



# The South Vs. The South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War

By William W. Freehling

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Why did the Confederacy lose the Civil War? Most historians point to the larger number of Union troops, for example, or the North's greater industrial might. Now, in *The South Vs. the South*, one of America's leading authorities on the Civil War era offers an entirely new answer to this question.

William Freehling argues that anti-Confederate Southerners--specifically, border state whites and southern blacks--helped cost the Confederacy the war. White men in such border states as Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland, Freehling points out, were divided in their loyalties--but far more joined the Union army (or simply stayed home) than marched off in Confederate gray. If they had enlisted as rebel troops in the same proportion as white men did farther south, their numbers would have offset all the Confederate casualties during four years of war. In addition, when those states stayed loyal, the vast majority of the South's urban population and industrial capacity remained in Union hands. And many forget, Freehling writes, that the slaves' own decisions led to a series of white decisions (culminating in the Emancipation Proclamation) that turned federal forces into an army of liberation, depriving the South of labor and adding essential troops to the blue ranks.

Whether revising our conception of slavery or of Abraham Lincoln, or establishing the antecedents of Martin Luther King, or analyzing Union military strategy, or uncovering new meanings in what is arguably America's greatest piece of sculpture, Augustus St.-Gaudens' *Shaw Memorial*, Freehling writes with piercing insight and rhetorical verve. Concise and provocative, *The South Vs. the South* will forever change the way we view the Civil War.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Historians have offered many different explanations for the North's triumph over the South during the Civil War. In this work, the University of Kentucky's Freehling (*The Road to Disunion*) dissects the role played by a failure of border states (Maryland, Delaware, Missouri and Kentucky) to unify with the seceding states. As these border states developed an industrial economy (to replace their extinct tobacco-based economy), they became more similar culturally and politically to the North, he argues. And like most Northern whites, whites living in the border states were not as strongly against slavery as they were for preserving their own "lily-white utopia." Lincoln knew that in order to win the war, according to Freehling, he would have to appeal to the border states' desire to remain with the Union, and in order not to alienate them he had to maintain his ambiguous stance on slavery and emancipation. Moreover, Freehling claims, historians have failed to appreciate fully the corrosive effect runaway slaves had on the Confederacy's ability to promote its proslavery position among its border neighbors. Though the argument that runaway slaves and border-state whites were critical to the outcome of the war is not quite as new as Freehling makes it out to be, his discussion of these two groups together in one volume is a valuable contribution to Civil War literature.

B&w illus. and maps. (Mar.)

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From Library Journal

The most recent work by Freehling (history and Otis A. Singletary Chair in Humanities, Univ. of Kentucky) examines causes and outcomes of the Civil War. His *Prelude to Civil War* analyzed the nullification crisis, while *The Road to Disunion, Vol. 1: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* examined the diversity of the South. Here, Freehling postulates that anti-Confederate Southerners, primarily border-state whites and Southern blacks, influenced military outcome by contributing thousands of troops to the Union cause, bolstered by Lincoln's exemplary and cunning statecraft, the Union's anaconda strategy, and the failure of Northern Democrats and foreigners to support the disunionists. This had a profound impact on the war, for the Confederacy needed both manpower and production capacity to realize its aims. Thoroughly and exquisitely researched, Freehling's analysis is provocative and novel. Maps of germane battles and places illustrate the text. Recommended for academic libraries. Kathleen M. Conley, Illinois State Univ., Normal

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From [Booklist](#)

The author of an award-winning study titled *Secessionists at Bay 1776-1854* (1990), the first volume of his *Road to Disunion*, incisively argues how lethal opposition by Southerners was to the Confederate cause. Those Southern dissenters were unionists, on whom Lincoln initially banked to quench the fire-eaters who engineered secession in 1860-61. However impotent they were in restoring their states to the Union, the Southern anti-Confederates hampered the secessionist war effort in many ways. Freehling points out those ways and forcefully stresses that Lincoln's political imperative--denounced by abolitionists then and viewed critically by historians since--was to temporize on proclaiming emancipation. Lincoln's delaying tactics placated whites in crucial border states, especially Kentucky, even as blacks who escaped slavery voted for freedom with their feet. Skillfully weaving them into the military aspects of his lively narrative, Freehling uses statistics concerning Southern whites and blacks in Union blue to demonstrate the crucial enervation of Confederate military strength they indicate. A masterful account of the South's internal "house divided."

Gilbert Taylor

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