

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE MOTIVES OF RADICAL RECONSTRUCTION LEADERS:
AN HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

A THESIS

PRESENTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS

BY

SAMUEL ALLEN STREIT

AUGUST 25, 1967

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For the past one hundred years, historians have interpreted the Reconstruction period and the motives of the Radical leaders in a variety of ways. Even though most authors have attempted to be objective, their opinions have often reflected feelings as intense as those expressed by the actual participants in Reconstruction. This intensity, as well as the various interpretations of Reconstruction occurred primarily because of the authors' tendency to explain the period in relation to contemporary problems.

Writers during and just after the Reconstruction era described the period largely in sectional terms. Southern authors pictured Reconstruction as an evil age marked by gross corruption in the South, and by vindictive, selfish Radicals in Washington. Conversely, northern writers saw Reconstruction as a time when Congress attempted to peacefully restore the South to the Union and help the Negroes in their struggle for equality.

By the turn of the twentieth century, trained historians, notably the Dunning School, turned to writing about Reconstruction. Dunning and his students, who dominated Reconstruction historiography for the first three decades of the twentieth century, echoed many of the arguments of preceding years in that they damned the Radicals for selfishly invading the South and for forcing the 'innately inferior Negro into

the social and political realm of the white man.

By the 1920's, however, several historians writing in The Journal of Negro History began challenging the Dunning interpretation. These historians, who held that Reconstruction made positive contribution to southern life and who denied that the Radicals were wholly inspired by vindictive selfishness, represented the beginnings of the Revisionist interpretation of Reconstruction.

During the years following the depression, Charles A. Beard's economic interpretation of American history led several historians to explain Reconstruction in terms of economic selfishness. These authors maintained that the Radicals attempted to economically exploit the South while enabling northern capitalism to consolidate the gains it had made during the Civil War.

Also during the 1930's, Marxist historians developed an economic interpretation of Reconstruction based upon the socialistic idea of the class struggle and the rise and eventual decay of the industrial bourgeoisie. The Marxist historians believed that the early Radicals were inspired, at least partially, by humanitarianism but they agreed that these altruistic Radicals were replaced by self-seeking men who were primarily concerned with political self-perpetuation and the spread of capitalism.

By World War II, the revision of Reconstruction history

entered a new phase although the earlier major interpretations continued to find adherents. Revisionism after 1940, which emphasized the humanitarian aspect of Radical motives, resulted in large part from the growing importance of the civil rights movement. In some cases, these authors preached with such intensity that their works reflected the writing of the Radical supporters of the 1870's; thus, Reconstruction historiography by the mid-point of the twentieth century had come full circle.

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INTRODUCTION

The decade following Lee's surrender at Appomattox was one of the most significant and revolutionary in American history. These years saw the Congressional Radicals add amendments to the United States Constitution that changed the basic nature of the Union. Under the guise of reconstructing the nation, they initiated what threatened to become a social and political revolution in the southern states. However, the program that established military government in the South and threatened to confiscate the land of southern planters, stopped short of the revolutionary changes that Radical plans had portended. Following the Compromise of 1877, Reconstruction ended and with it the attempt to give political rights and land to the ex-slaves. The three constitutional amendments remained as reminders of a revolution that had failed. In the hands of the United States Supreme Court, the Fourteenth Amendment served corporate interests rather than guaranteeing Negro rights.

In the one hundred years since the end of the Civil War, the interpretation of Reconstruction history has gone through a number of different phases. The changes in Reconstruction historiography occurred in large part because of the tendency of each generation to interpret the period in terms of contemporary problems.

Sectional animosity determined the early interpretation of Reconstruction and caused the northern authors to praise

the Radical program while Southerners deprecated it with equal intensity. This sectional interpretation dominated Reconstruction historiography until the end of the nineteenth century when the desire for sectional reconciliation became more important. This desire for reconciliation led to an interpretation of Reconstruction by both northern and southern historians that stressed the vindictive selfishness and naïve impracticality of the Congressional Radicals and the unbelievably corrupt conditions of the Southern Radical governments. Current with this interpretation of Radical Reconstruction was the acceptance by historians of the racial inferiority of the Negro.

In the 1920's, several Negro historians began to challenge the dominant interpretation of the role of their race in Reconstruction. They stressed the contributions of the Negroes and denied that the period was as filled with corruption and inefficiency as many historians had painted it. The work of these Negro historians represented the beginning of the Revisionist interpretation of Reconstruction.

The depression years of the 1930's saw an increasing concern with economic questions and a number of historians discussed the Radicals and their program in terms of economic aims and their effect upon the South and the nation. The older ideas that stressed political selfishness and vindictiveness continued to find expression in the accounts of Reconstruction but they no longer predominated.

By the middle of the twentieth century, the civil rights movement that was gaining strength and becoming more successful, exerted a considerable influence upon Reconstruction historiography. Many historians who wrote in response to this movement emphasized the tragedy of Reconstruction and its failure to guarantee civil and political rights to the Negro. These historians saw as the principal legacy of the Reconstruction era the three constitutional amendments that made possible the realization of the idealistic Radical aims in the mid-twentieth century.

America's role as a world leader, as well as the civil rights movement, has also influenced historians. They have been disturbed by the conflict between the idealistic foreign policy statements of American leaders and racial discrimination in the United States. This attitude led to a reinterpretation of the humanitarian aims of the Radicals.

Implicit in any interpretation of Reconstruction is the question of whether social change can be brought about through legislation. Historians have always faced this problem when considering the Radicals' motives and deeds. Most historians who wrote prior to World War II accepted Justice Henry Brown's statement in his opinion in Plessy vs. Ferguson in 1896; "legislation is powerless to eradicate racial instincts, or to abolish distinctions based upon physical differences . . . If one race be inferior to the

other socially, the constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane." Recent historians, strongly influenced by modern anthropology, in their interpretation of the Radicals and Reconstruction agree with the statement of Chief Justice Earl Warren in Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka in 1954; "We cannot turn the clock back . . . to 1896 when Plessy vs. Ferguson was written."

CHAPTER I

SECTIONAL INTERPRETATIONS OF RADICAL MOTIVATION, 1865-1890

The literature of Reconstruction produced in the quarter of a century after the Civil War considered the period either from a northern or southern point of view. The war and its aftermath were too fresh in the minds of the participants on both sides to allow them to interpret Reconstruction dispassionately.

Northern journalists, the earliest writers to discuss Radical Reconstruction, displayed less sectionalism in their discussion than any other group of authors before 1900. Indeed, their writing often rankled with racism and political animosity toward the Radicals. Most northern authors, aside from the journalists, fervently praised Radical policies and lamented the fact that the results of Reconstruction were not permanent. These writers, many of whom were prominent in Reconstruction, favored civil rights for the Negro, the ascendancy of the Republican party, and the protective tariff. Most southern writers also betrayed their sectionalism and racial beliefs in their comments on Reconstruction. Their works condemned the Radical governments in the South and pictured the period as one of corruption and Negro domination.

Among the most widely read contemporary accounts of Radical Reconstruction were those written by northern journalists who toured the South. Unlike most northern writers,

they did not approve of Radical policies or the manner in which Reconstruction had proceeded in the South. Typical of these dissatisfied journalistic accounts were James S. Pike's The Prostrate State: South Carolina Under Negro Government and Charles Nordhoff's The Cotton States in the Spring and Summer of 1875.

Pike lived in Calais, Maine as a child. His family was prominent but had little money; as a result Pike received little formal education. He chose journalism as a career and while still a young man became the Washington correspondent of the Boston Courier. In the 1860's he became an associate editor of the New York Tribune. While writing for both papers, Pike condemned southern congressmen and southern policy; soon he was one of the favorite journalists of the abolitionists. During the Civil War Pike served as the American minister resident at The Hague. Finding this uneventful and not to his liking, he returned to the United States before the war ended. Pike devoted the rest of his life to writing books on political and financial topics.

During the early days of Reconstruction Pike was a Radical. He supported Negro suffrage but only because it would help the Republican party, and he believed for the same reason that Congress was right in barring the southern representatives from Congress in 1866. He opposed Johnson's plan of Reconstruction, and supported impeachment for a time, but during the impeachment proceedings began to change his

mind. Reversing his position, he came to doubt the validity of Negro suffrage. The Grant administration, with its corruption, particularly distressed Pike and he became a Liberal Republican. In 1873 Pike traveled to South Carolina in hope of finding material with which to discredit the Grant administration and gain popular support for the Liberal Republicans. The result of this journey was a series of articles written for the New York Tribune, republished in 1874 under the title The Prostrate State. This book, well received in both the North and South, would in time become one of the most famous of the early works dealing with Reconstruction.¹

Pike's chief criticism of Reconstruction centered on the corruption of the carpetbag governments and the Negroes. He insisted that "the rule of South Carolina should not be dignified with the name of government" because under these men it was a "morass of rottenness." Their "complete and universal" corruption "overspread the State like an inundation."²

Pike's discussion of the Negro was more vivid than his treatment of the carpetbaggers. His racism, combined with his desire to discredit the Grant administration, caused him

¹James Shepherd Pike, The Prostrate State: South Carolina Under Negro Government (New York, 1874); Robert Franklin Durden, James Shepherd Pike; Republicanism and the American Negro, 1850-1882 (Durham, N.C., 1957), 160-219.

²Pike, The Prostrate State, 26, 58, 206.

to criticize the Negro more sharply than other groups. The Negro, Pike judged, was the willing although sometimes unknowing tool of the carpetbaggers and as such bestrode the the South "like a colossus." "Sambo," as Pike often referred to the Negro, was a "small-brained" simpleton who believed "any thing . . . no matter how ridiculous." Pike contended that the Negro was the innocent cause of the South's despoliation.³

The Negroes and carpetbaggers did not act alone in causing the horrors of Reconstruction. Pike felt that the federal government was responsible for much of the corruption since so many of the offenders in the South were federal officials. He noted that the federal government made matters worse by refusing to end the gross misconduct of the carpetbag governments. Pike believed that if the federal government "would drive partisan politics into the sea, and undertake to administer Federal affairs here strictly on the basis of honesty and integrity, it might at least begin to stop corruption."⁴

Charles Nordhoff, like Pike, was a northern journalist who went South to observe and report on Reconstruction for his newspaper. Nordhoff was born in Germany, but he came to the United States as a child where he became a printer's ap-

³Ibid., 17, 40, 58, 263.

⁴Ibid., 38.

prentice. Although he served in the navy and the merchant marine, journalism was Nordhoff's choice as a career. In 1861 he became the managing editor of the New York Evening Post; in editorials and in several pamphlets Nordhoff supported the Union during the Civil War. From 1874 to 1890 he served as the New York Herald's Washington correspondent. During this period he toured the South and wrote the series of articles later published under the title, The Cotton States in the Spring and Summer of 1875.⁵

Nordhoff sympathized with the South, even though he made an attempt to be objective. He declared that the Radicals punished the South on moral grounds because Southerners had turned to their old leaders after the Civil War. Such punishment, he asserted, was wrong because morality was a religious and not a political question. He contended that it was only logical for the South to turn to the men who led her during and before the Civil War; to deny these men a place in the political arena was unjust.⁶

Nordhoff thought that the Radicals had overlooked an excellent opportunity to make political allies of the white

⁵Charles Nordhoff, The Cotton States in the Spring and Summer of 1875 (New York, 1876); republished in Burt Franklin Research and Source Works Series, no. 90 (New York, n.d.); Percy W. Bidwell, "Charles Nordhoff," Allen Johnson, et al., Dictionary of American Biography (New York, 1928-1958), XII, 548, [hereafter cited as D.A.B.]

⁶Nordhoff, The Cotton States, 11.

southern leaders. These ex-Confederates, Nordhoff maintained, were old Whigs with interests similar to the Republicans.⁷ These old Whigs acted "with the Democrats under the pressure of Federal interference" and because of "the misconduct of the Republican rulers in all these States." Had the Republicans been wise and sought the political friendship of these men "there would have been to-day a respectable and powerful Republican party."⁸

Nordhoff found Republican rule in the South distasteful. He agreed that federal interference had been necessary for a time after the Civil War so as to prevent disorder, but he believed the Radicals had maintained this interference longer than necessary. Nordhoff also felt that Radical Reconstruction had unnecessarily injured the South, for the Radical policies led to intimidation of Democrats by Republican soldiers, as well as stealing and maladministration in all the southern states, and hopeless debts in many of them. The Negro had also been damaged by Radical Reconstruction "by making him irresponsible to the opinion of his neighbors, and submitting him, in his ignorance, to the mischievous and corrupt rule of black and white demagogues."⁹

⁷Nordhoff was the first author writing about Reconstruction to mention this Republican-Whig relationship.

⁸Nordhoff, The Cotton States, 15, 16.

⁹Ibid., 11, 12.

Nordhoff pointed out that although the problem of corruption existed at the state level, the Radicals in Washington were not "without blame in this matter," for they carelessly and knowingly allowed such governments to continue without interfering. The Radicals sent corrupt appointees into the South, and chose as their southern allies, "corrupt, weak, self-seeking" men. Nordhoff charged that the Radicals had "confided the federal power and patronage to men, many of whom would to-day be in State-prisons if they had their dues." Indeed, Nordhoff saw this "long-continued political disturbance" as the only factor standing in the way of a prosperous future for the South.¹⁰

In 1877, when Radical Reconstruction had come to an end, Henry Wilson published The History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America. Since he was an abolitionist during the 1840's and 1850's, and a Radical Republican during the Civil War and Reconstruction periods, Wilson wrote his book as a reflection and a defense of his own ideas and actions. His work represented an attack on the slave power conspiracy as the cause of the Civil War and served as a means of vindicating Radical aims.

Wilson, in true Horatio Alger fashion, rose from indentured laborer to United States Senator and Vice-President. He became a bitter opponent of slavery after tour-

¹⁰Ibid., 24, 25.

ing the South in the 1830's. This influenced both his political career and his writing. From 1840 to 1855, Wilson served in the Massachusetts legislature where he became known for his denunciation of a conspiracy on the part of the slave power to take control of the federal government. He continued to warn against southern influence after his election to the United States Senate in 1855. During the Civil War, as chairman of the Senate committee on military affairs, Wilson cast his lot with the Radical Republicans. He became a leader of the Radical faction which urged Lincoln to make emancipation of the slaves a war aim. Following the South's defeat, Wilson and the other Radicals opposed both Lincoln's and Johnson's plans of Reconstruction and set about to substitute one of their own.¹¹

Wilson's attitude toward Radical Reconstruction, although generally favorable, was also somewhat critical because he felt that much had been left unfinished. He indicated that "marvellous and radical changes had taken place. And yet what changes remain to be effected, more marvellous and radical still. Whether or not these changes came about, Wilson believed, would determine if "what has been accomplished is to be regarded as a blessing or a curse."¹²

¹¹Henry Wilson, History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America (3 Vols. Boston, 1877); G.H. Haynes, "Henry Wilson," D.A.B., XX, 322-325.

¹²Wilson, History of the Slave Power, III, 614, 630.

Even though Wilson admitted that the Radical program was imperfect, he defended Radical Reconstruction and its leaders largely in altruistic terms. He declared that the Radicals were "determined that by no neglect of theirs should the freedmen fail of being confirmed in the full possession of that wonderful deliverance that had been . . . vouchsafed them." Recognizing that the Negroes were loyal to the Union during the Civil War, Wilson felt that the Republican party could not conceive of "leaving them unprotected, the victims of enemies who hated them."¹³

Wilson admitted reluctantly that some Republicans acted from political motives, but he denied the Democratic charge that they wanted to remain in power solely for their own benefit. Wilson claimed that the Republican party was "committed to 'equality of rights and privilege'" and was bound "to make the Constitution and laws of the country in har ony with its sublime creed." He added, "it was patriotism and not party, the country and not Republicanism that were the watchwords and inspiration of their course."¹⁴

Another Radical Republican Congressman, John A. Logan, expressed his views on Reconstruction in a book entitled The Great Conspiracy: Its Origins and History. Logan, one of the most bitterly partisan of the Radicals, continued to

¹³Ibid., 607-610, 616.

¹⁴Ibid., 673, 680.

wave the bloody shirt long after most other Republicans. Although trained in the law, Logan spent most of his life as a soldier and politician. He served in the Illinois legislature during the 1850's and in 1858, went to the United States House of Representatives as an anti-Lecompton Democrat. However, his Unionist sympathies caused him to leave the Democratic party in 1860, and to fight in the Union army. Logan returned to Congress as a Republican in 1866. Soon he became a leader of the Radical faction and avidly served their political interests for the next twenty years. In the presidential election of 1884, Logan was James G. Blaine's running mate. The defeat of the Blaine-Logan ticket by Grover Cleveland influenced Logan when he wrote The Great Conspiracy two years later.¹⁵

Like Wilson, Logan found the cause of the Civil War in a slave power conspiracy and Reconstruction he saw as an effort to prevent the conspiracy from reasserting itself. He agreed with Wilson that the Radicals were concerned with the plight of the Negro, but he did not emphasize this point. Instead, he believed that the Radicals were more interested in holding back the resurgence of the political power of the South.

¹⁵John Alexander Logan, The Great Conspiracy: Its Origins and History (New York, 1886); George Francis Dawson, Life and Services of General John A. Logan as Soldier and Statesman (Chicago and New York, 1887), 104-307; Frederick L. Paxson, "John A. Logan," D.A.B., XI, 363-365.

Logan felt dissatisfied with Radical Reconstruction because it had not been able to prevent the return of Southerners to Congress. Failure to reconstruct the South properly led to the Republican defeat in 1864. If the Radicals had been more stern with the South between 1865 and 1876, the country would not have been turned over to the Democrats. But the Radical party Logan stated, had "acted from its heart, instead of its head. It was merciful, forgiving and magnanimous. In the magnificent sweep of its generosity to the erring son, it failed to insure . . . exact justice." As a result, the "active and malignant minds" of the southern leaders were left free to plot "a future triumph for the 'Lost Cause.'"¹⁶

Aside from political reasons, Logan believed that the South should have been barred from Congress because it advocated free trade. Logan passionately championed the protective tariff, and he believed a southern return to Congress would restore "those pernicious doctrines of Free-Trade . . . would again check and drag down the robust expansion of manufactures and commerce" in the North.¹⁷

Logan remained discouraged as to the nation's future as long as it remained in Democratic hands. He predicted possible reenslavement of the Negro, rampant free trade and

¹⁶Logan, The Great Conspiracy, 656, 671.

¹⁷Ibid., 656.

governmental corruption. The only salvation, Logan declared, was the return of the Republicans to power.

The third Radical Republican statesman to write extensively about Reconstruction was James G. Blaine who published Twenty Years of Congress. Blaine studied law, but his interest centered on politics. He was very active in the Republican party from its inception. He served as a member of the Maine legislature and in 1863, became one of Maine's representatives to Congress. From 1869 to 1875, he held the office of Speaker of the House. During Reconstruction Blaine supported Negro suffrage, but he did not strictly adhere to either Stevens' or Sumner's Reconstruction policies. Although he opposed the General Amnesty Bill of 1875, he never exhibited bitterness toward the South; he did not support some of the more coercive Reconstruction measures. The Republican party considered Blaine as a presidential nominee in both 1876 and 1880, but passed him over because of his implication in a railroad scandal. After 1876, Blaine served as United States Senator from Maine and as Secretary of State. Finally in 1884, Blaine became the Republican choice for the Presidency, but he lost to Grover Cleveland.¹⁸

¹⁸James G. Blaine, Twenty Years of Congress From Lincoln to Garfield (2 Vols., Norwich, Conn., 1884-1886); David Saville Muzzey, James G. Blaine, A Political Idol of Other Days (New York, 1934), 12-25, 42-350; Edward Stanwood, James Gillespie Blaine (Boston, 1905), 61-295; Carl Russell Fish, "James G. Blaine," D.A.B., II, 322-329.

Blaine's Twenty Years of Congress was the most detailed of the early works that defended Radical Reconstruction. This book, the first volume of which appeared in the spring of 1884, was an effort by Blaine to make himself attractive to the Republican nominating convention that met in June. Thus Blaine pictured the Radicals and the Republicans in a favorable light.

The Radicals, Blaine stated, "overcame the numbers of the opposition . . . lifted their associates from the slough of prejudice and led them out of the darkness of tradition." By such actions, Blaine felt that the Radicals had made Reconstruction a relative success despite the resurgence of the Democratic party in the South. Blaine declared that President Johnson's plan of Reconstruction had regrettably led to necessarily firmer action by the Radicals. Indeed, the Radical course was firm to the point of severity because it could not permit the South, with Johnson's blessing, to come back on its own terms and damage the safety of the nation and the future of the Negro.¹⁹

Blaine readily admitted that political motives were highly important to the Radicals, but he added that the South had forced this attitude of self-preservation upon them. He warned that "the Southern States which had rushed into a rebellion so wicked, so causeless, and so destruc-

¹⁹Blaine, Twenty Years of Congress, II, 250, 264, 421.

tive should not be allowed to resume their places of authority in the Union" particularly since there was the possibility that they would undo the Radicals' work. The South "should not be permitted to oppress the negro population and use them merely for an enlarged Congressional power to the white men who had precipitated the rebellion." He further asserted that "the North believed, and believed wisely, that a poor man, an ignorant man, and a black man, who was thoroughly loyal, was a safer and a better voter than a rich man, an educated man, and a white man, who, in his heart, was disloyal to the Union."²⁰

Frederick Douglass was an outstanding example of the loyal black men of whom Blaine spoke. Douglass, the most prominent Negro who wrote about Reconstruction, recorded his observations in 1882, in an autobiography entitled The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass Written by Himself.²¹ Douglass spent his youth in bondage on a Maryland plantation, but he early sought the freedom offered by the North. His attempt at flight proved successful, and once he arrived in the North, Douglass made himself useful to the abolitionists. He became widely known for his speeches and writings which graphically described the rigors of slavery

²⁰Ibid., 264, 303-304.

²¹This was Douglass' second autobiography. For the period of his early life this autobiography was copied verbatim from the earlier one entitled My Bondage and My Freedom (New York, 1856).

and the blessings of freedom. Throughout the Civil War, Douglass sought through his speeches and writing to fire popular indignation against slavery, to inspire support in behalf of the Union, and to persuade Negroes to enlist in the Union army. After 1865 Douglass devoted himself to efforts to secure civil rights for the Negro and for the nation's women. He became a much sought after lecturer on both topics. His career culminated in his appointment as United States Marshal of the District of Columbia in 1876, and as Minister to Haiti in 1889. His influence declined after he married a white woman in 1884.²²

In his book, most of which was a reminiscence, Douglass described Reconstruction in glowing terms. He felt that the Radicals were right in assuming control of the South because "until it shall be safe to leave the lamb in the hold of the lion, the laborer in the power of the capitalist, the poor in the hands of the rich, it will not be safe to leave a newly emancipated people completely in the power of their former masters." He added, "the sceptre of power had passed from the old slave and rebellious States to the free and loyal States and that hereafter the loyal North . . . must dictate the policy and control

²²Frederick Douglass, The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass Written by Himself (Hartford, 1882); Philip S. Foner, Frederick Douglass, A Biography (New York, 1964), 15-182, 235-350; Benjamin Quarles, Frederick Douglass (Washington, D.C., 1948), 222-301.

the destiny of the republic."²³

Douglass treated the leaders of Radical Reconstruction in a very cursory manner. However, whenever he did refer to them, he invariably described them in favorable terms. Charles Sumner, Douglass related, abounded in "eloquence, learning, and conclusive reasoning" and Henry Wilson was one of the "foremost friends of the colored race in this country." Douglass implied through his laudatory descriptions of the Radicals, that they were motivated by humanitarian ideals. He ignored the possibility suggested by some of his contemporaries, that the Radicals had been inspired, at least in part, by political or economic motives.²⁴

Douglass' writings and example during the 1850's influenced a young Pennsylvania Negro, George Washington Williams. Inspired to do something for his race, Williams joined the Union army when only fourteen years old. He was wounded during the course of the war and later became the sergeant-major of his regiment. After the war Williams studied for the ministry, and in 1874, was ordained as a Baptist minister. He also studied law, and was a journalist for a short time. In 1879, he became the first Negro to sit in the Ohio legislature. He later served as Minis-

²³Douglass, The Life and Times, 464, 485.

²⁴Ibid., 469, 511.

ter to Haiti.²⁵

Williams in 1883, wrote a work entitled A History of the Negro Race in America From 1619 to 1880. The account of Reconstruction in this book was surprisingly critical of the Radicals. Williams endorsed the spirit of Radical Reconstruction, but he felt that it would have been more successful if it had been conducted differently. He believed the Radicals had been sincerely humanitarian in their motives, but he felt that they had failed to develop a plan to achieve their objectives; "Congress seemed to be unequal to the task of perfecting a proper plan for reconstructing the Southern States," Williams asserted. The principal blunder of the Radicals, according to Williams, lay in their failure to retain military control of the South; instead they turned Reconstruction over to carpetbaggers, scalawags, and Negroes, none of whom impressed Williams as fit to rule. Some of the carpetbaggers, Williams alleged, "went South with fair ability and good morals; there they lost the latter article and never found it; while many more went South to get all they could and keep all they got." He believed the scalawags were "the poor white trash of the South," and the Negro was simply

²⁵George Washington Williams, History of the Negro Race in America From 1619 to 1880 (2 Vols., New York, 1883); William E. Smith, "George Washington Williams," D.A.B., XX, 263-264; John Hope Franklin, "George Washington Williams, Historian," The Journal of Negro History, XXXI (January, 1946), 60-90.

too ignorant to have a voice in government. Williams noted regarding the freedman, that "the government gave him a statute-book when he ought to have had the spelling book; placed him in the legislature when he ought to have been in the school-house." Williams concluded that "if the Negro is industrious, frugal, saving, diligent in labor, and laborious in study," he could assume "normal relations in politics." Then, Williams maintained, "he will be respected" and sought out by white men.²⁶

Southern writers who recorded their observations and ideas about Reconstruction seldom praised it. This group of authors, many of whom were ex-Confederate statesmen and soldiers, generally disagreed with all aspects of the Radical plan and foresaw a discouraging future.

Alexander H. Stephens, the Georgian who became the Vice-President of the Confederacy, presented his interpretation of the Radicals in A Constitutional View of the Late War Between the States, the first major work about Reconstruction written by a high ranking ex-Confederate. Even though he consistently and staunchly upheld states rights, Stephens had urged compromise in 1861, when he objected to Georgia's drive toward secession. While serving as the Confederate Vice-President, Stephens' fondness for states rights brought him into conflict with the centraliz-

²⁶Williams, History of the Negro Race, II, 108, 381, 382, 527, 528.

ing trend of the Davis administration. This disagreement reached such proportions, that Stephens returned to his home in Georgia, from whence he aimed occasional barbs of criticism at the Richmond government. After the Civil War, along with other high Confederate officials, he spent several months in prison; the Radicals also denied him a seat in the United States Senate in 1866. Stephens once again retired to his plantation, but in 1873, he returned to Congress where he became noted for his frail health and constant support of states rights.²⁷

Stephens wrote his book immediately following the Civil War as a vindication of states rights, the Confederacy, and the part he played in it. In his book, Stephens disapproved of Johnson's plan of Reconstruction, but he preferred the Presidential plan to that of Congress.²⁸

The catastrophe of Radical Reconstruction, Stephens believed, was that the Radicals were not interested in rehabilitating the South. Instead, "the Monster Principle of ultimate complete Centralism . . . was their goal." Stephens felt that this drive for centralization, which was "organized on the model of a Jacobin Junta," was motivated

²⁷Alexander H. Stephens, A Constitutional View of the Late War Between the States (2 Vols., Philadelphia, 1868-1870); Rudolph von Abele, Alexander H. Stephens, A Biography (New York, 1946), 50-250.

²⁸Stephens, A Constitutional View, II, 637, 638.

by the Radicals' desire for party perpetuation. He declared that the Radicals were laboring "for their own special advantage and power." They were achieving their goal moreover, by dishonorable methods. Stephens warned that the legislation enacted by the Radicals was not designed with the Negro in mind, but was merely "another advanced step, stealthily taken, under false colors" to consolidate governmental power for their own benefit. Stephens concluded that "these monstrous Reconstruction Measures, with all their enormities and fatal tendencies towards ultimate complete Centralism and Empire" were destroying "every vestige of Civil Liberty" and "every existing legal barrier for the protection of life and property in ten states."²⁹

Richard Taylor, another Confederate leader, discussed the Civil War and Reconstruction in Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War. Taylor, the son of Zachary Taylor, spent his boyhood at various frontier army camps. He studied in Europe and at Harvard and Yale and eventually settled in Louisiana. His political background was Whig, but he became a Democrat when the Whig party died in 1860. Following Louisiana's secession from the Union, which he actively supported, Taylor served in the Confederate army as a Major General. He led very

²⁹Ibid., 639, 641, 648, 650.

effective guerilla attacks against the Union armies and was one of the last Confederate commanders to surrender in 1865. The remainder of his life Taylor spent in New Orleans and New York where he was an administrator of the Peabody Educational Fund.³⁰

Taylor's Destruction and Reconstruction, published in 1879, recorded his observations on secession, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. Taylor was thoroughly disenchan-
ted with Reconstruction "as it was called," and he blamed the Radicals for the problems arising from it. He stated that Congress made "a whipping-post of the South, and in-
flicts upon it every humiliation that malignity could de-
vise." Taylor deplored the violence which occurred in the South during Reconstruction, but he believed the Radicals were responsible, for "when ignorant negroes, instigated by pestilent emissaries went beyond endurance, the whites killed; and this was to be expected." Not only did Taylor blame the Radicals for the problems of Reconstruction, but he said they used these problems for their own advantage; the Radicals rejoiced over such incidents as the New Or-
leans riot of 1866, because they "derived profit from these acts."³¹

³⁰Richard Taylor, Destruction and Reconstruction: Personal Experiences of the Late War (New York, 1879); Wendell H. Stephenson, "Richard Taylor," D.A.B., XVIII, 340.

³¹Taylor, Destruction and Reconstruction, 249, 250, 252, 255.

Taylor was not always consistent in his characterization of the Radical leaders. He said Stevens was the "Radical Amaryllis" who was "deformed in body and temper like Caliban" and cared only for the survival of the Republican party. Sumner, however, Taylor considered to be a pedant,³² yet "the purest and most sincere man of his party. A lover, nay, a devotee of liberty."³³

Taylor worried about the immediate future of the South. He felt that even though the South had managed to remain intact in spite of Reconstruction, her problems were not over. The "old breed of statesmen," Taylor declared, "has largely passed away" leaving demagogues in public office who "grovel deeper and deeper in the mire in pursuit of ignorant votes." He added that "this poison, the influence of three fourths of a million negro voters, will speedily ascend and sap vigor and intelligence" in the South."³⁴

Hilary A. Herbert, also an ex-Confederate soldier and one of the leading "Redeemer" politicians of Alabama, in 1890, edited and contributed to an anthology entitled Why the Solid South? Or Reconstruction and its Results. In

³²This is a rather strange attitude for Taylor to take since his Destruction and Reconstruction was pedantic in the extreme.

³³Taylor, Destruction and Reconstruction, 243, 244, 245.

³⁴Ibid., 269.

this work Herbert displayed as much concern about the period as either Stephens or Taylor, although he wrote over a decade after the end of Reconstruction. Herbert was descended from a planter family. After attending the Universities of Alabama and Virginia, Herbert practiced law in Greenville, Alabama. He fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War, and because of his outstanding battle record, was promoted to lieutenant colonel. After the Civil War Herbert returned to his law practice and soon became a leader of the group attempting to restore the government of Alabama to southern men. By 1874 this "Redeemer" movement was successful and in 1877, Herbert became a member of Alabama's delegation to the United States House of Representatives. Herbert served as the chairman of the House committee on naval affairs, and in 1893, became Grover Cleveland's Secretary of the Navy. While holding this post he significantly enlarged and strengthened the Navy.³⁵

Herbert edited his book to unite opposition to the Federal Elections Bill of 1890.³⁶ The method employed by

³⁵Hilary A. Herbert, Why the Solid South? Or Reconstruction and its Results (Baltimore, 1890); Hilary Herbert, "The Conditions of the Reconstruction Problem," Atlantic Monthly, LXXXVII (February, 1901), 145-157; Hal-
lie Farmer, "Hilary Herbert," D.A.B., VIII, 572-573.

³⁶The Federal Elections Bill of 1890 provided that federal officials should be appointed to election boards in any part of the country if 500 voters in a district so petitioned. These officials could pass upon the qualifications of voters and accept ballots which were refused by local officials. Karl Schriftgiesser, The Gentleman from Massachusetts: Henry Cabot Lodge (Boston, 1945), p.n. 106.

Herbert and the other contributors was to praise the Redeemer governments by which the South ruled itself, and to discredit the earlier Radical governments. In many respects the ideas in Herbert's work foreshadowed those of the Dunning School which would rise to prominence in the early years of the twentieth century.

Herbert stated that the Radicals in their drive for power had abused the South. By late 1865, "party spirit had . . . gotten far away from that lofty plane on which Lincoln, the statesman, had stood." This Radical defection from high ideals had occurred, because "Republican leaders felt that a crisis in the history of their party had come and many of them were ready to go to any extreme" in order to preserve their ascendancy. One of these extreme measures, Herbert stated, was allowing the Negro to vote.³⁷ In an article published in the Atlantic Monthly in 1901, he pointed out that the Radicals used the post-war plight of the Negro for political purposes, and thus he became the "handmaid of acrimony and political ardor." Herbert said that not only was the purpose behind Negro suffrage dishonorable and harmful to the South, but that it also was harmful to the Negro. It made him believe he could live without working, and thus made "a parasite of a plant that needed to strike its roots deep into the earth." The

³⁷Herbert, Why the Solid South? 12, 27.

problem should have been left in southern hands, for the South better understood the needs of the Negro.³⁸

Herbert was critical of corruption in the carpetbag governments. He held that these governments were "not honestly and carefully administered." He disapproved of the Radical legislatures where "illiterate office-holders" had engaged in bribery and fraud. "There was nothing . . . but wretchedness and humiliation and shame and crime begetting crime There was no single redeeming feature except the heroic determination of the better classes" to rid themselves of Radical rule.³⁹

In a chapter entitled "Sunrise," Herbert described how the Redeemers saved the South from the ravages of Radical rule. He noted that there was a "most startling contrast between . . . good government" of the Redeemers, and the bad government of the Radicals. The difference could most easily be seen in the low taxes and the lack of violence.⁴⁰

Herbert believed that if the Force Bill of 1890 passed Congress, all the progress of the South would be in vain and that the South would regress to a situation similar to Radical Reconstruction. He urged the American people to join with him and the South in defeating this bill.

³⁸Herbert, "The Conditions of the Reconstruction Problem," 148, 157.

³⁹Herbert, Why the Solid South? 51, 54, 430.

⁴⁰Ibid., 431.

A second Redeemer politician to write of Reconstruction was Oran Milo Roberts of Texas, who wrote Our Federal Relations from a Southern View of Them. Roberts was born in South Carolina and grew to manhood in Alabama. He attended the University of Alabama and practiced law there until 1841, when he moved to Texas. In Texas, Roberts soon became an important political figure. He held the posts of district attorney, district judge, and associate justice of the Texas Supreme Court. He was President of the Texas secession convention, and during the Civil War served as a colonel in the Confederate army. As in the case of Stephens, the Radicals denied him a seat in the United States Senate in 1866. Roberts returned to Texas where he became the chief justice of the supreme court. After serving as governor of Texas from 1878 to 1882, he became professor of law at the University of Texas.⁴¹

Roberts published Our Federal Relations in 1892. This book was a compilation of lectures and addresses which he delivered between 1867 and 1891. Some he wrote in an effort to persuade Congress to seat the Texas delegation in 1867; others of them joined Herbert's outcry against the Election Bill of 1890. All of them however, were quite similar to Stephens' Constitutional View in their repeated

⁴¹Oran Milo Roberts, Our Federal Relations from a Southern View of Them (Austin, Tex., 1892); Charles Shirley Potts, "Oran Milo Roberts," D.A.B., XVI, 13-14.

protest against the centralizing tendency of the federal government.

Roberts disapproved of these centralizing aims of the Radicals and of their objective, "a great consolidated republic based upon universal political equality, without distinction of race or color." He declared that the Radicals had unconstitutionally freed the Negroes, voted them as Republicans, passed abhorrent legislation and amendments, and impeached Andrew Johnson, solely to establish a "self-protective, self-developing empire of America with a central controlling head."⁴²

Radical Reconstruction as carried out in the southern states also displeased Roberts. He wrote that lawful government expired "quickly in view of a drawn sword and a substitute spoken into life by a military officer." Such action by the Radicals, was "a notable example of the incompetency of a government placed over a people without their consent It was the case of the government against the people."⁴³

Roberts saw the Election Bill of 1890, as a final blow at states rights because it dispensed "with the aid of the States" in the election of Congressmen. He urged his readers "to keep the government to its original foun-

⁴²Roberts, Our Federal Relations, 97.

⁴³Ibid., 107, 108.

dation" but his hopes of success were slight.⁴⁴

Those who wrote accounts of Reconstruction in the decades following the Civil War had one very important element in common; they all had lived through the period and in varying degrees participated in the events surrounding the Civil War and its aftermath. They based their writing on their observations and experiences rather than on historical research and as a result frequently incorporated their prejudices into their works. Their interpretations of Reconstruction depended upon the section in which they lived, their attitude toward the Negro race, their political hopes and fears, and their economic interests.

By the 1890's, a new generation of Americans had begun to study and interpret the Reconstruction period. This new group often borrowed the ideas, stereotypes and in some cases the writing style of the men who wrote in the preceding period. However, the changing nature of America's role in the world, the changing attitude toward the Negro, and the reconciliation between the sections led to a reinterpretation of the Reconstruction era acceptable to both Northerners and Southerners.

⁴⁴Ibid., 8, 16, (appendix 2).

CHAPTER II

DUNNING SCHOOL PREDOMINANCE OF RECONSTRUCTION HISTORIOGRAPHY, 1890-1920

Historical writing in the period from the 1890's to the First World War reflected several important changes in the way in which Americans interpreted the Reconstruction era and the motives of the Radical leaders. Racial theories, stemming in part from the works of Charles Darwin, led Americans, both northern and southern, to accept Negro inferiority as fact. This, plus United States experiences overseas with alien races, caused American historians to reassess the goals of the Radicals during Reconstruction. The 1890's also marked the advent of the professionally trained historian, who, along with dedicated and talented amateurs, went to the sources, and after considerable research produced studies that were vastly different from the emotional and undocumented accounts of the earlier authors. The sectionalism that had been so evident in earlier histories began to fade, and in its place arose an almost unanimous sympathy for the plight of the South during Reconstruction.

William A. Dunning and his students represented the culmination of the trend toward a scholarly interpretation of Reconstruction history. For over forty years, Dunning's application of scientific and scholarly methods, and the ideas which he brought to his discussion, greatly influenced writing about Reconstruction. As early as 1897, when Dun-

ning published his Essays on the Civil War and Reconstruction, he was performing meticulous research, documenting his work, and divorcing his prejudices as much as possible from his writing. As a result, this early volume of essays and his Reconstruction, Political and Economic, which he published in 1907, exhibited fewer undocumented statements and less of the polemical bias of many of his predecessors and contemporaries. Still, Dunning's work reflected his times in that it condemned Reconstruction as all bad, and accepted the theory of Negro inferiority. Dunning was born into an affluent New Jersey family. His father influenced him to pursue a scholarly career. After receiving his Ph.D. in history from Dartmouth College in 1885, he joined the faculty at Columbia University. From 1913, until his retirement in 1922 he occupied Columbia's Francis Lieber chair of history.¹

Dunning criticized Radical Reconstruction although he felt a grudging admiration for the Radicals' tactics. He wrote that "the fate of the Southern white . . . may excite our commiseration; but the mechanism by which the end was achieved must command an appreciation," because it was so

¹William A. Dunning, Essays on the Civil War and Reconstruction (New York, 1897); republished (New York, 1931); Dunning, Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865-1877 (New York, 1907); J.G. de Roulhac Hamilton, "William Archibald Dunning," Allen Johnson, et al. (eds.), Dictionary of American Biography (New York, 1928-1958), V, 523-524. [hereafter cited as D.A.B.]

"refreshingly efficient."²

Like many of his contemporaries, Dunning felt that the Radicals acted because of a combination of selfish and humanitarian motives. He declared that "the leading motive of the reconstruction had been, at the inception of the process, to insure to the freedmen an effective protection of their civil rights." However, "by the time the process was complete, a very important, if not the most important part had been played by the desire . . . to secure to the Republican party the permanent control of several Southern 'states.'" Everything beyond that, Dunning thought, was incidental, even though Charles Sumner and his followers continued to proclaim "in season and out, the trite generalities of the Rights of Man."³

Dunning graphically described the individual Radical leaders and their motives. He saw Stevens as "truculent, vindictive and cynical," while Sumner was the perfect type of "that narrow fanaticism which erudition and egotism combine to produce." Henry Wilson, as Dunning characterized him, was never distracted from "his count of the votes to be gained for his party"; George Boutwell epitomized the "hard, merciless type which the Puritan conscience makes

²Dunning, Essays on Reconstruction, 248, 299.

³Ibid., 251, 353.

of a mediocre man."⁴

Dunning realized that much rebuilding was necessary in the South after the Civil War, but he felt that the "financial burdens of these enterprises was very great," because of inefficient planning by incompetent legislatures. He added, however, that this honest depletion of the state treasuries did not entirely account for the financial difficulties in the South; "corruption played equal parts" with inefficiency. He deplored the dishonest "private prosperity among radical politicians of high and low degree," while the southern states were in many cases virtually bankrupt. Dunning concluded that this combination of inefficiency, extravagance, and corruption created an intolerable situation in the South, especially when it became involved with the Negro problem.⁵

Dunning's discussion of the Negro reflected his association at Columbia University with Professor John W. Burgess, a leading exponent of Anglo-Saxon superiority. Dunning admired the work of Burgess, particularly his Reconstruction and the Constitution, which Dunning felt dealt "incisively with the legal and political aspects of the period." The Negroes, Dunning wrote, were as responsible for the corruption as the whites; they "were very frequently

⁴Dunning, Reconstruction, 86, 87, 88.

⁵Ibid., 204, 206-207, 208, 209.

of a type which acquired and practiced the tricks and knavery rather than the useful arts of politics." Dunning believed the Negro was marked by "ignorance and stupidity," and should not have taken part in ruling the South.⁶

Dunning acknowledged that the Redeemers' "exploitation of the poverty, ignorance, credulity and general childishness of the blacks" was a chief contributing factor to their success in wresting the South from Radical control. Although he did not approve of many of the tactics used by the Redeemers, Dunning believed that they were no worse than those of the Radicals and that the end justified the means. He saw a better future for the South after the Redeemers took control, although he believed that the racial problem would continue to plague that region and the nation. He doubted, however, that "the historian . . . will ever have to record a reversal" of the prevailing tendency toward disenfranchisement of the Negro.⁷

Dunning's best known student, and the only one to produce a general study of Reconstruction, was Walter Lynwood Fleming. In 1905, Fleming published Reconstruction in Alabama, one of the most influential of the state studies. The Documentary History of Reconstruction, which appeared

⁶Dunning, Essays on Reconstruction, 354, 355; Dunning, Reconstruction, 249.

⁷Dunning, Essays on Reconstruction, 375, 385.

the following year, and The Sequel of Appomattox, which he published in 1919, extended Fleming's coverage of Reconstruction to all of the southern states. Fleming was born on an Alabama plantation into a family that had been active in the Civil War. His father's stories about the war and Reconstruction ignited the boy's interest in this period. After graduating from the Alabama Polytechnic Institute in 1896, Fleming enlisted and fought in the Spanish-American War. In 1900, he went to Columbia University to study under Dunning and received his Ph.D. in 1904. He subsequently taught at West Virginia University, Louisiana State University, and Vanderbilt University.⁸

Fleming's southern origins and attitudes colored his treatment of Reconstruction, but his work was seldom polemical in its criticism of the Radicals, the carpetbaggers, or the Negro. Nevertheless, he was thoroughly critical of Reconstruction. He noted that all of the Radicals were at least partially inspired by partisan motives, but some were moved by personal hostility as well, or by humanitarianism,

⁸Walter Lynwood Fleming, Reconstruction in Alabama (New York, 1905); Fleming, Documentary History of Reconstruction (2 Vols., New York, 1905); republished (New York, 1950); Fleming, Sequel of Appomattox A Chronicle of the Reunion of the States (New Haven, 1919); Fletcher M. Green, "Walter Lynwood Fleming, Historian of Reconstruction," Journal of Southern History, II (November, 1936), 497-527; William C. Binkley, "The Contributions of Walter Lynwood Fleming to Southern Scholarship," Journal of Southern History, V (May, 1939), 143-154.

which they "reserved entirely for the blacks." He stressed, however, that all of the Radicals, no matter what else moved them, were concerned "for the perpetuation of the Republican party." Fleming added that their success was not entirely of their own making; they were aided by apathetic Southerners and the "mistakes, bad judgement, and bad manners on the part of the President."⁹

Fleming disapproved of Radical Reconstruction at the state as well as at the federal level. The history of the Radical governments in the South, he wrote, was one of fraud and corruption in politics, and federal government support of objectionable administrations. The governments established in the South by the carpetbaggers and scalawags were characterized by fraud, "extravagant expenditure, heavier taxes, increase of the bonded debt and the depression of property values."¹⁰

Like Dunning, Fleming accepted the prevailing concept of Negro inferiority. He believed that the Negro became involved in Radical Reconstruction as a pawn of the carpetbaggers. When the Negro was made the political equal of "people higher in the scale of civilization," the result was a vexing race problem. Fleming held that if emancipation had

⁹Fleming, Sequel of Appomattox, 121, 122, 123, 124.

¹⁰Fleming, Documentary History, II, 33, 37; Fleming, Sequel of Appomattox, 229, 230-231.

been a gradual program, combined with a system of apprenticeship, it might have proved successful. The Radicals, however, did not follow such a plan, but allowed the Negro to do as he pleased so long as he voted Republican. Under such conditions, warned Fleming, the Negro's natural disposition to indolence and dishonesty prevailed and irritated the race problem even more.¹¹

In addition to Fleming's Reconstruction in Alabama, Dunning students published between 1901 and 1915, accounts of Reconstruction in four other southern states. There were also eight state studies of Reconstruction published between 1898 and 1926, which, although not written by Dunning students, were clearly in the same tradition. As a result, every southern state was the subject of at least one monograph in the manner of Dunning. In this way, the Dunning interpretation dominated Reconstruction historiography into the 1920's. It pictured Radical Reconstruction as an evil instigated by selfish partisans who made use of an inferior race.¹²

¹¹Ibid., 92.

¹²Monographs by Dunning students were: James W. Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi (New York, 1901); Walter Lynwood Fleming, Reconstruction in Alabama (New York, 1905); Mildred Thompson, Reconstruction in Georgia, Economic, Social, Political, 1865-1872 (New York, 1915); J.G. de Roulhac Hamilton, Reconstruction in North Carolina (New York, 1914); William Watson Davis, Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida (New York, 1913); Other state studies similar to those of the

The value of the works expressing the Dunning interpretation varied. They all adopted a basic interpretational framework that had already gained general acceptance but they differed among themselves in both the quality, emphasis and tone of their work. However, most of them were far less biased than the writings of Burgess and James Ford Rhodes.

William P. Trent, in an article entitled "A New South View of Reconstruction," which he contributed to The Sewanee Review in 1901, viewed Reconstruction as did Dunning. Trent, a member of a distinguished Virginia family, grew up during Reconstruction and suffered financial adversity because of post-Civil War conditions in the South. After attending the University of Virginia, Trent continued his studies in history under Herbert Baxter Adams at the Johns Hopkins University. After receiving his Ph.D. in 1888, Trent joined the faculty of the University of the South, where he founded The Sewanee Review. In his biography of

Dunning students' were: Ella Lonn, Reconstruction in Louisiana After 1868 (New York, 1918); John Rose Ficklen, Reconstruction in Louisiana (through 1868) (Baltimore, 1910); James Walter Fertig, The Secession and Reconstruction of Tennessee (Chicago, 1898); Hamilton J. Eckenrode, The Political History of Virginia during the Reconstruction (Baltimore, 1904); John S. Reynolds, Reconstruction in South Carolina, 1865-1877 (Columbia, S.C., 1905); Charles W. Ramsdell, Reconstruction in Texas (New York, 1910); Thomas Starling Staples, Reconstruction in Arkansas 1865-1874 (New York, 1923); David Yancey Thomas, Arkansas in War and Reconstruction, 1861-1874 (Little Rock, 1926).

William Gillmore Simms, published in 1892, Trent ventured the opinion that the Civil War was caused by slavery rather than states rights. This resulted in criticism, which in part, led Trent to leave the South in 1900, and accept a teaching position at Columbia University as a colleague of Dunning.¹³

Although Trent entitled his article "A New South View of Reconstruction," he presented little in the way of new interpretation. It did differ from older works however, in that he used scholarly methods in his writing and was less harsh in his discussion of the Radicals. Trent believed that the main problem of Reconstruction was that it had been too doctrinaire and too partisan. "In these two words we have the source of a generation's woes," he declared. He added that many of the Radicals "were thoroughly honest and well-meaning in their views but . . . were totally ignorant" of the situation in the South, and were too doctrinaire to listen to Southerners who cautioned them. Because of their doctrinaire ideas, the Radicals forcibly gave suffrage and equal rights to the Negro, thus injuring both the white and the Negro. Trent added, however, that the Radicals were not solely inspired by their devotion to helping the Negro; they

¹³William P. Trent, "A New South View of Reconstruction," The Sewanee Review, IX (January, 1901), 13-29; Franklin T. Walker, "William P. Trent," D.A.B., XXII, 666-667.

had selfish motives as well. These selfish Radicals irritated the situation even more, when they combined their party aspirations with a desire to punish the South. Such punitive desires were natural, he felt, but that did not make them any more acceptable. The result of this partisan spirit was the erection of southern tyrannies which took the form of "legislative carnivals of corruption."¹⁴

The contemporary belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority strongly influenced Trent. He held that the Negro, because of his ignorance, became the dupe of the carpetbaggers during Reconstruction. Furthermore the future of the Negro in the "new South" was bleak indeed. Trent felt that once the area became industrialized, "their elimination will be a comparatively painless one."¹⁵

John W. Burgess was another colleague of Dunning at Columbia University who wrote on Reconstruction. His Reconstruction and the Constitution, although written nearly forty years after he left his native Tennessee, still reflected a strong sympathy for the South. Burgess' parents, even though slave owners, were strong Unionists during the Civil War, and their influence on Burgess caused him to join the Union army in 1864. After the war, Burgess attended Am-

¹⁴Trent, "A New South View," 19, 20, 22.

¹⁵Ibid., 25.

herst College, but he received most of his education at the Universities of Berlin, Leipzig, and Gottingen. While in Germany, he studied under such eminent scholars as Theodor Mommsen, Leopold von Ranke, and Heinrich von Treitschke. From these men, Burgess learned much about the historical method and the philosophy of Friedrich Hegel. Upon his return to the United States in 1873, Burgess accepted a teaching position in political science at Columbia University. While at Columbia he tried and eventually succeeded in organizing the school along the broad philosophical lines of the German universities; he also founded the Political Science Quarterly. Burgess' racial theories which stressed Teutonic superiority, appeared often in his works including that on Reconstruction. He preached that the United States had a mission to spread the American-Western European socio-political system throughout the world.¹⁶

In his Reconstruction and the Constitution, Burgess' primary interest revolved around the constitutionality of the various Radical Reconstruction measures. He emphasized repeatedly that Reconstruction was a problem for Congress, and not the executive. However, Burgess felt that Congress misused its prerogative, with the result that Reconstruction

¹⁶John W. Burgess, Reconstruction and the Constitution, 1866-1876 (New York, 1902); Charles E. Merriam, "John W. Burgess," D.A.B., XXI, 132-134.

became a "punishment so far in excess of the crime that it extinguished every sense of culpability upon the part of those whom it was sought to convict and convert." The crime of Reconstruction prevented a reconciliation between the sections until 1898, when the Spanish-American War reunited them under the same banner.¹⁷

Although he never failed to stress Congress' right to control Reconstruction, Burgess soon parted company with the Radicals because of their course of action. He agreed with the Radicals that the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Fourteenth Amendment were necessary steps in protecting the Negro, but he denied that Congress had the right to demand ratification of the amendment as a condition for the South's readmission to the Union. Most of the subsequent Radical legislation, Burgess condemned as unconstitutional and brutal, in that it abrogated the rights either of the South or of the President.

Burgess criticized the Radicals' motives as well as their legislation, although he did find some humanitarianism in their actions. A few congressmen, Burgess believed, acted as they did "with the purpose of creating adequate guarantees for life and property and for the equal protection of the laws to all." The Radicals also feared that "the work of four years of war might have to be done all

¹⁷Burgess, Reconstruction, 43, 297.

over again unless a new political people . . . should be created at the South, whose members had never been disloyal." Even though some of the Radicals were inspired by such motives, Burgess found that there was also "undoubtedly in some of the baser minds among them . . . the determination to create Republican party 'States' in the South." No matter what else motivated the Radicals, Burgess believed that "there is still left the conviction that the fanaticism of extreme partisanship had an undue influence over them all."¹⁸

Burgess indicated his belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority when he wrote that the Radicals blundered in making the Negro the white man's equal. The Radicals wronged civilization when they "put the white race of the South" under the domination of the Negro race, which "has never of itself succeeded in subjecting passion to reason, has never therefore, created any civilization of any kind." Burgess was pleased to relate that by the end of the century, "the Republican party, in its work of imposing the sovereignty of the United States upon eight millions of Asiatics," had accepted the ideas of white superiority. He pointed out, that the southern whites therefore "need now have no further fear that the Republican party . . . will ever again give themselves over to the vain imagination of the politi-

¹⁸Ibid., 98, 127.

cal equality of man."¹⁹

Many of Burgess' ideas found more detailed expression in James Ford Rhodes' History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850, the first multi-volume history to deal with Reconstruction. Writing history for pleasure interested Rhodes from his youth, but not until the 1880's did he devote himself exclusively to this avocation. Rhodes was born in Cleveland into a wealthy family of coal mine operators. His father's strong ties with the Democratic party influenced Rhodes as a child; he supported his father's political views while a student in the public schools of Cleveland during the days of the Civil War, while most of his classmates and instructors ardently supported the Republican party. This early brush with political opinion had no great effect on his later life however, since he shifted parties more than once. Strong political bias also failed to appear in his writing. Rhodes attended the University of the City of New York and the old University of Chicago. After his graduation from Chicago in 1867, he traveled to Europe to study metallurgy at his father's request. Upon his return to the United States in the early 1870's, Rhodes toured several of the southern states to investigate coal and iron deposits. This trip and his wedding trip a few years later influenced his opinion of Reconstruction. Between 1874 and

¹⁹Ibid., 133, 298.

1885, Rhodes worked as a member of his family's coal and iron company but in 1885, he retired and devoted the rest of his life to writing history. In 1891, Rhodes moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts and then to Boston, where he became well known in Brahmin society as well as in literary circles. The first five volumes of his History of the United States were well received by both the public and the critics. He wrote volumes six and seven later in life when he was ill, and as a result they lacked the qualities of the earlier volumes. In 1898, the members of the American Historical Association elected Rhodes their President.²⁰

Rhodes agreed that some form of Reconstruction was necessary, but he believed that "it would have been safe to permit the States to work out their problem" in conjunction with the Freedmen's Bureau and military occupation. Such a program, enforced by "merciful" legislation like the Civil Rights Act and the Fourteenth Amendment would have, in Rhodes' estimation, made Reconstruction much easier and more successful for all concerned. Rhodes declared that even without southern participation, "the congressional plan was

²⁰James Ford Rhodes, History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850 (7 Vols., New York, 1892-1906); Robert Cruden, James Ford Rhodes, The Man, The Historian, and his Works (Cleveland, 1961), 9-53, 74-89, 213-218; Burrell Shippee, "Rhodes' History of the United States," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XIII (September, 1921), 133-148; Raymond Curtis Miller, "James Ford Rhodes; A Study in Historiography," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XV (March, 1929), 455-472.

marked by even-handed justice" through the spring of 1866. He lamented the fact that this "even-handed" Congressional Reconstruction ended with the seizure of the process of Reconstruction by the Radicals.²¹

Rhodes had little favorable to say about Reconstruction after it came under Radical control. Their legislation he denounced as "unjust in its policy" and direful in its consequences. The motives of its leaders he considered to be either dishonest or hopelessly doctrinaire. Stevens, although he was chiefly concerned with the predominance of the Republican party, was also motivated by vindictiveness, and his desire "to crystallize his feeling of hatred into legislation." Sumner epitomized the doctrinaire humanitarian; he was so "thoroughly pledged to the cause of the negroes that he could believe any plausible stories of cruelties . . . whilst he had no pity for the vanquished Southerner." Rhodes added that Sumner saw only one side of the problem, and "persuaded himself that suffrage was an essential right, not a privilege." The worst of the Radicals, according to Rhodes, were men of the stamp of Benjamin F. Butler, Benjamin F. Wade, and Henry Wilson who were completely ruthless in their attempts to maintain the power of the Radical Republicans. Rhodes felt that much of the Radi-

²¹Rhodes, History of the United States, V, 559, 606, 609.

cal legislation resulted from a combination of these humanitarian and political motives.²²

Radical Reconstruction at the state level, was to Rhodes a "sickening tale" of "all sorts of fraud, bribery and embezzlement." He declared that the "grossest misgovernment" was the rule when "negroes, carpet-baggers, and scalawags controlled the legislatures" and when the governors were, "for the most part low-minded and sordid men."²³

This form of Reconstruction, Rhodes believed, "pandered to the ignorant negroes" who in intellect developed only to the level of thirteen or fourteen year old white children and whose racial characteristics included indolence, playfulness, sensuality, imitation, subservience, unsteadiness of purpose, and affectionate dispositions. Rhodes believed that the Negro should for a time, have been "treated as a child," and taught gradually the use of his liberty. Sumner, "the scholar in politics," Rhodes pointed out, should have reflected upon this fact before advocating "the immediate enfranchisement of such an ignorant mass." However, "Sumner showed no appreciation of the great fact of race," and as a result the rule of the "Congo Negro" was forced upon the South at the point of a bayonet. Rhodes concluded,

²²Ibid., VI, 14, 23, 24, 41, 202.

²³Ibid., VII, 91, 93, 104, 106, 108.

"finally . . . his old masters have deprived him of the ballot and . . . he has been set back to the point where he should have started directly after emancipation."²⁴

Rhodes felt that Reconstruction was in the final analysis, a failure. It failed to achieve its humanitarian goals and even failed in its selfish aims. He rejoiced that there was a "final triumph of Southern intelligence and character over the ignorance and corruption that so long had thriven under Northern misconception" and wickedness.²⁵

Rhodes influenced many later historians, among them James Schouler, who wrote a multi-volume work entitled History of the United States Under the Constitution. Schouler was born in Massachusetts, grew to manhood in Ohio, and then returned to Massachusetts where he attended Harvard in the mid-1850's. Upon graduating from Harvard he studied law in Boston, but in 1861 joined the Massachusetts Volunteers, and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Union army. While a soldier in North Carolina, Schouler contracted a disease which affected his hearing. Deafness eventually forced him to give up a lucrative post-war law practice in Boston, and he then turned to writing. In 1891 Herbert Baxter Adams asked him to lecture in American history at the

²⁴Ibid., V, 556; VI, 29, 36, 80; VII, 17, 160, 170.

²⁵Ibid., 290.

Johns Hopkins University, a position that he retained until his retirement.

Schouler's History of the United States, which began appearing in 1880, originated as a hobby, but it became his primary interest. This work was the first scholarly attempt to cover American history from the Revolution through Reconstruction. He was the first historian to use the manuscript papers of James Monroe and Andrew Johnson and the diary of Gideon Welles; in other areas he relied heavily on Rhodes and other secondary sources.²⁶

Volume seven of Schouler's history, which he published in 1913, discussed Reconstruction in detail. He pictured the period as "a vampire tyranny . . . which strangled the South as with some hideous nightmare." Schouler shared the Southerner's abhorrence of "Northern adventurers without means [who] came flocking in . . . like a swarm of locusts."²⁷

Schouler also indicted the Radicals in Washington. He maintained that "one reason why this grotesque and horrible rule of a misled barbarism lasted so long was . . . vindictiveness against the President, coupled with the desire [to] keep their party dominant." These motives he said, "inspired . . . legislation quite as much as any real regard

²⁶James Schouler, History of the United States of America Under the Constitution (7 Vols., New York, 1880-1913); John H. Latane, "James Schouler," D.A.B., XVI, 459-460.

²⁷Schouler, History of the U.S., VII, 105, 174, 258.

for the social and economic wants of the States . . . or the uplifting of the freedman himself." Sumner and Stevens, Schouler continued, combined "humanity and vengeance"; Sumner's "ideals for the Negro were lofty," but Stevens "had little of the milk of human kindness in him that was not soured."²⁸

In 1917, the first volume of another multi-volume history of the United States made its appearance; this work was Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer's United States Since the Civil War. Oberholtzer lived in Pennsylvania all of his life. He attended the University of Pennsylvania and studied under John Bach McMaster, while working as a staff member of the Philadelphia Evening Telegraph. After receiving his Ph.D. in 1893, he edited the Philadelphia Times and the Philadelphia Public Ledger. Throughout this period, however, Oberholtzer continued his interest in history. Although he edited and contributed to the American Crisis series and wrote histories of local interest, his principal reputation rested upon his five volume History of the United States. He designed this work to begin with the end of the Civil War, where McMaster's history had left off.²⁹

²⁸Ibid., 50, 106, 258.

²⁹Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, A History of the United States Since the Civil War (5 Vols., New York, 1917-1937); Roy L. Nichols, "Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer," D.A.B., XXII, 495-496; Earle D. Ross, "Oberholtzer's History of the United States Since the Civil War," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXIV (December, 1937), 341-350.

Oberholtzer too, wrote in the Dunning tradition. He stated that "it was a hollow trick . . . to disguise the social disorder and political misrule, which disgraced the South, under the name of 'Reconstruction'"; it was mere "public rascality with the mantle of patriotism and philanthropy over it." The corruption in the South began "with small peculation" but soon "assumed gross form" causing the states to sink to the "lowest depths under a weight of theft and extravagance." Oberholtzer lamented that the South experienced "every variety of public perfidy," including "enormous debt, high taxes, incompetent and ignorant men in administrative posts, a corrupt judiciary, riots instigated for political objects, and the arrest of innocent citizens."³⁰

Oberholtzer's discussion of the Negro and his role in Radical Reconstruction smacked of pure racism. He repeatedly called the Negro, "Sambo," and "Cuffie," and commented on his "blubber lips." He said they were "dense" and as "credulous as children, which in intellect they in many ways resembled." The quadroons and mulattoes, he explained, were "more intelligent than men of darker skin," and thus the more culpable for the part they played in Reconstruction.³¹

Oberholtzer considered the motives of the Radicals to

³⁰Oberholtzer, History of the United States, II, 327; III, 22, 191, 193, 195, 199.

³¹Ibid., I, 85; II, 26, 39.

be less than altruistic. "Party bitterness and ambition" were the hallmarks of these leaders, although he conceded that there were a few misguided men of Sumner's stamp, "who would make the black the equal of the white man." Such Radicals were imbued with a "fanaticism . . . near to madness." Oberholtzer felt that most of the Radicals, however, were more akin in spirit to Stevens, the "embittered, cynical, sarcastical old man" who, in order to gain his "partisan purposes would alter the entire character of the Federal commonwealth."³²

Although the Dunning interpretation of Radical Reconstruction dominated historical writing before World War I, there were a few dissenting voices. One of these was W.E. Burghardt DuBois. In an article entitled "Reconstruction and Its Benefits," which appeared in the American Historical Review in 1910, DuBois reinterpreted the period in more favorable terms. DuBois was born into a free Negro family in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. He attended the local public schools, and received a Master of Arts degree from Fisk University in 1888, and another from Harvard in 1890. DuBois studied at the University of Berlin for two years, but he returned to Harvard to receive his Ph.D. in history in 1895. While teaching at Wilberforce University, in Wilberforce, Ohio, DuBois became a Socialist, and began to

³²Ibid., I, 38, 433, 439; II, 253.

write about the problems of the Negro. In 1910, he became affiliated with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, as editor of its Crisis magazine. DuBois advocated the use of force of numbers or even violence by Negroes to gain their objectives. He tried to mobilize Negro discontent into active opposition through the Niagara Movement. This movement and its failure generated ill feelings between DuBois and the N.A.A.C.P.³³

In his article, "Reconstruction and Its Benefits," DuBois wrote that the North could not afford to allow the South to reconstruct itself, because this would mean "virtually giving up the great principle on which the war was . . . fought, i.e. human freedom." He believed that "if the South had been permitted to have its way in 1865 . . . the blacks would have remained in slavery."³⁴

As for corruption in the South, DuBois noted that it had been exaggerated and that the Negro's part in it had been overstated. Like later revisionists, he pointed out that corruption was common to all areas of the country during the post-Civil War period.

³³W.E. Burghardt DuBois, "Reconstruction and Its Benefits," American Historical Review, XV (July, 1910), 781-799; Francis L. Broderick, W.E.B. DuBois, Negro Leader in a Time of Crisis (Stanford, 1959), 1-90; Elliott M. Rudwick, W.E.B. DuBois: A Study in Minority Group Leadership (Philadelphia, 1960), 54-207.

³⁴DuBois, "Reconstruction and Its Benefits," 785, 786.

DuBois agreed that there were "men, black and white," who were "only too eager to take advantage of such a situation for feathering their own nests," but he questioned whether the results of their rule were "as bad as painted or if negro suffrage was the prime cause." DuBois recognized that the allegations against the Negro "are in part undoubtedly true, but they are often exaggerated." He claimed that Negro corruption that did exist, was only logical, for the freedmen were just learning the rudiments of self-government.³⁵

Again marking the path for a later generation of revisionists, DuBois pointed out that much good came from the Reconstruction governments, despite the corruption. They were responsible for measures bringing about more democratic government, free public schools, and social betterment.

DuBois took issue with the historians who acclaimed the Redeemers for restoring sane government to the South. In fact, he felt that there was little difference between the Radical governments and the Redeemer governments, except in personnel. He wrote that "outside the curtailing of expenses and stopping of extravagance, not only did [the Redeemers] make few changes in the work which these legislatures and conventions had done, but they largely

³⁵Ibid., 788, 789.

carried out their plans I know of no greater compliment to negro suffrage."³⁶

John Roy Lynch, like DuBois, did not interpret Reconstruction in line with the prevailing "Dunning School." But unlike DuBois, Lynch was not a trained historian, and did little research. He fervently praised Radical Reconstruction, without offering any evidence, except his own memory. In The Facts of Reconstruction, published in 1913, and in Some Historical Errors of James Ford Rhodes, published in 1922, he attempted to refute those who denigrated Radical Reconstruction and applauded the success of the Redeemers. Lynch stated that such writing was propaganda designed to deceive and mislead the public about conditions in the South, and to secure "the perpetuation of the local oligarchies." James Ford Rhodes, he felt, was the most prominent historian who wrote in this "inaccurate, one-sided, biased, partisan, prejudiced" fashion. Lynch had a second purpose in writing The Facts of Reconstruction; he was disgusted with the William Howard Taft administration's southern policy, because of its surrender to the states that denied the Negro political rights.³⁷

³⁶Ibid., 799.

³⁷John Roy Lynch, The Facts of Reconstruction (New York, 1913); Lynch, Some Historical Errors of James Ford Rhodes (Boston, 1922), V, XVII, 53; Lynch presented the essence of Some Historical Errors of James Ford Rhodes in two articles

Lynch's attitude concerning Reconstruction was formed by several factors, not the least of which was his race. He was a mulatto born on a Louisiana plantation; he gained his freedom in 1863, when federal troops occupied Louisiana. After the war, Lynch moved to Mississippi where he educated himself, and began to take an active part in politics. He served in the Mississippi House of Representatives, and in 1872 went to Congress, where for three terms he supported the Radicals' program of Reconstruction. In 1884, he became the first Negro elected temporary chairman of the Republican national convention. He later served in the Spanish-American War, and practiced law in Chicago.³⁸

The Reconstruction period, as Lynch saw it, "was a great and brilliant success." The Radical program, he felt, was the only plan which "could have saved to the country the fruits of the victory that had been won on the field of battle."³⁹

Lynch denied that there was widespread corruption in the South during Reconstruction, although he admitted that

entitled "Some Historical Errors of James Ford Rhodes," Journal of Negro History, II (October, 1917), 345-368; and "More About the Historical Errors of James Ford Rhodes," Journal of Negro History, III (April, 1918), 139-159.

³⁸John Hope Franklin, "John Roy Lynch," D.A.B., XXII, 395-396.

³⁹Lynch, Errors of Rhodes, 32; Lynch, The Facts of Reconstruction, 110.

the election of "some objectionable persons . . . could not very well be prevented." Like DuBois, Lynch emphasized the achievements of Radical governments in the South; he declared that the rebuilding of the states physically, improving the quality of education, and enacting needed social legislation were highly important. Lynch felt that since the state treasuries had been bare, increased taxation was necessary for this rebuilding, but he denied that the rate of taxation was unduly oppressive, even if some of the planters were financially damaged.⁴⁰

Lynch thought the course of the national leaders had been just, reasonable, and humane. He wrote, that as representatives of northern sentiment, the Radicals "demanded not only justice and fair treatment for the newly emancipated race but also an emancipation that should be thorough and complete." In order to complete emancipation, the Radicals in Washington believed that "enfranchisement of the blacks in the States to be reconstructed was an absolute necessity"; in no other way could the Negro protect himself.⁴¹

In contrast to the Dunning School, Lynch attacked the Redeemer governments in the South. He stated that "the

⁴⁰Lynch, Errors of Rhodes, 13.

⁴¹Ibid., 14, 18.

legitimate State Governments" were overthrown by oligarchies which oppressed both whites and blacks to achieve their selfish ends. They were characterized by rampant fraud, higher taxes, and corruption. He discovered in the Redeemer governments the same evils which historians like Rhodes and Dunning had associated with the Radicals. To make matters worse, Lynch wrote, these Redeemers were receiving support from the national government. Lynch warned that Taft's cooperation with southern oligarchies would eventually alienate the Negroes and all honest men; he urged the Taft administration to reconsider its desertion of the Negro before it was too late.⁴²

The outstanding characteristic of historical writing on Reconstruction in the period from the 1890's to the 1920's was the all-pervasive influence of the Dunning School. Even northern historians abandoned their previous defense of Radical Reconstruction and accepted the Dunning viewpoint concerning Radical motives, the nature of southern Radical governments, Negro inferiority, and the role of the Redeemers.

The Dunningites, the first generation of historians to use scholarly methods in their research, considered Reconstruction a serious blunder which was rectified only when the Redeemers seized the South from Radical control. They

⁴²Ibid., 89-90, 98, 158.

felt that the Reconstruction tragedy revolved around the vindictively selfish and impractically humanitarian Radicals who held the South under the political domination of carpetbaggers and Negroes. According to the Dunning interpretation, the role of the Negro in the South during Reconstruction presented an especially serious problem because of his racial inferiority. The historical profession's acceptance of Negro inferiority reflected the widely held view of Anglo-Saxon superiority which found much of its basis in Darwinism and the experience of the United States as an imperial nation.

The work of W.E.B. DuBois represented the beginning of what would eventually become a general reassessment of Reconstruction and the Radicals. Writing in opposition to the Dunning School, DuBois stressed that Reconstruction was not a blunder. Indeed, he found several valuable consequences resulting from Radical rule, particularly in the areas of free public schools and constitutional innovation. Moreover, DuBois found the Radicals neither impractical nor insincere in their attempts to aid the Negro. Nor did he agree with the Dunning School that the Redeemers had been the saviors of the South. Rather, he saw in the Redeemers many of the evils for which the Dunningites had blamed the Radicals. DuBois' reassessment of Radical Reconstruction represented a break-through, and even though the Dunning

School's influence would continue to be felt after 1920, its dominance would wane in the light of new revisionist interpretations.

CHAPTER III

BEGINNINGS OF REVISIONISM, 1920-1940

The burgeoning volume of historical writing about Reconstruction which appeared between the two World Wars, revealed an increasing interest in the period. The influence of the Dunning School continued to dominate Reconstruction historiography until the early 1930's, but throughout the 1920's, a group of historians who represented the beginnings of the revisionist movement attacked the Dunning interpretation in articles appearing in The Journal of Negro History. The depression years saw the rise to prominence of new revisionist interpretations that gradually forced the Dunning views into the background. The most important of these emphasized economic factors. One aspect of this economic view of Reconstruction grew out of the pioneer work of Charles A. Beard, while the second involved an effort to force Radical Reconstruction into the mold of Marxist socialism. The revisionist reassessment which overturned the Dunning interpretation also found expression in several new state studies that painted a different and more complimentary picture of the southern Radical governments.

The Dunning tradition continued into the 1920's in a number of important studies of Reconstruction. Allan Nevins, in The Emergence of Modern America, published in 1927, emphasized the base motives of the Radicals and the corruption

of their governments in the South. A native of Illinois, Nevins received an M.A. degree from the University of Illinois in 1912, and began a career in journalism. He worked as an editorial writer for the New York Evening Post and the New York World. In 1928, he gave up his newspaper career to become a professor of history at Cornell University and later at Columbia University.¹

Nevins strongly disapproved of the enormous social and economic evils "flowing from the mismanagement of Reconstruction." He deprecated the carpetbaggers who, like vultures, went south to take advantage of "fat offices, large revenues, and an ignorant inexperienced electorate," and who, with "barefaced impudence," robbed the southern states until they were in a state of virtual bankruptcy.²

Nevins felt that the "unlettered and ignorant . . . children of the Dark Continent" were debauched by being made participants in these corrupt and incompetent southern governments. The combination of lawless and selfish carpetbaggers and their black dupes ruled the South for their own benefit, and left behind no contribution of value.³

¹Allan Nevins, The Emergence of Modern America 1865-1878 (New York, 1927), 1-31, 290-318, 349-380; "Allan Nevins," Jacques Cattell Press (ed.), Directory of American Scholars, A Biographical Directory (New York, 1942-1964), I (4 ed.), 219-220, [hereafter cited as D.A.S.]

²Nevins, Emergence of Modern America, 28, 355.

³Ibid., 27, 28, 364.

Claude G. Bowers' The Tragic Era also reiterated the Dunning interpretation. Indeed, Bowers not only continued in the tradition, but he outdid the Dunningites in his condemnation of Radical Reconstruction and the Republican party. The Tragic Era appeared in 1928, the year in which Bowers became the temporary chairman and keynote speaker of the Democratic national nominating convention. In his memoirs, Bowers attempted to disassociate the publication of The Tragic Era from the election of 1928, but the unfavorable reviews of the book drew attention to the fact that his writing was violently anti-Republican and highly laudatory of the Democratic party.

Bowers, born in Indiana, divided his interest between politics and writing history. He worked for a time as secretary to John W. Kerr, United States Senator from Indiana, and as the editor of the Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette. From 1933 to 1939 he served as ambassador to Spain and from 1939 to 1953 as ambassador to Chile.⁴

Bowers, like the Dunning School, found few redeeming features in Reconstruction at either the national or state levels, and saw the motives of the Radical leaders as primarily political. Although some of the leaders were "moved

⁴Claude G. Bowers, The Tragic Era, The Revolution After Lincoln (Cambridge, 1929); Bowers, My Life, The Memoirs of Claude G. Bowers (New York, 1962), 65-107, 173-235.

by a sincere interest in the freedmen's welfare," he believed "the average politician was thinking of the tremendous engine for party" and was "bent on the exclusion of the Southern States until negro suffrage could fortify . . . [the] power of the Radicals." According to Bowers, the Freedmen's Bureau and the Union League became in large part, mere instruments aiding this perpetuation.⁵

While the majority of the Radicals "cared not a tinker's dam" for the Negro, Bowers felt that several leaders, including Stevens, acted out of altruism. However, even Stevens' "amazing programme" did not overlook party ascendancy. Sumner, according to Bowers, acted from purely humanitarian motives, but "his advocacy of negro suffrage and of equal rights was theoretical" and thoroughly impractical.⁶

Bowers assailed the Radical governments in the South. He dismissed them as "putrid . . . a cross between a gambling-den and a colored camp meeting" run by imported Republican thieves and "credulous . . . simple-minded" Negroes. This "avaricious horde" controlled a South "saturated by corruption" where "stealing was a virtue."⁷

George Fort Milton's The Age of Hate, Andrew Johnson

⁵Bowers, The Tragic Era, 10, 63, 198.

⁶Ibid., 83, 93, 101, 335.

⁷Ibid., 307, 357, 362.

and the Radicals, published in 1927, reflected Bowers in tone and content, particularly in its attacks upon the Radicals. Milton, a native of Chattanooga, Tennessee, and the editor of the Chattanooga News, pictured Radical motives as being wholly political in nature, while he depicted Johnson as a wronged hero. Milton found that the "mainspring of Radical maneuvers was not concern for negro rights, but a deliberate desire to keep Southerners out of Congress." The Radicals had no concern for the South or for the President; they were too filled with an "unbridled political passion They intended to rule."⁸

The influence of the Dunning School's interpretation of Radical Reconstruction continued into the 1930's in the work of James G. Randall. Randall, a mid-westerner and professor of history at the University of Illinois, published The Civil War and Reconstruction in 1937. It became a widely used textbook and gave the Dunning interpretation extensive circulation. This work and an article, "John Sherman and Reconstruction," clearly placed Randall in the Dunning tradition.⁹

⁸George Fort Milton, The Age of Hate, Andrew Johnson and the Radicals (New York, 1930), 219, 262, 263, 264, 302, 310, 315, 381; "George Fort Milton," Albert Nelson Marquis (ed.), Who's Who in America: A Biographical Dictionary of Notable Living Men and Women of the United States (Chicago, 1899-1967), XV, 1489, [hereafter cited as Who's Who]

⁹James G. Randall, The Civil War and Reconstruction (Boston, 1937), chs. 30-37; Randall, "John Sherman and Reconstruction," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XIX (December, 1932), 382-393; "James G. Randall," Who's Who, XX, 2051.

Randall's dissatisfaction with World War I, and the conditions arising from it, led him to draw many correlations between the Reconstruction period and the years following "the Great War." He compared the two in terms of the "prevalence of crime, intolerant mass psychology, speculative excess, business depression, moral slump, official sinning." Randall believed that even the word "Reconstruction is a misnomer [for] as in the case of many other wars the worst elements were able to capitalize the war for their own purposes."¹⁰

Randall discussed the motives of the Radical leaders in terms of politics, vindictiveness and economics. He stated that they were revengeful, and their "militaristic attitude of mind was painfully evident" in virtually all of their actions. Vindictiveness however, was incidental to more basic motives, Randall believed. For example, Stevens, who was a "hater of the South," was more concerned with political perpetuation than with vengeance.¹¹

Partisan motives seemed to Randall, to be the most important of the basic reasons for the actions of the Radicals. He noted, that they "did not even seek to dissemble the partisan character of the Vindictive program." They intended

¹⁰Randall, Civil War and Reconstruction, 689; Randall, "John Sherman," 383.

¹¹Randall, Civil War and Reconstruction, 689, 690, 723.

their legislation "to put Congress in control of governmental functions and to insure within Congress the ascendancy of the Radical group." Reconstruction thus served to perpetuate the benefits of Republican rule.¹²

Randall's textbook, unlike the works of the Dunningites, included a discussion of new interpretations of the Radicals; he particularly acknowledged the work of Charles A. Beard and Howard K. Beale. Randall contended however, that the Radicals acceded to the economic demands of the protectionists and northern bond holders only in order to form a powerful political alliance. He did not admit that the Radicals were interested in economic questions per se.¹³

Randall condemned the nature of southern governments under Radical rule in the language of the Dunning School. He declared that "extravagance and gaucherie . . . plunged the Southern commonwealths into an abyss of misgovernment." He described these governments as "a kind of racket" which "bore a bogus quality" resembling "opera bouffe."¹⁴

Two accounts of Radical Reconstruction written by non-professional historians that perpetuated the Dunning tradition, were Don C. Seitz' The Dreadful Decade, written in

¹²Ibid., 722, 750; Randall, "John Sherman," 383.

¹³Randall, Civil War and Reconstruction, 748.

¹⁴Ibid., 847, 849, 852, 853.

1926, and Robert Selph Henry's The Story of Reconstruction, published in 1938. Seitz, a journalist, received his education at the Liberal Institute of Maine, Norway, Maine, and worked on the Brooklyn Eagle, the Brooklyn World, and the New York Evening World. Henry, a Tennessean educated at Vanderbilt and Cambridge University in England, was a journalist and lawyer who served as the assistant to the President and later as President of the American Association of Railroads.¹⁵

Both Seitz and Henry restated the Dunning idea, that the Radicals' motives had been largely political and that their governments were marked by corruption. Henry noted that "one intent of the Radical program was to make of the Southern states permanent vassal-allies of a Republican party of the Radical persuasion," and Seitz asserted that "the franchise remained a burning question, not as to conferring deserved or desired rights upon the negroes but as a means of preserving the Republican party." When the Radicals made the Negro eligible for office and sent the carpetbaggers south, Seitz observed, they "ushered in the most reprehensible phase of 'reconstruction.'" Henry agreed with

¹⁵Robert Selph Henry, The Story of Reconstruction (New York, 1938); "Robert Selph Henry," Who's Who, XV, 1188; Don C. Seitz, The Dreadful Decade (Indianapolis, 1926), ch. I; "Don C. Seitz," Who's Who, XV, 1867.

Seitz' assessment of the southern governments. He declared that the carpetbaggers came south because they saw "fairer opportunities than they had known before of political preferment or public plunder." Even though Henry and Seitz restated the Dunning interpretation, they, like Randall, were more restrained in tone than were Bowers, Nevins, and Milton.¹⁶

While writing in the Dunning tradition continued into the 1920's and the 1930's, it increasingly came under attack by those who became known as revisionists. Much of the early writing in this vein appeared in The Journal of Negro History.

The early revisionists stressed the humanitarian motivation of the Radicals, although they agreed that some had selfish aims as well. Louis F. Post, an ex-carpetbagger and an assistant Secretary of Labor from 1913 to 1921, expressed this view in 1925, in "A South Carolina Carpetbagger." He pointed out, that in light of the discrimination against the Negro in the post-Civil War South, Congress had no alternative but to champion his cause. Such action, Post argued, was based upon democratic principles. Carl M. Frasure of West Virginia University, in "Charles Sumner and the Rights of the Negro," also emphasized the humanitarian side of

¹⁶Henry, Story of Reconstruction, 46, 48, 49, 141, 401, 446, 448; Seitz, Dreadful Decade, 15, 19, 20, 24-25.

Radical motives. He especially lauded Sumner for his labors in mankind's behalf, and for his uncompromising attitude toward slavery, whether legalized or de facto.¹⁷

Revisionist scholars also re-evaluated the charges of carpetbag corruption and Negro ignorance. Sophia Walker, in an article entitled "Carpetbaggers," demonstrated that these individuals laid the foundation for the rebuilding of the South, and gave direction to the mass of hopeless and defenseless southern Negroes. Louis F. Post declared that even though there was corruption within these governments, not all of the men termed carpetbaggers were guilty, himself included. He recognized that the contempt with which Southerners treated all carpetbaggers was only natural, but the time had come for a reassessment. Post praised the Negro's role in these governments; he complimented their ability and integrity and the accomplishments of the Negro legislatures.¹⁸

In the late 1920's and early 1930's additional historians joined the ranks of those dissenting from the Dunning in-

¹⁷Louis F. Post, "A Carpetbagger in South Carolina," The Journal of Negro History, X (January, 1925), 10-79; Carl M. Frasure, "Charles Sumner and the Rights of the Negro," The Journal of Negro History, XIII (April, 1928), 126-149.

¹⁸Sophia Walker, "Carpetbaggers," The Journal of Negro History, XIX (January, 1929), 44-59.

terpretation. Economic determinism served as the basis of one of the most important of the new interpretations of Reconstruction. This re-evaluation found its best expression in the works of Charles A. Beard, Howard K. Beale, and William B. Hesseltine. In their writings, Beard, Beale, and Hesseltine reflected the reformist ideas of the Progressive movement, and the Progressives' preoccupation with economic motivation that had about it aspects of a conspiracy against the people.

Beard was born in rural Indiana into a prosperous family of conservative Republicans. However, his work at Le-Pauw College under Colonel James Riley Weaver and a summer spent in the slums of Chicago converted him to Progressivism. In 1898, Beard entered Oxford University and became associated with British labor groups, but he returned to the United States where he earned his Ph.D. in history at Columbia University in 1904. Upon graduating, he joined the faculty at Columbia, where he remained for twelve years; in 1918, he resigned after a dispute with the Board of Trustees concerning academic freedom.

Beard published An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States in 1913. Thereafter he used an economic interpretation in his historical writing, although by the 1940's, he had modified his views concerning

the importance of economics in American history.¹⁹

The most important of Beard's works dealing with Reconstruction were The Rise of American Civilization, published in 1927, the History of the United States, written in 1934, and A Basic History of the United States, published in 1944. Beard's discussion of Reconstruction in these works typified his changing opinion concerning the significance of economic factors in American history. In The Rise of American Civilization he repeatedly stressed the importance of the economic aspects of Radical Reconstruction. He declared that the period helped to accelerate the capitalist class revolution which had overthrown the planting aristocracy in the Civil War. "While the planting class was being trampled in the dust," Beard wrote, "the capitalist class was marching onward in seven league boots."²⁰

¹⁹Charles A. and Mary R. Beard, The Rise of American Civilization (2 Vols., New York, 1927), 99-118; Beard and Beard, History of the United States, A Study in American Civilization (New York, 1934), 409-439; Beard and Beard, A Basic History of the United States (Garden City, N.Y., 1944), ch. 18; Howard K. Beale (ed.), Charles A. Beard, An Appraisal (Lexington, Ky., 1954), 47-60, 115-161; Bernard C. Borning, The Political and Social Thought of Charles A. Beard (Seattle, 1962), 36-63, 120-139; Lee Benson, Turner and Beard, American Historical Writing Reconsidered (Glencoe, Ill., 1960), 95-137.

²⁰Beard, Rise of American Civilization, 105, 119.

Although Beard agreed that some of the Radicals were inspired by humanitarianism or by political considerations, he described their motives largely in economic terms. He held that many of the Radicals' goals centered on tariff bills which were "primarily designed to afford advantage to industries," the intrenchment of the national bank in the financial structure of the nation, land grants to railroads, and free land to farmers. Moreover, many supporters of the Fourteenth Amendment, Beard asserted, had economic motives in mind rather than civil rights for the Negro. It was these Radicals, who worded the amendment in such a way as to insure that its provisions were applicable to corporations as well as to individuals.²¹

In his History of the United States, published in 1934, Beard still wrote in terms of the economic motives of the Radicals. He reaffirmed his theory that Reconstruction preserved the victory of the capitalists in the class struggle which had culminated in the Civil War. He also reiterated that Radical Reconstruction guaranteed the triumph of the protective tariff and national banking, but he no longer made the sweeping charge that the Radicals had been primarily motivated by economic considerations when they framed the Fourteenth Amendment. Beard did acknowledge that many

²¹Ibid., 108, 110, 112-113, 117.

Radicals were bent on "granting freedmen certain rights by national law," and destroying the "signs and badges, civil, social, and political," of slavery.²²

By 1944, when Beard published his Basic History of the United States, he no longer maintained that economic motives were all important to the Radicals. Beard continued to feel that economic considerations were significant during Reconstruction, however; he merely shifted his emphasis. He stressed the financial aberrations of the Radical governments, and the efforts of Southerners to pick up the pieces of their shattered economy.²³

Beard's interpretation of the Radicals' political motives did not change. He remained consistent in his belief that the Radicals were vitally concerned about retaining their political power. They realized that "their party represented a minority in the nation," and thus they "had a care for measures that would keep themselves in power." Beard believed that many of these partisan Radicals "made use of the Utopians" in Congress who advocated the Radical program mainly because of what it could do for the Negro. Even so, he felt that many of these selfish Radicals also

²²Beard, History of the United States, 405, 412, 413.

²³Beard, Basic History of the United States, ch. 18.

sincerely "sought to uphold the legal rights of the Negro." In order to further these rights, they and their "Utopian" colleagues in Congress wanted "to hold the Southern states down, utterly destroy the great landlord class by confiscation of its estates . . . give suffrage and full civil rights to the dispossessed."²⁴

Beard's treatment of the Radical governments in the South expressed more conventional ideas than his discussion of the Radicals' motives, although he did see a constructive aspect to some of the legislation of these governments. He noted that "undoubtedly, many honorable people took part in restoring state governments in the South, but enough recalls had a hand in it to discredit even the good that was done corruption and waste of public funds were common in the legislatures, sometimes in the grossest forms." Beard added, however, that "many of their laws, for example those providing for free public education, measured up to enlightened concepts of the age."²⁵

By the 1930's, Beard's economic interpretation influenced the writing of many historians, including several who

²⁴Ibid., 289; Beard, Rise of American Civilization, 121.

²⁵Beard, History of the United States, 411; Beard, Basic History of the United States, 292.

wrote on Reconstruction.²⁶ In The Critical Year and in "The Tariff and Reconstruction," Howard K. Beale, a mid-westerner and a Harvard Ph.D., followed in part the Beardian interpretation of Radical Reconstruction. Beale felt that the motives of the Radicals were in large part inspired by a combination of political and economic considerations. Foremost among these was the fact that the Radicals and their industrialist constituents wanted to retain the economic gains made during the Civil War. The Radicals, however, were motivated not only by the desire to facilitate northeastern capitalism; they were also striving to create a powerful political ally within the business community. These Radicals, according to Beale, "almost universally assumed that if Southerners were readmitted to full standing in the Union they would vote solidly for tariff reduction" and against virtually all of the legislation proposed for the benefit of the northern industrial-commercial interests. Realizing that such a situation would be detrimental to the Republican party as well as to their businessmen allies, the Radicals decided that their salvation lay in excluding the South from Congressional representation.

²⁶Vernon L. Parrington's Main Currents in American Thought (3 vols., New York, 1927-1930) which is often paired with the Beards' writings gave only cursory attention to Reconstruction. Parrington died before he could develop the chapters devoted to this period.

Beale emphasized the fact that the Radicals "were imbued with a sense of strict party loyalty." They determined to keep their party in power, and this "sheer love of power," Beale felt, was one of the few binding forces which kept the Radical coalition from splitting into politically helpless fragments.²⁷

A very important and often overlooked Radical motive, Beale noted, was their desire "to remodel the very form of our government into a parliamentary system." Beale warned that such a plan would have resulted in "the tyranny of partisan omnipotence in Congress," replete with a loss of the system of checks and balances and minimizing of the role of the state governments and the office of President of the United States. Happily, Beale stated, this Congressional plan was thwarted by their failure to impeach Andrew Johnson, and by the readmission of the South to Congress.²⁸

Beale asserted that the Radicals could not publicly avow either their economic, partisan, or parliamentary motives; indeed, they had to divert popular attention from them. This they accomplished, by "waving the bloody shirt," and by stressing their desire to help the Negro. Beale

²⁷Howard K. Beale, The Critical Year, A Study of Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction (New York, 1930), 112, 117, 143, 144, 272; Beale, "The Tariff and Reconstruction," American Historical Review, XXXV (January, 1930), 277; "Howard K. Beale," D.A.S., 50.

²⁸Beale, The Critical Year, 211.

termed such tactics, the substitution of "claptrap for issues."²⁹

While their desire to aid the Negro was often inspired by party expediency, Beale did not imply that all of the Radicals lacked humanitarian motives. Some, including Stevens, were idealists in their concern for the Negro and human rights. "Without knowing anything of the Negroes," and "blinded to practical difficulties by their own enthusiams," these Radicals wanted to "elevate them to civil and political equality with the white man."³⁰

The Critical Year pictured deplorable conditions in the post-Civil War South. Beale contended that "the South swarmed with Radical troublemakers," and Negroes who "had no conception of the function of money, or the meaning of terms like government, morality, suffrage, or even free labor." This coalition wrought a "period of corruption and wasting of public money."³¹

During the 1930's, William B. Hesseltine, a Southerner teaching at the University of Wisconsin, also used Beard's economic interpretation in writing about Reconstruction. In "Economic Factors in the Abandonment of Reconstruction,"

²⁹Ibid., 139.

³⁰Ibid., 143.

³¹Ibid., 155, 188-189.

published in 1935, and in A History of the South, written in 1936, Hesselstine stressed economic aspects of the Reconstruction period. Using Beardian terminology, he pictured Reconstruction as simply the attempt of the northern "'masters of capital' . . . to secure their victory over the vanquished 'Lords of the Manor.'"³²

Hesselstine accepted Beard's thesis, that much of the impetus behind the Radicals' actions stemmed from a desire to protect the economic gains made by the business class during the Civil War. He saw many of the Radicals, as representatives of the northern capitalistic class, "seeking to control the national government in behalf of the national banks, the protective tariff and the railroads." But in addition to protecting what they had already achieved, Hesselstine noted that this group of capitalists and their Congressional agents believed that the South could "become a suitable field for economic exploitation." They enacted their southern program in order to protect the property of Northerners in the South and to disfranchise many of the white Southerners, thereby enabling "'loyal' men and Negroes to enact legislation which would protect the Northern capitalism

³²William B. Hesselstine, A History of the South (New York, 1936), 482-560; Hesselstine, "Economic Factors in the Abandonment of Reconstruction," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXII (September, 1935), 191; "William Best Hesselstine," D.A.S., 374.

in exploiting the South."³³

Hesseltine emphasized that the Radicals were split into two factions with antagonistic goals. A struggle eventually ensued between the two because the economic Radicals believed their politically motivated colleagues were keeping the South in a political turmoil through their partisan endeavours. This unstable situation in the South, Hesseltine explained, kept the economic Radicals and their business allies from exploiting the area. Hesseltine believed that the economic Radicals ultimately triumphed, however, because the American public finally grew tired of the "bloody shirt," the political Radicals' principal weapon. This victory resulted in the "masters of capital" embarking upon "a policy of conciliating their former enemies" and exploiting the South without hindrance from any quarter.³⁴

In The Road to Reunion, published in 1937, Paul H. Buck approached the Reconstruction period by trying to analyze those ties that promoted and those problems that hindered sectional reconciliation. Buck, a history professor at Harvard, was a native of Ohio and received his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1935. Buck followed Beale's interpretation but his discussion of the southern Radical governments also reflected

³³Hesseltine, History of the South, 496, 518; Hesseltine, "Economic Factors," 194.

³⁴Ibid., 193, 208, 209; Hesseltine, History of the South, 519.

the early revisionist writing in The Journal of Negro History.³⁵

Buck pointed out that the Radicals were inspired primarily by political considerations and that their avowals of humanitarian and economic motives were in most cases mere "ruses" concocted to gain political support. The Radical hold on the northern public "was precarious and depended largely upon keeping 'patriotism' keyed . . . to wartime pitch"; thus, the appearance of the "bloody shirt." Buck lamented the fact that the Radicals used such divisive methods to stay in office, for this slowed the movement toward sectional harmony. However, he realized how tempting a weapon the "bloody shirt" was, and stated that the Radicals "would have been an unusual assemblage of politicians indeed, if it had not exploited this instrument." Even Sumner, who Buck considered a genuine humanitarian, recognized that Radical dominance was necessary for his plans of Negro enfranchisement. Sumner also realized that to secure Congressional support for his program, it would be necessary to prove that the Negro vote was essential to maintaining the Republicans in power.³⁶

³⁵Paul H. Buck, The Road to Reunion 1865-1900 (Boston, 1937); "Paul H. Buck," D.A.S., 111.

³⁶Buck, Road to Reunion, 45, 46, 48.

The Radicals had other means of gaining support in their drive for power. Buck noted that the humanitarians and partisans alike wooed wavering northern businessmen by supporting economic measures desired by this group, and by repeatedly warning that "a Democratic administration would lower the tariffs, partially repudiate the debt, and shower economic benefits upon the South." In exchange for this favorable economic program the Radicals expected to receive political and financial support from the businessmen of the northeast.³⁷

Unlike Beale, Buck did not condemn Radical governments in the South without mentioning their accomplishments. He pointed to such reforms as "the designation of the sources for school support, uniform systems of taxation, and the emphatic injunction that Negroes as well as whites should be educated," and be allowed to enjoy full civil rights.³⁸

In 1938, Matthew Josephson, a Columbia University graduate and editor of the New Republic, wrote The Politicos in which he restated the Beale interpretation of Radical Reconstruction. However, the tone of Josephson's work set it apart from the more moderate accounts of Beale and Buck. In flaying the capitalist class and their Congressional

³⁷Ibid., 80.

³⁸Ibid., 164.

henchmen, Josephson came close to equalling Bowers in his vituperative descriptions. Economic motives and the "Frankenstein monster of party organization," lay behind the actions of the Radicals who came equipped with "horns and cloven feet."³⁹

During the 1930's, a second economic interpretation of Radical Reconstruction appeared. This variant of the economic interpretation utilized the ideology and terminology of Marxism. Marxist interest in Reconstruction began in the 1870's, when Marx and Engels made occasional observations about it, but there were no scholarly attempts to discuss Reconstruction in Marxist terms before 1930. During the depression, however, when many disillusioned intellectuals turned to socialism, and when Russian Communism seemed for many to be the wave of the future, several historians produced works that analyzed Radical Reconstruction within the ideological framework of Marxism.

The best known Marxist historian was W.E.B. DuBois. By the 1930's, DuBois had temporarily retired from actively championing socialism and Negro rights. It was during this period that he became the chairman of the department of sociology at Atlanta University, and turned to the second

³⁹Matthew Josephson, The Politicos, 1865-1896 (New York, 1938), 21, 78; "Matthew Josephson," Who's Who, XX, 1373.

phase of his writing career. By 1935, when he published Black Reconstruction, DuBois' writing displayed marked differences from his earlier works. His writing in the first decade of the twentieth century had strongly supported the cause of Negro rights, but it had not been Marxist in its approach nor bitter in tone. But by the 1930's, DuBois' work used the terminology and ideology of Marxism to interpret Reconstruction.⁴⁰

In Black Reconstruction DuBois stressed "that there is no question but that Congress was right" in assuming control of Reconstruction. A strong executive, according to DuBois, was undemocratic, and Johnson, "the most pitiful figure in American history," exemplified executive power at its worst. DuBois applauded Stevens, "the stern believer in democracy," for his attempts to weaken the executive and to centralize the control of the national government in Congress.⁴¹

Indeed, DuBois held that the primary concern of many Radicals centered on this desire to create a more complete democracy in the United States, whether by establishing Congress as the supreme governmental power, or by securing Negro rights in the South. In this drive for Negro rights,

⁴⁰W.E. Burghardt DuBois, Black Reconstruction: An Essay Towards a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880 (Philadelphia, 1935).

⁴¹Ibid., 260, 265, 322.

DuBois stated that it was Stevens and Sumner who led the way. Sumner, "one of the finest examples of New England culture and American courage . . . had been fighting . . . for the manhood rights of the free Negro ever since he entered Congress." And Stevens, the "seasoned seer of democracy . . . a man of grim and awful courage . . . made the American Congress take the last step which it has ever taken towards democracy."⁴²

DuBois declared that both Stevens and Sumner advocated, in addition to political rights for the Negro, the confiscation and division of southern plantations for the freedmen's benefit. However, few Radicals followed their lead, because the financial-industrial interests of the North and their Congressional representatives feared that confiscation would "embarrass future freedom of exploitation and would certainly increase present taxation." Stevens and Sumner were thus unsuccessful in giving the freedmen land as a basis for their economic independence.⁴³

DuBois contended that even though the northern capitalists refused to agree to confiscation, Stevens, Sumner, and most of the Radicals continued to support measures favorable to the interests of this group. As staunch defenders

⁴²Ibid., 191, 192, 197.

⁴³Ibid., 206, 327, 328.

of the new industrialism, they sought to "buttress the threatened fortress" of capitalism from the agricultural interests of the South and West. He added, somewhat wistfully, "thus a movement, which began primarily and sincerely to abolish slavery and insure the Negro's rights, became coupled with a struggle of capitalists to retain control of the government." Regardless of whether the Radicals acted from humanitarianism or from a desire to aid capitalism, DuBois noted, they realized they had to keep themselves in power. They appreciated the fact that as a minority party they "would have been swept out of power" if the Southerners had been allowed to return to Congress.⁴⁴

DuBois did not deny that corruption frequently characterized the southern governments during the Reconstruction period. However, he felt that considering the handicaps under which they labored, the records of these governments were outstanding. Corruption in the South merely typified the widespread dishonesty of an "age of extravagance"; it was not an anomalous condition confined to the Radical governments.⁴⁵

DuBois described in bitter terms the period after Reconstruction. This era witnessed the inevitable triumph

⁴⁴Ibid., 214.

⁴⁵Ibid., 428.

of capitalism, with its accompanying "orgy of theft that engulfed the nation." In the South, this movement saw a successful attempt by the Bourbons to exploit black labor. As a result, the Negro was in no better position than he had been under slavery.⁴⁶

The most outspoken Marxian interpretation of Radical Reconstruction appeared in James S. Allen's Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy. Allen contended that Reconstruction involved a bourgeois attempt to effect "the complete destruction of the economic and political power of the landed baron," while strengthening their own political position and further developing a capitalistic economy.⁴⁷

Allen's discussion of the Radicals' motives combined economic class interests, retention of party power and humanitarianism. Allen held that the Radicals acted as the willing agents of the industrial bourgeoisie in their struggle for national economic dominance. In fact, he felt that much of the Radicals' striving for national political supremacy revolved around their desire to remodel the American economy along capitalistic lines. In order to stay in power and remake the economy, Allen explained, the Radicals had to prevent the landed aristocracy from regaining its power, ei-

⁴⁶Ibid., 580.

⁴⁷James S. Allen, Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy, 1865-1876 (New York, 1935), 19.

ther in the South or in Congress. The Radicals recognized that if they permitted the South to regain its ascendancy it would, "under the banner of states rights . . . prevent the intervention of the bourgeoisie" in the economy and the government of the nation.⁴⁸

Allen believed that the Radicals, in addition to championing the aims of capitalism, desired to set up a bourgeois democracy. In the South this meant full political rights for the Negro. The Radicals wanted to transform the Negro "into a fighter for bourgeois democracy." He maintained that the Radicals believed that if the aristocracy were to be overthrown at all, "the Negro would have to be the core of it; if democracy was to be established they would have to be its chief bearers." The Radicals took definite steps, Allen related, to aid the Negro in his struggle for equality. They enacted legislation insuring civil rights and political power for the Negro. However, with the exception of Sumner, Stevens, and a few others, the Radicals went no further. Most of the Radicals and their bourgeois constituents lent a deaf ear to Stevens' plea for confiscation of the southern estates. Allen contended that "the scales . . . definitely tipped against a revolutionary revision of the land relationships" and "slowly and with great difficulty the Negroes were forced back upon the plan-

⁴⁸Ibid., 29, 36.

tations under labor contracts." In this way, the humanitarian objectives of Radical Reconstruction sustained a major setback, for the Negro now found himself abandoned by many of his former Radical allies, and had no alternative but to accept whatever the Bourbons offered him.⁴⁹

Allen agreed that corruption existed in the South, for "after all . . . the governments were bourgeois-democracies, with all the vices of such governments." However, he felt that the charge of corruption often served as a "political weapon used against the legislatures which carried through measures for the public welfare on funds raised by taxing the planter." Allen stressed the "progressive and democratic measures" undertaken by these governments, and pointed out that the increased taxation was necessary.⁵⁰

Louis M. Hacker wrote the most scholarly account of Radical Reconstruction in the Marxist vein.⁵¹ Hacker, a native of New York City, received his education at Columbia University and became a professor of economics at Columbia in 1935. He served as president of the American Marxist Association and as an editor of the Marxist Quarterly.

⁴⁹Ibid., 30, 33, 72.

⁵⁰Ibid., 137, 140, 149.

⁵¹Hacker's interpretation underwent a considerable change after the 1930's and by the 1950's he was a contributor to Fortune magazine.

Hacker's Marxist interpretation of Radical Reconstruction found its best expression in The United States Since 1865, published in 1932, The Triumph of American Capitalism, published in 1940, and in an article, "Why Reconstruction Failed," which appeared in The New Republic in 1937.⁵²

Some of the original Radicals, Hacker believed, were truly interested in aiding the Negro. They were equalitarians with "real and unselfish devotion . . . to the cause of Negro emancipation and betterment." These Radicals, however, failed in their humanitarian goals because they could not succeed in persuading Congress to confiscate the southern estates and divide them among the freedmen. Furthermore, this group of humanitarian Radicals eventually found themselves supplanted in Congress by men who cared nothing for "supporting the Negroes and their white equalitarian allies in the South." These new leaders, many of whom were "personally hostile" to Stevens' and Sumner's humanitarian ideals, completely ignored the Negro except as a political tool. Hacker reproved these selfish politicians for making the Negro both the handmaiden and "the innocent victims" of their

⁵²Louis M. Hacker, Benjamin B. Kendrick, The United States Since 1865 (New York, 1932), 11-37; Hacker, The Triumph of American Capitalism, The Development of Forces in American History to the End of the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1940); Hacker, "Why Reconstruction Failed," The New Republic, LXXXII (October 27, 1937), 346-347; "Louis Morton Hacker," American Men of Science, A Biographical Directory (Tempe, Arizona, 1955), 438.

dishonorable schemes.⁵³

After the Radicals deserted the Negro, Hacker wrote, their only concern centered on efforts to keep themselves in power. This they accomplished by aiding capitalism in its drive to "establish . . . control over the national state." These Radicals cultivated every important capitalistic interest that would sustain themselves in power.⁵⁴

The Radicals realized, Hacker noted, that the South, if it regained its power, would quickly halt their plans. When the Radicals "saw that southern debasement and their own victory were both aspects of the same question," they lost no time in inaugurating their program of "holding the South in bondage" through their Reconstruction measures.⁵⁵

Hacker regarded Reconstruction as a failure, largely because of its abandonment of the Negro. However, he believed that it was partially successful for it insured the defeat of slavery and put the South on the road to a capitalistic economy which would in turn eventually evolve into socialism.

The Marxist interpretation of Reconstruction found popu-

⁵³Hacker and Kendrick, United States Since 1865, 22; Hacker, "Why Reconstruction Failed," 346; Hacker, Triumph of American Capitalism, 379, 380, 384.

⁵⁴Hacker, "Why Reconstruction Failed," 347; Hacker, Triumph of American Capitalism, 383, 384.

⁵⁵Hacker and Kendrick, United States Since 1865, 28, 33.

lar expression in Howard Fast's novel, Freedom Road. Fast, a New York Communist writer who received the Stalin International Peace Prize in 1953, told of the Negro's struggle for equality, his desire for "forty acres and a mule," his cooperation with poor white laborers and carpetbaggers, and his eventual defeat at the hands of the Redeemers and the Ku Klux Klan.⁵⁶

Revisionist interpretations of Reconstruction also appeared in several state studies written in the 1920's and 1930's. These works differed from those of the Dunningites in several respects. They discussed Reconstruction in light of recent findings which gave new importance to social and economic factors. Generally, these studies pointed to some valuable contributions left by the southern Radical governments, they did not consider the Negro inherently inferior, and they were more moderate in tone. These studies also tended to be more specialized in subject matter than the monographs in the Dunning tradition. Frequently they dealt with only one aspect of Reconstruction in a particular state.

The earliest state studies were Alrutheus A. Taylor's "The Negro in South Carolina during the Reconstruction," written in 1924, and "The Negro in the Reconstruction of

⁵⁶Howard M. Fast, Freedom Road (New York, 1944); "Howard M. Fast," James M. Etheridge (ed.) Contemporary Authors, A Bio-Bibliographical Index to Current Authors and Their Works (Detroit, 1962-1963), III, 52.

Virginia," published in 1926. In these articles, Taylor criticized the Dunning School for presenting only the negative aspects of Radical Reconstruction; Taylor held that the Dunningites had written "to prove that the Negro is not capable of participation in government and to justify the methods of intimidation instituted to overthrow the reconstruction governments of the South." Because of this, Taylor felt that the Dunning studies were practically worthless.⁵⁷

Taylor contended that the Negro constantly worked to help himself and his state by acquiring knowledge, accumulating wealth, and extending the Christian religion. He pointed out that even though the Negro was often an instrument of the carpetbaggers, he continued to try to better himself until such efforts were crushed by the caste system which the Redeemers reinstated. The Radical southern governments achieved major successes in the areas of free public education and constitutional innovation; these achievements, Taylor insisted, were the true monuments to the Negro of the Reconstruction period.

In 1932, Francis Butler Simkins, a South Carolinian

⁵⁷Alrutheus A. Taylor, "The Negro in South Carolina during the Reconstruction," The Journal of Negro History, IX (July, 1924), 242, 243; Taylor, "The Negro in South Carolina during the Reconstruction," The Journal of Negro History, IX (October, 1924), 381-564; Taylor, "The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia," The Journal of Negro History, XI (April, 1926), 243-414; Taylor, "The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia," The Journal of Negro History, XI, (July, 1926), 425-536; "Alrutheus A. Taylor," Who's Who, XVI, 3372.

teaching at the State Teachers College at Farmville, Virginia, and Robert H. Woody, professor of history at Duke University, published South Carolina During Reconstruction. This book was a pioneer work of great importance because it was the first revisionist study of the entire Reconstruction story of a state. Although critical of many of the activities of South Carolina's Radical government, Simkins and Woody did not disparage the efforts made to reconstruct the state. Rather than dwelling at great length on the mistakes and corruption of the carpetbaggers and Negroes, they pointed to the contributions of these men. The authors discussed the steps taken during Reconstruction to establish social and political equality and they commented at length upon the importance of the system of free public education, the enlargement of women's rights, and the reform of local and judicial administration which the Radical government inaugurated.⁵⁸ The emphasis that Simkins and Woody placed upon the positive contributions of the Radical government of South Carolina influenced succeeding state studies of Reconstruction. These works extended the revisionist interpretation to the state level and gave it a stronger foundation.⁵⁹

⁵⁸Francis Butler Simkins and Robert H. Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction (Chapel Hill, 1932), chs. III, VI, XII, XIII, XIV, XVI, XX; "Francis Butler Simkins," D.A.S. I (4 ed.), 276; "Robert H. Woody," D.A.S., I (4 ed.), 302.

⁵⁹The revisionist state studies written before 1940 in-

By the end of the 1930's, many historians felt that revisionism of the interpretation of Radical Reconstruction was making progress toward a more complete understanding of the period. However, areas remained where information was inadequate and where further research was needed. In 1938, Alrutheus A. Taylor of Fisk University sharply criticized Reconstruction historiography in an article, "Historians of the Reconstruction." He declared that most of the writing about Reconstruction since the time of Rhodes and Dunning, displayed bias against the Negro and the southern Radical governments, and were thus of little value. The work of DuBois, particularly his Black Reconstruction, represented to Taylor, the first major breakthrough in several decades, and he strongly urged other historians to expand DuBois' theses.⁶⁰

clude; Alrutheus A. Taylor, "The Negro in South Carolina during the Reconstruction," The Journal of Negro History, IX (July, 1924), 241-264; Taylor, "The Negro in South Carolina during the Reconstruction," The Journal of Negro History, IX (October, 1924), 381-564; Taylor, "The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia," The Journal of Negro History, XI (April, 1926), 243-414; Taylor, "The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia," The Journal of Negro History, XI (July, 1926), 425-536; Francis Butler Simkins and Robert H. Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction (Chapel Hill, 1932); Horace Mann Bond, Negro Education in Alabama; A Study in Cotton and Steel (Washington, 1939); Roger Shugg, Origins of the Class Struggle in Louisiana (Baton Rouge, 1939):

⁶⁰Alrutheus A. Taylor, "Historians of the Reconstruction," The Journal of Negro History, XXIII (January, 1938), 16-34.

At the 1938 meeting of the Southern Historical Association, Francis Butler Simkins echoed many of Taylor's criticisms. Simkins took issue with those who still wrote in the Dunning tradition. He especially disapproved of writers like Bowers who had ulterior motives. Simkins emphasized that the picture of southern Radical governments needed more comprehensive revision. He called for a "saner view" of the Radicals and a fair evaluation of their contributions. Another area of Reconstruction history needing re-evaluation, according to Simkins, centered on the racial question. He held that the usefulness of many of the accounts of Reconstruction was destroyed by the acceptance of the hackneyed ideas of Negro inferiority. The key to solving many of these questions, Simkins believed, was a "more critical, creative, and tolerant attitude this will banish provincialism" from Reconstruction history and aid in easing the South's racial problems.⁶¹

The year following Simkins' address, Howard W. Beale presented the paper, "On Rewriting Reconstruction Historiography," to the annual meeting of the Southern Historical Association. In this address, written a decade after The Critical Year, Beale denounced many of his contemporaries who reitera-

⁶¹Francis Butler Simkins, "New Viewpoints of Southern Reconstruction," The Journal of Southern History, V (February, 1939), 50.

ted the old outworn ideas of the Dunning School. He found the Marxian concept of Reconstruction to be marked by faulty interpretation, but he did agree with some of their findings and he applauded their fresh approach. Beale, like Taylor and Simkins, urged an unbiased re-evaluation of the Radicals and their motives, the nature of the southern Radical governments, and the role of the Negro in Reconstruction. He stressed the need for a concerted effort by historians to determine the importance of social and economic factors in both the North and South during Reconstruction.⁶²

The revisionist writing which appeared between the two World Wars seriously challenged the Dunning School's interpretation of Reconstruction. The most important aspects of this reinterpretation centered on the Negro and the southern Radical governments. Revisionists did not regard the Negro as innately inferior nor did they condemn completely the Radical governments. Instead, they stressed the positive accomplishments of the Reconstruction governments. The revisionists also shed new light on the motives of the Radicals. Rather than underscoring the Radicals' political aspirations, these historians pointed to their humanitarian, democratic, and economic aims. Indeed, the economic motiva-

⁶²Howard K. Beale, "On Rewriting Reconstruction History," American Historical Review, XLV (July, 1940), 807-827.

tion of the Radicals became one of the most pervasive of the innovational themes of the writing on Reconstruction during the 1920's and 1930's.

Even though the revisionists contributed much to a better understanding of the Reconstruction period, by the end of the 1930's, several prominent historians of Reconstruction felt that still more research and reinterpretation was needed. They urged a fairer evaluation of the Radicals, a more comprehensive study of social and economic forces, and a more objective treatment of the racial question.

CHAPTER IV

CLOSING THE CIRCLE; THE FLOWERING OF REVISIONISM, 1940-1967

After World War II, many historians of Reconstruction began incorporating the suggestions of Taylor, Simkins, and Beale into their writing. Others, however, continued to write about the Reconstruction period using ideas and stereotypes of preceding generations. The interpretations of those who restated the older views were reminiscent of the venerable works of the Dunning School, in that they stressed the selfish aims of the Radicals and excoriated the southern Radical governments.

Several historians who favored the economic interpretation of Radical Reconstruction reiterated the theories of Charles A. Beard and Howard K. Beale. But even though the Beard-Beale thesis continued in some historical writing, the economic interpretation of Radical motivation underwent a considerable revision in the work of most historians. Economic altruism and the lack of solidarity among the Radicals concerning economic policy found expression in these revisionist works, rather than the idea of a sectional-class struggle.

The Radicals' humanitarian concern for the Negro became the central theme in the work of a number of historians writing in the 1960's. They were the first twentieth century authors to emphasize humanitarianism as the predomi-

nant Radical motive. Their writing, influenced in large part by the civil rights movement, in some respects echoed the authors of the previous century who had championed the Radical cause.

Finally, several historians have tried to synthesize the various interpretations of Radical motivation. They explained that the Radicals were inspired by a composite of political, economic, vengeful, and humanitarian aims.

The old Dunning idea of partisan selfishness as an incubus upon the South persisted, but with emphasis upon the condemnation of Radical policies for being harmful to the Negro as well as to the white Southerner. Typical of this approach was E. Merton Coulter's The South During Reconstruction, published in 1947. Coulter's book represented the last important example of the Dunning interpretation of Radical Reconstruction.

Coulter, a North Carolinian teaching at the University of Georgia, regarded Reconstruction as a distressing period of gross motives, criminal corruption, and Negro domination of the South. The tone of his book was often more strident than many of the earlier studies of Dunning and his students. Coulter noted that Reconstruction had about it a "glimmering resemblance to the later cults called Fascism and Nazism." It was imbued "with a crass, materialistic design" even though "cloaked in a garb of high idealistic justice." Coul-

ter agreed that there were "a few genuine Radicals bent on revolution for the masses," but these men "were hoodwinked" into supporting the program of the selfish, partisan leaders who were "blinded by their own vengeance."¹

More than any other major author since Claude Bowers, Coulter dwelled upon the unsavory aspects of Reconstruction in the South. He pictured this period of southern history, as a "blackout of honest government," and "the most spectacular and exotic development in government in the history of white civilization." The carpetbaggers, who "took the easy road and speedily buried themselves in corruption" plunged the South "into debauchery, corruption, and private plundering unbelievable" in its magnitude and pervasiveness.²

Although Coulter's book received favorable reviews, many historians were appalled at his attitude toward the revisionist studies; he simply brushed them aside, noting that "no amount of revision can write away the grievous mistakes made in this abnormal period of American history."³ John Hope Franklin, in an article entitled "Whither Reconstruction Historiography?" took Coulter to task for ignoring thirty-five

¹E. Merton Coulter, The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877 (Baton Rouge, 1947), 114, 152; "Ellis Merton Coulter," Jaques Cattell Press (ed.), Directory of American Scholars, A Biographical Directory (New York, 1942-1964), I (4 ed.), 63, [hereafter cited as D.A.S.]

²Coulter, The South During Reconstruction, 139, 140, 141, 148.

³Ibid., XI.

years of historical research and re-interpretation. Franklin also disapproved of Coulter's selection of sources and his "overweening desire to . . . support a particular point of view." Howard K. Beale also criticized Coulter's book at the 1952 meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association. In a paper entitled "The Professional Historian: His Theory and His Practice," Beale declared that Coulter had discarded "the whole revisionist school of Reconstruction history" and had "violated the canons of sound historical criticism" because of his "selection of materials that would prove his convictions."⁴

Coulter was not alone in ignoring revisionist work. Charles O. Lerche, a professor of history at the American University in Washington, D.C., also restated the Dunning ideas concerning Radical motivation. In his article, "Congressional Interpretations of the Guarantee of a Republican Form of Government During Reconstruction," Lerche felt that Reconstruction was no more than "a bald attempt to perpetuate the party victory brought about by the war." Even the Radicals' humanitarian motives were often "a veneer to cover base political considerations."⁵

⁴John Hope Franklin, "Whither Reconstruction Historiography?," The Journal of Negro Education, XVII (fall, 1948), 457; Howard K. Beale, "The Professional Historian: His Theory and His Practice," Pacific Historical Review, XXII (fall, 1953), 248, 249.

⁵Charles O. Lerche, "Congressional Interpretations of the Guarantee of a Republican Form of Government During Re-

In South of Appomattox, a rather saccharine series of biographical essays of southern leaders, Nash K. Burger and John K. Bettersworth of Mississippi State University continued the Dunning interpretation. They considered vindictiveness and political power to be the major motives, as the Radicals "set out to persecute the bewildered South." Burger and Bettersworth felt that Radical Reconstruction was doomed to failure because no group of leaders could restore the South to the Union except the native whites. The authors maintained that had the Radicals allowed these men to reconstruct the South and had they denied themselves "the heady pleasures of social engineering, a military occupation, and a carpetbag Reconstruction, the South would have reentered the Union more readily and more fully."⁶

Fodding Carter's The Angry Scar represented a significant non-professional account of Radical Reconstruction in the Dunning tradition. Carter, best known as the Pulitzer prize-winning editor of the Greenville, Mississippi, Delta Democrat-Times, pictured Reconstruction as a tragedy of vin-

construction," The Journal of Southern History, XV (May, 1949), 208; "Charles O. Lerche," James M. Ethridge (ed.), Contemporary Authors, A Bio-Bibliographical Index to Current Authors and Their Works (Detroit, 1962-1966), 7/8, 318.

⁶Nash K. Burger and John K. Bettersworth, South of Appomattox (New York, 1959), 10, 13; "John K. Bettersworth," Albert Nelson Marquis (ed.), Who's Who in America: A Bio-Bibliographical Dictionary of Notable Living Men and Women of the United States (Chicago, 1899-1937), XXXI, 241, [hereafter cited as Who's Who].

dictive misrule in Washington and gross corruption in the South; and like the Dunning studies, denounced Radical motives as disreputable and impractical.⁷

Carter credited the Radicals with some humanitarian aims but he was unsympathetic with their philanthropy, because he thought it too visionary. Stevens' "fanatic belief in the equality of the races," and Sumner's "ragingly idealistic" concern for the Negro were quixotically unrealistic. These "apostles of a raceless Utopia . . . were animated by belief in the principle of universal manhood suffrage regardless of color or capability."⁸

Carter believed, however, that the plan for Negro suffrage was not completely altruistic; Radical political ascendancy was also involved. These "political giants and moral pygmies," according to Carter, "were thinking considerably less of man's brotherhood than of the perpetuation, world without end, of Republican domination of the nation and of the opportunities for personal power." In Carter's view, vindictiveness was closely connected with the Radicals' partisan aims. They considered themselves "victorious Rome; to the South lay Carthage."⁹

⁷Hodding Carter, The Angry Scar, The Story of Reconstruction (Garden City, N.Y., 1959); "Hodding Carter," Who's Who, XXXI, 484.

⁸Carter, The Angry Scar, 95, 101, 111.

⁹Ibid., 22, 27, 94.

Carter's treatment of Reconstruction on the state level revealed greater acceptance of revisionist ideas than his discussion of Radical motives. He agreed that the carpetbag governments had aided the South by inaugurating free public school systems and remodeling the state constitutions. Still, he referred to the period as the "years of the locust," and declared that on balance the bad outweighed the good. Even though many carpetbaggers and scalawags had acted out of conviction, many more were "corrupt, dissolute men." The Negroes also had to share the blame for the tragedy of Radical Reconstruction in the South; "so incapable or dishonest was a majority of the Negro officeholders and voters that before Reconstruction had run its full course even some of the old-line Radicals . . . had turned against them."¹⁰

Not all of the historians who believed the Radicals acted mainly for selfish reasons wrote in terms of past stereotypes. Patrick W. Riddleburger, in his article, "The Radicals' Abandonment of the Negro During Reconstruction," condemned the partisan motives of the Radicals, not for injuries sustained by the South, but for abusing the Negro. Riddleburger, a professor of history at the University of Maryland, found no "evidence leading to the conclusion that they wanted to do more than to make sure of the Negro's vote." Among the earlier Radicals, Riddleburger found some

¹⁰Ibid., 153, 259, 268, 406.

genuine humanitarians, but by 1870, even these, with the exception of Sumner, were so concerned with their political welfare that they were incapable of "acting in terms of long range policies for the benefit of the Negro."¹¹

Riddleburger explained that it was a relatively simple matter to understand the Radicals' desertion of the Negro, since their interest in him was purely selfish. However, the Liberal Republicans' abandonment of the Negro was a more complicated affair. He felt that the Liberal defection from the cause of Negro rights stemmed from their disillusionment with "Grantism" and the decline of their political power. Also of importance was the changing attitude toward reform in the 1870's. This change was marked by a belief that the Negro could best solve the problems confronting him "by his own efforts and the application of Puritan virtues rather than through the largess of the federal government." In such an atmosphere, according to Riddleburger, the Liberals had little choice but to desert the Negro.¹²

David Donald's The Politics of Reconstruction, based upon a series of lectures delivered at Louisiana State University, also discussed Radical motives in terms of partisan politics. Donald arrived at his conclusions after using a

¹¹Patrick W. Riddleburger, "The Radicals' Abandonment of the Negro During Reconstruction," The Journal of Negro History, XLV (January, 1960), 89, 90.

¹²Ibid., 91, 95.

calculator to analyze the voting records of the members of Congress. Although Donald repeatedly stressed that their motives were chiefly of a political nature, he did not condemn the Radicals for mistreating either the South or the Negro. His interest centered instead on what lay behind the Radicals' desire to secure party perpetuation. Donald pointed out that very possibly many Radicals wished to retain office for purely political reasons, but he emphasized that it was equally possible that efforts to retain office could revolve around a desire to aid business interests or ease the lot of the Negro.¹³

After World War II, a few historians continued to apply the theories of economic determinism to the Reconstruction period. The interpretations current in the 1930's, claiming that the Radicals had acted out of economic self-interest or as agents for the industrial class of the North, endured into the 1960's. New viewpoints, however, also emphasized economic issues.

The first post-war example of the older economic interpretation was T. Harry Williams' historiographical essay, "An Analysis of Some Reconstruction Attitudes." Williams, a mid-westerner educated at the University of Wisconsin and a professor of history at Louisiana State University, stated that "the sectional-class thesis of Beale would seem to be

¹³David Donald, The Politics of Reconstruction (Baton Rouge, 1965), 12.

the most nearly correct analysis of northern motivations." He agreed with Beale, that "Reconstruction was a successful attempt by northeastern business, acting through the Republican party, to control the national government for its own economic ends." Reconstruction was designed to overthrow western and southern agrarianism and consolidate the power of the industrial class. Williams pointed out that as a result of their association with the business class, the Radicals were "moved by issues of economics and political power far more than by democratic idealism."¹⁴

Henry L. Swint, in his article, "Northern Interest in the Shoeless Southerner," also reiterated the idea that the Radicals had acted as agents for northern business interests. Swint, an Alabamian teaching at Vanderbilt University, held that the northern teachers and missionaries who came South after the Civil War "became the tools of the Radicals" in this economic undertaking. These post-Civil War invaders, Swint noted, often realized that they were in a position to exploit the South and through their work with the Negro, create a new market for northern industry. Swint declared that it should not be assumed that all northern industrialists or all Radical Congressmen were motivated by economic interest; yet he emphasized that few of them failed to under-

¹⁴T. Harry Williams, "An Analysis of Some Reconstruction Attitudes," The Journal of Southern History, XII (November, 1946), 470, 473; "T. Harry Williams," D.A.S., 324.

stand and take advantage of "the economic implications of the program" undertaken by the Radicals.¹⁵

George R. Woolfolk's The Cotton Regency: The Northern Merchants and Reconstruction, 1865-1880 repeated Swint's interpretation of Radical motivation. Woolfolk, a prominent Negro historian, declared that Reconstruction was no more than "a Yankee euphemism for capitalist expansion." Reconstruction, as Woolfolk saw it, was bound up in the struggle between industrialism and agrarianism. The real tragedy of Reconstruction, he believed, was that "the Southern and social experiment of adjusting a slave population to freedom were caught in the middle of-way, often became the weapon in-" this battle. Woolfolk credited the Radicals with political sagacity in giving northern capitalists "a position of first rank" in their consideration. In return for their programs establishing protective tariffs, tax reductions, bounties, and government organized exploitation of the South, the Radicals expected and received valuable political and financial support.¹⁶

William B. Hesseltine continued to explain Radical motives in terms of selfish economic aims as late as 1960,

¹⁵Henry L. Swint, "Northern Interest in the Shoeless Southerner," The Journal of Southern History, XVI (November, 1950), 462, 470, 471; "Henry L. Swint," D.A.S., 294.

¹⁶George R. Woolfolk, The Cotton Regency: The Northern Merchants and Reconstruction, 1865-1880 (New York, 1958), 17, 18, 81; "George R. Woolfolk," D.A.S., 328.

when the revised edition of A History of the South, first published in 1937, appeared under the title, The South in American History. This revised edition, written in collaboration with David L. Smiley of Wake Forest College, varied little in interpretation from Hesselstine's writings of the 1930's. Hesselstine and Smiley denounced the Radical vocabulary of humanitarianism which "excoriated slavery, proclaimed their own devotion to freedom, and demanded the unconditional subjugation of the southern states," as a pretense designed to disguise Radical economic goals. A "'free' South would mean better markets for Northern factories, a cheap labor supply for Northern capital, and the end of southern opposition to protective tariffs, a national banking system, and to railroads under federal protection."¹⁷

The most recent economic interpretations of Reconstruction have stressed the lack of cohesiveness among the Radicals concerning economic questions. Stanley Coben, in his article "Northeastern Business and Radical Reconstruction: A Re-Examination," published in 1959, emphasized that "neither business leaders nor Radicals were united in support of any set of economic aims." Coben found that this division of interests was especially evident concerning the tariff and the currency questions. The business community

¹⁷William B. Hesselstine and David W. Smiley, The South in American History (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1960), 355; Hesselstine, A History of the South (New York, 1936), 482-560; "David W. Smiley," D.A.S., 279.

of New England and New York favored a low tariff because of their dependence on imported raw materials; they also supported currency contraction coupled with the resumption of specie payments to prevent inflation. Conversely, business interests in Pennsylvania sought a high protective tariff and more inflation. Coben concluded, that "from evidence such as this, the reconstruction program of the Radicals cannot be explained as an organized attempt by the business interests of the Northeast either to preserve and promote their own economic advantage or to obtain protection for economic exploitation of the South." If American businessmen were so split on economic questions, Coben maintained, the Radicals in Congress could hardly be expected to present a unified front concerning economic legislation favorable to their constituents.¹⁸

Money, Class and Party: An Economic Study of the Civil War and Reconstruction by Robert P. Sharkey analyzed the division among the Radicals concerning economic policy in a manner similar to that of Coben. Sharkey, a professor of history at the University of South Carolina, discussed these cleavages in terms of hard versus soft money supporters and low tariff versus high tariff advocates. The "ultras," Stevens, Butler, and Wade supported soft money and a high

¹⁸Stanley Coben, "Northeastern Business and Radical Reconstruction: A Re-Examination," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLVI (June, 1959), 68, 69.

tariff while such moderate Radicals as Blaine, Roscoe Conkling, and James A. Garfield were hard money men and supported a low tariff. Sharkey noted that a third group of Radicals held the balance between the "ultras" and the moderates; it was this group, made up of such men as John A. Logan, John Sherman, James F. Wilson, and George Boutwell that determined the course of Radical action. These men were not committed to any particular economic policy but supported legislation that furthered their political ambitions.¹⁹

In "Radicals and Economic Policies: The Senate, 1861-1873," Glenn M. Linden of New Mexico State University confirmed the findings of Coben and Sharkey. Linden used quantitative methods to analyze Congressional voting records from 1861 to 1873. Linden found that there was no consolidated group of Radicals who "tended to support economic measures favorable to big business." Neither the Radicals nor the non-Radicals voted as a bloc on economic issues. When economic questions came before Congress both tended to vote along sectional rather than along Radical versus moderate lines. Linden concluded, "This suggests that the definition of 'Radicalism' in the Civil War and Reconstruction years should not specify a particular stand on economic questions."²⁰

¹⁹Robert P. Sharkey, Money, Class, and Party: An Economic Study of the Civil War and Reconstruction (Baltimore, 1959), 279, 280, 281; "Robert P. Sharkey," D.A.S., 272.

²⁰Glenn M. Linden, "Radicals and Economic Policies: The Senate, 1861-1873," The Journal of Southern History, XXXII (May, 1966), 190, 199.

While some historians were pointing out that the Radicals had no ulterior economic motives, others began to re-examine Radical humanitarian objectives with a greater degree of sympathy. The growing importance and success of the civil rights movement, based solidly upon the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments to the Constitution, led to a more favorable interpretation of the Radicals. These historians did not deny that some Radicals had baser motives, but they stressed philanthropy as the keystone of their thinking. Taking advantage of contemporary anthropology, historians pointed out that there are no inherent differences between whites and Negroes and the Negro was deserving of fairer treatment in Reconstruction historiography.

The first post-World War II study to emphasize the humanitarian motives of the Radicals was Out of Our Past: The Forces that Shaped Modern America by Carl N. Degler. Degler, a history professor at Vassar College, believed that the Radicals, although inspired by other considerations were imbued with a driving sense of duty to formulate protective measures to aid the Negro.²¹

To Degler, "the tragedy of Reconstruction is that it failed"; it did not go far enough in its humanitarian objec-

²¹Carl N. Degler, Out of Our Past: The Forces that Shaped Modern America (New York, 1959); "Carl N. Degler," D.A.S., 74.

tives. Both the North and the South were responsible for this failure, for the South was too intransigent and conservative and the North was too bungling in its idealism.²²

Although Degler's disappointment centered on the failure of the Radicals to consummate their idealism, he believed that the Reconstruction era did serve a purpose. The idealism that gave impetus to the movement did not die. Many Americans, he wrote, "Northerner and Southerner, never lost sight of the American dream of justice and equality which the Radicals of Reconstruction had securely fixed in the Constitution." Degler predicted that because of this idealism, these legal instruments "will be the means whereby the American urge to equality and justice for all will be translated into reality."²³

Beginning in 1959, historians who shared Degler's ideas were concerned with the need for a general work on Reconstruction which would synthesize the revisionist interpretation. The first essay to discuss this, was "The Dark and Bloody Ground of Reconstruction Historiography" by Bernard Weisberger of the University of Rochester. Weisberger, along with many others, believed that Coulter's The South During Reconstruction was unsatisfactory since it ignored revisionism and did not represent a contribution to under-

²²Degler, Out of Our Past, 228.

²³Ibid., 237.

standing the period.²⁴

Weisberger felt that the main reason for the lack of a general revisionist history of Reconstruction centered around the widespread conservatism which had "blunted the purpose of the historical guild." Too many historians had closed their minds to new approaches, particularly whites who either shied away from writing about the racial question or who exhibited preconceived, prejudiced value judgements concerning the Negro. Weisberger declared that "in the case of the knotty race problem . . . only a hardheaded approach to distasteful truths will yield real understanding." Weisberger contended that until such a racially honest approach appeared, there could be no adequate revisionist synthesis of Reconstruction.²⁵

The year following the publication of Weisberger's article, Donald Sheehan, a professor of history at Smith College, declared in his essay, "Radical Reconstruction," that the objectivity of Reconstruction historiography often led to undesirable noncommittal attitudes. Sheehan believed that there was too much concern with being fair to every faction and too little ideological commitment. Such an attitude, according to Sheehan, was illogical and ideological-

²⁴Bernard A. Weisberger, "The Dark and Bloody Ground of Reconstruction Historiography," The Journal of Southern History, XXV (November, 1959), 434; "Bernard A. Weisberger," D.A.S., 318.

²⁵Weisberger, "The Dark and Bloody Ground," 428, 437, 439.

ly dishonest, for it offered no choice as to the primacy of Negro rights or southern rights; it permitted no interpretation as to who was right and who was wrong during the Reconstruction period. Sheehan urged historians, either in writing monographs or in undertaking the much needed synthesis of the revisionist interpretation of Reconstruction, to reverse this trend of ideological noncommitment.²⁶

Vernon L. Wharton, in his essay, "Reconstruction," agreed with Sheehan that there was an urgent need for a synthesis of the revisionist point of view. However, he had reservations about Sheehan's attitude toward historical objectivity. Wharton, a Mississippian teaching at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, felt that "there is increasing evidence that moderate revisionism does not satisfy many new students of a new generation" who have been influenced by recent sociological, psychological, anthropological, and political estimates of the nature of man. Wharton appreciated the fact that these historians were "profoundly disturbed by contradictions between American doctrine and American behavior," but their tendency to allow their conscience to take precedence over historical objectivity disturbed him. Wharton was apprehensive that these historians, led by their conscience, would search for "a simple, two-sided interpretation

²⁶Donald Sheehan, "Radical Reconstruction," in Sheehan and Harold C. Syrett (eds.), Essays in American Historiography: Papers Presented in Honor of Allan Nevins (New York, 1960), 37-49.

of the Reconstruction experience" which would place Reconstruction historiography in the position it occupied in the 1870's.²⁷

In Politics, Principle, and Prejudice, 1865-1867, John H. Cox, with his wife LaWanda as co-author, ascribed humanitarian motives to the Radicals. They asserted that a gradual metamorphosis transformed the Radicals' ideals from ending slavery into a "condemnation of legal discrimination which . . . seemed to them the last vestiges of slavery," and sought to retain their power in order to sustain these rights.²⁸

James M. McPherson's Struggle for Equality also echoed the ideas of Radical humanitarianism. He agreed that many Radicals were selfishly motivated but he felt that several of them "provided an idealistic-moral-humanitarian justification for the politics of the Republican party." The remarkable fact about these humanitarian Radicals, according to McPherson, was that "in a nation where popular belief and scientific learning overwhelmingly proclaimed the Negro's absolute inferiority [they] dared to affirm their faith in the innate equality of all men, regardless of

²⁷Vernon L. Wharton, "Reconstruction," in Arthur S. Link and Rembert W. Patrick (eds.), Writing Southern History: Essays in Historiography in Honor of Fletcher M. Green (Baton Rouge, 1965), 314, 315; "Vernon Wharton," Who's Who, XXXI, 3090.

²⁸John H. Cox and LaWanda Cox, Politics, Principle, and Prejudice, 1865-1867 (Glencoe, Ill., 1963), 207, 210.

race." Unfortunately, the idealistic intentions of the early Radicals were supplanted by more selfish motives; indicating that the North's original acceptance of the idea of Negro equality "was primarily a conversion of expediency rather than one of conviction." The Reconstruction period left an important legacy however. McPherson noted that "whatever success the contemporary movement finally does achieve will be built partly on the foundations laid down more than a century ago."²⁹

Although the Coxes' and McPherson's books followed the ideas of Degler, Weisberger, and Sheehan, Kenneth M. Stampp's The Era of Reconstruction, published in 1965, seemed to be a more complete answer to their suggestions. Stampp, a history professor at the University of California at Berkely, synthesized the revisionist reassessment of the various aspects of Radical Reconstruction.³⁰

Stampp, like earlier revisionists found many laudable accomplishments deriving from Reconstruction, and he felt that many of these achievements resulted from the idealistic role which the Radicals played in "the last great crusade of the nineteenth century reformers." Even so, Stampp agreed with historians who criticized Reconstruction, that

²⁹James M. McPherson, Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction, Princeton, 1964.

³⁰Kenneth M. Stampp, The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877 (New York, 1965); "Kenneth M. Stampp," D.A.S., 285.

the Radicals also acted from less exalted motives. He admitted that they were often vindictive; "these men . . . did have in them a streak of hatred and bitterness toward the South, a desire to punish her for her 'treason.'" They also desired to retain their political power through Negro votes. In addition, Stampp conceded that the "Republican party had become, in part, the political agency . . . of northern business enterprise." However, Stampp pointed out that there were also traces of idealism in the Radicals' economic program for they believed that a high tariff and soft money would "benefit and enrich not just special interest groups but the country as a whole." Stampp contended that even though the Radicals were partially inspired by vindictive, selfish motives, "it does not necessarily follow that their program itself was reprehensible A genuine desire to do justice to the Negro . . . was one of the main-springs of radicalism" and it was this idealism which was responsible for the legislation and amendments giving civil and political rights to the Negro.³¹

Radical Reconstruction in the South also had favorable aspects, Stampp declared. He felt that the carpetbaggers were not all evil and ignorant men; indeed, they were often men of substantial accomplishments who came South because of their humanitarianism. Furthermore, the Negroes' role in

³¹Stampp, Era of Reconstruction, 90, 93, 97, 101, 105, 107.

the southern Radical governments was not one of passive subservience or gross corruption. They took an active and useful part in governing the South and made several lasting contributions.³²

Reconstruction was successful, Stampf contended, only in an economic and political sense. The humanitarian goals failed with the result that the "Negroes . . . were only half emancipated." Still, the humanitarian idealism of the Radicals did not die; "indeed, without radical reconstruction it would be impossible for the federal government to protect Negroes from legal and political discrimination" in the mid-twentieth century. Stampf concluded with the thought that "it was worth a few years of radical reconstruction to give the American Negro the ultimate promise of equal civil and political rights."³³

Stampf, in following the recommendations of Degler and Sheehan, did not remain uncommitted in his interpretation of Reconstruction. In fact, Thomas J. Pressly, of the University of Washington, in "Radical Attitudes, Scholarship, and Reconstruction: A Review Essay," warned that Stampf had allowed his scholarship to be misled "by the ideological convictions of his time." Pressly felt that all historians, Stampf included, should "examine with particular rigor those

³²Ibid., 159, 176, 177.

³³Ibid., 13, 214.

findings which so neatly coincide with their convictions"; such an examination would aid historians to base their interpretation "upon durable evidence rather than ideological convictions."³⁴

Staughton Lynd of Spelman College in Atlanta, carried further Stamp's ideas of Radical humanitarianism. In "Rethinking Slavery and Reconstruction," written in 1965, and in Reconstruction, which he published in 1967, Lynd viewed the period as the consolidation of a revolution gone awry. He felt that Reconstruction, as envisioned by the true Radicals, involved the desire to create a deliberate, revolutionary social change by giving the Negro land through homestead laws and the confiscation of southern plantations. That these Radicals failed to garner enough support for their schemes, disappointed Lynd; he saw this failure to give land to the Negro as the "fundamental error in Reconstruction policy Congress should have given the ex-slave the economic independence to resist political intimidation." Because "political change was not reinforced by economic change," manhood suffrage became inevitably artificial. Lynd concluded that the persistent civil rights struggles of the twentieth century occurred in large part because Congressional Reconstruction "set up a stool with

³⁴Thomas J. Pressly, "Radical Attitudes, Scholarship, and Reconstruction: A Review Essay," The Journal of Southern History, XXXII (February, 1966), 92, 95.

two legs, Negro suffrage and a federal presence," without including the necessary leg of economic independence.³⁵

The importance of Radical humanitarianism also appeared in the writing of William R. Brock. Brock, a professor at Selwyn College, Cambridge, and a frequent lecturer at universities in the United States, was one of the few English historians to write about Reconstruction. In An American Crisis, Congress and Reconstruction 1865-1867, written in 1963, and The Character of American History, published in 1965, Brock discussed Reconstruction largely as a liberal humanitarian movement, "a part of the world wide crisis of the nineteenth century liberal tradition." His coverage of the Radicals' economic motives followed Co-ben and Sharkey in stressing a lack of Radical cohesiveness concerning economic policy. The Radicals "did not think of themselves as agents of the masters of capital," Brock observed, even when they supported a high tariff; they simply felt that such a policy would stimulate the economy, thus serving the best interests of the people. Basically, however, the Radicals were liberal humanitarians and Brock believed this to be evident in their desire for social reform, particularly where the Negro was concerned. He pointed out

³⁵Staughton Lynd, "Rethinking Slavery and Reconstruction," The Journal of Negro History, L (July, 1965), 207; Lynd (ed.), Reconstruction (New York, 1967), 4, 8; "Staughton Lynd," D.A.S., 189.

that this social idealism "was not the possession of a few fanatics in Congress," but was an expression of the belief of millions of Americans. "Radicalism was not an aberration but a broad stream which gathered up most themes of American history." The Radicals, as spokesmen for this widely held social idealism, believed that the northern form of society was more just and logical than the southern social system.³⁶

Eventually however, the dynamism of Radical Reconstruction wasted away although the framework remained. Reconstruction ended, Brock believed, because of the ebbing of the reformist zeal of the educated middle class, and the pitfall inherent in attempting so radical a departure from past experience. Brock saw "the weight of tradition" and the Radicals' failure to break with tradition as the basis of the tragedy of Reconstruction.³⁷

Most Reconstruction historians writing in the period after World War II emphasized only one aspect of Radical motivation. Several historians, however, maintained that a combination of economic, political, and humanitarian motives

³⁶William R. Brock, An American Crisis: Congress and Reconstruction, 1865-1867 (London, 1953), 9, 94, 224; Brock, The Character of American History (London, 1965), 142-170; "William R. Brock," James M. Ethridge (ed.), Contemporary Authors (Detroit, 1962-1966), 9/10, 60.

³⁷Brock, An American Crisis, 298.

had inspired Radical policies. Francis Butler Simkins' The South, Old and New, published in 1947,³⁸ emphasized this composite nature of Radical motivation. Simkins in this work attempted to carry out the suggestions he had made a decade before, in his article, "New Viewpoints of Southern Reconstruction."³⁹

Simkins believed that vengeance was an important factor in determining the Radicals' attitude toward the South. Humiliation of the South in the form of personal harassment, seizure of churches, and military rule resulted. As time passed, the Radicals' vengeance lessened in intensity and was supplanted by other motives. Important among these, according to Simkins, was a zeal for humanitarian reform. They sought, he wrote, "to impose upon the benighted land of secession and slavery progressive concepts of social morality" in order to aid the Negro. They also "wished to give the South, white as well as black, the benefits of that brand of nationalism, democracy, and capitalism which had worked wonders in the North." These altruistic objectives

³⁸The South, Old and New was republished largely unchanged in 1953 under the title A History of the South.

³⁹Francis Butler Simkins, The South, Old and New: A History 1820-1947 (New York, 1947), 103-223; Simkins and Robert H. Woody, South Carolina During Reconstruction (Chapel Hill, 1932); Simkins, "New Viewpoints of Southern Reconstruction," The Journal of Southern History, V (February, 1939), 49-61.

explained why the Radical experimenters, despite their significant shortcomings, "never completely forgot their obligation to reform and uplift."⁴⁰

Simkins did not overlook selfish Radical motives. He observed that "some politicians in Washington saw in corrupt Southern governments a means of sustaining a national party" under their control. They also saw in their domination of the South a means of quick wealth for themselves and for northern capitalism. Simkins concluded that "those who had acted from self-interest became corrupt . . . while others who had been originally disinterested joined the greedy or retired from the South with their enthusiasm subsided."⁴¹

C. Vann Woodward in Reunion and Reaction, published in 1953, and The Burden of Southern History, written in 1960, also pointed out that the Radicals had more than one motive in reconstructing the South. Woodward, a Southerner educated at Emory University and the University of North Carolina, felt that partisan politics had helped determine Radical goals. During the first months of Reconstruction, Woodward noted, the Radicals did not advocate Negro suffrage because they felt that the Negro could not vote intelligently. How-

⁴⁰Simkins, The South, Old and New, 168, 194.

⁴¹Ibid..

ever, this hesitancy soon disappeared with the resurgence of Democratic power, and the Radicals quickly inaugurated their program championing the cause of Negro civil and political rights. Even though Woodward did not approve of all the Radical tactics in this area, he felt that the end result afforded one of history's most "drastic applications of the democratic dogma."⁴²

Woodward did not believe however, that political objectives told the whole story; "in addition to the party purpose there was another purpose which was not frankly declared. It was more often disavowed, concealed, deprecated"; this aim was economic in nature. He maintained that many important northern business interests "saw in the return of a disaffected and Democratic South a menace to the economic order that had been established during the absence of the seceding states."⁴³

Even though the Radicals had important political and economic motives, Woodward felt that they could not publicly admit either aim. However, they soon discovered that a philanthropic program would attract widespread public support; thus, the Radicals launched their program of civil and

⁴²C. Vann Woodward, Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction (Boston, 1951), 5; Woodward, The Burden of Southern History (Baton Rouge, 1960), ch. 5; "C. Vann Woodward," D.A.S., 328.

⁴³Woodward, Burden of Southern History, 95.

political rights for the Negro. Woodward emphasized that "it is undoubtedly true that some of the Radicals were motivated almost entirely by their idealism" but he added that "what is doubtful is that these were the effective or primary motives, or that they took priority over the pragmatic and materialistic motives of party interest and sectional economic interests." Although Reconstruction ended with the "compromise of 1877," Woodward felt that the accomplishments of the era paved the way for the civil rights movement of the twentieth century.⁴⁴

Eric McKittrick, a professor of history at Columbia University, in his Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction agreed with Woodward concerning the multiple nature of Radical motives, but he stressed cleavages among them. McKittrick noted that "they were radical for different reasons We find no program, no unity, no 'grim confidence,' and certainly no 'fierce joy.'" He went so far as to declare that "it would be almost a mistake to think of them, at this time, as constituting a 'group' at all."⁴⁵

McKittrick pointed out that some of the early Radicals had a sincere interest in the Negro; there were those who promoted civil and political rights "primarily on the grounds

⁴⁴Ibid., 96, 97, 107.

⁴⁵Eric McKittrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction (Chicago, 1960), 54, 64; "Eric McKittrick," D.A.S., 195.

of principle." However, there were others who saw the Negro "as a possible device for establishing some sort of Republican foothold in the South." Indeed, McKittrick felt that the Radicals' selfish and humanitarian sentiments concerning the rights of the Negro were so intermingled, that it would be difficult to determine "where 'principle' left off and 'expediency' began."⁴⁶

David Donald in his revision of James G. Randall's Civil War and Reconstruction in 1951, expressed ideas similar to those of McKittrick. Donald took into account the vast amount of new material on Reconstruction which had been published since the first edition in 1937, and he consciously attempted to break away from Randall's Dunningite interpretation. Donald no longer referred to the Radicals as vindictive, and he did not censure their motives to the extent that Randall had. Even though they used all the means at their disposal to retain their power, Donald noted that many of the early Radicals sincerely believed that "there was an identity between the welfare of the Republican party and that of the nation." He also felt that many of them were genuinely concerned for the Negroes' well-being. However, by 1868, whatever the Radicals "had earlier had in the way of idealism and a sense of mission had vanished," and they were concerned chiefly "with the stakes of power."

⁴⁶McKittrick, Andrew Johnson, 56.

These later Radicals used their power, Donald contended, "with unscrupulous virtuosity to perpetuate themselves in office."⁴⁷

Donald's discussion of Radical Reconstruction in the South and the role of the Negro differed from Randall much more than his explanation of Radical motives. He noted that the South had never been dominated by Negroes and that those who had held office "were of about average ability." Even though "there is a great deal of evidence to substantiate the familiar charge that these Radical governments in the South were corrupt," such evidence, he believed, had to be kept in perspective. The historian should remember that corruption was widespread in the United States during this period, and was evident in the South after the fall of the Radicals.⁴⁸

John Hope Franklin, now teaching at the University of Chicago, published Reconstruction: After the Civil War in 1961. Like McKittrick and Donald, Franklin emphasized the variety of Radical motives and he stressed the many accomplishments accruing from Radical rule.⁴⁹

⁴⁷James G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction (2 ed., Boston, 1961), 570, 633.

⁴⁸Ibid., 622, 623, 624, 626.

⁴⁹John Hope Franklin, Reconstruction: After the Civil War (Chicago, 1961); "John Hope Franklin," D.A.S., 101.

Franklin considered humanitarianism to be a major Radical motive, especially before 1868. He believed the original leaders, like Stevens, were committed to Negro uplift; they wanted "to carry the crusade to its logical conclusion" of Negro political and civil rights. Franklin pointed out that these early Radicals regarded control of the South by the former Confederates as inimical to their humanitarian aims.⁵⁰

When the older group of Radicals relinquished their power to younger men, Franklin felt that the Radicals' motives changed. The new leaders had more concern for their own political future and the welfare of their northern business allies than "solicitude for humanitarian reform." They "proceeded to make good their domination" of national politics by "strengthening the position of Congress in reconstruction."⁵¹

Franklin declared that the Radicals also acted as the agents of the northern "industrial plutocracy that was seeking to keep a stranglehold on government in order to maintain its intrenched position." The Radicals saw in the northern business community a powerful ally; for this reason they took advantage of "the peculiar post-war conditions to

⁵⁰Franklin, Reconstruction, 9, 60.

⁵¹Ibid., 9, 60, 70.

further the interests of their friends in the industrial and financial community."⁵²

Franklin discussed the nature of the Radical governments in the South and their contributions. He found them to be corrupt, but he declared that "no party or race had a monopoly on public immorality." He added that "the tragedy of public immorality in the Southern states was only part of a national tragedy." Franklin pointed to many significant contributions made by the Radical governments and noted that these accomplishments were continued by the Redeemers.⁵³

The most recent general study of Reconstruction, Rembert Patrick's The Reconstruction of the Nation, appeared in 1967. Patrick, a professor of history at the University of Georgia, also explained Radical motivation in terms of several goals. The Radicals "mixed principle and expediency" and he noted that "the principles . . . of this segment of the Republican party changed from time to time."⁵⁴

There was vindictiveness, Patrick declared, particularly in the actions of Stevens and his adherents. By 1867, he stated, "the vindictive Stevens was determined to devote his remaining months of life to the punishment of traitors."

⁵²Ibid., 9, 73.

⁵³Ibid., 149, 151, ch. X.

⁵⁴Rembert W. Patrick, The Reconstruction of the Nation (New York, 1967), 52, 53; "Rembert W. Patrick," D.A.S., 251.

This vindictiveness "mounted to peaks of intensity in 1867 and 1868," but after the death of Stevens in 1868, ceased to be an important Radical force.⁵⁵

Patrick also emphasized the importance of political objectives to the Radicals. Many of them "anticipated policies which would win party ascendancy in the South for the Republicans," thus strengthening their hold on government at the national level. Patrick pointed out, however, that the Radicals' political desires were not exclusively selfish. Stevens' "open avowal of party purpose," although shocking to many Americans, was not simply a statement of political lust, for Stevens also sincerely believed that "the safety of the nation depended upon the continued supremacy of the Republican party."⁵⁶

Even though the Radicals sought means to enthrone the Republican party in the defeated South, Patrick believed they also were "concerned for the welfare of the Negroes and the poor whites." Sumner "was almost childlike in his devotion to the principle of Negro rights," and Stevens felt that "the freedmen needed political rights for their self-protection." Patrick maintained that these motives, as well as self-centered ones, led to the Reconstruction Acts, the

⁵⁵Patrick, The Reconstruction of the Nation, 60, 94.

⁵⁶Ibid., 91.

Fourteenth Amendment, and Radical Reconstruction in the South.⁵⁷

The basic objection of white Southerners to Congressional Reconstruction centered around the Negro, and the Radicals' championing of Negro rights. Patrick noted that "white supremacy was the essential reason for opposition to Congressional Reconstruction." The problem of graft and corruption, which did exist, although not to the extent that many historians have claimed, was simply ammunition used by white Southerners in their attacks upon the governments which forced Negro equality. Like other revisionist historians, Patrick felt that Reconstruction was not fraught with evil and declared that in many respects it helped the South.

The number of specialized monographic studies greatly increased after World War II. These works, incorporating the revisionist interpretation of Reconstruction, sanctioned and fortified the opinions presented in the general studies of the period. Often these monographs contributed significantly to Reconstruction historiography but historians continued to be fully aware of the fact that the need and opportunity for further research and interpretation were far from exhausted.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Ibid., 54, 76.

⁵⁸Post-World War II revisionist monographs include:

Even though a century has passed since Reconstruction began, historians are not in complete agreement as to the meaning of the period, or as to the proper frame of reference to be used to interpret the Radicals. By the mid-1960's, most historians have accepted as a matter of course, the contributions of the Revisionists. They are agreed that corruption was a national phenomenon and not confined to the southern Radical governments, that Negroes are not racially inferior, and that Radical rule in the South made a number of significant contributions.

Historians in the 1960's continued to be aware of the political and economic aspects of Reconstruction, but because of the growth and success of the civil rights movement, these have been overshadowed by the tendency to interpret Radical motives, and the entire period, in terms of humanitarian accomplishments. Where the Radicals' humanitarian aims were successful, as in adding the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments to the Constitution, the

David Donald, "The Scalawag in Mississippi Reconstruction," The Journal of Southern History, X (November, 1944), 447-460; T. Harry Williams, "The Louisiana Reunification Movement of 1873," The Journal of Southern History, XI (August, 1945), 349-369; Vernon L. Wharton, The Negro in Mississippi, 1865-1890 (Chapel Hill, 1947); Thomas B. Alexander, Political Reconstruction in Tennessee (Nashville, 1950); T.B. Alexander, "Persistent Whiggery in Alabama and the Lower South," Alabama Review, XII (January, 1959), 35-52; Alan Conway, The Reconstruction of Georgia (Minneapolis, 1956); Joel Williamson, After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1831-1877 (Chapel Hill, 1966).

Reconstruction period has been regarded as the crowning achievement of the movement to emancipate the Negro.

If there has been a tragic aspect to the Reconstruction era, historians no longer interpret it as did the Dunning School; they do not explain Reconstruction in terms of greedy and opportunistic carpetbaggers and scalawags who used ignorant Negroes to impose their corrupt governments upon a defenseless South. Instead, they feel that the tragedy centered on the fact that Reconstruction did not go far enough in implementing the idealistic aims of the Radicals; the one hundred-year delay in giving meaning to the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments was a mistake of major proportions. Many of these historians, in expressing their disappointment concerning the century-long delay in giving the Negro civil rights, echo the sentiments of the authors who championed the Radical cause in the 1870's. Thus, Reconstruction historiography of the 1960's, in many respects has come full circle and is in a position similar to that which it occupied in the years just after Appomattox.

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