

# The True Enemy

The True Enemy emerges in the early days of the Civil War, highlighted by Mississippi's decision to secede from the Union on January 9, 1861. Following in South Carolina's footsteps, Mississippi's secession convention unanimously voted to leave, driven by the belief that slavery was essential to their way of life. The delegates saw the institution of slavery as crucial for their economy, with its preservation seen as a moral and economic necessity. In their declaration of secession, they emphasized a sharp division between the North and South, arguing that slavery was vital for global commerce and portraying any effort to abolish it as an assault on civilization. This stark perspective underscored the deep ideological rift between the two regions, setting the stage for the nation's eventual conflict.

The declaration revealed intense fear of President Lincoln and the Republican Party, whose opposition to slavery was viewed as a direct threat to the South's social and economic structure. Mississippi's delegates framed secession not as a choice, but as an urgent necessity for survival, believing that their way of life would be crushed if slavery was abolished. They expressed their grievances in emotional terms, describing the Union's stance on slavery as a malevolent force that sought to dismantle the Southern way of life. The delegates believed the North had cultivated resentment and insurrection against the South, painting it as a force intent on destroying their civilization. These grievances reflected the entrenched divisions in the nation, as the South felt cornered by a growing anti-slavery movement that they viewed as an existential threat.

President Buchanan's response to Mississippi's secession and the broader crisis revealed his indecision and reluctance to take decisive action. In his message to Congress, Buchanan acknowledged the gravity of the situation, yet chose to defer responsibility for resolving the conflict to the legislative branch. His remarks

acknowledged federal authority to protect federal property but lacked concrete steps to address the mounting tensions. Buchanan's address was marked by a sense of resignation, revealing his internal conflict about the future of the Union and his role in preserving it. Despite expressing a desire for national unity, his inability to take strong action during this critical moment reflected the paralysis of leadership at a time when decisive steps were needed. Buchanan's failure to act with authority and clarity only deepened the crisis, leaving the country further divided and more vulnerable to the storm of conflict brewing between the North and South.

This chapter encapsulates a moment of intense political and emotional turmoil in American history, as Mississippi's secession represented not just a political decision, but a direct challenge to the future of the Union. The emotional appeals of the delegates highlighted the entrenched divisions over slavery, which had become the primary catalyst for the secessionist movement. As the South felt increasingly threatened by the Northern push for abolition, the emotional and ideological rift deepened, turning a political disagreement into a full-scale crisis. Buchanan's response, or lack thereof, underscored the failure of leadership in navigating these perilous waters, leaving the country on the brink of collapse. The chapter serves as a poignant reminder of the forces that shaped the outbreak of the Civil War, driven by the deeply held beliefs of those who saw the institution of slavery as the key to their survival, and the unwillingness of national leadership to confront these issues head-on.

In the aftermath of Mississippi's secession, the Union's future seemed uncertain, with a deep sense of division taking root in both political and social spheres. As the country grappled with the consequences of these actions, the ideological divide between the North and South became ever more pronounced. The emotional intensity of the secession movement, as well as the political paralysis at the federal level, demonstrated how deeply the country was divided over the issue of slavery and states' rights. The South's view of slavery as an economic necessity was in direct opposition to the North's growing abolitionist movement, and this fundamental conflict would define the course of the nation for years to come. The sense of inevitability surrounding the nation's split into two opposing forces was palpable, and the decisions

made during this time would shape the future of the United States, leading to a war that would change the course of history forever.