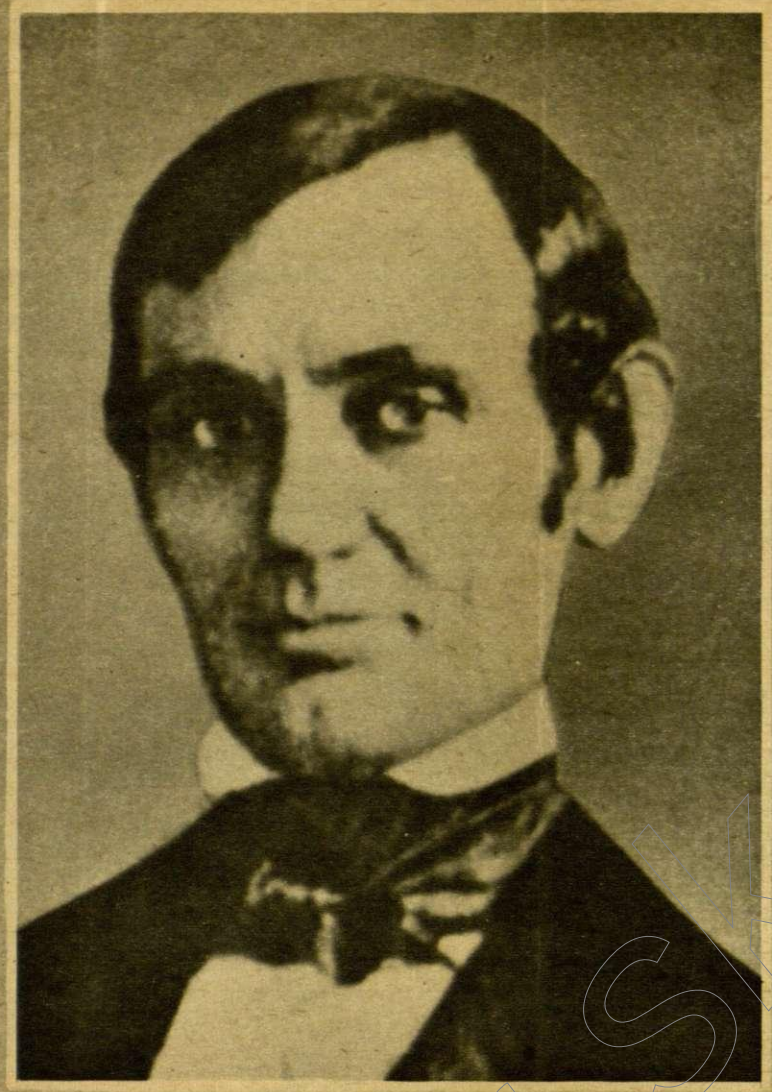
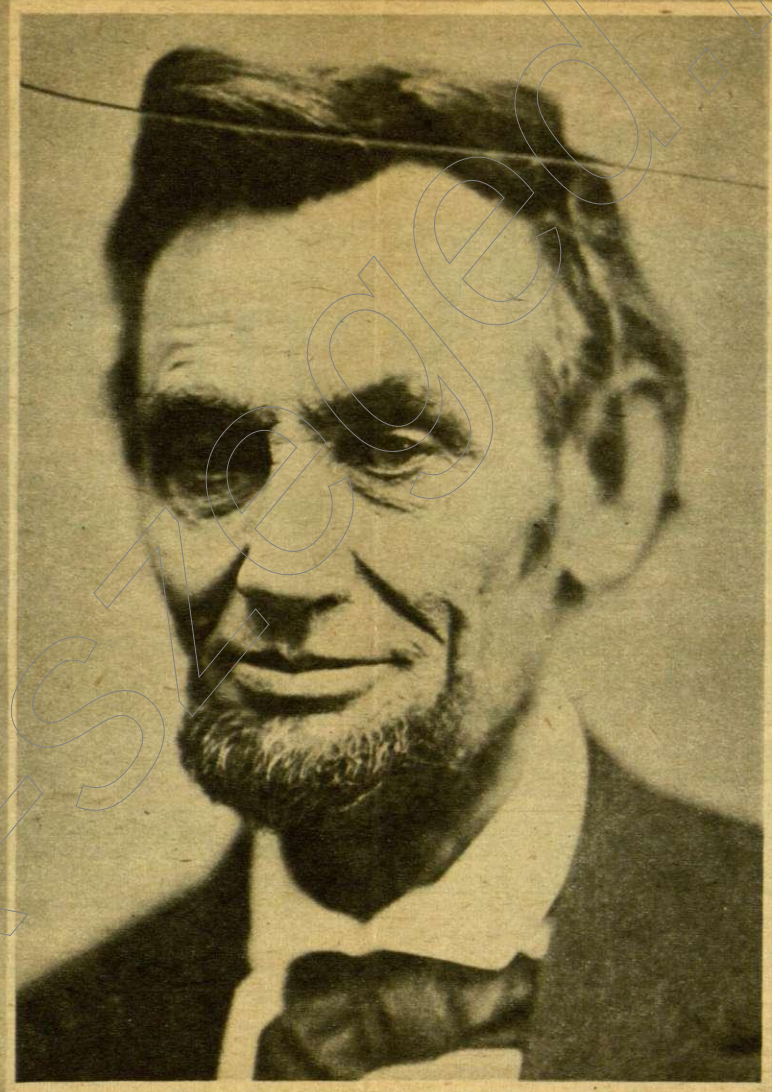


Lincoln, as the rising young lawyer-politician of Illinois.



Lincoln—his last portrait, taken four days before his death.

'That All Should Have an Equal Chance'

These words expressed Lincoln's belief in the experiment of American freedom. They hold a message today for the alliance of free peoples.

By BARBARA WARD

IT is just a hundred years since Abraham Lincoln made his decisive entrance upon the stage of national politics. In the election year of 1856, he ceased to be a minor and only intermittently successful Illinois politician and emerged as a Republican leader of national stature. As a favorite son of Illinois in the Vice Presidential balloting, he received his first votes in a national convention. In the Presidential campaign, his reputation as a speaker began to spread beyond the boundaries of his own state and although no full record remains of any of these speeches, a memorandum he drew up for use during the campaign shows that by 1856 he had finally made up his mind on what was the fundamental issue in the great controversy over slavery.

Whatever the exigencies of politics, whatever the need for compromise or conciliation, whatever the loyalty due the nation's indissoluble union, slavery as such—the denial to any man of his undeniable human right to freedom—was a moral evil. The side condemning slavery could never give up the field to the slave-owning interest, for right cannot yield to wrong.

Now, all this might be no more than mildly interesting historical reminiscence. The doings of politicians a hundred years ago are not, on the whole, particularly memorable and, in the Eighteen Fifties, at least a score of political reputations were in the making, which, to contemporaries, seemed far more significant than the emergence from obscurity of a small-town lawyer in a raw prairie state. Douglas in America, Bismarck and Louis Napoleon in Europe, Gladstone and Disraeli in England were all in the ascendant. But only specialists or professional historians are likely to feel today that the dates, anniversaries, convictions and careers of any of these men are still contemporary and significant.

BUT with Lincoln, it is not so. Not only the specialists—and they are legion—in Lincoln research, not only the historians who add year by year to the Lincoln bibliography, but thousands of ordinary citizens in and beyond the English-speaking world feel the extraordinary power of Lincoln's personality and are eager for any clue, any recollection, any scrap of evidence, that will help them "pluck out the heart of his mystery."

Most notable politicians, most statesmen, even most national heroes take their niche in history, there to be remembered, perhaps honored and revered. But their significance is exhausted. They have nothing more to tell us. Their historical context has swallowed them up. But Lincoln will not dwindle to a historical personage. He is larger than his context and whatever his meaning is in the history of humanity, one generation and even one nation are not enough to decipher it. He is one of the very few of the world's leaders who stay alive.

It is remarkable how quickly this quality of timelessness was recognized in Lincoln. Leo Tolstoy, his great Russian contemporary, prophesied not long after the President's assassination that Lincoln would become one of the world's legendary figures because of "peculiar moral powers and greatness of character. * * * He was what Beethoven was in *(Continued on Page 71)*

BARBARA WARD is a well-known British author, lecturer and authority on world affairs. She is the author of "Faith and Freedom."

'That All Have An Equal Chance'

(Continued from Page 15)

music, Dante in poetry, Raphael in painting and Christ in philosophy of life." He was "a saint of humanity whose name will live thousands of years in the legends of future generations. We," Tolstoi added, "are still too near his greatness and so can hardly appreciate his supreme power; but in a few centuries' time, our descendants will find him far greater than we do."

THE first century has nearly passed and Tolstoi's prophecy is already confirmed. The Lincoln who wrote—of his own autobiographical fragment—"there is not much of it, for the reason, I suppose, that there is not much of me," seems to later generations to be, on the contrary, inexhaustible. There is no explaining the phenomenon. One could as easily define the particular power of Shakespeare's plays. Genius "does not abide our question." We shall never reduce it to its sociological components as the Marxists would or plot the precise psychological disturbances which are supposed to give rise to it. But, in another sense, it does not so much abide as invite our question for, however darkly, it gives men the assurance that the questions they feel most deeply and tragically—questions of freedom and destiny and hope and justice—are not meaningless or vain.

But there is a special reason why Lincoln should speak to us in this generation. However successful the lives we live, however buoyant the standard of living, however hopeful the advances in medical science, however insistent the assurances of "peace and prosperity," most people are more aware than they find comfortable of the fact that the age, for all its ease and convenience, is one of the most dire and apocalyptic mankind has ever faced. Physically the means for exterminating humanity are, it seems, at hand. Morally, the issue over which Lincoln pondered and agonized a hundred years ago—the issue of man's right to freedom—has become the concern not of a single people but of the whole world.

"Can we as a nation continue together permanently—forever—half slave and half free?" This was the question Lincoln put to his friends in the months leading up to the 1856 campaign. This is the question that must now be answered over all the earth. Small wonder, then, that the man who, of all the world's statesmen, thought most deeply of the problem of human freedom and engaged in the practical operations of a war fought more exclusively perhaps than any other over the issue of freedom—small wonder that this man should be turned to as guide, oracle and prophet in an age in which freedom has become once again the supreme stake.

Yet some of the avowed champions of freedom in our contemporary struggle against communism may not find in Lincoln precisely the leadership they hope for or expect. Or, rather, they may find that his leadership takes them considerably further than they are prepared to go.

Throughout our Western community, there are men who genuinely fear and combat communism and work eagerly to prevent its extension, yet can hardly be said to occupy Lincoln's position when the issue is not simply the Communist threat to freedom but the broader issue of freedom itself. Certainly, they want to defend freedom against the Communist enemy—but they seem ready to extend their definition of "enemy of freedom" to include any shade of opinion which does not happen to coincide with their own.

THE phenomenon can be observed on the Right or the Left. In America's recent public history, there have been demagogues saying, in effect, "All have the right to freedom—except Communists, Socialists, liberals, New Dealers and even Democrats." Indeed, they have used the public celebration of Lincoln's birthday for such a full-scale anathema.

In Europe, it is not unknown for genuinely anti-Communist

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Left-Wingers to defend the inalienable rights of everybody—except capitalists, landowners, *rentiers* and most of the bourgeoisie. For defenders of freedom of this stamp, Lincoln is a most uneasy guide. He had a word for their interpretation of the Bill of Rights—a strong word. He called it "degeneracy."

In a letter to his friend Joshua F. Speed, he declared that America's "progress in degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid. As a nation, we began by declaring that *'all men are created equal.'* We now practically read it 'all men are created equal *except Negroes.*' When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read 'all men are created equal, except Negroes and *foreigners and Catholics.*' When it comes to this, I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty—to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure and without the base alloy of hypocrisy."

TODAY, Lincoln would wryly savor the irony of his last remark, for in no country has the hypocrisy of freedom been carried further than in Russia where everyone's rights are inalienable—except when the Government sees fit to take them away. But the sting remains. Lincoln demands a higher respect for freedom than many anti-Communists are prepared to give.

For him, the principle is absolute, for it is rooted in the moral law. His "ancient faith" taught him that "all men are created equal" and "that there can be no moral right in connection with one man's making a slave of another."

From this unyielding stand on principle must we conclude that Lincoln's leadership can be claimed by those today who are so uncompromising in their opposition to communism—or, indeed, to any other encroachment on freedom—that they are ready for all means, even preventive war, to check its spread? Once again, the partisans cannot appropriate Lincoln so easily. From his whole record, we know that extremism of any form was utterly alien to him.

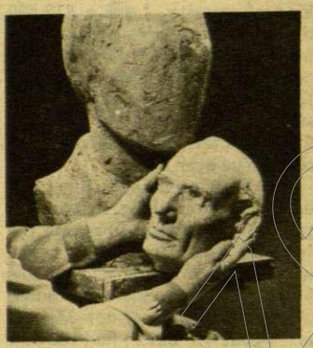
IN the Eighteen Fifties he opposed not so much the fact of slavery as the risk of its extension. He looked and hoped for its eventual extinction, but not by violent means, and in this he made enemies among the Abolitionists. The war, when it became inevitable, was thrust on him by the secession of the states, not by any initiative of his.

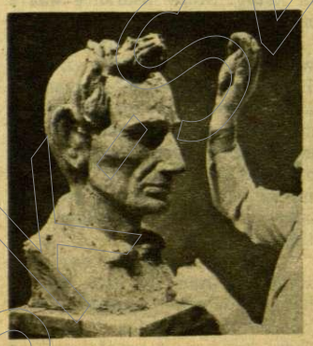
And, as the terrible struggle dragged to an end, he was at mortal odds with his own party in his determination to reconcile the defeated South by tolerance, generosity of spirit and ready rehabilitation. The partisans of preventive war or forcible liberation or "go-it-aloneism" can find no support here.

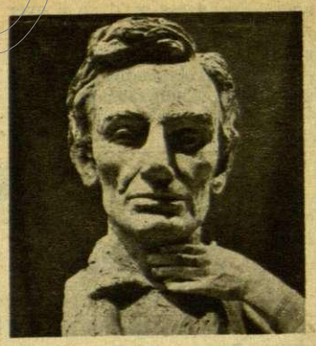
Nor will they find much comfort in the convictions which made Lincoln above all a man of patience and conciliation. He was not a compromiser or a trimmer. But he was utterly lacking in that spirit of self-righteousness, that capacity for total judgment on others and equally total blindness toward oneself, which marks and mars so many men of extreme temper.

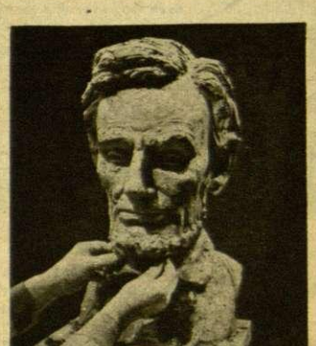
For one thing, he was always alive to the inability of any man to judge the workings of another's conscience. This awareness did not in his mind weaken the general moral distinction between right and wrong but it made imperative a sustained modesty in making moral judgments on particular wrongdoers. Who knew their hearts? Lincoln was not presumptuous enough to assume that he did.

FACES OF LINCOLN









Lincoln's career, as etched in his face, is a hobby of Professor Merrell Gage of the University of Southern California fine arts department. Above are pictures of his Lincoln lecture which, as he talks, he illustrates by molding busts based on Volk's life mask (top picture) and the numerous photographs of the President. The lecture has been made into a documentary film.

BUT there was another, deeper reason. What man could claim to be innocent enough of the world's guilt to set himself up in moral judgment? The Abolitionist cotton spinner paying starvation wages to his New England laborers—was he the man to pass sentence on the Southern slaveowner? Slavery remained wrong, according to immutable moral law. Neither North nor South could change that fact. But to pursue the slaveowner with hatred, malice and lust for revenge betrayed a complete unawareness of the North's own part in the accumulated social tragedies of slavery and a terrifying pride in its supposed guiltlessness. Probably no greater political utterance has ever been made than Lincoln's second inaugural address, in which the plea for reconciliation is rooted in the recognition of common guilt.

In short, Lincoln's conciliatory spirit, like his uncompromising stand on principle, had the same deeply religious foundation. In his youth, he may, as he said, have played with the idea that men were ruled by blind necessity. But in the years of his experience and responsibility he believed profoundly in a Providence that guided the world and Whose purposes, far outstripping human wisdom, would ultimately work in all things for good.

HE did not claim that the result would be to human comfort or liking. This was no gospel of success or "adjustment" or peace of mind. It was simply a statement of the ultimate moral power at work in the universe, the power upon which all human striving must at last depend. "Let us have faith that right makes might and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it." And then let us leave the judgments and the justifications, the post mortems and the balance sheets—the whole great human profit and loss account—in the hands of God.

Now, from all this, it must be admitted that, for many people in the West, Lincoln, on closer examination, will seem anything but a satisfactory interpreter of our present crisis of freedom. This is not the tone in which much of the con-

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troversy is carried on. He must seem to many too subtle, too ambiguous, too qualified to give a lead in the international slanging match conducted by Khrushchev and his colleagues.

NOR is it simply a question of standing up to Soviet certainties and Soviet invective. As we have seen, many Western defenders of freedom simply do not accept Lincoln's approach. They want to fight communism—yes, but they are not on that account ready to recognize the rights and freedoms of others whose orthodoxy does not match theirs. They are anti-Communist, but they are anti-Liberal, anti-trade union, anti-Negro, anti-Conservative or anti-business men with almost as much fervor.

They want to defend "the free way of life," but prefer wholesale condemnations of anyone who does not go all the way with them to the more patient process of attempted understanding, the search for conciliation, even a backward glance at faults and shortcomings on their own side. They will, for instance, lecture the uncommitted peoples of Asia on the sin of "neutralism" without a thought for the centuries of Western colonial control or the pride of ancient peoples just emerging from foreign domination.

Above all, they want no part of the Lincolnian vision of all sinful humanity standing under Divine Judgment. God, it must be clear, is on the side of the West. His designs are not beyond the grasp of finite minds. On the contrary, He is an accommodating God who can be brought in to bless the West's national aspirations and enterprises.

SO, after all, Lincoln has perhaps no new message for us. Too partisan of principle, too generous of judgment, too alive to the ambiguity of history, too conscious of an inscrutable Providence, he is a great man always but not, as we may have thought, a relevant man for our times. The struggle with communism must be fought with other weapons and other views—with passion and self-confidence, with an unyielding sense of righteousness, and with a profound conviction that history is on our side because, as we know and history knows, we are in the right.

Yet the paradox is that, in thus rejecting the supposed ambiguity and indecisiveness, even the weakness of Lincoln's philosophy, we have defined not our own spirit but the spirit of communism itself.

If we think the struggle can be won by greater partisan passion, are we sure we can ever equal the Communists in their ruthless rejection of any ally who does not totally subserve their plans? If we think we shall gain by stronger attacks on dissidents and by ever greater confidence in our own virtue, can we ever hope to rival the sublime self-congratulation achieved by the Communist leaders and their brutal, lashing contempt for anyone or anything that stands in their way?

And, if we decide that Providence is on our side and can be manipulated to our purposes, will this confidence ever match the central Communist conviction that the world's entire destiny can be determined by mastery of the dialectic? However much we may try to transform ourselves into that combination of Machiavellian, mudslinger and cosmic Pharisee which makes Khrushchev so striking an individual, the game is lost before we begin.

This statue of Abraham Lincoln is in London's Parliament Square.

NO, in this contest, the Communists have little to fear if they succeed in making us pale copies of themselves. But they must fear always, and do fear now, the opposite tradition of tolerance and generosity, and of faith based not on arrogant self-reliance but on humble confidence in the final goodness of God's ways with man.

The lead that Lincoln gave —"With malice towards none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right"—is still the spirit in which the free world must strive, as he did, "to finish the work we are in." This is the only spirit that can underpin an alliance of free men, or hold together, in common purpose, the diversity of nations and peoples who, no less than the Western democracies, hope to keep their freedom intact.

Above all, it is the only spirit in which there can be fulfilled the promise Lincoln believed to be implicit in the experiment of American freedom—the promise "that in due time weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men and that all should have an equal chance."

"Equal chance for everybody"

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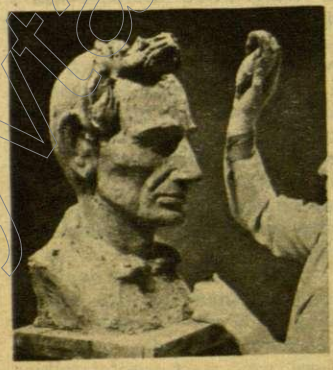

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