Taking Sides

Issue Ten

Was Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Policy Motivated by Humanitarian Impulses?

p. 209, ¶ 1 after introduction, line 1 – “Andrew Jackson’s election to the presidency in 1828 ushered in an era marked by a growing demand for political and economic opportunities for the ‘common man.’ As the ‘people’s president,’ Jackson embodied the democratic ideal in the United States.”

p. 209, ¶ 2, line 1 – “The rise of Jacksonian democracy occurred during a dramatic territorial growth increase in the years immediately following the War of 1812.”

p. 210, ¶ 1, line 1 – “As the populations of these states increased, white citizens demanded that their government, at both state and national levels, do something about the Native American tribes in their midst who held claims to land in these regions by virtue of previous treaties.”

Question: What is the “Trail of Tears”?

Yes– “Brothers, Listen... You Must Submit”

p. 211, ¶ 1, line 1 – “It is an awesome contradiction that at the moment the United States was entering a new age of economic and social betterment for its citizens – the industrial revolution underway, democracy expanding, social and political reforms in progress – the Indians were driven from their homes and forced to seek refuge in remote areas west of the Mississippi River.”

p. 211, ¶ 2, line 1 – “The policy of white Americans towards Indians was a shambles, right from the beginning. Sometimes the policy was benign – such as sharing educational advantages – but more often than not it was malevolent.”

p. 211, ¶ 4, line 2 – “They presumed that once the Indians adopted the practice of private property, built homes, farmed, educated their children, and embraced Christianity these Native Americans would win acceptance from white Americans.”

p. 211, ¶ 5, line 1 – “The policy of removal was first suggested by Jefferson as the alternative to the ‘civilizing’ process, and as far as many Americans were concerned removal made more sense than any other proposal. Henry
Clay... insisted that it was impossible to civilize these ‘savages.’”

p. 212, ¶ 5, line 1 – “The Indian Removal Act of 1830 authorized Jackson to carry out the policy outline in his first message to Congress.”

p. 212, ¶ 6, line 1 – “The monumental piece of legislation spelled the doom of the American Indian.”

p. 213, ¶ 3, line 1 – “Andrew Jackson has been saddled with a considerable portion of the blame for this monstrous deed. He makes an easy mark. But the criticism is unfair if it distorts the role he actually played.”

p. 214, ¶ 3, line 1 – “The reaction of the American people to Jackson’s removal policy was predictable. Some were outraged, particularly the Quakers and other religious groups.”

p. 215, ¶ 2, line 1 – “The actual removal of the Choctaw Nation violated every principle for which Jackson stood. From start to finish the operation was a fraud.”

p. 215, ¶ 3, line 1 – “Jackson tried to prevent this calamity but he was too far away to exercise any real control, and the temptations and opportunities for graft and corruption were too great for some agents to resist.”

p. 215, ¶ 4, line 1 – “To begin with, the entire operation of Indian removal was transferred from civilian hand to the military.”

p. 215, ¶ 5, line 1 – “The experience of removal is one of the horror stories of the modern era.”

p. 215, ¶ 6, line 1 – “Would it have been worse had the Indians remained in the East? Jackson thought so.”

p. 216, ¶ 4, line 1 – “Chief Justice John Marshall in the case Cherokee Nation v. Georgia handed down his opinion on March 18, 1831. He rejected Wirt’s contention that the Cherokees were a sovereign nation.”

p. 216, ¶ 5, line 1 – “The Indians chose to regard the opinion as essentially favorable in that it commanded the United States to protect their rights and property.”

p. 216, ¶ 6, line 1 – “Georgia... had refused to acknowledge the court’s right to direct its actions and had boycotted the judicial proceedings.”

p. 217, ¶ 4, line 1 – “Still the President had encouraged Georgia in its intransigence.”

p. 218, ¶ 3, line 1 – “Ultimately, the Cherokees also yielded to the President.”
p. 219, ¶ 2, line 1 – “It was useless for the Indians to resist Jackson’s demands. Nearly 46,000 of them went west. Thousands died in transit.”

p. 219, ¶ 3, line 1 – “The policy of removal formed and important part of Jackson’s overall program of limiting federal authority and supporting states’ rights.”

p. 219, ¶ 5, line 1 – “Ultimately Jackson’s policy of removal and reorganization of the Indian service won acceptance by most Americans.”

No- The Long Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians

p. 220, ¶ 2, line 1 – “...Georgians felt that they had the right to claim the President’s sympathetic attention in time of need. And now was that time. The Cherokee constitution in effect nullified Georgia law and made the Indian nation a ‘state within a state.’”

p. 220, ¶ 3, line 3 – “The new President quickly took steps to implement a removal program that would, among other things, resolve the Georgia crisis.”

p. 221, ¶ 2, line 5 – “About half the discussion of Indian affairs was devoted to the constitutional issue raised by the Cherokee claim to independence and political sovereignty within the state of Georgia.”

p. 221, ¶ 2, line 15 – “Emigration... should be strictly voluntary with individuals.”

p. 221, ¶ 2, line 21 – “For those who chose to remain, he gave assurance that they would ‘without doubt’ be allowed to keep possession of their houses and gardens.”

p. 222, ¶ 2, line 1 – “The debate on the bill was long and bitter, for the subject of Indian removal touched upon a number of very emotional issues: the constitutional question of states’ rights versus federal prerogatives, Christian charity, national honor, racial and cultural prejudices, manifest destiny, and of course just plain greed. The opening salvo was the Report of the Indian Committee of the House.”

p. 222, ¶ 2, last sentence – “Obviously, in the committee’s view, it was not merely justifiable but morally imperative to save the Southern tribes from extinction by helping them to emigrate to the West.”

p. 222, ¶ 3, line 1 – “Both Houses of Congress were deluged by hundreds of petitions and memorials, solicited by religious groups and benevolent societies opposed to Indian removal.”

p. 223, ¶ 1, line 9 – “Senator Frelinghuysen’s speech, which took three days to deliver, pointed out that the Indian
policy of the United States, from the time of Washington on, had been based on the principle that the United States was obligated to protect peaceful natives living in unceded territory from intrusion by whites under any pretext, by force if necessary. Treaties with Native Americans, according to the Constitution, were, like other treaties, the law of the land. The Jackson Administration, by refusing to enforce existing treaties, was violating the Constitution.”

p. 223, ¶ 2, line 1 – “Why was more Indian land needed now, when annual sales of public lands amounted to no more than 1 million acres?”

p. 223, ¶ 4, line 1 – “Forsyth dismissed Frelinghuysen’s words as mere self-interested plea by the ‘Christian party in politics’ to create unwarranted sympathy for the Indians, among whom their missionaries lived so prosperously.”

p. 224, ¶ 4, line 1 – “A fairly clear federal policy with regard to the transfer to white owners of title to newly purchase Indian lands, based on a generation of experience, was already in place when the Removal Act was passed and signed.”

p. 225, ¶ 2, line 1 – “The government did not expect to realize much if any profit from the sale of public lands.”

p. 225, ¶ 3, line 1 – “Thus the Jackson administration was ready to do its ‘land office business’ as soon as the Indians could be persuaded to sell and agree to remove.”

p. 225, ¶ 4, line 7 – “But McKenney, despite his support for the principle of voluntary removal, soon balked at the harassment tactics of the administration.”

p. 225, ¶ 5, line 1 – “It was the team of Jackson, Cass, and Herring that supervised the removal of most of the Southern Indians from 1830 through 1836. By the end of 1836, the Choctaws and Creeks had emigrated, and by the close fo 1837 the Chicasaws had followed.”

p. 226, ¶ 1, line 1 – “In principle, emigration was to be voluntary; the Removal Act did not require Native Americans to emigrate, and those who wished to remain could do so. But the actual policy of the administration was to encourage removal by all possible means, fair or foul.”

p. 226, ¶ 2, line 1 – “Jackson as usual spoke publicly in a tone of friendship and concern for Indian welfare.”

p. 226, ¶ 3, line 1 – “A harsh policy was nevertheless quickly put in place.”

p. 226, ¶ 4, line 1 – “The principal acts of harassment... were carried out by the govern and citizens of the
Southern states.”

p. 226, ¶ 5, line 1 – “And all the while, the federal government stood idly by, refusing to intervene in the application of state laws.”

p. 227, ¶ 3, whole ¶ – “It is abundantly clear.....”

Postscript

p. 228, ¶ 1, whole ¶ – “One of the interesting sidelights...”