

## Works of Indiscretion

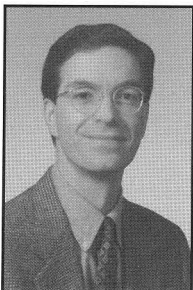
### Violence Against the Democratic Press in Indiana during the Civil War

*A systematic survey based on extensive research in Indiana newspapers and archival sources reveals that violence against the newspaper press, both Democratic and Republican, was widespread during the Civil War. Most violence was directed at Democratic newspapers and editors with Union soldiers perpetrating the violence and threats of violence in the majority of cases. Ideologically driven troops, disgusted by what they perceived to be "fire in the rear" disloyalty by Democrats, took violent steps to punish "treasonable" speech; and civilian authority was often powerless to stop soldiers, who were rarely called to account for their deeds. This article finds far more instances of violence, coercion, threats, and arrest than previous studies and points to the partisan nature of the press as a key factor in understanding why and how violence occurred.*

At 7 p.m. on October 21, 1861, newly recruited enlisted men of the 43rd Indiana Volunteer Infantry regiment, under the command of several of their officers, marched from their rendezvous camp, Camp Vigo, which was north of Terre Haute, through the town. Following a plan conceived earlier in the day by both officers and enlisted men, the soldiers halted in front of the office of the *Terre Haute Daily Journal*, a newspaper published in the town and aligned with the Democratic Party. Officers posted guards "at several points of access to the office, and formed a line in front of it, in the street, so as to prevent any interference" with their plan. Then, they entered the newspaper and smashed the printing presses, throwing the type and other portable items into the street. As one of the soldiers proudly stated, "it was a well-planned mili-

tary movement executed in a soldierly like-manner [sic] worthy of veterans. . . . The *job* was done with neatness, order, and dispatch, without any confusion or noise, more than the falling type, presses, etc." Their work completed, the troops "proceeded to several houses of ill-fame in the city and drove all the inmates [out] and threw all the furniture into the streets," according to a report of the incident. Having wiped out what they believed were the sources of moral corruption in town, the soldiers retreated to camp.<sup>1</sup>

This was only one of many Indiana newspapers that were violently attacked and destroyed during the Civil War. Some were attacked by groups of soldiers, and others were "mobbed" by civilian crowds. Several newspaper editors were physically assaulted or beaten by individuals, both military and civilian. Newspapers were shut down and kept from publishing editions, their editors arrested by official order. Moreover, many newspapermen operated under threat of violence to themselves, their staff, and their presses. Historians have known about many of these incidents, especially those involving newspapers supporting the Democratic Party; several such events have been recounted in the historical literature.<sup>2</sup> However, many more incidents have been unknown and overlooked, and indeed, only a fraction of the incidents involving violence or threats of violence against the Indiana press have been noted. This article will show that there were a large number of violent attacks on the press, many more than previously noted.



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