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**A House Divided: The North on the
Eve of War - I**

Lead: One hundred and fifty years ago the Republic was facing its greatest crisis. This continuing series examines the American Civil War. It is "A House Divided."

Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: America's greatest crisis was decided in favor of the proponents of Union because in the end, one side was able to grind the other into submission, physically. It was not immediate, but over time, the enormous population disparity

between the North's and the South's white majorities sealed the fate of the Confederacy. In 1860 due mostly to immigration and a faster birthrate, the American population had grown much faster than Europe and even the world's. With thirty-two million inhabitants in its states and territories, the United States was the largest nation in the western world save Russia and France. The Union had a population of over 20,000,000. The white Confederacy had just about 5,000,000, with 4,000,000 slaves either at its disposal or as its burden.

Immigration had brought millions to the free states and territories because they possessed more jobs and more available land. In the 1850s, the

free states grew 20% faster than slaves states and that on a population base of white citizens that already exceeded that of the future Confederacy. While the South could match forces in the early years of the war, a kind of rough parity, with each campaigning season the huge population differential began to make itself apparent. As the bodies began to pile up, the population strength of the North simply overwhelmed the South. Even after the horrendous blood-letting of 1864, the North was able to replenish its ranks with fresh volunteers, conscripts, and re-enlisting veterans, a seemingly endless wave of troops to throw into the fray.

Added to the natural advantage of a much larger population, following Emancipation, after initial hesitation, Northern leaders began to wield the cudgel of black soldiers. This had a dual advantage. Former slaves liberated by advancing union armies at first were called contraband. This indicated that blacks were southern strategic property seized by the Union and thus denied to South as a valuable asset. Thinking changed as contrabands were allowed to don Union blue and fight for the freedom the war was increasingly seeking to confirm. After a shaky start, blacks proved themselves more than adequate soldiers. They were used in rear areas as support troops, thus freeing white troops for frontline duty, but they also

demonstrated with increasing frequency that a bullet fired by a black soldier could be every bit as lethal as that of any other soldier.

Despite 300,000 deaths since 1861, by the end of 1864, President Lincoln was able to report that the Union Army had a million men in uniform. The gloomy but ever realistic South Carolina diarist, Mary Boykin Chestnut, could not but conclude about the cascade of bad news pressed upon her region by the looming Union hoards, “Since (the fall of) Atlanta I have felt as if all were dead within me, forever. We are going to be wiped off the earth.” Next time: a transportation revolution.

**From Richmond Virginia, this is
Dan Roberts.**

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