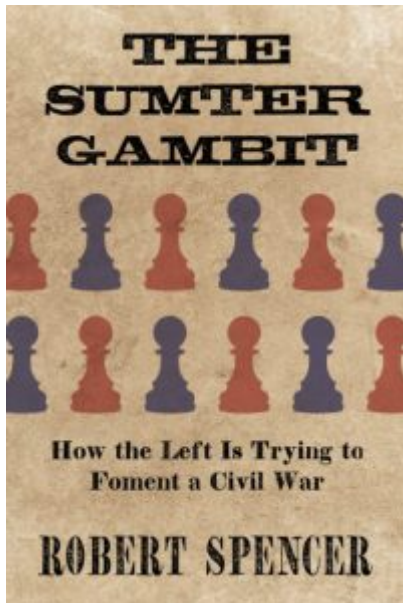


The Sumter Gambit

Robert Spencer reveals how the Left is trying to foment a civil war.



by Bruce Bawer

From birth, the United States was a house divided. Slavery had existed always, everywhere; but America was different – founded on a set of noble ideas with which the institution of slavery was utterly at odds. Still, in order to establish – and then to preserve – a union that was half slave and half free, America's leaders repeatedly put off the day of reckoning. Jefferson condemned slavery in a draft passage of the Declaration of Independence, only to take it out to ensure passage. The Constitution's framers dealt with the issue by concocting the three-fifths compromise. In 1820, the Missouri Compromise balanced the admission of slave Missouri with that of free Maine; the Compromise of 1850 admitted free California but also introduced the Fugitive Slave Act, compelling the return of escaped slaves to their owners.

Along the way, some events upset the constant, desperate

attempts at balance. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) sparked anti-slavery passions. In 1854, abolitionists formed the GOP and the Kansas-Nebraska Act allowed slavery anywhere. In the 1850s, Kansans spent years warring over slavery, and in 1859 John Brown raided a Virginia arsenal in an effort to incite a slave revolt.

Viewing Lincoln's 1860 election as a threat to their "peculiar institution," Southern states began seceding even before he took office; in his inaugural address, delivered two weeks to the day after the formation, on February 18, 1861, of the Confederate States of America, Lincoln eloquently articulated the hope that even now, when a standoff between Union and rebel forces was brewing at Fort Sumter, an Army installation in the harbor of Charleston, S.C., further compromise was yet feasible: "Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

But no reunion was forthcoming. No angels materialized. On April 12, Southern forces began firing on Fort Sumter. As Robert Spencer puts it in his engaging, important, and wide-ranging new book, [The Sumter Gambit](#), the war "started when the Confederate side forced it to begin." Ordered to abandon the fort, the Yankees refused. "Then the South warned that even resupplying the fort with food would be considered an act of war. The choice was clear: surrender the fort and accept the secession of the Southern states or go to war."

And so it was war. The longstanding divisions had finally split the house in two. Today, argues Spencer, America is in a not dissimilar fix – although, in his estimation, the divisions now are even wider. In 1861, North and South shared "a common culture, a common religion, a common heritage, and a common outlook"; today, left and right barely share "a common

language.”

Can that be? Is the gulf greater now than then? My own sense is that in the mid-19th century there were significant disparities in culture and outlook – and, yes, even in religion – between North and South, and that today, conversely, red and blue voters can seem more divided than they really are, with millions voting Democrat because they’re clueless about what the party stands for today and because they get their “news” from corporate media that pour out progressive PR. Nonetheless, it’s true that today’s leftist ideologues, like the more rabid secessionists in the South of 1961, are indeed, as Spencer says, “edging the nation ever closer to a new civil war.” Spencer dubs this “the Sumter Gambit.”

Like the standoff in Charleston harbor, the present crisis follows decades of increasing tension between two Americas. This time it’s not about freedom vs. slavery, however, but about freedom vs. statist tyranny. And there are other divergences. One is that slavery was there from the beginning and was essentially (in the words of the old hymn) from age to age the same; by contrast, the left’s governing ideology has, over the decades, grown steadily more radical and hard to square with individual freedom, common sense, or (for that matter) the hard lessons of 20th-century totalitarianism. As late as 1960, JFK and Nixon were remarkably close to each other on the issues; a few years later, LBJ’s Great Society marked a great leap forward from federalist republic to welfare state; in 1972, George McGovern’s presidential run represented, in Spencer’s words, the “mainstreaming of...anti-Americanism in the Democratic Party.” In the ensuing years, the mainstream media, the D.C. swamp, and – most decisively – the schools and universities fell increasingly under the control of radicals who taught young Americans to hate liberty, capitalism, and their own country and to embrace globalism, multiculturalism, climatism, and, more recently,

“anti-racism” and gender madness. And Congress welcomed members like Ilhan Omar, who makes McGovern look almost like Eisenhower.

Then there’s the longtime problem of the Deep State. As early as 1961, in his farewell address, Ike warned about the military-industrial complex. The CIA is now being seriously accused of having a hand in the JFK assassination. A generation grew up believing that Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein saved democracy by bringing down Nixon; now they look like unwitting tools of Deep State operatives eager to oust a strong-minded president who’d just won an overwhelming election victory. Almost half a century later, the same Deep State tried its darndest to bring down Donald Trump – and then, almost certainly, foiled his re-election.

In the Watergate era, to be sure, Democrats viewed Republicans as opponents. Now they’re seen as nothing less than enemies – a chilling attitude that found its ultimate expression in Joe Biden’s speech of September 1, 2022 (delivered, ironically enough, at Independence Hall in Philadelphia), in which he described Trump and his supporters as “extremists that threaten the very foundations of our republic.” Quite rightly, Spencer views that dark moment in Philadelphia as pivotal. “For the first time in American history,” he writes, “a president declared that his primary political opposition was outside the bounds of acceptable political discourse...Biden came closer to calling for war upon American citizens than any president since Jefferson Davis.”

But Spencer doesn’t leave it at that. He also compares Biden’s speech to one given by Hitler on March 23, 1933, in support of a piece of legislation called the Enabling Act. Of course, we’re never supposed to compare *anyone* to Hitler. Leo Strauss called it *reductio ad hitlerum*. But why is this so *verboten*? There have been tyrants as terrible as Hitler in the past – in the twentieth century alone we had Stalin and Mao – and there will be terrible ones in the future. If an American president

stands in front of a blood-red background, with Marines at attention behind him, and demonizes his political opponents in fiery language that's eerily reminiscent of a specific Hitler speech, is it unreasonable to note the similarity? When Biden and his flunkies routinely smear MAGA Republicans as fascists – even while his own regime, by covertly collaborating with Silicon Valley and other corporate cronies, is acting out the very definition of fascism – wouldn't one be a fool not to point out the truth?

One thing's for sure: Spencer, as he's proven in over a dozen exceptional books, is no fool. In *The Sumter Gambit*, he perceptively examines the various fronts on which the left is pushing freedom-loving Americans to the brink, frequently focusing in on various obscure episodes that illuminate just what we're up against. Did you know, for example, about January 6 "insurrectionist" Matthew Perna, a decent patriot who, on February 25, 2022, his heart and soul finally broken after more than a year of emotional torture at the hands of the Justice Department, committed suicide? Spencer contrasts the system's cruel tormenting of Perna with the case of Quintez Brown, a BLM thug who, after shooting at a Kentucky politician who's now the mayor of Louisville, was treated sympathetically in the media, welcomed on Joy Reid's MSNBC show, "anointed as a rising star by the Obama Foundation," and given a column in Louisville's major daily.

A key difference between the first Fort Sumter moment and the current one is that slavery, in those immediate antebellum days, was out in the open – an unambiguous evil – while today's Democratic tyranny is largely a matter of back-room machinations involving party hirelings, media hacks, and secret agents, all of whom seek to bamboozle the rest of us by turning virtually everything upside-down. In Orwell's *1984*, "war is peace" and "freedom is slavery"; in 2023, truth-tellers are "conspiracy theorists" and "saving our democracy" means suppressing free speech. MAGA words are

violence – but don't dare call Antifa arson or BLM bloodshed by its real name.

And on and on it goes. The same establishment figures who pushed the lie of Trump's Russia collusion dismissed Hunter Biden's laptop as Russian dupery. Joe Biden – who has weaponized the FBI and CIA, collaborated covertly with big tech, and been bought and paid for by the CCP – is depicted as a defender of “our democracy,” while Trump, a real champion of freedom, is painted as a dangerous authoritarian. Although multiple investigations (who in this country's history has been probed more thoroughly?) have shown Trump's finances to be remarkably above-board, while the colossal dimensions (and treasonous implications) of Biden's corruption are becoming clearer and clear, clueless clowns on the left can still say, as Joy Behar did on a recent episode of *The View*, that “we all know that Trump is a liar and a thief” but we “don't think Biden is a liar and a thief.”

It's hard to deny Spencer's assertion that the left is actively seeking to provoke the rest of us into starting a civil war. Why, after all, did Nancy Pelosi's office deny security officials the resources they requested so that they could safeguard the Capitol on January 6? Why did Capitol Hill police essentially stand down during the so-called “insurrection”? Why did some of them let “insurrectionists” into the building? Why have the Democrats kept most of the video recordings of the events of that day under lock and key?

But what about Spencer's concern that conservatives might resort, in significant numbers, to actual violence (as opposed to the imaginary violence of January 6)? Is he right to worry about that? Isn't it the left that breeds rioters and rebels? Aren't conservatives by nature law-abiding? Doesn't the left's desperate need to cast the Proud Boys as terrorists simply reflect the lack of *real* organized violence on the right to complain about? Yes, it would be thoroughly understandable if a large cohort of right-wingers were, at long last, after

decades of left-wing violence – the Black Panthers, SDS, Weather Underground, M19, BLM, Antifa, etc., etc. – to go amok in reaction to the outrages cataloged in Spencer’s book. But how likely is that? I don’t know. Spencer’s far from alone in being concerned about a possible divorce – amicable or not – between the blue and red states. But even after everything that’s happened – and been revealed – in the last few years about the scale of the D.C. swamp’s perfidy, such a turn of events is hard for me to imagine. Perhaps I still haven’t shaken off my romantic boyhood ideas about America. Or perhaps I’ve lived abroad too long to realize just how far things have gone.

In any event, I’m certainly on board with Spencer’s concluding exhortation to responsible-minded American patriots: if you’re moved to end affirmative action, bar biological males from women’s sports, secure the border, celebrate the Founding Fathers, pursue an “America First foreign policy,” and reverse the left’s innumerable other assaults on American liberty, peace, and prosperity, the time to do it is now. And the way to do it, however much you may be tempted to become the John Brown of the Biden era, is to act within the law – even though the administration of what used to be known as American justice is currently in the hands of a vile swamp creature of an attorney general whose loyalty isn’t to due process but to the Democratic Party. As Spencer observes at the close of this highly estimable addition to a truly magnificent oeuvre: “Our resistance and stand for freedom must be unshakable and indefatigable, without resorting to the violence the Left is relentlessly trying to goad us into committing.”

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[Order Robert Spencer’s new book, *The Sumter Gambit*: [CLICK HERE.](#)]