

CHAPTER ONE

The Triumph Of The “Directory”

1865-1868

The talk and labor is of Reconstruction, for this is the engine by which they hold power; yet not a man among that great number...appears to know...what he means by Reconstruction.

GIDEON WELLES

THE longed-for peace had come. The great military captains, Grant and Lee, Sherman and Johnston, vied with each other in gestures of magnanimity on the one side and conciliation on the other. Shaking off the stupor and frenzy of war, the Union and Confederate soldiers who were being mustered out at Appomattox instantly fraternized with each other.

After the iron days and nights of war, the call to peaceful, civil life seemed infinitely deep and sweet. There was so much to be done; there was so much work, chance, opportunity which the war and the victory itself opened up, in the farms and shops of the North even more than in the ravaged valleys of the South. The whole machinery of the country must be remade for the new age of coal and steam power which had come about even before men's eyes had grown accustomed to it. There must be greater arteries for the circulation of the new industry; a transcontinental network of railway track must be quickly laid; the production of iron must be doubled; new oil fields in Pennsylvania, copper and silver mines in Colorado and other mountain territories, must be opened up. Homestead farms, new towns and industries too, in the virgin prairies of the West along the moving frontier offered hope and fortune to the strong, willing men who had borne arms. To seek opportunity among the new resources that beckoned, to exploit these by their own untrammelled, individual efforts as freely as possible within the open continental market of America—here were the common realities, here for most men were the real fruits of the Second American Revolution. Finally, opportunity for work and enterprise was greater, more immediate, than ever before, because the barriers of the feudal land economy of the South which had dominated the policy of the nation for long decades were broken at last as effectively, as completely, as feudalism had been broken in England in 1688 and in France in 1789. In 1865 three-quarters of the American people set to work instinctively, planlessly, to build a heavy industry

where there had been almost nothing of the sort, and to produce twice as much goods, food, wealth of all kinds, as they had produced in 1860. This had been their blind object and their end, though never mentioned in the dicta of party leaders or the terms of generals. Frustrated in this end, they had willingly taken to arms and halted not in the struggle with the enemy-brother until they had won.

Even the assassination of Mr. Lincoln, arousing momentarily horror, suspicion, and gloom, failed to shake for long the will of the people for repose after war, for swiftest return to the ways of peaceful labor after destruction. The Lincoln tragedy passed off in a fleeting mood of anger, bearing with it surprisingly little retribution; it was seen as the effect of insane intrigue rather than authoritative conspiracy, for had not Lincoln been the most conciliatory and merciful of the war-party leaders? But the new President too had proved himself a staunch patriot, and all seemed well. The press, most letters, and most memoirs of the time all tell of war weariness, of the passion for peace, for order, of immeasurable relief at the end of the long-drawn-out war.

This war weariness, combined with the nearly universal desire to embrace those chances of human betterment offered by the tremendous contemporary industrial and economic renovation and expansion, diverted men's minds at the outset from the perplexing problems of the peace settlement in the South. What was to be done with our 6,000,000 conquered rebels? How were we to treat with them? It was far less simple than treating with a subjugated foreign power. What was to be done with the colored freedmen? Were they to be given full civil rights? Few voices as yet spoke of conferring suffrage upon them. Here were engrossing, delicate race and economic questions; and public opinion seemed aloof, vague, or indecisive. But had not the military problem itself, during the war years, appeared utterly insoluble? Surely the questions of peace would be answered with reason and dispatch where the difficulties of war had been met at so fearful a cost.

The lessons of Northern blundering and dissension in wartime should have given warning of a frightful peace to follow. Disputes as to the restoration of conquered territories had broken out among the allied factions and classes on the Union side before 1865, but the need for military unity, the system of emergency-decree government, had muffled their dangerous echoes. Lincoln, the Moderate Republican, had put forth in December, 1863, a tentative plan for the restoration of semi-civil local government in three of the conquered provinces; Congress, led by the Radical Republicans Senator Wade of Ohio and Representatives Henry Winter Davis and Thaddeus Stevens, offered in July, 1864, a different, harsher plan in the Wade-Davis Bill, to which Lincoln gave a "pocket veto." Afterward leaders of Congress challenged the President's authority in this field with a vigorous resolution of censure, the Wade-Davis

Manifesto. The successful election canvass of 1864 would seem to have supported fully the President’s more lenient doctrines. Yet Lincoln did not deceive himself concerning the difficulties of Reconstruction in the South which were to be faced after the war. Stanton, his aggressive Secretary of War, had offered his resignation in a last interview before the President’s death; and Lincoln, tears filling his eyes, as Stanton related, had said: “Stanton, you cannot go. Reconstruction is more difficult and dangerous than construction or destruction...you must help us through the final act. The bag is filled. It must be tied, and tied securely.”¹

The people were weary and indifferent; the soldiers themselves and their leaders were conciliatory toward the enemy. But the politicians were otherwise, and their hour had come again. News of General Sherman’s gallant conditions of surrender offered to A. S. Johnston’s defeated army brought at once a resounding public rebuke ‘from Secretary Stanton and enforcement of severer terms by Congress.

What was, then, to be the diplomacy of peace in America? Despite the savagery of the war, the victors were disposed to be magnanimous. How was it that they were turned shortly toward a program of peace which involved subjugation of the conquered territories by force for more than a decade, breeding hates fiercer than those of bloody battle—hates flowing from daily petty oppression in civil life, hence deeper, more malignant by far than the momentary, physical emotion of war?

A brief season, a summer of calm before Congress convened, then the war of words, the storm of partisan controversy broke in all its force of towering and theatrical passion. The conquerors, yesterday so firmly united, were today strangely at odds, even at blows amongst themselves, over the disposition of the conquered. Against moderate counsels which urged a speedy pacification of the rebel States and promptest return from a degrading military rule to “proper and practical relations with the Union,” as Lincoln had phrased it—these counsels coming chiefly from the circle of the Administration, the new President, Andrew Johnson of Tennessee—strident voices of Northern “Jacobins,” or “Radicals,” were raised in opposition, and cried for a Carthaginian peace. These now demanded in sternest, revolutionary tones a pitiless vengeance, the full, forcible subjugation of the Southern former rebels, treatment of their States as conquered provinces, continued suppression of their civil rights, even confiscation of their lands—in short, the complete breakup of their institutions, their customs, their society.

What demon had entered into the souls of the politicians at Washington? What madness whipped them steadily to a pitch of hate and fury which the people were so far from sharing or comprehending? What the true motives, the concrete interests, behind their verbal bombardments, their legal batteries,

their propaganda, with which they conducted thunderous campaigns and skillfully manipulated or flanked public opinion?

Peace had come, but there was no peace. The strident demands of politicians and interested groups mingled discordantly with lyrical professions of patriotism, of devotion to the national safety. A peculiar, distinguishing trait of the chaotic years of Reconstruction, it has been said, was the marriage of the Protective Tariff and the Bloody Shirt. The men who had borne arms no longer wished to fight, General Sherman wrote to his brother, the Senator from Ohio. But he feared that the politicians were ready to “prolong the war ad infinitum.”²

II

Ours has been a jealous, quarrelsome republic of bourgeois, a strong element among its egalitarian citizens, in surprising degree, being ever suspicious of high authority, impatient of powerful leadership. The tone of political controversy is seldom polite or ceremonial, and the spirit of our popular tribunes often violent and vulgar in their partisanship, though Roman senators too were sometimes far meaner, far less dignified than conventional history pictures them. We have also among our people a tradition of eating up even great military leaders, chewing away the bay leaves of their glory—a tradition which is not without its virtues in a republic of free men. After every major war we have rent in pieces the autocratic power of the war leader or the President who served for a time as Commander in Chief. In the striking transition from war government to civil life in 1865 such a revolt, such a fate, was prepared also for the sagacious leader Lincoln.

Mr. Lincoln, as the rebel armies retreated in 1865, and especially in the several days following Appomattox, possessed the authority almost of an Augustus Caesar. As one of his contemporaries and partisans has recalled, he

stood triumphant in every public relation—chosen by an almost unprecedented vote to his second term, the rebellion conquered, the Union firmly re-established! Never since Washington’s exalted position at the close of the Revolution, or his still more elevated station when he entered the Presidency, has there been a man in the United States of so great personal power and influence as Mr. Lincoln then wielded.³

For most of four years, the Administration, the “White House,” had been supreme in our Government. Yet Lincoln was to have been assailed as Washington was

assailed and humiliated. The terms of the Wade-Davis Manifesto of 1864 left no doubt on this score. His preferred course in Reconstruction after the war would have brought new accusations of “rash and fatal” acts; of striking “a blow at the rights of humanity and at the principles of republican government.” The powerful autocrat of war, who for four years had exercised leadership in person or through his cabinet officers, would have been sternly admonished anew that the support of the Republican Party was “of a cause and not of a man”; that “the authority of Congress is paramount and must be respected”; that he must “confine himself to his executive duties—to obey and execute, not make the laws.” But Mr. Lincoln, resourceful, patient, leader of his party, fell before the pistol of Booth, and the brunt of the party uprising prepared for him was to be borne by his successor.

The nation-wide political controversy over Reconstruction burst forth in the autumn of 1865 and raged for three years as a struggle first upon constitutional grounds between the two strongest branches of our Government, Congress and the President, then for ten years thereafter on other grounds, largely as a conflict between the two great parties. It was strife as unforgiving as the economic-sectional strife of the 1850’s on the eve of the “irrepressible conflict.” Its issues and terms at the period were as confused, as distorted, as contradictory, as those of any controversy in our recent history. Partisans of both camps were heard to appeal now to “eternal principles” and now to unreasoning hate, passion, and particular prejudice. They invoked the doctrines of the Declaration of Independence, of “natural rights,” of universal liberty and equality, but turned also to time-serving bargains. They swore to defend sacred human rights, but stooped also to intrigues in the advantage of an interested group or party.

In short, the stormy epoch of Reconstruction, tragic and burlesque in turn, with its principal actors heroic and ignoble at once, its glimpses of idealism in partnership with fraud and chicanery, with all its glaring contradictions between ideology and interest, between “eternal principles of truth and right” and class-economic necessities—this is a most fruitful period, a vastly instructive one for historical analysis. With its social circumstances strongly resembling and linked to those of modern times, this period may well serve as a point of departure for our inquiry into modern political institutions, which will seek always *the differences between that which men say and that which they mean in politics.*

In the struggle over Reconstruction, on one side men seemed to range themselves with those who would strengthen the Union, preserve the fruits of the victory over the secessionists, at once centralize and strengthen our

federal form of government and extend liberty and suffrage to all men. On the other side were aligned apparently those sincere devotees of particularism and sectionalism who ardently cherished local liberties, States' Rights or home rule, all the protective rights granted by our Constitution to preserve men from despotic power and authority in the days before such principles became the subterfuge of corporate capitalism. Such general principles were certainly invoked by the leading spokesmen of each side.

But we soon see that the statesmen who championed universal suffrage and hence Negro suffrage, incidentally or concomitantly or with affected innocence were concerned as well with quite worldly things and pecuniary measures of enormous potency: with the defense of a new national banking system introduced during the war, with the repayment in gold specie of the national war debt, with a system of taxation known as the protective tariff, which had wrought epoch-making changes in everyday life. Their opponents, while espousing in general terms traditional local liberties and rights of self-government against a "grasping, centralized despotism," often—whether hailing from Ohio and Indiana or from Tennessee—show themselves indifferent or uniformly hostile to the new banking system, to the new mode of taxation, that is, the protective tariff; they are even largely unconvinced as to the "sacredness" of the war debt.

Finally, when we perceive how the leading statesmen of the struggle against slavery compromise in the end, exchanging, for instance, the concrete realization of Negro suffrage in the South for the mere formal or legal appearance thereof—eventually abandoning the Negro freedman almost wholly to his old masters—we begin to doubt strongly the truthfulness of the general principles and motives declared at the outset of the struggle. We wonder whether the *incidental* or concomitant objects in view were 'not the de facto ones, while the "eternal principles" invoked were but the de jure ones. We confront the profound contradictions between ideology and interest; between the mask and parade—the theatrical dueling of prejudice, associations of thought, patriotic sentiment, illusions—and the naked clash of different conditions of existence, different forms of property and economy, such as those of the town and country, of capital and landed property. Behind the marching songs and slogans of the Ins and the Outs, the epithets of "Copperheads," "rebels," "traitors," and the answering ones of "tyrant," or "Scalawag," we must grasp at the pecuniary objects, the genuine, concrete interests, the real stakes being played for, as in every historic social conflict.

Just as, in private life, we draw a distinction between what a human being thinks and says of himself, and what he really is and does, so, "and even more definitely in the struggles of history, must we differentiate between the phrases and fancies of the political parties and their true organic entity, their genuine

interests, must distinguish appearance from reality.”⁴

The Civil War was of course no pure and simple struggle over slavery or States’ Rights. The preponderance of wealth lay in manufacturing rather than in agriculture after 1850. Practically all of the iron and textile manufacturing trade was in the control of the Northern bourgeoisie by 1860; over two-thirds of the banking capital, the greatest portion of the foreign shipping, more than three-quarters of the white population, mechanics and free farmers, were on the Northern side. Yet we must remember that the slaveowners of the South, carrying with them up to 1860 the agriculturists of the South and the West, had held a strategic balance of power for a generation, dominated the nation’s policy, raised barriers of a feudal economy against the industrial destiny of the nation. The slave oligarchy held power and office, and under the system of party patronage established since 1828 used the very funds of the national Treasury to buttress their political power. They rebelled at last when these advantages could no longer be maintained.

When the slaveowners burst into insurrection, foreseeing the fatal turn of events, the Northern capitalist States moved to crush their rebellion. But also, once engaged in the conflict, the progressive bourgeoisie of the North sought not only to destroy the enemy but to complete their own revolution—the swift completion of the bourgeois revolution which had been begun in the eighteenth century. The Northern Whigs who for a generation under Webster and Clay—indifferent to the small cry of the Abolitionists—had shown an overweening appetite for measures encouraging to business, for a national banking system, for internal improvements of rivers and harbors and a protective tariff, for Pacific Railway subsidies and free homesteads—all the things which the Southern political power had barred—were led at last to join, adventitiously enough, in the struggle for “union and liberty.” Whether Democrats or Whigs formerly, “the industrial classes, by a sort of instinct of self-preservation as it seemed to them, began to consolidate their votes in favor of the Republican party.”⁵

But masses of people, free farmers and laborers, may not easily be led into bloody battle to endure hunger, torture, weariness, and death for a new banking act, or a 47 per cent *ad valorem* tariff upon imports. It was in the name of patriotism, freedom and equal rights for all men, and free soil—doctrines proclaimed sincerely no doubt by the more radical middle-class ideologues—that the liberty-loving Northern masses were stirred to action. “To hundreds of thousands of voters who took part in that memorable contest” (of 1860) and cast their ballots for Mr. Lincoln, as Blaine recalls, “the tariff was not even mentioned.” Instead they were exhorted to aid free territory and resist the

aggressions of the proslavery leaders of the South. But in the October elections in Pennsylvania, on whose outcome the whole national contest depended, the tariff was the real issue and had “a controlling influence not only in deciding the contest for political supremacy but in that more momentous struggle which was to involve the fate of the Union.”⁶

Here, in accents which he made no effort to suppress, Curtin, the Republican candidate for the Governorship and the frank spokesman of the iron trade, asserted that Pennsylvania’s sons were “pining for protection to their labor and their dearest interests.” Indeed human liberty and the subvention of the iron trade became inextricably intertwined in his soul, so that he cried at once: “If you desire to become vast and great, protect the manufactures of Philadelphia....All hail, liberty! All hail, freedom! freedom to the white man! All hail freedom general as the air we breathe!”⁷

Even while the fortunes of military contests in the Mississippi Valley or the Blue Ridge of Virginia were still in doubt, the political leaders of the industrial classes behind the lines in the North had quickly carried economic positions which decades of campaigning in peacetime had never gained. The immense orgy of spending, destroying, and producing precipitated by the war—the awarding of fabulous public contracts, the feverish rise of prices, the geometric multiplication of the national debt, and the quickened circulation of an inflated money—contributed to these ends. Moreover, the war party, as it sat in Congress sternly voting day by day measures supporting full military action toward crushing opposition, almost unchallenged, enacted a series of sweeping laws which entrenched in power the new dominant class and encompassed the ruin of the old regime as surely as had the laws of the revolutionary French Convention in 1789-93. Noteworthy was the drastic Morrill Tariff Act, which a practical Republican leader privately declared to Justin Morrill was the most important single piece of legislation of the century. The new national banking act of 1863 and the subsequent law of 1865, striking down state banks, were also the realization of a purpose pursued since Jackson had destroyed the United States Bank in 1836; they enriched enormously the financial and fund-owning class. Likewise the historic Homestead Act of 1862 threw open to settlement and exploitation by free capitalists and farmers the vast public domain of cheap land with all its forest and underground mineral resources, a movement which the Southern oligarchy had resisted tenaciously, and which a Democratic President, Buchanan, had blocked with his veto as recently as 1860. Significant also, and passed off as a military measure, was the Pacific Railway Act, the first

large-scale subsidy to railroad enterprise, long championed by the Northern Whigs, whereby the Government advanced “loans” of over \$54,000,000 in bonds to railroad promoters and awarded them outright land grants in addition of some 22,000,000 acres, that the eastern and western shores of the continent might be bound together at last. But most drastic of all, and surpassing any of the decrees of confiscation with which the revolutionary Convention in Paris struck at the old regime, was the confiscation of some \$3,000,000,000 of property in the form of Negro slaves liberated by decree on January 1, 1863. This was done with the spirit of the General Franco of the Union armies: “Our duty is not to build up; it is rather to destroy both the rebel army and whatever of wealth or property it has founded its boasted strength upon.”⁸

The new industrialist and financial class and the farmers of the North emerged the greatest gainers by far among the mixed coalition of classes which fought to win the social revolution underlying the War between the States. But no less triumphant and dominant was the war party itself, the youthful organization of professional politicians and officeholders known as the Republican Party, and the instrument of the great progressive bourgeois revolution of 1861-65.

A minority party in 1860, and victor in a three-cornered electoral contest, it knew during the war the intoxication of unchallenged power and fortune beyond calculation. Must this be relinquished? Its formidable adversaries had deserted en masse, leaving it in command of all the offices of the Federal Government!

It had the management of the gigantic war finances, through which it attached to itself the interests...of the great capitalists and bankers throughout the North. It raised revenues by a high tariff which placed thousands of manufacturers under debt to it and linked their fortunes also with its fate....Railway financiers and promoters of all kinds had to turn to it for privileges and protection. Finally millions of farmers of the West owed their homes to its generous policy of giving away public lands. Never had a party had its foundations on interests ramifying throughout such a large portion of society.

And over all it spread the mantle of patriotism....The promises of the Declaration of Independence had been fulfilled and the heroic deeds of the Revolution rivaled by Republican leaders.⁹

Of this national party, while the more numerous Free Soil farmers, the laborers, and the patriotic lower middle classes gave it numbers, the Northern capitalist class composed the right wing, and was the most persistent, articulate, resolute among the several partners. The business-minded Secretary of State, Seward, had said earlier that the political party was “a joint stock association,

in which those who contribute most direct the action and management of the concern."¹⁰ This was in a measure true by 1865—yet we must not assume simply that the fighting, crusading political party of Lincoln, Greeley, Sumner, and Stevens in its vigorous youth was wholly the alter ego, the “damned soul,” or the entirely submissive concubine, of the Northern bourgeoisie. It had, as we shall see, by its very composition important and divergent reasons for existence.

In addition to considering the special interests of its biggest “stockholders,” the management of the Republican Party faced after 1865 the problem of consolidating their victory and preserving the fruits thereof. American traditions, the peculiar form of our laws and customs which made the political party an unwritten, an unconstitutional arm of the Government, an institution in itself, with peculiar “institutional” interests of its own, an imperium in imperio—all these worked to the end that the successful war party should endeavor to perpetuate itself, to retain governmental power “for its own sake,” even after its historic mission should have been fulfilled and need for its presence was seemingly ended. Thus “class motives” combined perfectly with “institutional” or party motives to the same end. Hence toward the close of the military conflict the party leaders looked with increasing anxiety toward the future day when the emergency war government must give way to civil government. Its managers scanned more sharply than all other items those acts of President Lincoln which restored conquered sections of the rebel South to the Union, and which promised to affect adversely its grip on the electoral situation. On this ground they were willing to assail Mr. Lincoln, and reminded him during the session of December, 1864, by a joint resolution of Congress that Louisiana and Arkansas, temporarily restored to the Union by him, were “not entitled to representation in the Electoral College.”

This resolution reveals how even in the winter of 1864-65 the Republican Party leaders were secretly obsessed by the fear of becoming again a minority party. Even in the twenty-three Union States, only 55 per cent of the vote in the presidential election of 1864 had been Republican. The Democratic, antiwar vote was thus a big minority. What, then, if eleven unregenerate States were quickly returned to constitutional relations with the Union? They assailed Lincoln on this ground; they would fall upon his successor, too, should his policies threaten or jeopardize the retention of power by the war party.

Strong epithets, resounding appeals, in the name of patriotism and national safety do not necessarily frighten cool, hard-fisted capitalists. The manufacturers and bankers of the Northeast could be depended upon by the war party in the peacetime that followed. But the simpler, more responsive masses of farmers and workers, especially those of the West who had fought for free soil, or “voted themselves a farm,” could certainly be moved by such

alarmist methods and held in line for years to come. As they cast about in search of policy, the war-party leaders determined instinctively to “prolong the war,” to maintain the appearance of national danger. For them the problem of retention of power becomes at any rate the key problem with which the fate of the white rebel, as of the Negro freedman, is linked as the controversy over Reconstruction opens.

But in the war of words which now engulfed the new bourgeois republic—a war which also verged often upon coercion and violence—these material considerations, naturally, would seldom be referred to by the politician-ideologues. Yet this subterfuge, an occupational vice concerning which the reader has already been warned, must not be permitted to confuse our judgment, drawn from the historical perspective of today.

The era of Reconstruction has led to later controversies among American historians almost as twisted as those which marked the epoch itself. It seems evident that to get at the essence of what happened we must follow two threads of investigation: (1) that which touches upon all the action which the ruling political party takes in self-interest, that is, as an “institution” seeking to exist per se; and (2) the action taken in the interests of its most important allies, its “chief stockholders” and principal paymasters, the Northern business class, the class that was most articulate, reached and swayed all organs of opinion, that knew most surely what it wanted. The purely partisan or professional battles into which the Republican Party was plunged by its leaders immediately after the war, and which we take up first, in some detail, is therefore to be seen as only half of the story.

III

The outcome of the conflict between President Johnson and Congress over the policy of Reconstruction has often been treated as an instance of the victory of congressional over presidential authority in our Government. It might be described more accurately as the triumph of the Republican Party Organization over the Presidency.

Aided by the patriotic impetus provided by the war, and by an advanced development of parliamentary rules, of committee and caucus action, there had been formed in Congress a sort of “Mountain,” a closely knit body of unflinchingly loyal and Radical Congressmen. Habits of prompt, concerted party action were formed; subcommittees and steering committees set policies for the party caucus. Party structure, in short, reached its most efficient

organization in our history and, creating a solid phalanx, supported Lincoln's military action. Month after month, the "Mountain" voted to send new drafts of soldiers to the front, to raise fabulous sums of money by taxation and loans or by fiat, to crush secret or open opposition behind the lines—all measures that, by bringing to bear a merciless unremitting pressure upon the rebels, would wear down their armies. The keynote of acrid, militant patriotism was set in the House by Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, the aged Republican floor leader, chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee; while in the Senate Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, the old-time champion of Emancipation, outdid all the others in sounding the notes of a fanatical idealism suiting the rigors of the time. Nor did Stevens and Sumner desist willingly with the coming of peace from breathing rhetorical fury upon the defeated rebel. With this resolute, unforgiving spirit they entered upon the problems of Reconstruction.

The plan of Lincoln had envisaged executive control of Reconstruction so that the intervention of professional party politicians in so complex a problem might be eliminated. By this plan there were to be established temporary State governments in the South based upon a loyal nucleus of some 10 per cent of the voting population who should have accepted the Thirteenth Amendment freeing the slaves, taken an oath of loyalty to the Union, and repudiated the war debt of the South. When President Johnson in 1865 followed the harsher program embraced in the project of the leading Radical Congressmen (the Wade-Davis Bill), they in turn were seen suddenly to have moved to a more advanced position; in more and more positive tones, harsher doctrines of Reconstruction, by no means embraced as yet by a majority of their own party, were now announced by them. These proposed the continued forcible subjugation of the former rebels, the grant of all civil rights and privileges, including the right of suffrage, to the Negro freedmen, and even, according to some extremist spokesmen, such as Senator Ben Wade of Ohio, the confiscation of rebel lands and their distribution to the freedmen. Stevens, Sumner, Wade, and the other Radical leaders knew their own purpose, but doubted strongly that the majority of their party, with its Moderate Republican elements and its converted Whigs and Democrats, could be brought over to their views.

The Radical leaders communicated with each other frequently in the lull of the summer of 1865, and laid plans to capture the party machinery in Congress. On August 26, 1865, Stevens, in a letter to Sumner, privately advised that they must first "get the rebel states in a territorial condition," so that Negro suffrage could "be easily dealt with." He continued: "That, I think, should be our great aim. Then Congress can manage it." Also, looking forward already to the party elections of 1866, he added: "We need a good committee on elections." The further plan was "to exclude all rebel state members until

final reorganization”—according to Radical ideas.¹¹

Charles Sumner, the New England “scholar in politics” who was considered the foremost orator of the time, stood now at the very height of his power. He was a man of “exalted moral fervor and humanitarian idealism” who “lived in the empyrean and descended thence with eternal principles which he discovered there and promulgated by preaching incessantly to his colleagues.”¹² “It sometimes seemed as if Sumner thought the Rebellion itself was put down by speeches in the Senate,” his friends felt.¹³ However, though egotistical and dogmatic, and given to a pedantic form of oratorical eloquence, Sumner was a powerful ideologue in the service of his party. That he believed single-mindedly and devoutly in the truth of his chosen principles (like Robespierre, who also ignored intellectual contradictions in his own policies) made him even more formidable in a political contest.

Sumner encouraged the inflation of party feeling by his moral fervor, while from his eyes, fixed on distant horizons, the meanness of partisan maneuvers was happily concealed. For him, the Republican Party was holy; all who were not traitors to the Union and humanity were bound to be with it. His triumphant party he decked with the glory of having established forever the principles and pledges of universal liberty and equality made by the Revolutionary Fathers.

Before the close of the war, Sumner advocated firmly the reorganization of the rebel States “on the footing of the Declaration of Independence,” as he wrote to John Bright, “with all persons equal before the law, and government founded on the consent of the governed....If all whites must vote, then must all blacks.”¹⁴ Sumner could weep at the lot of the Negro but “would filibuster to the end of the session to prevent the restoration to the southern whites of rights which were essential to their whole conception of life.”¹⁵ He also embraced at times the truly radical and logical doctrine of confiscation of the lands of the slave masters “as ancillary to emancipation”; the great plantations, he urged, “so many nurseries of the rebellion, must be broken up and the freedmen must have the pieces.”¹⁶

In Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, the leader of Congress during the war, the victorious Northern bourgeoisie had their militant spokesman, a true radical of the industrial revolution.* Born during the term of President

* Much confusion has prevailed over the sense of the party name of “Radicals” given to the extreme wing of the Republican Party. They have been described as “radical” only with regard to Reconstruction in the South, and allied with big capitalism, railroads, national bankers, and railroad barons in the North, hence truly opposed to all that passes for “radicalism” nowadays. Such a view, however, is historically naive and superficial; it ignores the phenomena of progressive and even revolutionary ideology which surges up with a new, conquering class of society, such as was the combined force of free farmers and new industrial capitalists. The new capitalism and the revolutionary sentiment of the Republican Party in its youth become so mixed that they cannot be distinguished from

Washington, the Pennsylvanian was a wrinkled apparition out of the early days of the republic. In the 1830's Stevens, then a lawyer, had earned local renown through his fight for the establishment of free common schools in his State. He was a "commoner" to his public, a man of enlightened, even freethinking views. He believed himself a leader of the party of progress, a friend of the plain people, a champion not only of the black but of the white masses. As a Whig and as a Republican, he had fought for the extension of universal suffrage, for free soil, for the opening of the public domain to the people, for all measures which might encourage industry and trade. To Stevens's mind, new railroads, new factories and foundries, all the busy, profitable industry of the North, were linked with the grand march of humanity toward a more productive and fuller life, while the world of the Southern plantation embodied the ways of sloth, backwardness, and darkness itself. To the aristocracy of the land Stevens had long ago dedicated his undying hate, a hate imbued with a fanaticism reminiscent of the French Jacobins.

Hate, fanaticism, as an instrument of party action toward a desired end Stevens well understood, as he understood and used the tactics of political intrigue and corrupt bargain. During his long career in local and national politics he had slowly become, by the force of his personality, his intellectual power, his fighting will, the pre-eminent party leader, as dominant over his fellow Republicans as was Henry Clay over the Whigs. For the sake of his party—"right or wrong, his party"—he would scatter confusion among his opponents, even if truth or logic buttressed the other side. "Throw conscience to the Devil and stand by your party" was an axiom widely attributed to him. To hold his followers in line, Stevens wielded patronage with a stern hand. Those who considered straying from "allegiance to principle" for the sake of "a few rations" he menaced with the fire and brimstone of party damnation. Hearing that President Johnson offered members of the war party certain Federal offices, he addressed a public meeting in the following terms:

I warn you to keep an eye on any professed Republican who consents to fill an enforced vacancy....He is a moral leper whom you should not touch. He should be socially ostracized as unfit for decent society. Let him flit about in the twilight and hide his averted countenance from the light of day.¹⁷

Though a fanatic outwardly, this harsh and angry old man was possessed of much humor, and could turn in his public speeches from passionate eloquence or close-gripping argument to full mockery of his opponents. It has been held

each other for the moment. Charles Sumner, the doctrinaire leader of the New England groups, for instance, saluted the proletarian uprising in France in 1848 as part of a world movement toward universal freedom, in which he was proud to participate.

that Stevens’s own business interests, as owner of an iron foundry, a newspaper publisher, and a lawyer friendly to the new railroads, colored his political doctrines. Yet Stevens showed himself far more tenacious and successful in accumulating political power than in accumulating gold. While scandal stained nearly all of his associates who labored with him in the midst of the legislative carnival for special interests, Thad Stevens’s name remained impeccable. By his policy, the capitalists of the North were to be treated as allies worthy of high reward; but no less fondly were the interests of the masses of free Western farmers regarded so long as Stevens lived and ruled his party. To the alarm of great bankers, Stevens, as one of his last actions, delayed the resumption of gold-specie payment and spared the Greenback, so that the demand of agriculturists for inflated money and favorable prices might not be denied.

Then, full of a fire that seemed to consume him, Stevens knew how to appeal to the generous emotions of youth, calling to the masses of friends of liberty to aid him in his sacred cause. The issue of the time was no mere question of taxation or constitutional law, he declared in his speech at Lancaster in the summer of 1865:

Young men, this duty [of supporting Radical principles] devolves on you. Would to God, if only for that, that I were still in the prime of life, that I might aid you to fight through this last and greatest battle of Freedom!¹⁸

In this same speech, before Congress convened again, he also sounded the keynote of the Radical campaign:

The whole fabric of southern society *must* be changed, and never can it be done if this opportunity is lost....How can republican institutions, free schools, free churches, free social intercourse exist in a mingled community of nabobs and serfs; of the owners of twenty-thousand acre manors with lordly palaces, and the occupants of narrow huts inhabited by “low white trash”? If the south is ever to be made a safe republic let her lands be cultivated by the toil of the owners or the free labor of intelligent citizens. This must be done even though it drive her nobility into exile!¹⁹

The country would be well rid of the “proud, bloated, defiant rebels.” The foundations of their institutions must be broken up and relaid, “or all our blood and treasure have been spent in vain.”

The Southern States in his view should be treated as conquered territory, and not as States which had never left the Union and with which legal and constitutional relations could be’ speedily renewed. Hence only Congress, and not the President, had authority over the admission and representation of new

States. The freedmen were each to be given “forty acres and a mule.” He gave warning also: “*Let all who approve of these principles tarry with us. Let all others go with Copperheads and rebels. Those will be the opposing parties.*”²⁰

The Union had been saved by blood and iron; but now it becomes increasingly clear to the minds of the war leaders that the Republican Party must be saved and kept in power. This preoccupation filled the private correspondence of the Radical leaders, Stevens and Sumner, as we have noted. In his letter to the great English Liberal John Bright, Sumner had argued on high grounds of humanity, reason, and justice. But he had also mingled instinctively with these reasons arguments on grounds of *necessity*. Was the freedman, but yesterday a slave, intelligent enough to vote? But the question had, become more “practical” than merely that.

Without their [the Negroes'] votes we cannot establish stable governments in the rebel States. Their votes are as necessary as their muskets....Without them the old enemy will re-appear, and under the forms of law take possession of the governments, choose magistrates and officers, and in alliance with the Northern Democracy, put us all in peril again, postpone the day of tranquillity, and menace the national credit by assailing the national debt. To my mind, the nation is now bound by self-interest—ay, self-defence—to be thoroughly just....Mr. Lincoln is slow in accepting truths.²¹

Even in their official reports and public declarations the partisan or “institutional” motives of the Radical Republicans showed their horns and cloven feet. Major General Carl Schurz, the German revolutionist who escaped to the United States after 1849, became famous as a journalist and an orator, and led divisions of German soldiers in the battles for the Union, was one of a number of Northern observers who were invited by the President to journey through the conquered States in 1865 and make impartial reports of conditions and prospects there. What Schurz saw led him to advocate before President Johnson the extension of the franchise to the Negro freedmen, though, as he admitted, “the masses are strongly opposed to colored suffrage.” The question of fitness of the former slaves was considered secondary. He feared that the unrepentant white Southerners planned by one device or another to reintroduce their “peculiar institution,” to limit and oppose free black labor. This was true enough, and one of the essential issues which the Republican Party ultimately abandoned. But, Schurz argued, by the introduction of Negro suffrage surveillance of the Southern States by the National Government would be made less necessary.

The whole problem of political and social reconstruction [could] be made simplified, if, while the masses lately arrayed against the

government are permitted to vote, the large majority of those who were always loyal and are naturally anxious to see the free labor problem successfully solved, were not excluded from all influence upon legislation. In all questions concerning the Union, national debt and the future social organization of the South, the feelings of the colored man are naturally in sympathy with the views and aims of the national government...[*vide* Republican Party leaders]. While the Southern white sees in the national government his conqueror, the Negro sees in it his protector; while the white owes to the national debt his defeat, the Negro owes to it his deliverance.²²

Schurz was not a native Yankee, he was a man of learning, and he was believed to be uninfluenced by sectional partisanship, yet, as President Johnson found out soon afterward, his voyage was secretly arranged and largely subsidized by Sumner and his Radical friends in Boston. Under a *nom de guerre*, Schurz's reports from the field had appeared also as propaganda in a newspaper friendly to the Radical program.

The intensity of the Radical educational propaganda was redoubled, before Congress opened, as suspicion spread of a change of heart in President Johnson. His Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, May 29, 1865, showed the Radical Republicans that he meant to pursue a conciliatory course of his own choosing, involving a loyal restoration of the Southern States, but under the control of their native white citizens who had recanted; his determination thereafter in adhering to this program, despite loud protests from the Radical faction, convinced Stevens that the President could not be turned aside, that the Radicals must therefore, as he wrote privately to Sumner, “be bold enough to lay the foundation of a party to take the helm of this government, and keep it off the rocks.”²³

In the last week of November, 1865, as politicians gathered in Washington for the opening of Congress, and for secret caucuses and conferences among themselves, Charles Sumner saw the President for a long private interview. He had admired Johnson, but now found him deeply “changed...and unreasonable” in his views. Sumner left him never to see him again, convinced that he was set like flint against the good cause, and that with the assassination of Lincoln “rebellion had vaulted into the presidential chair.”²⁴

Plans had been laid cautiously, and were unfolded at the Republican Party caucus. Schuyler Colfax, Radical partisan from Indiana, who had delivered an attack upon the Administration upon his arrival in Washington, was re-elected Speaker of the House. Whatever uncertainty may have prevailed among the majority of Republicans, initiative in action was taken brusquely by Stevens. He proposed that a Joint Committee of Fifteen of the two houses be chosen, to which all questions concerning admission of members from the

Southern States were to be submitted without debate. This was accepted. The Joint Committee of Fifteen was intended to be something more than a tribunal dealing with admissions of members, as the President's advisers soon realized. Emergency tactics were spurred by reports of sporadic disorders in the South; the joint resolution establishing this committee as an engine of strategic power was railroaded through Congress on a strict party vote, even before the President's message was read. Stevens, "sharp-faced, grim-looking," had quelled resistance by Moderate Republicans and dominated the caucus.²⁵ Bold party intrigue and swift action had swept the Opposition off their feet and placed the Radicals in a commanding position for the contest with the President.²⁶ The President and his advisers thought the Radicals' moves too highhanded and too bold; their audacity was expected to rebound against them.

As a test case, a Tennessee Unionist, Maynard, a member of the House since the war—a man unquestionably loyal, like Johnson—presented himself for recognition, but was denied admission to Congress; his name was stricken from the rolls.

IV

Andrew Johnson, the "poor white," the self-educated tailor and political stump speaker from eastern Tennessee, had taken a most vital part in the coalition for the defense of the Union. In former years in the Senate he had denounced secession in terms more unforgiving and uncompromising than Seward's or Sumner's; as Military Governor of Tennessee during the war he had been an apostate to the majority of the people of his State, ravaged and bleeding, tragically divided by the very battle lines of the armies. "Treason is a crime and traitors must be hung!" he had cried in the heat of the civil struggle. Johnson's home, his family, his own life, had been frequently imperiled in the bitter, immediate struggle between brother citizens.

The eastern highlands of Tennessee held few Negro slaves; they were peopled by independent small farmers. The proportion of whites to blacks at the time of the war was said to be twenty-seven to one. This region was moreover the cradle of the Jacksonian agrarian Democracy, of which Johnson himself—in opposition to the plantation aristocrats—was an outspoken, even an extremist, leader for those days. For years he had fought for a Homestead Act in unison with Northern Whigs, so that the public domain might be thrown open to settlers. He was an opponent of slavery, as of secession, in its very home. He was a common man, the friend of common men, as he often boasted, and his plain, weather-beaten, lined workingman's face went to prove it. Among the several categories of former rebels to whom he refused pardon

was the class having “over twenty thousand dollars in taxable property”—a distinction which aroused the derision of certain Republican opponents.²⁷ But while fighting secession, he was no Hamiltonian, but rather a staunch believer in home rule, in local government and local rights guaranteed by our Federal Constitution.

The President was disposed emotionally—when now the decision and responsibility descended upon him—to let the fighting cease, to receive the enemy in full fellowship again, to trust him, to leave him his liberties again. With regard to the question of suffrage in the rebel States, he was “conservative,” as he was radical on other grounds; it must be decided, he believed with Lincoln, in a constitutional manner, that is, by option of the citizens.*

That Tennessee, a very large minority of whose citizens had paid a fearful price for their loyalty to the Union—as Johnson often proudly related—should be held even temporarily as conquered territory outraged his sentiments, and impressed him with the injustice being prepared for the white Southerners. On this ground he clearly opposed leaders of the North such as Stevens and Sumner, who also professed themselves friends of the common man.

On the other hand, the plight of the Negro masses, destined to slip back into a renewed and ill-disguised servitude unless thorough-going social reforms were decreed, Johnson regarded with something of the racial fanaticism of the Southern whites—if not with the stony indifference sometimes attributed to “poor whites” as a competitive labor group in the South. Of the political incapacity of the freedmen he was firmly convinced; he sought a realistic, a gradual rather than a precipitate, solution of this problem.

As the requirements of the President’s proclamation were met in somewhat summary fashion by quickly called State conventions in the South, their “reconstruction” as provisional governments proceeded apace. The question of their representation in the Federal Congress Johnson cautiously did not raise at the beginning, leaving this for Congress itself to decide. Taking the position that he had no constitutional warrant to fix suffrage qualifications in the separate States by decree, he ignored all questions arising from the fact that Negro freedmen were excluded from State conventions, and that certain Southern States promised to bar Negroes forever from civil rights or suffrage by so-called Black Codes.

When the cry for Negro suffrage arose from the Radical wing among the Unionists in the North, Johnson became suspicious. He promptly saw a dark plot carried on in the name of justice to the freedmen, to fan race hate and

* The circumstance that a man who was no Republican, and differed from them on so many grounds, was nominated in 1864 for Vice-President arose from a habit of compromise long formed in our party conventions, and a desire as well to emphasize the policy of Unionist coalition of all loyal groups during the war.

race conflict, to fix an ignoble form of slavery upon white men. This was to be imposed from above on behalf of a despotic, central party organization, which, though having but a minority of the electorate behind it, grasped for a permanent rulership by fraud. Human liberty was synonymous with local liberty, consecrated by our federal form of government, or, as he said often in his public papers, “a government of limited powers, with a written constitution and with boundaries both State and National.” Here was a new Hamiltonian conspiracy, dictated by professional politicians in league with massive financial interests such as he had opposed his life long, in the North as well as in the South.

Much injustice done to this old-fashioned Jacksonian Democrat by partisan writers has been repaired lately; his courageous, impetuous, and impolitic character has been much rehabilitated and restored by modern scholarship. Andrew Johnson throughout his stormy career was veritably a victim of history. In earlier life, his unflinching independence had made him a “bad” Democrat in the party sense; in later life, raised to the highest office by alliance with the Unionist Republicans, he proved to be no “good” Republican.

With every step, as his program unfolded, the new President had progressively alienated the Radical wing of the Republicans, who had originally counted him one of their own denomination and set him in office. They aimed to proscribe the Confederate leaders; the President pardoned most of them, excepting the prominent military men and firebrands; they sought to confiscate rebel lands, and the Administration’s procedure barred this; they sought the enfranchisement of the Negroes, and Johnson’s proclamations returned the power of this decision to the local governments of former rebels; they would have delayed the reorganization of the Southern States, under military rule, until the ascendancy of Negro voters would guarantee, as Sumner hinted, the permanent subjection of the historic party of opposition, the Democrats; Johnson’s plan sought support among the Moderate Republicans, and above all tended to gain the adherence of a reunited mass of Democrats from North and South, already loud in approval, and promising soon in an early renewal of old party life to sweep the extreme war party from control of the Government.

And Johnson, himself an old-fashioned campaigner, from a region where political debate was part of the life of the people, also used the weapon of ideology, of eternal principles, in behalf of his moderate, constitutional program. In a first message to the Thirty-Ninth Congress, in December, 1865, he argued upon the issue of Reconstruction that the way of military subjection for an indefinite period would surely fail to end discontent, “would have divided the people into the vanquishers and the vanquished, and would have envenomed hatred rather than have restored affection.” If military rule were continued, who could set precise limits for its end? He held that the States in question had

in effect never left the Union, their pretended secession having been from the beginning null and void. Hence he would follow the spirit of the Constitution in “bringing them back into practical relations with the Union,” and see to it that they renewed their allegiance to the United States as quickly as possible, resuming their functions as States of the Union. The risk that was taken in bringing the Southerners back into the fold and believing in their acquiescence was worth taking. He insisted that the late rebel States adopt the Thirteenth Amendment setting free the Negroes, but maintained that as respected the qualifications for suffrage in each of the States “the General Government should not interfere, but leave that matter where it was originally left—in the Federal Constitution.”²⁸ The whole paper breathed an honest abhorrence of military oppression and of a headstrong government centralism strengthened by war and victory. Returning to peace, Johnson would also grant again even to the men whom he had treated as traitors during the war, whose hanging he had demanded, the right to local self-rule in the domains fixed by the Federal Constitution.

Thus within a year of Appomattox there were offered by different branches of the Government two opposing programs of Southern restoration—or rather two conflicting tendencies or philosophies, since the program of the Radicals was tentative, bided its time, and hoped for the summoning of a stronger public sentiment in the North, where no little approval was at first voiced for the conciliatory spirit of the President’s message.

The fierce political warfare which was declared with the opening of Congress over the terms of the Southern restoration assumed the form of an extraordinary contest between the two strongest branches of our Government, over the issue of presidential or congressional authority. Though the lines of party were not clearly drawn at first—for the Northern Democrats too were Unionists—the question of Reconstruction soon became the ground of battle between the historic party organizations, the Whig-Republicans and the reviving Democrats. The leaders of the Moderate and Radical factions, Johnson and Stevens, were soon wrought to a temper in which each firmly believed the other capable of the foulest villainy and treason. Each appealed to his partisans in the name of high doctrines: “constitutional justice” and “local rights,” or “universal liberty” and “national safety.” Each believed implicitly in the ideological superstructure which had taken empire over his mind. While behind the parties and leaders the interest of classes and sections, of powerful economic groups, was concealed—until the hour came when ideology and leader, shield and sword, could be thrown aside.

President Johnson had estimated too lightly the imponderable forces arrayed against his idea of Moderate Reconstruction, forces bound up with the prolongation of the war spirit and war conditions in peacetime. Nor did

Johnson know how to appeal to the liberal elements in the North. Opposed by the Radicals, he grew more determined, vehement, immoderate, one might say, in his pursuit of Moderate Reconstruction. He became, perhaps unwittingly, identified with the tenacious self-defense carried on by the surviving landowning class in the South, a class which had formerly detested him. In the North he was allied inevitably with sections of the Democratic Party which had supported the war indifferently, people who had actually preached ideas of “frugality” or strict constitutional observance during a time of national disaster!*

The leader of Congress, Stevens, on the other hand, was supported for the time not only by the loyal masses of the North but also by the great industrial and financial class, which sought to consolidate its victory—although its members often felt revulsion for certain of the party leaders’ “leveling” or “extremist” doctrines.

Here the special circumstances of the party conflict shaping itself anew must be remarked above all. We must note first how the dispute was deliberately provoked, how fuel was added to it, how the fire was fanned by unseen hands, until the masterly disorder plunged the President’s program into ruin. Second, we must note that the controversy was so conducted that it gave a fatal, *sectional* twist to the issues involved, distorting them, diverting all attention from the far more fundamental, decisive questions of the time, which were being dispatched almost secretly and with a high hand by the ring of politicians who mated the President and seized control of the state.

V

The plans of the congressional leaders involved “delay, delay, delay” at the outset. Sumner and his friends intended that while the Joint Committee of Fifteen was at work, Congress should occupy itself with “theories.” The discussion must continue for months; Sumner, as he declared privately, did not see how it could be stopped, nor did he wish to see it stopped. The single point to be reached was the *assertion of jurisdiction by Congress*, he held. So long as all speakers reached this point, it mattered not what roads they took, and he hoped that they would “all...speak and ventilate their theories.”²⁹

* “The bourgeoisie never rules as a whole; apart from the feudal castes, who have still retained some part of their political power, even the big bourgeoisie, as soon as it has defeated feudalism, splits into a ruling and an opposition party—which are usually represented here by the bank [of England] on the one side and the manufacturers on the other. The oppositional, progressive fraction of the big and middle bourgeoisie then has common interests with the petty bourgeoisie against the ruling fraction, and unites with it in a common struggle.” (Engels, *Campaign for the German Constitution*, cited in Marx and Engels, *Letters*, International ed., p. 148.)

Stevens, opening the long debate on December 18, raised the questions of whether the rebel States had not “left the Union” and whether they were not to be treated as conquered provinces—questions which Lincoln had ridiculed as irrelevant. Congress alone, and not the President, he held, had authority to restore the “conquered provinces.” The Constitution stated that “the United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a republican form of government.” But who were the United States?

Not the judiciary, not the President; but the sovereign power of the people, exercised through their representatives in Congress, with the concurrence of the Executive....The separate action of the President, or the Senate, or the House amounts to nothing in admitting new States or guaranteeing republican forms of government....Whence springs the preposterous idea that anyone of these acting separately can determine the right of states to send representatives or Senators to the Congress of the Union?³⁰

The last vehement words were clearly a shaft aimed at President Johnson, and deeply offended him, though he was not named. Stevens hinted broadly that severely protective laws must be enacted on behalf of the former slaves against their old masters, “else we had better left them in bondage.”

The rumble of speechmaking in House and Senate concealed for the moment the most burning anxieties of the Republican leaders. This was certainly true of the question of increased representation from the Southern States which would follow their readmission. Before the Thirteenth Amendment had been adopted, the Negro or slave population was counted at three-fifths of its number in apportioning members to Congress; with this clause void, the freedmen without voting would permit the return of 30 additional Congressmen from the Southern bloc, instead of 18 as formerly. Had the war been fought that the unrepentant rebel, now busily enacting the first Black Codes, might return with power augmented by the death of slavery?

The Joint Committee of Fifteen on Reconstruction named at the outset by Congress included Stevens in its membership and a majority of eight Republicans of the Radical stripe. It began at once to hold elaborate hearings of witnesses from the South, with a view to framing an Amendment which would ostensibly establish civil rights for the freedmen. In reality, they sought an Amendment which, as they admitted privately, would be “a means of protection for the Government and the North,” that is to say, for the Republican Party. This was to be done by granting additional representation in Congress to the Southern States in proportion as they granted Negro suffrage; while, conversely, their failure to do so would bring, as a punitive measure, a proportionate loss of representation in Congress. The Southerners were confidently expected to

reject an Amendment which would inflict a mass of Negro Republicans upon them, and by which statehood was to be denied to them as long as possible. Thus a permanent shifting of the geographical balance' of party power was to be incorporated into the Constitution. Beyond this, the Joint Committee of Fifteen, driven by Stevens, George Boutwell of Massachusetts, Justin Morrill of Vermont, and Roscoe Conkling of New York, intended to raise the issue of the Fourteenth Amendment and its new bill of rights before the country; it was to be a veritable engine of party warfare against the Opposition.

The measures of Reconstruction enacted by Congress were as promptly vetoed by the President, and a tug of war strange in itself, yet familiar under our government of divided authority, began after February, 1866. Hostility beyond accommodation by the most determined compromisers declared itself; high words followed in mounting rhythm, and one by one Radical Congressmen rose up not only to "ventilate their theories," but to heap abuse upon the President.

At length, threatened and calumniated, Johnson replied in kind. On Washington's Birthday, before followers who serenaded him at the White House porch, the harassed President promised that he would fight the "disunionists" who passed Reconstruction bills which were "legal monstrosities" as he had fought the secessionists. Their measures embodied once more the principle of taxation without representation. Some of them had spoken of removing the presidential obstacle. "They may talk about beheading," cried Johnson, "but when I am beheaded, I want the American people to be the witness.... Are those who want to destroy our institutions...not satisfied with the blood that has been shed? Does not the blood of Lincoln appease the vengeance and wrath of the opponents of this government?"

The terms of Johnson's speech were not uncommon for the partisan action of the time, nor stronger than those of his adversaries. The important charge which he made in his impromptu address was that the Radicals pressed for autocratic power to control a numerous class, the Southern Negroes, for their own political ends. The Joint Committee of Fifteen itself, he contended, was "an irresponsible central directory."³¹

The Radicals not only made violent reply, and even public demonstrations against the President, but also persisted in their strenuous efforts to muster a two-thirds majority in the Senate, which was accomplished on March 23, 1866, by unseating a Moderate Republican from New Jersey.

Stevens's uprising against the President was victorious. Thereafter all measures designed to cement control of the conquered territories by the Republican Organization were quickly passed over vetoes. A Freedmen's Bureau Bill, carrying with it appropriations of millions of dollars to be disbursed by faithful agents of the party, a Civil Rights Bill, nullifying the so-called Black

Codes lately enacted by defiant Southern communities, were both repassed in March. On April 30, 1866, the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution was reported, debated rather briefly, considering its importance, altered at length in some details; it was passed by a two-thirds majority on June 13.

The Fourteenth Amendment, sent to the State legislatures for ratification in the summer of 1866, served as a kind of Trojan Horse by which the citadel of former rebels and Democrats was stormed. It was a most complex affair, in truth, cunningly made of several different kinds of material and paint. The first clause, the first sentence, in simple yet majestic terms was a latter-day bill of human rights: “All persons born or naturalized in the United States are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.” Under this brave proclamation the Radical knights confounded the’ enemy and called to all true patriots and sons of liberty in the North to elect Radical Republican Congressmen in 1866. The second sentence, concerning “due process,” “property,” and “equal protection before the laws,” also had a fair, brave sound, but was scarcely understood until many years after; this as well as other provisions bespoke the special and diverse interests which moved the members of the famous Joint Committee of Fifteen on Reconstruction. The provisions with regard to property, as well as those for asserting the validity of the Union war debt while forcing the repudiation of rebel debts, appealed especially to one important, farsighted group in the Republican community of interests, that of the Northern capitalists. Those making leading Confederates ineligible for government office and restricting representation in Congress in accordance with the grant of Negro suffrage by States undoubtedly satisfied the institutional needs of the Republican Party Organization. The whole thing, moreover, had an equitable air, applying to all sections of the country, but though all but six Northeastern States excluded even limited suffrage for Negroes, the colored population was so small in the North that no loss of representation would result there.

At all events the new law was a guarantee against the prompt adoption of an independent, moderate, presidential program which would have injured the prospects of Republican Party control of the state. Stevens feared only that the terms given to the former rebels were too mild, milder than the treatment which “a provisional governor of Tennessee—I mean the late-lamented Andrew Johnson of blessed memory”—would have meted out, as he drily asserted. In the storm of war partisanship which the Radicals maintained unabated for two years, the adoption of the obscure Fourteenth Amendment was brought about by 1868. When the embittered President and the minority of ten Southern States unwisely opposed the new constitutional law, the hands of the Radicals were but strengthened; the moderate elements of their own party, in alarm, turned to support the more drastic steps of the Radical program which followed.

Both sides now arranged to “go to the people” with their case. The congressional elections of 1866 made the most exciting political season since Lincoln’s campaign of 1860. President Johnson made strenuous efforts to win the Northern people to his constitutional views and extricate himself from the dilemma of being a “minority President.” An unusual step at the time, he embarked upon a long stumping tour in August by means of the new railroads, from Philadelphia and New York as far as Chicago. In his train, to demonstrate his loyalty to the Union, he brought with him the idolized General of the Armies, Ulysses S. Grant, as well as Admiral Farragut.

The extremist Republicans, in Johnson’s view, showed no more regard for the Constitution “than for an old almanac.” But the people too, when they are uneasy and emotionally disturbed, generally show incomprehension or indifference to arguments in the name of constitutional law. The President, who held at heart the strong views of a radical agrarian in opposition to the high protective tariff and to the concentration of wealth among national banks—policies encouraged by the war party—found himself obliged to be silent on these hidden issues, lest he multiply opposition to himself. Failing to develop these questions, which were to become so momentous for the independent liberal farmers of the Mississippi Valley, he failed to divide the Northern people upon economic lines, while permitting the sectional alignment to be held firmly against him. Moderate Republicans held aloof; at the same time, approval of his policies by Southerners and discredited Democrats was an extreme embarrassment. He found the press overwhelmingly hostile to him; fantastic rumors concerning his private character, his presumed plot to assume despotic powers, to overcome Congress by military force, to bring about the repudiation of the war debt (which bred panic among the business class), pursued him everywhere. The Northern mobs were suspicious, hostile, increasingly disorderly; and hecklers among them goaded the impetuous Tennessean into hasty or careless replies which did him no good.³²

The “minority President” saw his power over patronage, the appointive power so vital to party management, steadily stripped away by his opponents. Stevens, ruling powerful committees and acting as chairman of the Republican caucus, not only exerted the pressure of the majority to block confirmation of appointments, but worked in close collaboration with heads of the Federal departments themselves. Even those cabinet members who sympathized with the executive were given to understand, Welles relates,

that they must conform to the theory and doctrines of Thad Stevens if they designed to preserve their Republican Party identity...Most of the members of the Cabinet acquiesced or submitted to the usurpation. No appointments or nominations to office made by the Executive...were confirmed by the Senate, except the nominees first

recommended or indorsed by Radical Members of Congress. Some of the Cabinet under these circumstances surrendered and made terms.³³

Within the Cabinet the tenacious Radical Stanton, while Secretary of War, intrigued against the President persistently, not only to use the office-giving power for the Radical faction, but to control the army itself on their behalf.

As for the members of Congress, most of them, according to Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy since Lincoln’s time, were “small party men, creatures of corner groceries, without any knowledge of the science of government or of our Constitution. With them all the great, overpowering purpose and aim are office and patronage.”³⁴ Each Congressman knew that it was as much as his political life was worth to defy the party caucus and its all-powerful chairman, who terrified them with gloomy predictions of both Houses of Congress overrun with rebels, should they relax in their discipline. The legions of Federal officeholders and postmasters, according to custom, obediently paid their dues, an assessment upon their wages, to the party’s collectors and also labored in concert, unostentatiously, to bring out the vote throughout the country wherever the fiery call of the stump orator might not reach.

Finally, for the campaign of 1866, the Republican Party made notable advances in the technique of organization. A new central organ called the Congressional Campaign Committee was created at Washington, with one member for each State, to control throughout the Union the elections to the House of Representatives. The new central committee, functioning constantly, watching the electoral situation in the congressional districts, “penetrated more deeply and more continuously into local political life than could be done by the permanent committee of the national [party] convention,” which appeared in presidential elections solely.³⁵ Throughout the ranks of the party the word was given that dissenters—so many moral lepers—must be watched and reported as in the Church Militant; the party which held but a minority of the total popular vote in 1864 must win a majority, else everything was lost.

In the midst of the congressional campaign, race riots at Memphis and New Orleans strengthened the hands of the Radicals and fed their arsenal of vituperation. The blood of Memphis and New Orleans must cry out, thundered Sumner, until it is heard and a guilty President may suffer.

Roscoe Conkling, the young Radical Congressman from upper New York and a picturesque orator, appealed not only to fears for the national safety but also to the class interests of capitalists and bondholders in the East, saying:

Do you want to give up your interests once more to this alliance,

with two-fifths added to the old slave power? Do you want to bind your country hand and foot...? What would become of it? What would become of the pension roll of soldiers and their widows and orphans? What would become of the public debt and the public credit? What would greenbacks, and five-twenties, and seven-thirties be worth?...Are you ready for this? Are you ready to put your rights, your property and the honor of the nation to be raffled for by the murderers of your children and the betrayers of your country?³⁶

The masses of Union Army veterans too were brought forth to parade and demonstrate for the militant party. For what pensions might they expect with the return of the rebels to power? The Radical Republicans organized a most impressive National Soldiers' Convention at Pittsburgh in September, where the "Grand Army," with General John A. Logan of Illinois as its leader, began its long, stern campaign on behalf of ever greater and more generous favors for veterans, a feature of our politics for a generation. Here the political generals, Ben Butler and Banks, Schenck, and other leaders in "a tempest of anger" led the convention to declare that the President's

acts...have retarded the restoration of peace. If the President's scheme be consummated it would render the sacrifice of the Nation useless, the loss of her buried comrades vain, and the war in which we have so gloriously triumphed a failure.³⁷

Oliver Morton, the famous wartime Governor of Indiana, who had momentarily accepted favors from Johnson but under pressure, like many conservative Republicans, turned to the other side, by the unrestrained violence of his oratory in 1866 fixed, perhaps better than anyone else, the style of the Bloody Shirt speech:

Every unregenerate rebel...calls himself a Democrat. Every bounty jumper, every deserter, every sneak who ran away from the draft.... Every man...who murdered Union prisoners...who contrived hellish schemes to introduce into Northern cities the wasting pestilence of yellow fever, calls himself a Democrat....Every wolf in sheep's clothing...everyone who shoots down negroes in the streets, burns negro school-houses and meeting-houses, and murders women and children by the light of their flaming dwellings, calls himself a Democrat....In short, the Democratic party may be described as a common sewer and loathsome receptacle, into which is emptied every element of treason North and South, and every element of inhumanity and barbarism which has dishonored the age.³⁸

Exhorted in such drastic terms to fight the rebel within, the electorate of the

entire North and West delivered an overwhelming vote of confidence in the war party. The Republicans gained in 1866 the largest majority in both houses of Congress known to any party since Monroe’s time, though it was true that ten of the former Confederate States were unrepresented.

Before the old Congress met again late that year, Stevens and his jubilant Radical comrades conferred in Washington; they felt themselves well vindicated and prepared to press home their advantage. Reconstruction of the South virtually as a subject province of the Republican Party Organization was the essence of their further plans.

The new Draconian Stevens Reconstruction Bill, passed over the President’s veto March 2, 1867, ignored the provisional governments recently ‘set up in the Southern States, dividing the conquered South into five military districts, and imposed a most rigorous army rule over them. This was to be carried out under the command of the General of the Armies, Grant—instead of the President. The traditional authority of the defeated Executive was then further hamstrung by a “rider” to an army appropriation bill which prohibited him from removing the General of the Armies. In effect, the military arm was made accountable to the central party leadership in Congress. The Supreme Court, which intervened now with one of its rare decisions on behalf of civil rights, *ex parte* Milligan, was simply flouted by the Radical leaders. Then by the celebrated Tenure of Office Act of March 2, 1867, the President was also forbidden to remove without the Senate’s approval civil officers whose appointment was subject to the confirmation of the Senate; and violation of the act was made punishable by fine and imprisonment. The President’s enormous power of executive appointment and patronage was now virtually ended. On March 7, 1867, the new Congress empowered a committee to take testimony with a view to the impeachment of the President on the ground of “high crimes and misdemeanors.”

The decrees which a machinelike Congress threw off one by one seemed born of the very madness of sectional hate or fear. Yet Stevens, amid high wrangling within his party over the unwarranted impeachment action, said repeatedly and coolly that it was “a purely *political* proceeding.”³⁹ In this sense only can the management of the Southern communities also be understood. By dint of military control, and imposition of the so-called ironclad oaths, only Negroes, men who had borne no arms in the Rebellion, and newcomers called “Carpetbaggers” could participate in local government. Six of the ten rebel States were thus set up as territories which would safely register a Republican electoral majority. The political power of the old slave aristocracy seemed broken forever, with the proletarian Negroes unwittingly serving as loyal agents of the party of Northern capital.

“The talk and labor are of Reconstruction,” Welles confided now to his

diary, “for this is the engine by which they hold power; yet not a man among that great number of elected Radicals appears to know...what he means by Reconstruction.”⁴⁰

Party organization and party rule of the Government now reached perhaps its highest development in our history. Tumult and war passion had been artfully prolonged by these “masters of turbulence.” After two years of postbellum political conflict, the brilliant, implacable old Stevens at the age of seventy-five ruled not only the South but the National Government, through a *junto* or “directory,” as Johnson had correctly charged. From 1866 to 1868, the year of his death, Stevens as a sort of prime minister for Congress virtually ruled in place of the repudiated President, even holding the country’s moneybags in his hands. The office of the House Appropriations Committee, of which he was chairman, was known as “Thad Stevens’s room.” Dying, Stevens handed to other leaders—unhappily, leaders of far different mold—a close-knit, militant party Organization, a superb machinery for party rule. This much had been well done.

VI

The off-year elections, chiefly of State officers and legislatures, provided some sobering thoughts for the Radical leaders in November, 1867. In the Mississippi Valley the realities of economic discontent showed themselves strongly; in Ohio the Republican Brigadier General Rutherford B. Hayes was elected Governor by but a hair’s breadth, and a hardy, unashamed, reviving Democracy won the State legislature for itself. In the populous Northern States of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, by a strong recoil of public opinion, the legislatures turned Democratic also.

Among the farmers the beginnings of a postwar contraction—though it did not reach its climax until six years later—were already appreciated, and pointed to the injustice of a system of taxation and currency which seemed to discriminate against them as a class. While the Radical leaders preached universal liberty and equality, they had quietly passed in April, 1866, a law which inordinately hastened the repayment of the nation’s huge war debt, and especially brought the swift retirement of the fiat paper money, the Legal Tender which Lincoln had issued during the war emergency.

The American program for repayment of the great war debt, far more rapid and drastic than that of Great Britain after the Napoleonic Wars, began to have the effect of a sweeping deflation. Prices of grain and other farm commodities, as well as of land, fell in 1866 and 1867. Credit grew scarce; a familiar cry of protest from the credit-hungry farm regions was heard, a protest which had

been rising and falling ever since the days of Daniel Shays’s Rebellion.

Moreover, popular resentment soon fixed itself upon the new national banks, and upon large bondholders, who sought repayment of the government obligations they owned in gold money of the prewar parity. Money was, being concentrated in the hands of the national banks, especially through the rapid retirement of Legal Tender by Secretary of the Treasury McCulloch. The national banks, which had bought low-priced government bonds during the war, received up to 9 per cent interest on these, then by depositing their government bonds as security, issued and loaned their own banknotes at from 6 to 8 per cent or more, so that many of them were said to be earning ever 17 per cent per annum upon their own capital. The early return to the former gold-specie payment would virtually, double the value of their government bonds.

The “Ohio Idea,” which the Democratic Congressman George Pendleton championed, now won popular support; the war debt must be repaid in the selfsame Greenbacks which the bond-buyers had invested; moreover, the interest which bondholders received was to be taxed away. President Andrew Johnson favored such a course, and Jay Cooke heard alarming rumors in September, 1867, that he intended to dismiss Secretary McCulloch.⁴¹ The Radical leaders themselves, Wade, Ben Butler, and Thad Stevens, actively opposed contraction and the repayment of the war bonds in gold money or its equivalent.⁴² Jay Cooke, the “financier of the Civil War,” and now the country’s foremost banker, held himself at this time in closest friendship with the national Republican leaders, a relationship concerning which so much illuminating evidence has been left us. But even Cooke, whose policies were followed almost automatically by Secretary McCulloch, saw the wisdom of compromise, and accepted a modified program. Conservative and Radical Republicans combined in haste to pass the act of February 4, 1868, prohibiting further cancellation of the Greenbacks, while also holding in abeyance the debt-funding program.

The minor setbacks of 1867 gave pause to the Radical leaders. Then, with their eyes fixed on the presidential campaign of 1868, they determined all the more strongly to whip up new partisan tumult, to raise the alarm once more for the national safety. On August 2, 1867, President Johnson had finally dismissed Secretary of War Stanton, and appointed General Grant as ad interim Secretary, thus deliberately courting a test of the constitutionality of the Tenure of Office Act. In January, 1868, when the removal of Stanton was not confirmed by the Senate, a technical ground was opened for impeachment action, although the twelve hundred pages of testimony on Johnson’s public and private life gathered by a Radical committee could produce nothing of an “illegal” or even questionable nature. The impeachment of the President, and his replacement by one of their own number, was to be the final step in the

conquest of the state power by the Radicals.

The trial, prepared all through February, began on March 5, and dragged itself out with unbelievable rhetoric and melodrama until May 26. Day after day the Radical orators, with whom the more conservative and business-minded elements in Congress, such as Garfield and John Bingham of Ohio, were induced to join, rose to denounce the “criminal” President upon charges so farcical that men in their right senses could scarcely have made them.

Once more the tactics of “masterful turbulence” and verbal galimatias, which Blaine attributed to some of his colleagues, are clearly seen. The war of words is carried to new lengths. General James A. Garfield, a rising young Republican Congressman from Ohio, commented especially in private letters from the political battle front on the “insane love of speaking” which the Radical leaders showed in this national emergency. They had obtained consent of the Senate for virtually all of their followers to speak and testify at the trial of the President, and Garfield writes, “here we have been wading knee deep in words, words, words, for a whole week, and we are but little more than half way across the turbid stream.” The fierce impeachers, he judges, would have abandoned all thought of impeachment if they were denied “an unlimited opportunity to talk.” Here, for instance, was Stevens, reeling in the shadow of death, struggling to read words which could not be heard twenty feet off, and others giving two days at a time to “the worst type of Tennessee stump speech.”⁴³ It was truly a circus parade in which the fanatical Boutwell, the turbulent Ben Butler, the “drunken” extremist “Zach” Chandler, then “Black Jack” Logan, Roscoe Conkling, Oliver Morton, and Charles Sumner, no less long-winded, airing their preposterous charges, filled the republic with more thunderous claptrap than it had ever known in the fourscore years of its wordy political life.

What was behind this farrago of hate, vengeance, and fantasy, evidently managed, guided, raised steadily to its fortissimo by shrewd theater directors?

Underneath the quarrel over Reconstruction, as we have come to see, lay great economic issues that had divided our people for generations and would divide them anew, issues which bore no resemblance to those mouthed so vociferously by the embattled politicians. The real issues embraced the whole profound change of direction in our postwar society. They touched the centripetal movement by which a partially organized, or weakly organized, “federal” union of States was being turned into a highly centralized nation; small enterprise, literally “cottage industry,” was giving way to large-scale manufacture, which was to be encouraged, “protected”—that is, subsidized—by the National Government, protected not only against foreign competition, but also against the restrictions of local or State governments. Even our money was to be different, and national, now that the old State banks with their “wildcat”

notes were to be taxed out of existence. On all these underlying questions, then—of taxation, of tariff, of the “centralizing” policy both in government and in economic life, of the stresses caused by the new social order growing up under Radical favor—almost no clue is given by the principal actors in the political drama before us, so that we are forced to scan always their private, unguarded expressions, wherever we may find them, to determine what they were truly engaged in doing.

The Radicals had enjoyed the sweets of power and unexpected favor for their economic interests. For all their doctrinary violence, they had held to their side the great moneyed groups of the North, interests which only recently had opposed unrestricted suffrage for white men in their own section. These groups—men of counting-houses, owners of factories, and all their train—were as yet a minority, a minority which had been consistently outvoted by the agricultural South and West for over thirty years. Neither the party leaders nor the business groups, then, had any wish to return to the hopeless minority fight which their fathers had made as Whigs. “To keep the economic questions in the background, until the Southern problem was settled, and their power secure,” until their social revolution was completed, was therefore essential. “A campaign of denunciation and vituperation would accomplish this by keeping war hatreds alive. Against their political and economic opponents, unreasoning passion, rodomontade—claptrap rather than issues” would be most effective. Else, with war passion, fear, and sectional hate subsided, and normal times returned, both elements might suffer again “the discouraging experiences of pre-war decades,” when so little headway could be made against the opposition and the peculiar inertia of our governmental system.⁴⁴

But in the spring of 1868 we confront one of those moments when the two largest stockholders of the “joint stock company” fall into discord. The professional politicians, as they prepared the overthrow of the President, were plainly carried away by their lust for spoils. They saw themselves in unchallenged control of all the Federal departments, and Ben Wade, the president pro tempore of the Senate, was already picturing himself in the White House and devising in his mind a new Radical Cabinet. By such logic the whole contingent of Republicans in the House had been brought to vote as a body for the impeachment resolution—many of them against their private convictions—and the Senators, who sat in judgment on the President, were also pressed to “let their conscience go.” It was afterward said that each one feared lest he might not seem as “radical” as his fellows.

The party’s powerful economic allies ended, however, by being thoroughly alarmed, not only at the turmoil that injured business, but also at the establishment of a precedent that would give a distinctly “South American” flavor to our constitutional Republic. Where would it all end if a few party

managers, by organizing their followers in Congress, could overthrow the head of the Government almost at will? The prosecution of the President was not only high-handed, but rested on the most doubtful legal grounds. William Evarts of New York, one of the country's foremost corporation lawyers, conducted Johnson's defense most ably. The richest Republican patrons, such as the financiers Jay Cooke of Philadelphia and Hamilton Fish of New York, seemed to tremble at the thought of the "wild Radical" Ben Wade in the White House. Wade not only urged the free distribution of land to the Negroes, but aroused poor farmers and laborers against capitalists in the North, and championed even votes for women!⁴⁵

It was evident at this juncture that only the most unbridled and narrowly partisan ends might be served by impeachment. The power of President Johnson, even as a "negative" force, had been removed. In any case, he had but a few months left of his term of office, and by May, during the conclusion of the trial, the election campaign was well under way and victory for the Republicans, with a glamorous war hero as their standard-bearer, was a foregone conclusion.

At the last moment the hands of the extremists were stayed. Seven leading Republicans, including Lyman Trumbull of Illinois and the aged Fessenden of Maine, on the ground of principle had resisted the procedure from beginning to end. The defection of four more Senators at the last moment caused the loss by one vote of a two-thirds majority for impeachment. This unexpected outcome Radical leaders angrily attributed to Jay Cooke's uncommon powers of persuasion.⁴⁶

But a presidential election now approached, and the party leaders, much like the French Directory after Thermidor, turned to new expedients for prolonging the conditions and moods of war as a means for prolonging their own power.

VII

At this moment Ulysses Grant, the "Savior of the Union," was the most popular and famous of Americans, the subject of unrestrained public ovations wherever he went. For more than two years the great soldier had cast an important shadow over the affairs and calculations of the politicians. His role as commander of the nation's military force, as well as his appeal for nearly 1,000,000 veterans of the war, was ever in the minds of the party leaders.

During the quarrels over Reconstruction both factions had wooed Grant. He knew nothing of specialized politics. A Democrat by vote before the war, he was thought to hold moderate views on Reconstruction. Like all men who

are uncertain in their knowledge, he was shy, suspicious, and he took refuge in silence. While the partisan storms swirled about him, he felt compelled to hold himself aloof and appear to obey the orders of his superior, the President, like a good soldier. Thus, as the historian Motley said at the time, he played “the dumb, inarticulate man of genius,” giving no clue to his ambitions, though all knew that the Presidency might be his for the asking.

But Grant’s military aides and political mentors, such as the ambitious and wealthy Representative Elihu Washburne of Illinois, who had won him his first division command in 1861, left him no rest. His friend General John Rawlins, wartime chief of his staff, who had kept him sober during battle campaigns and pounded his ideas into Grant’s head until Grant believed them his own, was another adviser who labored now to lead the war hero into the Radical camp.

With the dismissal of Stanton and Johnson’s appointment of Grant as ad interim Secretary of War, the war hero’s position became more difficult than ever. Though hitherto on terms of friendship with the President, he was brought step by step to quarrel with him over the military administration of the South. In leaning now to the congressional faction, he seems to have been moved by reasons always obscure, and chiefly by instinct rather than conviction.⁴⁷

On the eve of the impeachment trial, in January, when the Senate voted against the dismissal of Stanton and excited rumors of impending war between the President and Congress filled the Capital, Grant suddenly detached himself from Johnson’s side and surrendered his office to Stanton. He then hurriedly returned to his permanent post at Army Headquarters, his for life at \$20,000 per annum. Whatever the grounds for his action, Grant’s resounding public rupture with his chief was all too timely, and it was accompanied by a most offensive letter to the President (dictated by the same General Rawlins) in which he accused Johnson of having sought to involve him “in the resistance of law...and thus destroy my character before the country.” Rawlins, who was by nature a politician and, “having long foreseen the result of all the political complications, felt at last that the time had come” for rupture with the ill-starred President. “It was a stroke of political genius” whereby Grant became the logical, the inevitable candidate of the Republicans.⁴⁸

During the uproar over the impeachment proceedings the military wing of the Radical faction had rushed into action. Stanton, restored to his office, slept at the War Department, while General Logan, now Representative in Congress, secretly called members of the Grand Army of the Republic together, formed battalions, and officered them. Sentinels in citizen dress were on duty every hour before the White House and the War Department building, while Logan slept on a cot beside Stanton.⁴⁹ During the trial of the President, the G.A.R. was apparently held ready to rise at a given signal to the defense of Secretary Stanton or Congress.

Patriotic Grant Clubs had been organizing themselves “spontaneously” at many points in the country since the autumn of 1866. Politicians in the field held the view expressed by one correspondent to Congressman Elihu Washburne; Grant’s old sponsor, that “the soldiers hold the balance of power and will make the next President.”⁵⁰ But more urgently after the alarming symptoms of discontent shown in the off-year elections of 1867, reports from the “workers” in the field came in on all hands that a man was needed for the national Republican ticket who could “bring out the vote.” The Middle West was apathetic. Similar reports came from the East. “No civilian,” as one party agent reported on November 7, 1867, “can carry Pennsylvania, and without Grant our election would go against us.”⁵¹

But Grant had been silent, and the prominent Radicals among the Republicans, such as Stevens, Ben Wade, Horace Greeley, and Sumner, had not only mistrusted him but on occasion assailed him. It was his open and final break with President Johnson in January, 1868, which made the Republican “directory” jubilant. When Thad Stevens saw the General’s insulting letter to the President he exclaimed: “He is a bolder man than I thought him; now we will let him into the Church.”⁵²

The thought of Radicals and even of most orthodox Republicans was that the strategy of peace must bring about only such Reconstruction as would give “safety and power to the loyal.”⁵³ But large sections of the North, especially the Western Democracy of the Mississippi Valley, showed indifference to the Radical fire bells; they raised instead the most embarrassing questions concerning the economic burden of the war debt, the high cost of “protected” manufactured goods, the taxation of bonds, the retention of Greenbacks and an inflated money. Hence the Radical “directory” turned, though not without misgivings, as our parties had often done before in pursuit of their own interests, to the military captain as standard-bearer. The use of a figurehead or symbol had long been part of our political lore. In the unmilitary republic of jealous, democratic bourgeois, where nearly all men owned arms, no one feared the army “doughface” overmuch. Catechized and found safe enough by the professional politicians—only the quality of his Radicalism left some doubts—General Grant with all his aura of martial glory and successful patriotism was now borrowed for the propaganda campaign against rebels and Copperheads. “With Grant at the masthead,” one enthusiastic Republican worker had predicted, “the combined powers of darkness cannot beat us.”⁵⁴ The potential of Grant could be measured easily even before the Republican National Convention opened in May, when an impressive Soldiers and Sailors Convention, called together by Logan, Commander of the G.A.R., nominated

Grant by acclamation. An organized and highly interested support by nearly 1,000,000 voters was thus assured in advance. “Death to the Traitors!” was the slogan most often heard at the torchlight processions of the Boys in Blue. Also “Protection for Soldiers’ Widows and Orphans!”

The crusade of the Republican Organization that year was to be highly colored with bunting, regimental banners, and military uniforms. That the directors of the war party would be able to continue by such means to gloze over the genuine social issues of the time was all too plain. The keynote for the approaching electoral tournament was sounded by Oliver Morton, the Middle Western party leader and orator, now Republican Senator for Indiana, at a festival of battle flags held by a gathering of Union veterans:

You have laid aside your arms, and have assumed the character of peaceable and quiet citizens, but your duties are not all performed. The great question now confronts you and must be answered, whether these precious flags are to be emblems of barren victories, whether the heroes in war shall become mere children in peace; whether they shall shamefully and blindly surrender at the ballot-box the great prizes which they conquered upon the field.⁵⁵

VIII

The leaders of the war party were oblique in that they kept the economic questions in the background; in the name of patriotism, justice, liberty, they executed move after move which, at a glance, revealed all too plainly the overweeningly professional or “institutional” interest of party rule. A more lingering glance showed the devouring concern with pecuniary, class-economic objects only a little more masked and hidden beneath the vituperations against rebellion and the rodomontades of universal freedom. These significant contradictions may be traced even in the orations of the incorruptible Sumner.

No one questioned the earnestness of Sumner, who had been clubbed nearly to death in the Senate by the Southern firebrand Brooks for his antislavery speeches before the war. Long-haired, with careworn face and burning dark eyes, the immensely tall figure of the Massachusetts Senator would rise again and again as a martyr of the struggle against slavery and secession to make his familiar classical appeals for the rights of the freedmen. Then, at intervals, as in the congressional debates of February, 1866, one would distinguish suddenly notes intruding themselves which were in no sense academic:

Only through him [the Negro] can you redress the balance of our political system and assure the safety of patriot citizens. Only

through him can you save the national debt from the inevitable repudiation which awaits it when recent rebels in conjunction with Northern allies [Democrats] once more bear sway. He is our best guarantee. Use him.⁵⁶

To *use* the Negro, to save the national debt! Was it but for this mountain of gold looming ahead, \$2,800,000,000 of it, that the incorruptible Senator and the “Great Commoner” of the House of Representatives, Stevens, together made their appeals to youth, to patriots, in the name of liberty and progress? Was it for the protection of cotton cloth, wool blankets, and iron ingots? Were these Republican ideologues hypocrites, or did they deceive themselves?

What undoubtedly happened was that the consciousness—one might say the subconscious—of the Northern politicians had long been colored by the whole social order from which they sprang and the mode of production, the way of life, to which they were attached by a thousand imperceptible ties. Their heads were furnished with general ideas, sentiments, prejudices, associations of thought, forming a whole ideological “superstructure.” Instinctively they had learned to admire the thrifty, workaday, progressive ways of their own industrialists, artisans, and free farmers which had wrought an immense social revolution, and to loathe the economic backwardness, the “feudalism,” of the Southern agriculturists. With the latter section and class, also, memories and images—slaves being dragged off to the auction block, a familiar sight in Washington before the war—were long associated with a cruel and alien way of life. The old cry for States’ Rights, once raised by noble impulses, became detestable in their ears, while the dangers of such a Hamiltonian centralism as they championed in turn, under which new privileged groups might be nourished, were flouted. The new capitalism of the North seemed, in the youth of our industrial revolution, a friendly giant who richly paid free labor. The new banking and currency system, the distinctively protective form of taxation to be introduced, were but a small price to pay for national unity and human liberty, which seemed to depend upon them. Indeed they were vitally connected, intertwined, could scarcely be distinguished apart—in policy and action as in speech.

Meanwhile the leading Northern capitalists themselves, who were firm allies of the war party, were wont to express their thought in far more unequivocal form, not only in private correspondence, but in public. Thus in an open letter to the Boston *Daily Advertiser*, thereafter widely circulated as a pamphlet, Elizur Wright, an oldtime Abolitionist and reformer, an inventor and manufacturer as well, declared in 1866:

...I could easily convince any man, who does not allow his prejudices to stand in the way of his interests, that it will probably

make a difference of at least \$1,000,000,000 in the development of the national debt, whether we reconstruct on the basis of loyal white and black votes, or on white votes exclusively, and that he can better afford to give the Government at least one-quarter of his estate than have it try the latter experiment.⁵⁷

Another equally candid Yankee millowner, Gardner Brewer, wrote to Sumner that the unrestricted suffrage of the colored people was wholly desirable from a selfish point of view, lest the Southerners uniting with Northern Democrats bring a long train of evils fearful to contemplate, such as

a great reduction of the Tariff, doing away with its protective feature—perhaps Free Trade to culminate with Repudiation...and how sweet and complete will be the revenge of the former if they can ruin the North by Free Trade and Repudiation.⁵⁸

These are characteristic expressions, characteristic of a great many made at the end of the war by protected textile manufacturers, iron, glass, salt, and copper producers, in the Northeast and Middle West, who formed nowadays a remarkably close alliance with the movement of Abolitionist Republicanism and with the misled Negro proletarians of the South.* To this powerful class the doctrines of centralism which Republican leaders boldly urged also made an irresistible appeal.

The Fourteenth Amendment, as we have seen, framed by the Joint Committee of Fifteen in all its ingenious parts, served as an admirable election-campaign battery in 1866 against President Johnson’s party and was adopted in a tumult of partisan passions. Its first clause appeared to offer a bill of rights for the freedmen North and South, guaranteeing equality before the law and citizenship; its second clause controlled the apportionment of Representatives to Congress according to the enfranchisement of the Negroes; its third and fourth clauses excluded from public life the ablest Southern leaders, and enforced the repudiation of the rebel debt and the acceptance of the Union war debt. But few persons then living fully understood the cryptic meaning of the phrases inserted in the open section:

No States shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due

* That the Negro masses, pure proletarians, were lured by the promise of freedom and power to preserve the fruits of the war for Northern capitalists, and then, when no longer needed, were so monstrously betrayed, is one of the most extraordinary maneuvers in all the annals of bourgeois class politics, more remarkable even than the strange combinations of military castes or selfish clerical parties with poor peasants often effected in modern Europe.

process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Ostensibly a humanitarian measure, offered as a charter of liberty and human rights, the Fourteenth Amendment was understood only many years after by jurists and historians as being actually, by virtue of its opening paragraph, “the Magna Charta of accumulated wealth and organized capital.”⁵⁹ By interpreting the word “person” in its juristic sense of “corporation” or corporate person the Supreme Court was able in after years to depart from a policy of noninterference with State legislators and embrace the doctrine that it was “charged with the high duty of reviewing all and every kind of economic legislation by the states.”⁶⁰

Whereas previous Amendments (especially the Tenth) had largely defined, clarified, and buttressed the authority of State and local rights or privileges with regard to the National Government, the “Hamiltonian” war party now saw fit to reverse the process. Eighty years before, a nation of smallholders and merchants demanded freedom from foreign or central forms of authority. Now, foreseeing perhaps the approaching nation-wide scope of the new capitalism, they sought rather to protect the new large corporate “persons” by the aid of the National Government from oppression by the separate States. By the Tenth Amendment corporations were adjudged largely free of national regulation, and by the Fourteenth they were ultimately protected from local regulation. Thus it was truly a capitalist charter of liberties that emerged from the secret councils of the committee of congressional leaders before even any definitive plan of Reconstruction of the South and Negro enfranchisement. Representative John A. Bingham of Ohio, a conservative member of the Joint Committee of Fifteen, had actually tried to insert in the Amendment a supplementary clause to the effect that no State should “take private property for public use without just compensation.”⁶¹ But this had been voted down as possibly too transparent.

Many years later Roscoe Conkling, a member of the committee, explained that the Fourteenth Amendment was designed for the protection of white people as well as black; that the word “person” was not intended to be synonymous with “citizen,” but was used in its juristic meaning of “artificial person” or corporation. Thus, arguing on behalf of Collis Huntington’s railroad (*San Mateo County vs. Southern Pacific Railroad Company*) he related how, when the Fourteenth Amendment was first framed, many individuals and joint-stock companies were appealing for congressional and administrative protection against “the invidious and discriminating state and local taxes being enacted at the time.” One express company felt itself oppressed by ruinous taxes and rules of damages in twenty-eight States; complaints were then also especially rife in and out of Congress, said Conkling, of oppression in respect of property

and other rights made by citizens of Northern States who took up residence in the South.⁶²

Speaking before the Supreme Court in 1882, Conkling said:

Those who devised the fourteenth amendment wrought in grave sincerity. They may have builded better than they knew....They builded, not for a day, but for all time; not for a few, or for a race, but for man. They planted in the Constitution a monumental truth, to stand foursquare whatever wind might blow. That truth is but the golden rule, so entrenched as to *curb the many who would do to the few as they would not have the few do to them.*⁶³

The politicians in those stormy years of Reconstruction were as men afflicted with dual identity: they were literally Jekylls and Hydes. As Dr. Jekyll, with a generous impulse they emancipated Negro slaves, swept away the feudal, landed order of the South; as Mr. Hyde, they deliberately delayed the recovery and restoration of the conquered States, whose economy languished during many years of disorder; imposed military rule; and established a network of Freedmen’s bureaus and Carpetbag local governments which were subject to the central Republican Party Organization at Washington and paid tribute to the same. As Dr. Jekyll, they stirred the masses of voters to their support by use of a humane and libertarian ideology of a revolutionary American pattern; as Mr. Hyde, they planned and built coolly, at the height of deliberately invoked, turbulent electoral struggles and parliamentary storms, measures of high capitalist policy, to stand “not for a day, but for all time”; they worked to implant in the covenant of our society safeguards to property and capital which might hold against all future assaults.

Under entry of July 7, 1866, Gideon Welles wrote in his diary:

Congress accomplishes little that is good....There is little statesmanship in the body, but a vast amount of party depravity. The granting of acts of incorporation, bounties, special privileges, favors, and profligate legislation of every description is shocking. Schemes for increasing the enormous taxation which already exists to benefit the iron and wool interests are occupying the session.⁶⁴

So in the midst of the never-ending and resounding conflict with the Copperheads, the most worldly of the politicians pleasantly proceeded to enact a mass of innocent-seeming legislation: charters and grants for railroads, for land companies, special tariff duties, public contracts, pensions, appropriations. During the sessions of the historic Thirty-ninth Congress, sitting from December, 1865, to the spring of 1867, and its successor, the Fortieth, from 1867 to 1869, a vast acreage of choice Western land, some 10,000,000 acres, was added to that

which had been awarded earlier to Ames's and Huntington's Pacific railroads project during the war. There was time also to give 22,000,000 acres likewise to a vague new "Atlantic and Pacific" railroad, which years later turned up in the hands of Huntington and Jay Gould. Unresting lobbies employed by the Union Pacific, the Central Pacific, and the Pennsylvania railroads established most intimate working relations with the group of Republican politicians who were soon known as the "Railway Congressmen." These were rising business-minded statesmen who, such times as they were not waving the Bloody Shirt, labored to bring about the swift opening and exploitation of the public domain in the West, entered personally into little railroad promotions and stock-selling ventures of their own. The friends of the Pacific railroads promoters, according to Welles, were always in force at Washington, laboring to prevent any checking up of their actual construction on the one hand, and to obtain on the other hand ever new government subsidies with which to pay several times over the cost of the tracks they laid across the prairies.⁶⁵

In this Age of Big Business which had been launched, with its transcontinental railways, its new stockyards, its oil wells in Pennsylvania, tales of miraculous, sudden fortune stirred the imagination of political leaders as well as private enterprisers. News of a 60 per cent dividend paid in 1867 by a branch of the government-aided Union Pacific—a company of which members of the Republican Party were said to be active sponsors—threatened at one moment to set in the shade the impeachment of President Johnson.⁶⁶

The Railway Congressmen who managed the transfer of immense natural resources to friends and patrons of their party, amid frenzied land, town, and railway booms sweeping the country—must they refuse any part of the fortune they strewed about? For the famous "Christian Statesman," the pious Schuyler ("Smiler") Colfax, Speaker of the House, to have rejected the shares of *Crédit Mobilier* offered by Representative Ames of Massachusetts would have been nicely scrupulous, but would it have been "smart"? When John Bingham of Ohio several years later was charged with possessing as a free gift shares in the same fabulous corporation, he retorted simply that he "only wished he had ten times more."⁶⁷

Indulgent historians of the time have related that its ethics was "confused," that the war period with its inflation of money and profiteering by contractors was a solvent of public morals. But there are indications also that many of the ruling party members were settled and clear enough in their pecuniary canons. Senator G. F. Hoar, who entered Congress at this period, describes with relish the morals of the Radical demagogue General Ben Butler. During the war the Yankee adventurer, serving as Military Governor of New Orleans with a brutality still remembered there today, had seen fit to make a requisition of \$80,000 in gold upon a bank of that city, a sum which was never afterward

accounted for as having been paid into the national Treasury. Years later the bankers employed one of the most famous lawyers of the time, Edwards Pierrepont, to bring an action against Butler, who was then a leader in Congress. In the course of a conversation with Butler, Pierrepont observed to him: “Your neighbors in Lowell will not think very well of it when they see you riding in your carriage through the streets, and know it was paid for out of money you have taken unlawfully from this bank.” Butler eventually settled out of court, paying back the stolen money before trial came, but said to Pierrepont: “Well, you beat me. But I want to tell you that you made one mistake. You said the people of Lowell would not think very highly of me when they saw me riding through the streets in my carriage and knew it was paid for by the money of this bank. The people would think I was a fool for not having taken twice as much.”⁶⁸

The Puritan conscience, as in many other fields, so in politics, showed a remarkable elasticity in accommodating itself to new strains. The young New Hampshire Yankee William E. Chandler, who appeared always as a Republican election “expert” in campaigns, was to be seen moving about in his long blue cloak, wearing smoked glasses, as he quietly distributed sums of \$3,000 or \$3,500 a month to newspaper reporters, and negotiated for the purchase by the Republican National Committee of whole newspapers which were formerly Democratic.

In “dickering” with these fellows, Chandler asked himself on one occasion, “Can a man touch pitch and not be *defiled*?” But then, in the next moment, as he reports his purchase of a leading Washington (Democratic) paper, he answers his fluttering conscience: “*I am conscious of the correctness and purity of my own motives and do not dare turn away from this opportunity of demoralizing the Democracy.*”⁶⁹

In a fervor of patriotism, and as a military measure, the statesmen had earlier made their vast grant of \$50,000,000 in bonds for the Pacific railroads; then another fabulous grant for the Northern Pacific of 47,000,000 acres, which was less noticed. “I give no grudging vote in giving away either money or land,” cried the Massachusetts Senator Henry Wilson. “I would sink \$100,000,000 to build the road and do it most cheerfully.” To encourage the opening and settlement of the Western lands, to bind the shores of the continent together, was a patriotic task. No less pressing and patriotic, by Whig-Republican lights, had been the encouragement, even the subsidizing, of home industry and manufacture. A leading Radical, ‘Senator Zachariah Chandler of Michigan, had exclaimed: “I would raise a wall of fire between this nation and Great Britain....I would not let a single pound of any article she manufactured come

here during this war...I am for the tax and the highest tax."⁷⁰

The prosecution of the war against rebellion had been associated with a protective tariff levied against a hated England which profited and sought to profit further from our disaster. With the close of the war a cry arose from the Northeastern region that high tariffs were needed to pay the war debt, and an outburst of high Protectionism followed in 1866. The manufacturers as a class underwent a swift, remarkable organization for concerted propaganda and lobbying action. John L. Hayes, heading one of the first powerful lobbies in our history, that of the recently formed National Association of Wool Growers, advanced a scheme for keeping up the price of wool and woolen cloth; another group, supported by Bingham and by John Sherman in the Senate, maintained a monopoly of salt under the tariff, as David A. Wells, Johnson's Commissioner of Internal Revenue, demonstrated;⁷¹ a copper syndicate with mines in Northern Michigan, in which the old warmonger Zach Chandler was interested clamored for duties of 5 cents a pound on raw copper; the iron men of Pennsylvania demanded similar privileges, though iron was at \$80 a ton here as against \$32 in England. Each group, each promoter, clamored for Protection, for bounties, for appropriations.

These great benefits the embattled party politicians found it not in their hearts to refuse to their stanchest patrons and friends. While with one hand they carried unweariedly the sword of the patriot to the Copperhead, with the other they strewed freely government benefices among their allies. The dichotomy in Republican thought was perhaps best revealed in a G.A.R. slogan sometimes attributed to Senator James Henry Lane, the militant and picturesque Kansas Abolitionist. "*The old flag and an appropriation!*" he thundered at the conclusion of a speech in favor of soldiers' pensions. Not long after this (1866), with his mind unhinged, Lane committed suicide.

IX

Andrew Johnson, in the closing days of his term, stripped of power, his vetoes well-nigh futile against an overwhelming Republican majority in Congress, lifted his voice against the new, revolutionary principles "of government for the benefit of industry," principles as menacing to the welfare of the plain people as the rule of the old slavocracy. An enemy of large landholders, Johnson now opposed to the same degree the class which emerged from the war as large holders of government bonds. Gold in December, 1868, stood at approximately 150 per cent of parity in United States currency, the dollar being worth therefore about 66 cents in terms of gold money; and Johnson, though knowing no more of finance than Lincoln, pointed out in his annual message at this time

that the buyers of the “seven-thirty” war bonds had made their investment in depreciated Greenbacks then worth 50 or even 40 cents in gold. “The holders of our securities have already received upon their bonds a larger amount than the original investment,” he argued. He would therefore tax away their interest, and use this money to payoff the principal of our burdensome national debt. Here was “a bold and shameless advocacy of repudiation,” which alone showed, as a Republican spokesman, Blaine, has said, how much Johnson had merited impeachment. The President often attempted in vain to veto railroad charters and disguised grants to land-grabbing companies who would plunder the public domain. Johnson made further outspoken comment: that “an aristocracy based on nearly two billions and a half of national securities has arisen to assume that political control which the consolidation of great financial and political interests formerly gave to the slave oligarchy....The war of finance,” he predicted in a public interview, “is the next war we have to fight.”

But it was too late. The opposition party had taken a course of twisted compromise; the independent President was to be hurled into the limbo of defeated politicians. Moreover, the “war of finance” had begun at once after Appomattox.

The policy of swift redemption of inflated debt and paper money which Secretary of the Treasury McCulloch pursued with the support of the Republicans had brought, as we have seen, the minor election upheaval in the off-year elections of 1867. “What bad news, sad news to-night,” mused the pious banker Jay Cooke as he watched the election returns. “Pennsylvania and Ohio gone Democratic and the sad lessons of the war all forgotten. Well, God reigneth. His will and purposes will all be made known and enforced in good time.”⁷²

A last current of the Abolitionist Radicalism in Stevens and Wade had led them to advocate strongly repayment of the war bonds in Greenbacks—paper money. Even the conservative John Sherman of Ohio, who had been “as a lion” in defense of Cooke’s financial policies during the war, appeared frightened and endeavored to halt a too drastic deflation. To an emissary whom Jay Cooke sent to him he said:

Our bonds do not state that they shall be paid in gold. That is no part of the contract. Our soldiers and sailors who...saved the Union were paid in greenbacks....Our farmers and manufacturers who furnished materials for carrying on the war were paid with greenbacks....Why then should the money lenders...who bought our bonds at a cutthroat discount during the war: be singled out from all other creditors and be paid par in gold?...This logic has captured the people. Even if erroneous it is sweeping the country. When the issue comes the Democrats will go into power and carry out the change.

They are sure to go further than safety warrants and financial panic and disaster are sure to result.⁷³

The question of the national debt overshadowed all else in the minds of the well-informed citizen, though the statesmen evaded it. The problem of carrying the country toward rapid specie resumption and a sound gold basis, validating the mountains of paper profits left to the financiers as the outcome of the war, obsessed those likely to profit therefrom in 1867-69. Jay Cooke, the Tycoon of banking, was under fire in Congress, where resolutions of inquiry were aimed at his plans for new refunding operations; yet the imposing, white-bearded banker, on the defensive, persisted in his efforts to bend party leaders and newspapers to his will. Since 1866 he had apparently considered organizing the national bankers into an association, much like that of the wool and iron men, which might act in politics to defend their vast interests. This raised delicate questions. The young Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, William E. Chandler, already a wily political manager and wirepuller high in the national councils of the Republican Party, wrote Cooke December 2, 1867:

I very much regret that the organization in the interest of the banks of which you spoke to me a year ago has not been quietly effected ready for action. The banks need to bestir themselves to avoid hostile legislation and yet any organization effected now would... perhaps do more harm than good. This universal suffrage country will never see the end of attempts of demagogues to excite the poor against the rich, labor against capital, and all who haven't money against the banks who have it.⁷⁴

Such a project of a defense organization for national bankers as the fertile Cooke privately discussed with his aides was reminiscent of Alexander Hamilton's eighteenth-century vision of a plutocratic class, cementing together the union of the States by their common interest in the national debt and the United States Bank.*

But Cooke ended by adhering to his more circuitous method of paying large contributions to the Republican Party chest, and making personal loans to leading politicians. Young Chandler, who became secretary of the Republican National Committee in 1868, also pointed out to Cooke that "it would be a good investment" for him if money were supplied directly to help pay the election expenses of certain Western leaders of Congress, such as General Schenck and John A. Bingham of Ohio, and Logan of Illinois.⁷⁵ These leaders

* "The funds of the bank would create a class, or call forth one already in existence in support of the government. The stockholders of the [United States] bank would be even more united and more active than the holders of the funds because they would have more to gain." (H. C. Lodge, *Alexander Hamilton*, 12th ed., 1886, p. 102.)

Cooke referred to always thereafter as “our friends in Congress.”

After 1866 the Cookes besieged the war hero, Ulysses Grant, with their attentions. Henry Cooke, in the Washington office of Jay Cooke & Co., who acted as a public-relations manager for his brother, got himself into the confidence of the General, plied him with liquor, catechized him long before Thad Stevens and the Republican leaders did, and reported promptly to Jay that the great soldier was apparently conservative and “sound” on financial questions. Whereupon Jay Cooke answered him on September 9, 1867: “Tell Gen’l Grant from me that we all look to him to save to the country the legitimate results & fruits of the War.”⁷⁶

Grateful, but apprehensive, the leading financiers showered the conqueror of Lee with gifts and money prizes, much as the British bourgeoisie had rewarded Wellington after Waterloo. A fully furnished mansion for him in our largest city, Philadelphia, was paid for by A. T. Stewart, the dry-goods king, Adolph Borie, and other men of money; a sum of \$100,000 was raised in New York by Henry Clews, the Wall Street broker, with the aid of Hamilton Fish, Moses Taylor, Edwards Pierrepont, August Belmont, Moses Grinnell, stockbrokers, bankers, war contractors, to pay for the mortgage on Grant’s Washington home; and though Grant read almost nothing, a gift of a library to furnish his head richly, costing \$75,000, was promptly donated by “fifty solid men of Boston.”⁷⁷

Under Grant, as the conservative financiers pointed out to the Republican Party leaders, there would be law and order, there would be above all “economy.” While the Democrats and the opponents of the war against the rebellion would undoubtedly raise the banner of Repudiation, “and thus gain largely with the mass of people,” the Republicans would gather the patriot and soldier vote. One Republican agent, commenting sadly upon Democratic gains in Ohio late in 1867, wrote to Grant’s old friend and mentor, Washburne of Illinois:

After looking carefully over the field I know of but one man that in my humble judgment can beat this repudiation platform and that man is General Grant....If we run Grant, we can generally count upon the soldiers’ vote—they will vote for him to glorify themselves—feeling that to place him in the Presidential office will be an additional recognition of their own services...that is to say, they will prefer glory to repudiation. But with Chase or any of that school of politicians we will certainly be beaten....The people are uneasy...and inclined to try a change.⁷⁸

While Grant was being “let into the Church” in 1868 by Radical leaders and Logan, Morton, and other Western firebrands marshaled the soldiers’ votes, leading national bankers and financiers in the East, whose class interests

converged toward the institutional one of the professional politicians, organized themselves to raise “the sinews of war” for the same end. The managers of the Republican National Committee, Governor Edwin Morgan of New York, Washburne of Illinois, and Chandler of New Hampshire, held meetings in a Wall Street office where nabobs like A. T. Stewart, William E. Dodge, Collis Huntington, Cornelius Vanderbilt, William B. Astor, Hamilton Fish, and Moses Taylor were summoned to subscribe sums of from \$5,000 to \$10,000 each, sums then unprecedented. Certain war contractors linked to the Republican Party, such as Edwards Pierrepont of New York, who was believed to have given \$20,000 on this occasion, were told as in 1864: “You have had a good contract, out of which you have made money, and we expect you to use a part of that money to assist to replace us in power.”⁷⁹ But the bankers bore the brunt of the campaign levies.