

world who carried resistance to the extreme of an all-out showdown in civil war. In Russia emancipation was the decision of Czar Alexander II, and it was carried out peacefully with no threat of forceful resistance and only cooperation or impotent grumbling from noblemen. The owners were compensated for their loss, and emancipation was effected in their interest. With them as with all slaveholders in the New World apart from those of Saint Domingue and the South, abolition was the liquidation of an investment rather than the end of a society. Slavery ended violently in the South as the result of defeat in a rebellion on which the planters staked everything and lost. They were the only owners of human property in their time except those of Brazil to suffer emancipation without compensation and the only ones, save for the French colonists in Guadeloupe and Martinique in 1848, to endure radical efforts to bring the emancipated to equality and franchise as well as freedom. What they experienced was not only the overthrow of slavery but a revolution and the end of a society.

More than once in this fascinating study in comparative history there are hints of the intention of illuminate more than the past, and indeed the book concludes with a sentence containing the explicit suggestion that "it is well to remember the extent to which that earlier world has shaped our own." When we think of the century since these archaic systems of unfree labor were abolished by the two nations—one that enchained its own people and one that enslaved people of alien culture and different color—the comparison of past societies gains significance for contrasts in the present. This makes all the more welcome the author's promise of "a sequel in which I will examine the abolition of bondage in the United States and Russia." Readers won by the comparison of serfdom and slavery will await comparison of the consequences of their abolition with all the more interest.

10

Reconstruction: A Counterfactual Playback

Some comparisons are not readily recognizable as such. Thus when historians speak of what might have been or enumerate counterfactual outcomes of events, as they frequently and often quite legitimately do, they are actually comparing what did happen with what might have happened. Or when they place an event in a familiar category, such as renaissance, revolution, or restoration, they are suggesting comparison with other historic events so categorized. These types of comparative history can be as illuminating as the more conscious or formal ones. In the following essay some of these more informal comparisons are employed to cast light on the outcome of American Reconstruction.

THE RUINS OF TWO GREAT FAILURES dominate the landscape of American history. They stand close together in the middle distance, back to back, but separate and distinct. One is the ruins of the Confederacy, the South's failure to gain independence. The other is the ruins of Reconstruction, the North's failure to solve the problem of the black people's place in American life. The South's failure was the North's success and vice versa. Each can be and, of course, has been described by its opponents as simply the wreckage wrought in preventing acknowledged wrong. But from the standpoint of their supporters and champions there can be no doubt that each of these ruins represents a great American failure.

They stand out all the more conspicuously on the historical landscape because of their unique character. Failures and defeats on the grand scale are notoriously exceptional and uncharacteristic in the American experience. And so far, at least until very recent years, these two stand as the only instances of striking significance. They are surrounded by monuments of success, victory, and continuity, features far more familiar to the American eye. Some of these monuments—the Revolution, the Constitution, the two-party system, the parties themselves, the basic economic institutions, all still live and going concerns—are much older than the two historic ruins. This side of them in the foreground of American history stand more recent monuments in the traditional success style of the American Way, marred only somewhat by late twentieth-century exceptions. But the middle distance is still dominated by the two great historic failures.

The unavoidable responsibility of the historian is to explain these failures. But the strangeness and un-American character of failure seems to have inhibited or warped the fulfillment of the task. One evasive strategy of historians of the Confederacy has been first to acknowledge more or less candidly that the movement was misguided and perhaps destined to fail from the start and even to admit tacitly that it was best for all concerned in the long run that it did fail. But then to dwell at length on the high moments, the ephemeral triumphs, the selfless devotion, the

nobility of leadership, and the hardships and suffering of the participants. Essentially romantic, the lost-cause approach emphasized the glory and tragedy without too much attention to causes and consequences. Recent historians of the Confederacy have been addressing themselves more and more to the causes of failure and less to the ephemeral triumphs. But for a long time the South's refusal to face up to its own defeat contributed to the North's failure in accounting for the sequel to Appomattox.

Historians of Reconstruction have played variations on these Confederate themes without exactly duplicating the order or the mood. For a long time they too started with the assumption that the movement was misconceived and doomed to failure from inception and that, all things considered, it was just as well that it did fail. Since failure was regarded as both inevitable and fortunate, the problem of explaining it did not appear very challenging. With these more or less common assumptions, historians of the old school divided mainly on how they distributed their sympathy and admiration among the victims—the humble freedmen, the misguided idealists, the bumbling Presidents, or the long-suffering Southern whites—and on their distribution of blame among villains—Radical Republicans, Carpetbaggers, Scalawags, or black freedmen. They were in substantial agreement, however, in their homage to the tragic muse. Whether the spotlight was focused on the victims or the villains, the overriding preoccupation was with tragedy. The best seller on the subject was entitled *The Tragic Era*, by Claude Bowers. But whether as a cause for satisfaction or lament, there was little equivocation about the verdict of failure.

In the last few decades a shift has occurred in the common assumptions and preoccupations about Reconstruction historians. Failure is no longer regarded as inevitable or complete, the movement as misconceived, or the outcome as fortunate. On all these matters there has occurred a reversal of attitude. The treatment is still fundamentally tragic, but the reading of the tragedy has changed. The tragedy was not that a misguided movement had caused so much unnecessary suffering, but that a noble experiment had come so near fulfillment and failed. Furthermore,

the impact of failure itself has been blunted and the historical problem of explanation shelved by a new emphasis on the positive accomplishments of Reconstruction.

Much of the attention of revisionists has been focused on correcting the excessively negative picture painted by the old school and exposing the injustice and crudity of the stereotypes. New studies have pictured the old abolitionists as persevering champions of the freedmen. The collective portrait of the Radical Republican congressmen that emerges from revisionist biographies and monographs is one of high-minded idealists who rose above selfish political and economic interests. Studies of Northern teachers and preachers who went to the South on missionary enterprises stress their seriousness of purpose and the devotion and fearless dedication of their service. Carpetbaggers of vision and courageous statesmanship have been sympathetically portrayed. Scalawags of the new historiography appear to derive either from wealthy Southern aristocrats or from sturdy Jacksonian yeomen, depending on one's school of revisionism or one's technique of quantification. Among black leaders and statesmen revisionists have discovered a gratifying amount of talent, ability, and vision. Swindlers, grafters, and corruption have been discounted by comparison with contemporaneous fraud and graft in Northern states. The result of all this has been a wholesale decimation of stock figures in the demonology of Reconstruction.

Praiseworthy achievements of Radical Reconstruction include not only the legislative and constitutional foundations for black citizenship, franchise, and civil rights, but the training and preparation of freedmen for political action. Radical state governments are also justly credited with framing laudable and often durable state constitutions and law codes, with providing relief and welfare for the distressed, with establishing public schools, and with inaugurating new public services. Scholars have pronounced the freedmen's economic progress during Reconstruction, given their low starting point, a tremendous success and enumerated with pride their gains in land and capital. Others have pointed out the general progress of the South in economic recuperation and growth. The emphasis here, as in so many other

areas of revisionist history, is not on failures but on the successes of Reconstruction.

For this and other services of the revisionists we should be duly grateful. So successful have the revisionists of the 1960s and their followers been that they have virtually wiped the revisions of the 1900s and 1930s off the map. This is progress, as progress is measured in historiography, but a little more of it and we will arrive back at that tragic spring when lilacs last in dooryard bloomed—April, 1865.

The achievements of the revisionists are impressive. But as a contribution to explaining the failure of Reconstruction they tend rather to complicate than to solve the enigma. For if, as they have demonstrated, the statesmanship of the Radicals was all that inspired and their motivation all that pure, if the freedmen were so responsive and capably led, if government by the Scalawag-Carpetbagger-freedmen coalition was all that constructive, and if the opposition were indeed headed by a misfit in the White House who was out of touch with the electorate, then success would seem more indicated than failure. The paradox reminds me of the first historical problem I confronted as a boy. It went something like this: If Marse Robert was all that noble and intrepid, if Stonewall was all that indomitable and fast on his feet, if Jeb Stuart was all that gallant and dashing, and if God was on our side, then why the hell did we *lose* that war?

This is not to write off the accomplishments of the revisionists. I hope the record is clear that I have aided and abetted and egged them on, presumed to teach some of them, read many of their manuscripts and all their monographs, praised what I could and encouraged when I could. What they did in the main much needed doing. I do believe that they have produced many works with better prospects of durability than the school of the 1900s or that of the 1930s.

I am more interested in what comes next and what problems remain unsolved. This brings me back to the old problem of failure. As I have remarked earlier, Americans have rather a thing about failure—about confronting it, confessing it, and accepting it, as well as about explaining it. It is noteworthy that the

great bulk of work done by the revisionists has been on Andrew Johnson's administration, not on the two Grant administrations, that is, on the period where, paradoxically, the ephemeral successes and triumphs multiplied, not the period of twice that length when the failures piled up or became unavoidably conspicuous. This may be mere coincidence, but my guess is that it is more than that. Another tendency might be called the deferred success approach, the justification (or dismissal) of failure in the First Reconstruction on the ground that it prepared the way for success in the Second Reconstruction, or maybe a Third yet to come. Thus one historian writes that the failures of the First Reconstruction diminish to insignificance in comparison with successes of the Second in advancing equal civil and political rights for blacks and promise of further progress to come. This is a generational shift of the burden of responsibility. But it must be recognized as essentially another strategy of evasion.

One habit of mind that has complicated American ways of dealing with failure; apart from a relative unfamiliarity with the experience, has been the isolation of American history from comparative reference. Comparisons have indeed been used with regard to Reconstruction, but they have been internalized. Lacking foreign comparisons, or indifferent to them, Americans have turned inward to compare professed ideals with actual practice. This has encouraged a strong moralistic tendency in our historical writing and controversy. Since the nation has advertised a commitment to some very lofty ideals and principles, the contrast between performance and principle has always been painful, and the application of absolute and abstract standards of judgment often sets up moral disturbance that clouds issues and distorts perspectives.

For more realistic perspective on the American experience of Reconstruction we need to turn to comparison with foreign experiences, including but not limited to those of the other twenty-odd slave societies in the New World that went through the post-emancipation ordeal. To avoid repetition, since I have sampled those comparisons before, I must be content with summarizing conclusions of the best informed authorities. The most

important finding is that wherever slavery was widespread, emancipation was invariably followed by resort to drastic measures, including use of force, to put the freedmen back to work. The old masters of the American South were by no means alone in resorting to black codes and chain gangs. Old masters everywhere—West Indies, Latin America, Africa, Asia—took forceable steps to drive the freedmen back to work.

Furthermore, in those lands undergoing emancipation where the process of reconstruction was subject to outside control or supervision, whether from the crown, the mother country, an imperial or metropolitan administration, or as in the South the federal government under Northern control, such authorities proved quite ineffective in protecting the lives and rights of the emancipated. The universality of failure by authorities and oppression by old masters does not excuse or justify either the governments or the masters anywhere—especially not a government that had just fought a bloody civil war in the name of freedom. Reconstruction left a lasting blot on the American conscience and national history and continues to breed moral recrimination between regions and races. But at least the comparative context removes the stigma of uniqueness and places moral issues in a broader setting. That, I believe, is a legitimate use of history—not only to recover the past but to enable us to live with it.

Another type of comparison has often been used in interpreting Reconstruction, but not always with sufficient caution. To place a historical event in a category of events is to make a comparison. Thus, when Reconstruction is spoken of as a revolution, we are compelled to think of it in comparison with other revolutions. If we reserve the term "revolution" for the classic phenomena of England in the seventeenth century, America and France in the eighteenth century, and Russia and China in the twentieth century, then it is certainly misused when applied to the American Reconstruction of the nineteenth century. For in the last instance there were no mass executions, no class liquidations. No heads rolled. There were constitutional changes, to be sure, but they were insignificant compared with those in En-

gland, France, Russia, and China, and they were mainly effected through constitutional forms. The South's so-called Bourbons or Redeemers did not become proscribed and outlawed émigrés. They remained at home, retained their estates, took over from the ephemeral radical governments, and after their so-called counter-revolution they did not find it necessary to make very drastic changes in the system left them by the so-called revolution. All things considered, it would be better to abandon both the concept of revolution and that of counter-revolution in writing of Reconstruction as it *was*.

But in writing of what it *might* have been, what many hoped it would be, and of why Reconstruction failed, the concept of revolution seems indispensable. It should be fairly obvious that in order to succeed with the professed aims of full civil rights, equality, and justice for the freedmen, Reconstruction would have had to go much further in the way of revolutionary measures than it ever did. Even then it might have failed, for revolutions are not invariably successful nor are their innovations always lasting. It is not very helpful to prescribe revolution in the abstract without specifying the revolutionary program. Nor is it very realistic to imagine a revolutionary program without regard to the nature of the party and the people who would carry it out and the historical context in which they would have worked. Only by that means can we test the hypothesis that the failure of Reconstruction is to be explained by the lack of revolutionary measures.

One revolutionary measure, a favorite for the speculation over a century, is the confiscation of rebel estates and redistribution of them among the freedmen. This deserves serious consideration for a number of reasons. In the first place such a proposal was seriously made and had an able and powerful advocate in Thaddeus Stevens. The Stevens plan called for the confiscation of all rebel estates over \$10,000 or over 200 acres. He estimated that this would result in the taking over of some 394 million out of 465 million acres in the rebel states. The redistribution would give 40 acres to each adult male freedman. This would take 40 million acres, and the remaining 254 million would be sold to the

highest bidder and the proceeds allocated to pensions for Union veterans, damages and reparations, and enough left to retire three-quarters of the national debt. The plan was defeated, of course, but it has had later advocates such as W. E. B. Du Bois and various other Marxists.

Americans need no Marxist precedents, however, for there was ample precedent for the wholesale confiscation of the estates of disloyal elements of the population in the treatment of Tories during the American Revolution, and there was a spectacular contemporary example abroad in the distribution of some of the confiscated lands to emancipated serfs by the Czar of All the Russias in 1861. The American freedmen surely had as great a moral claim on the land on which they had toiled for 250 years. Furthermore if the federal government could overcome the legal and constitutional problems of confiscating the slave property of the planters, it surely could have justified confiscating their landed property as well. The planters would have objected strenuously, of course, but they would have been powerless to prevent the action had Congress been determined. Let us assume, then, that the Stevens Land Confiscation Bill actually passed, that President Ben Wade signed it in the White House after President Johnson's removal by successful impeachment, and that the Fortieth Congress then brought to bear all its experience and wisdom in refining the legislation and President Wade marshalled the best talents for administering the land act. What would have been the consequences for the outcome of Reconstruction? Would this have converted a failure into a reasonable success?

No one can possibly say for sure, of course. What one *can* describe with some assurance, however, is the record of the same federal government, the same Congresses under the control of the same party in administering and distributing public lands elsewhere. Again we resort to the comparative approach, though this time the comparisons are drawn from domestic rather than foreign instances. The Reconstruction period coincided with the great era of public land distribution by the federal government according to the provisions of the Homestead Act of 1862 and

other federal land laws placed on the books between 1862 and 1878. The public domain available for distribution under the Homestead and subsequent acts amounted to some 1,048,000,000 acres, more than half the total area of the nation and more than two and a half times the 394 million acres of confiscated rebel estates that would have been added to the public domain by the Stevens Act. This fabulous opportunity, without precedent in history, appeared to be the fruition of the American dream, the most cherished dream of reformers—free land for those who tilled the land.

What came of that dream in the administration of the Homestead Act is a matter of public record. We know that as things turned out the homesteaders got short shrift and proved to be the least favored of the various groups attracted to the western lands. The land-grant railroads alone got four times as much land as the homesteaders in the first four decades of the Homestead Act. In that period 84 percent of the new farms brought under cultivation were purchased or subdivided from larger holdings. Of the patents actually granted to homesteaders a great number were handed to pawns of speculators and monopolists, so that in all probability little more than one-tenth of the new farms were free in the homestead sense. Furthermore, the bona fide homesteader was typically shunted off into the poorest land and least desirable tracts, while the speculators pre-empted tracts closest to settlement and transportation and held them for resale at prices beyond the means of the class the Homestead Act was presumably designed to help. It is the opinion of Fred Shannon that, "In its operation the Homestead Act could hardly have defeated the hopes of the [land-reform] enthusiasts . . . more completely if the makers had drafted it with that purpose uppermost in mind."

While many of the same people who drafted and administered the Homestead Act for the West would in all probability have drafted and administered the Stevens Act for the South, it is only fair to remember that the Western land problem was complicated by variables absent from the Southern picture—granting that the latter had its own complications. But at least

the South lay within the humid, forested longitudes, conditions that were far more familiar to Eastern lawmakers than Walter Webb's Great Plains, and also the rebel estates provided a larger proportion of arable land, much more conveniently located in relation to the prospective homesteaders. Because of these advantages and the idealism said to have motivated Radicals in their dealings with freedmen (however inoperative it was in the same men's dealings with Western homesteaders) it is possible that the Stevens Act would have had a happier history than the Homestead Act and that the black freedmen would have actually entered into the promised land, peacefully and cheerfully, each one secure in the possession of his forty acres. And let us throw in an army mule apiece for good measure.

That outcome is conceivable and one would hope even probable. But in calculating the degree of probability one is forced to take into account certain other conditioning and relevant factors in addition to the western homestead experience. For one thing the Stevens Act as detailed by the Pennsylvania Radical set aside nine-tenths of the 394 million acres of confiscated rebel land for sale to the highest bidder—an open invitation to the speculator and monopolist. It is possible that these types might have behaved toward the black homesteaders of the South in much the same way they behaved toward the white homesteader in the West. If so the probability of success for the philanthropic part of the Stevens Act is appreciably diminished.

Prospects of success for the Stevens Act are also illuminated by the history of a Southern Homestead Act that actually *was* adopted by Congress. There were 47,700,000 acres of public land in five of the Confederate states in 1861, more than the amount of rebel estates set aside for freedmen by the hypothetical Stevens Act. In 1866 the Radicals pushed through a drastic bill applying exclusively to these lands, reserving them to homesteaders at 80 acres per holding, and favoring freedmen by excluding ex-Confederates from homesteading privileges. These lands were generally less accessible and less desirable than those of confiscated estates might have been, and as in the case of the Western act no provision was made for furnishing credit and

transportation to homesteaders. These conditions probably explain why extremely few blacks seized upon this opportunity to double the elusive 40 acres. In that respect the act was a failure and, at any rate, Congress reversed the policy in 1876 and threw open this rich Southern empire to unrestricted speculation. There ensued a scramble of monopolists that matched any land rush of the Wild West, and the freedmen were thrust aside and forgotten. Admittedly this episode offers further discouragement for the chances of the revolutionary Stevens Act.

Determined revolutionists are not disheartened by reverses, however. They merely press forward with more heroic measures. Perhaps Thaddeus Stevens was not revolutionary enough. There is the problem of the rebel resistance to Radical Reconstruction and federal authority in the defeated states. My own researches have impressed me deeply with the seriousness of this resistance. It was often open, defiant, organized, and effective. White Southerners repeatedly insulted, persecuted, and sometimes murdered federal officials, army officers included. They scoffed at the law and ridiculed the courts. They did everything to black citizens the law forbade their doing and invented mistreatments that law never thought of. How any self-respecting government put up with such defiance unless, indeed, it was at least subliminally sympathetic with the resistance, it is difficult to understand. With overwhelming power in its hands, even an ordinary respectable non-revolutionary government could have done better than this.

Let me remind you, however, that this is a revolutionary program that we are pursuing. Here Thad Stevens lets us down. He raises the question whether any Republican, Senator Charles Sumner included, really deserved the name "Radical." It is true that his rhetoric against the "proud, bloated, and defiant rebels" was violent enough, that he promised to "startle feeble minds and shake weak nerves," that he ridiculed "the prim conservatives, the snobs, and the male waiting maids in Congress," that he asked, "How can republican institutions, free schools, free churches . . . exist in a mingled community of nabobs and serfs," and that he thundered the promise to "drive her nobility into exile," or worse. But when it came right down to it he con-

fessed that he "never desired bloody punishments to any extent." This admission of bourgeois softness proves that Stevens has exhausted his usefulness as a guide to revolutionary solutions.

It is becoming a bit tiresome (and it is entirely unnecessary) to be flanked on the left in speculative audacity. Armchair bloodbaths can be conducted with impunity by anyone, even a professor emeritus. Let us then pursue the logic of the revolutionary process on past Stevens and Sumner, past the Old Left and the New Left, and out to the wild blue—or rather infra-red—yonder. Let us embrace in our revolutionary program, along with the Stevens Act, an act for the liquidation of the enemy class. There is ample precedent for this in the history of revolutions. Even the American Revolution drove the Tories into exile. Mass deportation, considering the merchant marine's state of total disrepair in 1865, is unfortunately not a practicable option. That leaves available only the messier alternatives. It is true that the Alaska purchase from Russia made providentially available an American Siberia in 1867, but that would take care of relatively few, and again there is the tedious problem of transportation. The numbers are formidable, for the counter-revolutionary resistance extended beyond the planter class through a very large percentage of Southern whites. A few hundred thousand Northern Copperheads can be handled in concentration camps, but in Dixie harsher measures are indicated. Let no true revolutionary blanch at the implications. Remember that we must be cruel in order to be kind, that we are the social engineers of the future, that we are forestalling future bloodbaths, race riots, and relieving our Northern metropolitan friends of problems that trouble their thoughts and for a time threatened to destroy their cities. If our work is bloody our conscience is clear, and we do all that we do—compassionately.

Having liquidated the white resistance down to the last unregenerate lord of the lash and the last bed-sheeted Ku Kluxer, let us proceed unencumbered to build the true Radical Reconstruction. We will find it expedient to import managerial talent in large numbers to replace the liquidated white resistance, and place them in charge of agriculture, industry, railroads, and

mines. They will doubtless come from the same states the carpet-baggers hailed from, but they must be carefully screened to eliminate the more objectionable types and certified as non-racists and non-Copperheads. We will also establish a permanent Freedmen's Bureau, perhaps modeled on the Indian Bureau, and place in command of it the very finest talent. If not General O. O. Howard, perhaps we can get the nomination of Frederick Douglass through a miraculously radicalized U.S. Senate, after a radicalized U. S. Grant had executed a Pride's Purge of half the members.

After these Draconian, Cromwellian, Stalinist measures had removed all resistance and interference from Southern and Northern racists and Kluxers and nightriders, silenced all Confederate orators, and shut down the last obstructionist press, the revolutionists should have had a perfectly free hand. What then would have been the consequences for fulfillment of Reconstruction purposes? Would these additional measures have converted failure into success? One would surely hope so after paying such a bloody price.

But again, no one can say for sure. And again we turn to the comparative method for possible illumination, I hope that I am sufficiently alert to the dangers of these comparisons. I realize that no analogy is complete, that no two historical events are identical, and that the risks of drawing conclusions by such reasoning are most formidable. I have tried to guard against such risks and to be very tentative about drawing conclusions, but I suspect I have already outraged respected historians by mentioning Grant in the same breath with Cromwell or Stalin. Nevertheless I shall take heart and venture one last excursion into the treacherous field of comparative or counterfactual history.

Once again the comparison is close to home and contemporaneous with the Reconstruction period. Moreover, the same electorates, the same congressmen, the identical presidents and judiciary, the same editorial chorus and clerical censors are involved in the one as in the other—one cast for two dramas. The second drama also has as its plot the story of reformers using the federal government to bring justice and rights and decent lives

to men of color. This time the theater is in the West instead of the South and the colored minority is red instead of black. Since we have "controlled the variable" (as the quantifiers say) of Confederate slave owners' resistance in the South—with a regrettable amount of bloodshed to be sure—the two theaters are more readily comparable. For while the reformers in the West had their own problems, they were not encumbered by die-hard Confederate reactionaries, former owners and masters of the red people, and not dogged at every step by determined and desperate nightriders. In these respects they had a relatively free hand.

The personnel and policies of the white guardians of the blacks and the white guardians of the reds were often interchangeable. General W. T. Sherman moved from command of the Southern District to command of the Western District in 1867, from the final arbiter of the black freedman's destiny to final arbiter of the redskin's fate. Many other military officers including General O. O. Howard moved back and forth from South to West. While General Howard, who had been head of the Freedmen's Bureau, was serving as president of an all-black Howard University in 1872 he was dispatched by Grant to conclude a treaty with the Apaches; in 1874 he was placed in command of the Department of Columbia, and in 1877 he led a punitive expedition against the Nez Perce Indians. Black regiments served in West and South under the same white officers. In the educational field Samuel Armstrong of Hampton Institute, Booker Washington's mentor and model, took Richard Henry Pratt, the great Indian educator, as disciple and assistant, and the two of them integrated and taught black and red students at Hampton. Later Pratt took the Armstrong-Booker Washington gospel to Indian schools. The same missionaries, preachers, editors, and reformers often concerned themselves with the problems and destinies of both colored minorities.

What can be said, in view of the relatively free hand they had in the West, of the performance of the American reformers toward the Indian, as compared with their performance toward the Negro, when they did not have the free hand I have imagined for them? Was it any better? As a matter of fact the two

problems were solved in much the same way. The red man like the black man was given to understand that the white man's will was supreme, that he had few rights the white man was bound to respect. He was promised land and the land was taken away. He was promised integration and then segregated, even more completely than the black man. He was degraded, exploited, humiliated, and because he offered more resistance he was cut down ruthlessly by military force or vigilante action. Idealists like Richard Henry Pratt who operated in both South and West were as frustrated in their efforts for red man as they were with the black man. White supremacy forces were as triumphant over Eastern "Indian lovers" in Arizona and Colorado as they were over Northern "nigger lovers" in Mississippi and Alabama.

But this comparison is an outrage against established compartmentalizations of historical thought, a preposterous violation of respected conventions. Everyone knows what a "good Indian" was. And what but confusion of the undergraduate mind can possibly come from comparing Colorado and Alabama? I apologize for this travesty against sound canons of the profession. Nevertheless, I confess that these irresponsible speculations have raised such doubts in the mind of one dedicated revolutionary arm-chair ultra-radical as to palsy his hand and sickly over with the pale cast of thought the native hue of resolution. Almost am I persuaded to countermand belatedly the order for the Confederate liquidation.

I owe further apologies. Having invited you to consider the causes of the failure of Reconstruction, I have produced nothing but negative results. While applauding the revisionists for their excellent work, I have questioned the emphasis on the idealism and sincerity of the Radicals and their ephemeral triumphs as an adequate indication of their ultimate failure. In the second place, I have raised doubts about moralistic and uniquely American explanations for post-emancipation failure in the protection of freedmen on the ground that much the same pattern of forced labor occurred everywhere in the world as a sequel to abolition. Thirdly, having embraced the Stevens policy of rebel land con-

fiscation and redistribution, I am forced to admit that contemporaneous experience with federal administration of public lands discourages optimism about the freedman's chances. And finally, after eliminating Confederate resistance with bloody measures I am overcome with doubts, caused by belated reflections on the fate of the poor red man, that even these drastic steps would ensure success. With the candor I have urged upon other historians I am obliged to confess a failure of my own, the failure to find a satisfactory explanation for the failure of Reconstruction.

The problem remains unsolved. The assignment still goes begging. It deserves high priority among the unfinished tasks of American historiography. Those who next undertake the task will not, I hope, rely too uncritically on the received ideas, the shared moral convictions and political values of their own time to sanction their premises. They should give scrupulous attention to uniquely American conditions, but remember that the post-emancipation problem they attack was not unique to America. They may well profit from consideration of allegedly idyllic race relations on happy islands in the Caribbean sun, but remember that their home problem was envired by Protestant Anglo-American institutions of a temperate zone unblessed by Pope or tropical sun. They should give due weight to constitutional issues without fruitlessly pining for an English-type constitution to deal with states' rights, a Russian-type Czar to distribute land among the emancipated, or a Soviet-type commissar of security to liquidate mass resistance.

I hope those who accept this challenge will not take these reflections as the counsel of despair, or as intimation that Reconstruction was doomed to failure, or that our ancestors might not have done better by their experiment than they actually did. Nor should other historians be discouraged from revolutionary speculations by the inconclusive results of my own. Let them be as far-out left as is currently fashionable. But in the transports of revolutionary imaginings, arm-chair edicts, and dreams of glory, they would do well to keep in mind the human materials and the historic context of their problem. If they do this, they will face up to the fact that nineteenth-century Americans (and some

in the twentieth century as well) were fatefully stuck with a perverse mystique of squatter sovereignty. The tenets of this perversion of the democratic dogma, this squatter sovereignty, were that whatever the law or the Constitution or the Supreme Court or world opinion or moral codes said to the contrary notwithstanding, the will of the dominant white majority would prevail. And where whites were not in the majority it would prevail anyway. How it was, and how early, we got stuck with a commitment to this caricature of democracy is a long story, a very long story, and the story did not begin in 1865, and the commitment was not confined to the South.

IV

HISTORY AND FICTION

For the last century or more American historians of the academic sort have tended to put distance between themselves and literary folk. The amount of distance has varied depending on the seriousness with which the historians happened to be stressing their aspirations as scientists. The more scientific, the more distance. Interludes of cordiality, largely sponsored by historians of journalistic background or sympathies, have occurred. Indeed an organization to foster the waning affinity still exists. Of late, however, the chill of scientific exclusiveness has increased and the dissociation has widened. Among the more exclusionist are some professionals who are uncomfortable with the very expression "historical literature," or the admission that they share with literary craftsmen the use of narrative, the employment of metaphor, or any serious concern with the quality of their prose.

The theme running through the pieces in this section of the book is a concern that historians may allow themselves to be deprived of benefits they could well derive from exploring the interests, subjects, problems, and techniques they share with