the intensity of it, the Liberty Party would get maybe at most 2% of the vote, so it wasn't like it was the uppermost thing on people's minds. If you asked them, if you pinned them down, they'd say, yeah, it's not that greatest system. We're not in favor of it. But that's certainly not what's driving an industrialist to support Lincoln, is he's just driven by — if he were that driven by an opposition to slavery, he wouldn't have been satisfied with the Republican platform at all. So what were some of the more mundane concerns that might have made somebody support a politician like Lincoln?

DILorenzo: Well, Lincoln got the nomination because of his record as a lifelong or career-long protection. And he raised tariffs ten times during his administration. The average tariff rate went from 15% to around 50% or more, and stayed there for 60 years. And that's one reason. So the Northern manufacturers are for him.

And also, he and the Republican Party opposed the extension of slavery into the territories, but they defended Southern slavery in their platform, and Lincoln did in his first inaugural. But the reason they gave was they wanted to keep the territories, Lincoln said, for free white labor. So he was arguing to protect the free white labor from competition from both free blacks and slaves. And so that was totally an economic thing.

And also, there was the three-fifths clause of the Constitution. If slaves did go into the territories, they were afraid that it might have increased the number of members of Congress in the Democratic Party, and they were very open about that. They said, well, that'll impede our ability to enact our economic agenda of protectionist tariffs on National Bank and corporate welfare for the railroad corporations. And so Lincoln was an old railroad corporation lawyer. He represented all the big railroad companies, including the Illinois Central in the Midwest. And that's how he got elected. He traveled around on a private rail car with an entourage of Illinois Central executives and wore expensive suits. He lived in the biggest house in Springfield, Illinois, on a street that today is called Old Aristocracy Row. That's who he was. He was not the old poverty-stricken rail splitter that you read about in elementary school. And those are some of the reasons people were voted for Lincoln.

And he was also a pork barrel politician, of course. He got the ball rolling, and I call him the founding father of crony capitalism. In the Pacific Railway bill, he got the ball rolling from massive subsidies to corporations, which have been debated for many years and had no success until Lincoln came along.

WOODS: Well, the book is *The Problem With Lincoln* by our guest, Tom DiLorenzo. I'm linking to it at TomWoods.com/1688. This book is a ten-megaton bomb in what it does to the elites of the US and the standard view of American history and all that. It very much needs to be done, particularly because of the absolutely, indisputably evil purposes to which the Lincoln myth has been applied. It's very, very important, because right now we have a lot of iconoclasm going on, but it's completely the wrong kind of iconoclasm. You want to be an iconoclast, you read *The Problem With Lincoln* by Tom DiLorenzo. Tom, thanks so much for being here today.

DILorenzo: Thanks for having me, Tom. Have a great day.