In the early part of the Civil War in the United States of America about 30 men were condemned to death as privateers, they having been captured from off Confederate Privateers, and Jeff Davis fearing they would be executed ordered 150 Union Soldiers & Sailors (who where in prision in the Tobacco Factories - Prisions - in Richmond Va. -) sent to Columbia S.C. as Hostages, Nov. 1 1861 were they were put in close confinement in the cells of the prision there. Secretary of War Stanton was determined to execute the Privateers, and President Lincoln believed such an act would be taken advantage of by other nations, as an opportunity of interferance, and was as firm in opposing Stantons rulings; finaly it was compromised by paroling a certain number on each side - which was called an exchange, without any recognized dealings with the Southern Confederacy. On May 20th 1862 the Hostages reached Washington D.C. from Richmond Va. were dressed in new clothing, and what was left of them taken to the grounds back of Columbia College (I believe that was the name of the building) a track drove in the grounds

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containing Lincoln & Stanton. President Lincoln made a short, but very pathetic address to the returned hostages, there were very few, if any dry eyes, for the boys then knew whose firmness and magnanimity had saved their lives, and prevented a war of extermination. After his speech he stepped forward, began shaking hands, talking of their sufferings, asking questions, telling them he had kept them constantly in his mind, if they had thought he'd forgotten them, they were mistaken, for he had continually thought of them etc.

There is no doubt if President Lincoln had not checked Secretary of War Stanton the execution of the privateers and hostages would be a matter of history, and out of love for Lincolns memory and showing the angel side of his character it should be placed to his credit on the pages of his biography.

From John H Anderson
Osceola, Neb.
see letter. 12/18-95

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