

Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of the

LINCOLN HISTORICAL RESEARCH
FOUNDATION

Louis A. Warren - - Editor

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FOREIGN RELATIONS

In presenting Premier Ramsey MacDonald to the Foreign Relations group last Friday evening, Honorable Elihu Root drew largely, for his opening remarks, upon Abraham Lincoln's contact with the working-men of Manchester. Anticipating that many readers of Lincoln Lore might like to have the document in full from which Mr. Root quoted, this issue is sent forth with that in mind.

Working-Men of Manchester, England

Executive Mansion,

Washington, January 19, 1863.

"To the working-men of Manchester: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the address and resolutions which you sent me on the eve of the new year. When I came, on the 4th of March, 1861, through a free and constitutional election to preside in the Government of the United States, the country was found at the verge of civil war. Whatever might have been the cause, or whosoever the fault, one duty, paramount to all others, was before me, namely, to maintain and preserve at once the Constitution and the integrity of the Federal Republic. A conscientious purpose to perform this duty is the key to all the measures of administration which have been and to all which will hereafter be pursued. Under our frame of government and my official oath, I could not depart from this purpose if I would. It is not always in the power of governments to enlarge or restrict the scope of moral results which follow the policies that they may deem it necessary for the public safety from time to time to adopt.

"I have understood well that the duty of self-preservation rests solely with the American people; but I have at the same time been aware that favor or disfavor of foreign nations might have a material influence in enlarging or prolonging the struggle with disloyal men in which the country is engaged. A fair examination of history has served to authorize a belief that the past actions and influences of the United States were generally regarded as having been beneficial toward mankind. I have, therefore, reckoned upon the forbearance of nations. Circumstances—to some of which you kindly allude—induce me especially to expect that if justice and good faith should be practiced by the United States, they would encounter no hostile influence on the part of

Great Britain. It is now a pleasant duty to acknowledge the demonstration you have given of your desire that a spirit of amity and peace toward this country may prevail in the councils of your Queen, who is respected and esteemed in your own country only more than she is by the kindred nation which has its home on this side of the Atlantic.

"I know and deeply deplore the sufferings which the working-men at Manchester, and in all Europe, are called to endure in this crisis. It has been often and studiously represented that the attempt to overthrow this government, which was built upon the foundation of human rights, and to substitute for it one which should rest exclusively on the basis of human slavery, was likely to obtain the favor of Europe. Through the action of our disloyal citizens, the working-men of Europe have been subjected to severe trials, for the purpose of forcing their sanction to that attempt. Under the circumstances, I cannot but regard your decisive utterances upon the question as an instance of sublime Christian heroism which has not been surpassed in any age or in any country. It is indeed an energetic and re-inspiring assurance of the inherent power of truth, and of the ultimate and universal triumph of justice, humanity, and freedom. I do not doubt that the sentiments you have expressed will be sustained by your great nation; and, on the other hand, I have no hesitation in assuring you that they will excite admiration, esteem, and the most reciprocal feelings of friendship among the American people. I hail this interchange of sentiment, therefore, as an augury that whatever else may happen, whatever misfortune may befall your country or my own, the peace and friendship which now exists between the two nations will be, as it shall be my desire to make them, perpetual."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Italian Goodwill

On July 23, 1864, Abraham Lincoln spoke as follows to Commander Bertinatti on the occasion of his advancement to the position of Italian Envoy Extraordinary:

"Mr. Commander Bertinatti:

"I am free to confess that the United States have in the course of the last three years encountered vicissitudes and have been involved in controversies which have tried the friendship and even the forbearance of other nations, but at no stage in this unhappy fraternal war in which we are only endeavoring to save and strengthen the foundations of our national unity has the king or the people of Italy faltered in addressing to us the language of respect, confidence, and friendship. We have tried you, Mr. Bertinatti, as a chargé d'affaires and as a minister resident, and in both of these characters we have found you always sincerely and

earnestly interpreting the loyal sentiments of your sovereign. At the same time I am sure that no minister here has more faithfully maintained and advanced the interests with which he was charged by his government. I desire that your countrymen may know that I think you have well deserved the elevation to which I owe the pleasure of the present interview.

"I pray God to have your country in His holy keeping, and to vouchsafe to crown with success her noble aspirations to renew, under the auspices of her present enlightened government, her ancient career, so wonderfully illustrated in the achievements of art, science, and freedom."

Lincoln's Naval Parity

One of the last, if not the very last proclamation issued by Abraham Lincoln was his action on naval parity. On April 11, 1865, three days before his assassination this proclamation was sent forth over his signature:

"Whereas, for some time past, vessels of war of the United States have been refused, in certain foreign ports, privileges and immunities to which they were entitled by treaty, public law, or the comity of nations, at the same time that vessels of war of the country wherein the said privileges and immunities have been withheld, have enjoyed them fully and uninterruptedly in ports of the United States, which condition of things has not always been forcibly resisted by the United States, although, on the other hand, they have not at any time failed to protest against and declare their dissatisfaction with the same; (and whereas) in the view of the United States, no condition any longer exists which can be claimed to justify the denial to them, by any one of such nations, of customary naval rights, as has heretofore been so unnecessarily persisted in;

"Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do hereby make known, that if, after a reasonable time shall have elapsed for intelligence of this proclamation to have reached any foreign country in whose ports the said privileges and immunities shall have been refused, as aforesaid, they shall continue to be so refused; then and thenceforth the same privileges and immunities shall be refused to the vessels of war of that country in the ports of the United States, and this refusal shall continue until war vessels of the United States shall have been placed upon an entire equality in the foreign ports aforesaid with similar vessels of other countries. The United States, whatever claim or pretense may have existed heretofore, are now, at least, entitled to claim and concede an entire and friendly equality of rights and hospitalities with all maritime nations.

"In witness, etc."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

By the President:
WILLIAM H. SEWARD,
Secretary of State.