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Article Title

Perfidious Albion: Britain, the USA, and Slavery in ther 1840s and 1860s

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Abstract

Britain outlawed trading in slaves in 1807; subsequent legislation tightened up the law, and the Royal Navy's cruisers on the West Coast attempted to prevent the export of any more enslaved Africans. From 1808 through the 1860s, Britain also exerted considerable pressure (accompanied by equally considerable sums of money) on the U.S.A., Brazil, and European countries in the trade to cease their slaving. Subsequently, at the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861, which was at least partly fought over the issue of the extension of slavery, Britain declared her neutrality. Insofar as appearances were concerned, the British government both engaged in a vigorous suppression of the Atlantic slave trade and kept a distance from Confederate rebels during the American Civil War. But is that the whole story regarding Britain, the trade in enslaved Africans, and slavery? Did the British government prosecute Britons who broke the law with the utmost rigor, for example? And to what extent did that government maintain its professed neutrality in the "war between the states"?

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