

The American Civil War began as an attempt to prevent armed secession and preserve the Union; it ended as a revolutionary crusade for the emancipation of the slaves. In this transformation, blacks played a crucial role. From the beginning of the conflict, black and white abolitionists and radical Republicans pressured the Lincoln administration to inaugurate an emancipation policy. In August, 1861, General John C. Frémont proclaimed emancipation as a measure of military necessity in Missouri, but his order was modified by the President. The same reception was accorded an order of Major General David Hunter, who in March, 1862, declared slaves free in the military department under his command. Yet President Lincoln was moving slowly but steadily toward emancipation. In the spring of 1862 he signed bills abolishing slavery in the territories, and proclaiming emancipation, with compensation for the slaveholders, in the District of Columbia. But he continued to grope for a policy which would not alienate the Border slave states, whose loyalties were crucial to Union success, and not aggravate northern fears that emancipation would result in a flood of freedmen coming to the North to challenge white men for jobs and social status. Lincoln's plan was compensated emancipation, coupled with voluntary colonization of the freedmen in Haiti or Central America. But as 1862 wore on, the