

AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH: ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND KARL MARX AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF SILENCE

READING *THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS* AND *THE ADDRESS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION TO PRESIDENT JOHNSON*¹

I. LINCOLN AND MARX

On the occasion of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln by John Wilkes Booth the pro-slavery terrorist and his band of Southern slave-power conspirators Karl Marx wrote an obituary published as *The Address from the International Working Men's Association to President Johnson*.² In part, this eulogy reads:

It is not our part to call words of sorrow and horror, while the heart of two worlds heaves with emotion. Even the sycophants who, year after year, and day by day, stick to their Sisyphus work of morally assassinating Abraham Lincoln, and the great Republic he headed, stand now aghast at this universal outburst of popular feeling, and rival with each other to strew rhetorical flowers on his open grave. They have now at last found out that he was a man, neither to be browbeaten by adversity, nor intoxicated by success, inflexibly pressing on to his great goal, never compromising it by blind haste, slowly maturing his steps, never retracing them, carried away by no surge of popular favour, disheartened by no slackening of the popular pulse, tempering stern acts by the gleams of a kind heart, illuminating scenes dark with passion by the smile of humour, doing his titanic work as humbly and homely as Heaven-born rulers do little things with the grandiloquence of pomp and state; in one word, one of the rare men who succeed in becoming great, without ceasing to be good. Such,

¹ A special thanks to Rob Petersen for making me watch the TV series *Gettysburg* a number of years ago. To this event I owe an intellectual interest as exciting as the many I had as an activist over more than three decades. He also allowed me access to his library and the *Collected Works of Marx and Engels* as part of hospitality in his home. Quintin Combrink and Gavin Silber provided research assistance. And, as always Gavin was a critical reader along with Dalli Weyers. Jack Lewis insisted that I complete the paper and the Open Society Institute's Global Fellowship programme allows me to do this work.

² For convenience, *The Address from the International Working men's Association to President Johnson* will be referred to as *The Address to President Johnson*

indeed, was the modesty of this great and good man, that the world only discovered him a hero after he had fallen a martyr.³

In Marx one can hear an echo in later obituaries, the great texts of mourning friends and comrades in struggle. The words of philosopher Jacques Derrida in his collected obituaries for his friends and colleagues from Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault to Gilles Deleuze and Paul de Man express the combination of mourning and almost unbounded respect. Most of these men were Derrida's friends and ideological opponents. At De Man's memorial service, he said: "Speaking is impossible but so too would be silence or absence or a refusal to share one's sadness".⁴

Respect for Lincoln "a man, neither to be browbeaten by adversity, nor intoxicated by success" is memorialised for future generations by one of the greatest intellects of all times – Marx. The love for an elder, father or brother who had to admonish both loved ones and opponents is a common recognition by all who knew Lincoln as a family member, friend, colleague, opponent, comrade or even enemies. Tempering "stern acts with the gleam of a kind heart" and illuminating scenes dark with passion by the smile of humour", "one of the rare men who succeed in becoming great without ceasing to be good" as Marx writes of Lincoln is repeated by one of his great contemporary biographers Doris Kearns Goodwin.

She writes: "His success in dealing with the strong egos of the men in his cabinet suggests that in the hands of a truly great politician the qualities we associate with decency and morality—kindness, sensitivity, compassion, honesty and empathy—can also be impressive political resources."⁵ Was Marx's appreciation of Lincoln shared by contemporary scholars a coincidence?

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Two men, assumed over time by individuals, movements for change and governments to be ideological and social adversaries, are the subject of this discussion. I chose *The Gettysburg Address*, the first major public speech by Abraham Lincoln after the final *Emancipation Proclamation*, as my subject of discussion. In its literary construction, historical and political significance, *The Gettysburg Address* begged a comparison with *The Communist Manifesto*. The fact that Lincoln and Marx were contemporaries and leaders with complex personalities strengthened this comparison.

In the course of constructing this discussion, my aim changed. The comparison with *The Communist Manifesto* (though still valid) is no longer a part this discussion because reading on the American Civil War revealed a very different and rich vein that moved my imagination.

Marx followed the Civil War in all possible detail for that time through reading newspapers, speeches and documents, as well as correspondence with soldiers such as his friend Joseph Weydemeyer. Together with Friedrich Engels, they analysed rigorously, wrote lyrically and engaged passionately as activists against what they called the “pro-slavery rebellion” of the American South. Their analysis and practice of class, race and social revolution was transformed by the Civil War.⁶

Instead of a comparison with *The Communist Manifesto*, I examine the direct relationship between Lincoln and Marx during the Civil War. Their relationship was not a personal one but a minor political collaboration across the Atlantic with the participation

⁶ The impact of the pro-slavery revolt on the theoretical understanding of Marx and Engels is discussed below. For now a single footnote will suffice. In *Capital Volume 1* there are more references to the American Civil War than to the French Revolution and none to the Revolutions of 1848. Marx followed the United States because he understood the centrality of its emergence as a capitalist power. In a footnote referring to the Civil War he writes: “An American revolution and a universal crisis were needed in order that working girls, who spin for the whole world might learn to sew.” His theoretical argument based on a reading that the cotton crisis and unemployment caused by the American Civil War gave working “women...sufficient leisure to give their infants the breast, instead of poisoning them with ‘Godfrey’s Cordial’ (an opiate)... But from this we see how capital, for the purposes of its self-valorization, has usurped the family labour necessary for consumption.” pp517-18

of Friedrich Engels in the prosecution of the Union's war aims. The Lincoln and Marx collaboration despite its fleeting and impersonal nature is imbued with immense political, historical and theoretical significance that can illuminate contemporary struggles for democracy, freedom, equality, dignity and social justice.

“PICTURE A WORLD” – SLAVERY AND INEQUALITY

Lincoln, Marx and their intersecting relationships to the revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cannot be understood without first speaking of colonialism, slavery, class oppression, gender inequality and racial domination. Today's conversation is an attempt to open this discussion from the vantage point of contemporary struggles for local and global citizenship. My impoverished conversation is limited to a miniscule part of their vast works on the American Revolution and Civil War not readily available, nor easily accessible.⁷ Their engagement in such struggles was located in the then world's first and lone democratic Republic struggle for survival in a time of slavery and bondage.⁸ In the words of Adam Hochschild:

Picture a world in which the vast majority of people are prisoners. Most of them have known no other way of life. They are not free to live or go where they want. They plant, cultivate and harvest most of the earth's major crops. They earn no money from their labor. Their work often lasts twelve or fourteen hours a day. Many are subject to cruel whippings or other punishments if they do not work hard enough. They die young. They are not chained or bound most of the time but they are in bondage, part of a global economy based on forced labor. Such a world would, of course, be unthinkable today.”⁹

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⁸ The United States was the only Republican government based on universal (predominantly white) male suffrage and the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. The French Revolution now had an Empire ruled by a reactionary Louis Napoleon. The aristocracy and anti-Enlightenment social forces had been reinforced throughout Europe and they were openly in solidarity with the South.

⁹ Hochschild, A. *Bury The Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery*

The world of master and slave in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries encompassed the cruel and barbaric traffic in people from Africa. This was marked by the capture and enslavement of African children, men and women with assault, murder, rape, illness and death as their grim companions. Class exploitation located in colonial conquests was alloyed by a brutal regime of racial subordination and degradation.

Hochschild contends that in the Caribbean and the colonies of North-America (later the United States of America), “the vast majority of people” so transported were “prisoners”. This is an understatement. They were slaves with no freedom, no right to life, movement, speech or personhood. In short, slaves were deprived of all human dignity.

In his analysis of “The Working Day” in *Capital*, Marx describes slavery as the reckless sacrifice of “Negro life” and the production of “fabulous wealth” in a trade that has “engulfed millions of the African race”. He argues: “The slave-owner buys his worker in the same way he buys a horse. If he loses his slave, he loses a piece of capital, which he must replace by fresh expenditure on the slave market.”¹⁰

For Marx and Engels, slavery was not simply a cruelty condemned through abstraction. It affected people from Africa and they demonstrated the hypocrisy of Europeans who disguised its function as a system of capital accumulation. Marx maintained that slavery in Roman law reduced a person “an *instrument vocale* (an instrument with a voice) as opposed to an animal which is an *instrument semi-vocale* (a semi-mute instrument) or a lifeless implement classified as *instrument mutum* (a mute instrument).¹¹

With the development of capitalist production during the period of manufacture, the public opinion of Europe lost its last remnant of shame and conscience. The nations bragged cynically of every infamy that served

¹⁰ p377

¹¹ p303

them as a means to the accumulation of capital... the privilege of being allowed to ply the slave trade... [from] Africa... Liverpool grew fat on the basis of the slave trade. This was its method of primitive accumulation.

While the cotton-industry introduced child-slavery into England, in the United States, it gave the impulse for the transformation of the earlier, more or less patriarchal slavery system into a system of commercial exploitation. In fact the veiled-slavery of the wage-labourers in England needed the unqualified slavery of the New World as its pedestal.¹²

The combination of slavery based on commercial exploitation and wage labour would inform both their theory and practice exposing it as a global system that linked four continents Europe, North-America, Latin America and Africa as the source of trade in human beings. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, colonialism, capital accumulation and capitalism would be partly based on slaves from Africa.

On 16 June 1858, Lincoln would argue that:

The Republicans inculcate, with whatever ability they can, that the negro is a man; that his bondage is cruelly wrong, and that the field of his oppression ought not to be enlarged. The Democrats deny his manhood; deny, or dwarf to insignificance, the wrong of his bondage, so far as possible, crush all sympathy for him, and cultivate hatred and disgust against him... and call the infinite outspreading of his bondage “a sacred right of self-government.”

[They have] done all in [their] power to reduce the whole question of slavery to one of a mere *right of property*...¹³

Lincoln and Marx both illustrated a progressive understanding of the context of slavery, the system, its brutality and the struggles against it.

¹² p924-5

¹³ [racial equality]

Reading Lincoln's *The Gettysburg Address* and *The Address to President Johnson*, I argue two propositions: first, the American Civil War was fought within the law on the basis and mainly within the limits of its Constitution to preserve freedom, equality and republican government and that it achieved revolutionary objectives as a consequence of unparalleled violence with the mobilisation of public opinion. What commenced as a counter-revolution against the aims of the American Revolution in 1776, its revolutionary anti-colonial Declaration of Independence and its human rights based Constitution became a revolution that extended its gains by abolishing slavery. The Constitution and Declaration of Independence constituted the banner that Lincoln used to prosecute the war with the aim first to maintain the Union and later to abolish slavery.

Second, Lincoln and Marx understood that this war had significant global implications and that victory required building a global moral consensus for the Union. Both of them were actors in the construction of the global moral consensus to end slavery and establish freedom in the United States of America.

The struggles of Lydia a woman slave from North Carolina and Dredd Scott a slave from Missouri are instructive of the issues that lay at the heart of the most brutal war fought on the soil of the United States of America.

LYDIA – THE SLAVE OF ELIZABETH JONES

Lydia was the slave of Elizabeth Jones of North Carolina who had hired her for a year to a master named John Mann. In 1829, the Supreme Court of the Slave State heard that Mann had assaulted Lydia for a minor infraction. When she attempted to escape during the assault, the slave-owner shot and wounded her. He was indicted and tried by a jury of his peers – twelve white men who found him guilty of battery. Lydia was regarded as a person upon whom a slave-owner could not exercise violence. Jones appealed the decision of that Court to the Supreme Court of North Carolina.¹⁴

¹⁴ *The State v. John Mann*. From Chowan.13 N.C. 263 (1829)

Justice Thomas Ruffin of that Court characterised the legal question as “whether a cruel and unreasonable battery on a slave, by the hirer, is indictable”. In an opinion supporting the master, Judge Ruffin rejected the argument that a slave is “special property”, part human and part property allowing a slave to be punished in the a parent punishes a child. Instead, he argued:

The difference is that which exists between freedom and slavery--and a greater cannot be imagined. In the one, the end in view is the happiness of the youth, born to equal rights with that governor, on whom the duty devolves of training the young to usefulness, in a station which he is afterwards to assume among freemen. To such an end, and with such a subject, moral and intellectual instruction seem [sic] the natural means; and for the most part, they are found to suffice. ...With slavery it is far otherwise. The end is the profit of the master, his security and the public safety; the subject, one doomed in his own person, and his posterity, to live without knowledge, and without the capacity to make any thing his own, and to toil that another may reap the fruits.

For Ruffin and contemporaries, the social system of slavery the profit, security and public safety of the master required “obedience”. The Supreme Court in the person of Ruffin condemned Lydia (and all slaves) “to live without knowledge” and without a “will of his/[her] own” in fact, a person without human dignity. In Judge Ruffin’s words:

[the slave]...surrenders his will in implicit obedience to that of another. Such obedience is the consequence only of uncontrolled authority over the body. There is nothing else which can operate to produce the effect. The power of the master must be absolute, to render the submission of the slave perfect.

Justice Ruffin admits the brutal legal formalism of his decision but obfuscates its real impact on the person of slaves. The white slave-hirer Mann has “uncontrolled authority over the body” of the black woman Lydia to inflict what Ruffin legally defines as “cruel and unreasonable battery on a slave”.

“I most freely confess my sense of the harshness of this proposition, I feel it as deeply as any man can. ... [but] we cannot allow the right of the master to be brought into

discussion in the Courts of Justice. The slave, to remain a slave, must be made sensible, that there is no appeal from his master; that his power is in no instance, usurped; but is conferred by the laws of man at least, if not by the law of God.

Eugene Genovese, the principal historian of American slavery was one of the first scholars to theorise the role of the law in southern slave society. He argues that slavery developed in law through an “institutional jurisprudence” which “constituted the principal vehicle” of its legitimacy and legality. For Genovese, this legality formed the boundaries of class exploitation, racial domination of black people, gender subordination of women slaves, colonial subjugation of Africans, and the fiction of a superior white caste.

Despite the barbarism of this legality, Genovese argues that the law created spaces of resistance so that slaves could use Courts when they were progressive, or, avoid them through use of local customs and tradition when laws denied slaves protection. He argues that statutes and the common law were subject to progressive and regressive change.

According to Genovese:

The South had discovered, as had every previous slave society that it could not deny the slave’s humanity, however many preposterous legal fictions it invented. ...Had they reflected on the implications of a wagon’s inability to raise an insurrection, they might have understood that the slaves as well as the masters were creating the law.¹⁵

North Carolina v Mann became part of the common law of that state for a few years but it was reversed but, not of the whole United States. To legalise slavery the law and practice, or, in the words of the time “property in man” throughout the United States was to be the prerogative of its Supreme Court in the case of *Dred Scott*.

DRED SCOTT AND FAMILY – THE SLAVES OF JOHN EMERSON

¹⁵ p30

Today visitors to the grave of Dredd Scott in St. Louis Missouri place Lincoln pennies on his headstone. For all but nine-months of his life Dred Scott lived as a slave. He was born in bondage during 1799 to the family of Peter Blow in the State of Virginia. In 1830, after three decades as a slave, Scott was sold to Dr. John Emerson, an army surgeon from the State of Missouri. They moved to the free state of Wisconsin in 1832 and Dred Scott accompanied them where he married Harriet who was also a slave of the army surgeon. Ten years later the Emersons returned to Missouri where slavery was legal. John Emerson died a year later.

In 1846, Dred Scott decided to sue for freedom on the legal basis that he and his family had lived on a prolonged basis in the free state of Wisconsin where their daughter Eliza Scott was born. The Scott family lost their first case but won the right to a re-trial. In 1850, they were set free by a jury of twelve white men in St. Louis Missouri. Mrs. Emerson appealed to the Missouri State Supreme Court which returned the family to captivity and slavery. The Scotts now appealed to the United States Supreme Court. In a cruel judgment that echoes that of Justice Thomas Ruffin, the US Supreme Court condemned the Scotts and others to perpetual slavery. By doing so, they also opened the way for the introduction of slavery into the free states and new territories contrary to the Constitution.

Chief Justice Roger Taney wrote the opinion for the majority of seven members of the US Supreme Court with two dissenting opinions. Taney decided that people of African descent whether slave or free in the United States could never be considered citizens or part of its people. The Scott family stripped of both personhood and citizenship according to Chief Justice Taney could not claim protection of any court in the United States.

The Court also held that Congress was prohibited by the Constitution of the United States to make any law that excluded slavery from any territory. By sleight of hand, the Court rewrote the Declaration of Independence which declared that "all men are created

equal” and endowed with the inalienable rights that include “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness”.

The Taney Court held that African people in the United States, imported as slaves or their descendants, whether slave or free were inferior and articles of merchandise for the benefit of white people. I quote extensively from this judgment and other contemporaneous sources to reclaim a radical history from obscurity.

In the opinion of the court, the legislation and histories of the times, and the language used in the Declaration of Independence, show that neither the class of persons who had been imported as slaves nor their descendants, whether they had become free or not, were then acknowledged as a part of the people, nor intended to be included in the general words used in that memorable instrument.

It is difficult at this day to realize the state of public opinion in relation to that unfortunate race which prevailed in the civilized and enlightened portions of the world at the time of the Declaration of Independence and when the Constitution of the United States was framed and adopted. But the public history of every European nation displays it in a manner too plain to be mistaken.

They had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race either in social or political relations, and so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect, and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit. He was bought and sold, and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise and traffic whenever a profit could be made by it. This opinion was at that time fixed and universal in the civilized portion of the white race. It was regarded as an axiom in morals as well as in politics which no one thought of disputing or supposed to be open to dispute, and men in every grade and position in society daily and habitually acted upon it in their private pursuits, as well as in matters of public concern, without doubting for a moment the correctness of this opinion.

The Court’s decision was delivered two days after the inauguration of pro-slavery President James Buchanan on 4 March 1857. The Republicans were galvanised by what they assumed was a conspiracy of “Slave Power”. Their assumptions, particularly

those of Abraham Lincoln and Senator William H. Seward, were justified. In 1883, a letter by the pro-slavery Congressman for Georgia, Alexander Stephens was published in a biography. His correspondence revealed that he knew what the Supreme Court majority in the Dred Scott case would decide. On 15 December 1856, Stephens wrote that the decision “will be according to my opinions upon every point”.¹⁶ I elaborate his opinions later.

For free black people, slaves, Abolitionists and other opponents of slavery, the Supreme Court had set the ground for confrontation with the power of 300 000 slave-owners who controlled the lives of nearly four million slaves. On 16 June 1858, Abraham Lincoln was nominated by the Republican Party as its candidate for US senator against Northern Democrat Judge Stephen Douglas against whom he lost. Douglas had defended the right to extend slavery into new territories under the banner of “states rights”.

In his acceptance speech, Lincoln declared that “A house divided against itself cannot stand”. His *House Divided*” speech was regarded as a declaration of war by the South. In it, he referred directly to the Dred Scott decision and predicted: “I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half *slave* and half *free*. ... It will become *all* one thing or *all* the other.”

Harriet Scott, the widow of Dredd Scott lived for 19 years as a free woman to see the United States become in Lincoln’s words “all the other” -- free of slavery. She witnessed the destruction of the Taney Court’s decision not by legal argument but by blood and sword. In other words, she and more than four million black people witnessed and participated in a revolution along with more than 26 million white people. The American Civil War was a unique revolution fought by citizens on the basis of law and the rule of law.

Abraham Lincoln was nominated for President of the United States of America in 1860 and he pledged not to give an inch of free soil to slavery, but, instead to uphold its Constitution. Slavery could exist in the South as the Constitution required but no new

¹⁶ McPherson, J. *Battle cry of Freedom – The Civil War Era* p.172

slave state could be admitted to the Union. Lincoln's election on 4 November 1860 gave impetus to the Secession and Civil War. Six weeks later South Carolina voted to secede from the Union and called on all Slave States to follow suit.

On 8 February 1861, the Confederate States of America adopted its Constitution that proclaimed no law "denying or impairing the right of property in negro slaves shall be passed"¹⁷. Two weeks before Lincoln's inauguration on 18 February 1861, former Senator Jefferson Davis of Virginia was elected as provisional President of the Confederate States with former Congressman Alexander Stephens of Georgia as his Vice-President.

The Confederate Constitution, the basis of rebellion by the nine slave states legally protected slavery. In other words, *and* in the language of the times, the constitutional protection of "property in man" on the basis of law and practice was the basis of the war. Confederate Vice-President Alexander Stephens – the same Stephens who knew in advance the decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case declared that the Southern Constitution rejected the original Declaration of Independence and the "prevailing ideas entertained by ... [Thomas Jefferson] and the leading statesmen at the time...that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of nature; that it was wrong in principle, socially, morally, and politically." Stephens regarded those ideas as "wrong" because they "...rested upon the assumption of the equality of races." Instead he argued:

Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rest upon the great truth, that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery—subordination to the superior race—is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.

The destruction of this social system that Stephens described and defended also weakened but did not eradicate the ideas and ideology of racial domination and

¹⁷ Section 9(4) of Article I. of The Constitution of the Confederate States of America in Roper, J. (ed) *The American Civil War – Literary Sources and Documents*

subordination. Today, their ghosts haunt every part of the planet in the struggles and the fears of all people.

The battle-lines drawn, the Union dismembered, the troops assembled, the guns of enemies blessed by God; the contest ensued and claimed more than 600 000 soldiers lives on either side with countless casualties, and the marches of destruction by Sherman's army through the slave states. The number of civilian deaths and casualties are not known. This war cruelly affected every person on the soil of the United States of America. James McPherson writes: "Seldom in history has a counter-revolution so quickly provoked the very revolution it sought to pre-empt. This happened because most northerners refused to condone disunion".

The Civil War was a contest that mobilised the propertied aristocracies and working classes of Britain and Europe, as well as, the middle class intellectuals, journals, newspapers and activists across the Atlantic. Karl Marx and the First International spoke the following words to a global community of activists: "it fell to the lot of Abraham Lincoln the single-minded son of the working class, to lead his country through the matchless struggle for the rescue of an enchained race and the reconstruction of a social world".¹⁸

Victory was never certain. The Slave States had unmatched ideological unity, most of the officers of the US army had deserted the Union and its greatest loss was that General Robert E. Lee who decided he could not fight against his home of State of Virginia. The Confederacy could also rely on supporters in the North and mainly those in the Democratic Party. Abroad, Prime Minister Palmerstone and William Gladstone in Great Britain together with British industrialists in the cotton and shipbuilding industries and Louis Napoleon in France were in the vanguard of the support for the Confederate cause.

¹⁸ IWMA

On the other hand, Lincoln faced an ideologically divided Union in the North. A minority of the people supported the Abolition of slavery and an even smaller number supported equality between black and white people. The majority regarded black people as inferior but they also supported the Union. The Northern masses would fight against secession but not for the abolition of slavery. However, the foundation on which Lincoln rested was the near universal sentiment that slavery was wrong and that not an inch of free soil should be given to slave-owners. The dominant ideology of the Republican Party and most people in the North was based on free labour – the idea of equal opportunity through work.¹⁹

II. THE MEANINGS OF GETTYSBURG

On New Year's Day in 1863, after six months notice to the slave states of the Confederacy, Lincoln's Final Emancipation Proclamation was issued. It freed slaves in the rebel states and required that the army and navy recognise as well as maintain the freedom of slaves. The proclamation asked slaves to desist from violence except in self-defence and where possible and allowed by their former masters to work for a reasonable wage. One of the most revolutionary acts of the Emancipation Proclamation accepted former slaves into armed service of the United States of America.

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion

I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

¹⁹ Eric Foner's *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men* (1970:1995) is one of the best studies on the ideology of free labour and free soil of the Republican Party and most Northern and Western States.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

The Emancipation Proclamation and Union victories in 1863 placed the Confederacy under enormous pressure. Union armies who had been occupying the South now had access to former slaves not simply as labour but as soldiers. When freed they followed the army and many fought in critical battles. Confederacy citizens who vowed to die for slavery started placing pressure on their government. For instance, on 2 April 1863, hundreds of women, the wives of metalworkers in Richmond, Virginia home of the Confederate capital marched to the governor's office to demand bread. One of them declared: "We are going to the bakeries and each of us will take a loaf of bread. That is little enough for the government to give us after it has taken all our men". After a brief riot and the direct intervention of President Jefferson Davis, they reluctantly dispersed.

McPherson describes the food and refugee crisis affecting civilians in the South in the following words:

All wars produce refugees; these homeless people generally suffer more than the civilian population; in the American Civil War this suffering was confined almost entirely to the South. As these refugees packed the roads... they taxed the South's ever decreasing resources and added to the uncounted deaths of white and black civilians from disease and malnutrition—deaths that must be included in any reckoning of the war's human cost.²⁰

²⁰ McPherson pp616-619

Davis could stop a food riot but not the Union army on the Mississippi River. The Union Armies captured key points that prevented the South's use of the great river in many battles that included General Ulysses Grant's celebrated victory at Vicksburg, Mississippi. The Confederate Territory had been split, the resolve of its people weakened but the armies of the South were not yet defeated. By June 1863, General Robert E. Lee led 70 000 men into Pennsylvania. In Chambersburg, they pillaged and looted. Most seriously, according to McPherson, "Southern soldiers also seized scores of black people in Pennsylvania and sent them south into slavery."²¹

For a month, the Northern population and press panicked. The British Parliament on Louis Napoleon's prodding and the impetus of Lee's march into the free State of Pennsylvania then prepared to debate recognition of the Confederacy. The motion was defeated because the British ruling class antipathy to the French Emperor was stronger than its desire to recognise a slave state.

Confederate publicist Henry Hotze declared on 11 July 1863: "Diplomatic means can now no longer prevail and everybody looks to Lee to conquer recognition". Hotze had not heard the news from the Battle of Gettysburg.

At Gettysburg, the stakes were enormous – the North could be occupied, Washington would be threatened, the Emancipation Proclamation would be endangered, the November elections for Congress would see the defeat of the Republicans, the European powers would recognise the Slave States and secession could succeed.

The costs to both sides would also be enormous in what is known as the decisive battle of the American Civil War. Seven million rounds of ammunition were fired during a three-day battle from 1—3 July 1863 in Gettysburg Pennsylvania. More than 50 000 casualties on both sides including almost 10 000 deaths were recorded later. Immediately after the battle, General George Meade who was appointed to the Union Command of the Army of the Potomac four days before wrote:

²¹ McPherson p649

The result of the campaign may be briefly stated in the defeat of the enemy at Gettysburg, his compulsory evacuation of Pennsylvania and Maryland, and withdrawal from the upper valley of the Shenandoah, and in the capture of three guns, 41 standards, and 13 621 prisoners; 24,978 small-arms were collected on the battle-field.

Our own losses were very severe, amounting ...to 2,834 killed, 13,709 wounded, and 6,643 missing; in all, 23,186.

On 3 July, the final day of the battle, General Lee had ordered an attack by 15 000 men “to advance three-quarters of a mile across open fields” to “assault dug-in infantry supported by ample artillery”. General James Longstreet, Lee’s subordinate ordered to carry out the attack had warned against it. “My heart was heavy” he would write later, “I could see the desperate and hopeless nature of the charge and the hopeless slaughter it would cause. ... That day at Gettysburg was one of the saddest of my life.” ²²

The sacrifice by the Union soldiers at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania that day helped secure freedom, equality, dignity and democracy for the United States and globally. Abraham Lincoln addressed its significance in 271 words that forever memorialised the battle and all who perished in the Civil War.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate... we can not consecrate... we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little

²² Cited in McPherson p661

note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government: of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.²³

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is remembered as one of the most important and beautifully crafted speeches of any President. Its profound themes reverberate and enable us "to converse with the dead, the absent and the unborn, at all distances of time and space".²⁴

In the Gettysburg Address, freedom and equality are asserted as founding values of the American Republic; the civil war engendered by slave-owners against those ideals are its cause; mourning the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands who lost their lives and many more wounded in the "great civil war" has the empathy of a father who had lost sons, a man who had lost friends in the war and a President more than any before then or since who saw soldiers and people buried daily in Washington. A call to arms for all people to complete the unfinished work to secure a democracy based on the values of freedom and equality, one that "shall not perish from the earth" still echoes for local and global citizens everywhere.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, one of the great women abolitionists of the time and author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* wrote that Lincoln's writing was direct "brief, condensed, intense and with a power of insight" that made him "well-understood by the people, and that since

²³ Lincoln, A. *The Gettysburg Address* 19 November 1863

²⁴ Lincoln, A. *Lecture on Discoveries and Inventions* 11 February 1859

the time of Washington, the state-papers of no President have more controlled the public mind”.²⁵

Douglas L. Wilson, in one of the most remarkable books written on the subject of Lincoln’s writing and leadership,²⁶ maintains that as a *civil* war President under permanent pressure, “he was beset by critics on all sides”.

His writings were an important part of his effort to respond to this pressure. His achievement is all the more remarkable when we consider that many of the presidential writings for which Lincoln is best known—the Emancipation Proclamation, the Gettysburg Address, the Second Inaugural—were formulations of ideas that were not immediately popular. That they eventually came to be widely admired and even venerated is a tribute to Lincoln’s rare combination of leadership and literary ability.

Understanding the Constitution of the United States and its meaning to working people there and everywhere was at the heart of Lincoln’s single-mindedness.

III. GETTYSBURG AND THE GENESIS OF A REVOLUTION TO FREE LABOUR

The legends of Lincoln and Marx address people, causes and movements across generations through their revolutionary ideas and ideals. One of Lincoln’s biographers tells a simple truth of Lincoln that applies equally to Marx or any other mythical persona – legends are symbols that resist complexity in life, philosophy, biography or history.

The American Revolution of the eighteenth century and defeated the racist, pro-slavery counter-revolution that erupted as the Civil War in the main never formed a part of the historical imagination or the political and theoretical education of activists in the 20th Century. However, Marx together with Engels understood the enduring relevance of the battlefields of that “great civil war” on the lives of succeeding generations. For them

²⁵ Beecher-Stowe, H. *Abraham Lincoln* in Holzer, H. ed. *The Lincoln Anthology*

²⁶ *Lincoln’s Sword – The Presidency and the Power of Words*

Lincoln's words that the defeat of the counter-revolution signified: "a new birth of freedom—and that government: of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth" meant above all struggle.

When Lincoln declares in the Gettysburg Address that the United States of America was "conceived in Liberty" and "dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal", he combines the revolutionary aims of the Declaration of Independence with that country's Constitution. The philosopher Hannah Arendt argues persuasively that the fundamental difference between the revolutions of America and Europe was based on the nature of the US Constitution.

For her, the US Constitution was not founded on the simplistic notion of the limitation of governmental power to protect the individual but the balance of power between branches of government to enhance liberty and the "pursuit of happiness" of all people. In this endeavour, the limitation against intrusion must be understood.

In other words, the US Constitution is a foundation on which liberty and equality must be enforced, built and extended – it is not simply a check on government. The European revolutions for liberty and equality had to contend with a feudal system that affected the majority of people while in the US except for slavery such entrenched inequalities in power did not exist for the majority of people. Arendt writes:

The American Constitution finally consolidated the power of the Revolution, and since the aim of revolution was freedom, it indeed came to be ... the foundation of freedom.

Arendt distinguishes between "the power of the Revolution" which in every sense means the power of the people and "the aim of the Revolution" the fact that everyone is "born equal" and with inalienable rights that include "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". This principle animated the life and work of Lincoln because of his unshakeable belief in equal opportunity as the basis for personal and social progress. He wrote:

The prudent, penniless beginner in the world, labors for wages awhile, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land, for himself; then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him. This, say its advocates, is free labor---the just and generous, and prosperous system, which opens the way for all---gives hope to all, and energy, and progress, and improvement of condition to all.

Renouncing the revolutionary aim that everyone is created equal and entitled to human rights undermined the promise of freedom and progress. The counter-revolution by slave-owners and their leaders had to base their rejection of the Constitution and Union on the renunciation of the aims of the Revolution. Lincoln addressed these questions in his critique of the Dred Scott decision, a speech that has not received the philosophical or political recognition for his practice as President and its implications for contemporary struggles. He writes:

Chief Justice Taney, in his opinion in the Dred Scott case, admits that the language of the Declaration is broad enough to include the whole human family, but he and Judge Douglas argue that the authors of that instrument did not intend to include negroes, by the fact that they did not at once, actually place them on an equality with the whites. ...I think the authors of that notable instrument intended to include all men, but they did not intend to declare all men equal in all respects. They did not mean to say all were equal in color, size, intellect, moral developments, or social capacity. They defined with tolerable distinctness, in what respects they did consider all men created equal---equal in ``certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." This they said, and this meant. *They did not mean to assert the obvious untruth, that all were then actually enjoying that equality, nor yet, that they were about to confer it immediately upon them. In fact they had no power to confer such a boon. They meant simply to declare the right, so that the enforcement of it might follow as fast as circumstances should permit.*

For Lincoln the aims of the Revolution are clear but what could he mean by the assertion that the framers of the Constitution "simply meant to declare the right" that "all men are created equal so that the enforcement of it might follow as fast as

circumstances might permit.” At the time of the *First Inaugural Address* and the secession, he declared unequivocally that the aim of the government was to ensure that the Union survives intact on the principle of not ceding any free soil to slavery.

One section of our country believes slavery is right, and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong, and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute.

From questions of this class spring all our constitutional controversies, and we divide upon them into majorities and minorities. If the minority will not acquiesce, the majority must, or the government must cease. There is no other alternative; for continuing the government, is acquiescence on one side or the other. If a minority, in such case, will secede rather than acquiesce, they make a precedent which, in turn, will divide and ruin them; for a minority of their own will secede from them, whenever a majority refuses to be controlled by such minority.

Plainly, the central idea of secession, is the essence of anarchy. A majority, held in restraint by constitutional checks, and limitations, and always changing easily, with deliberate changes of popular opinions and sentiments, is the only true sovereign of a free people. .. Unanimity is impossible; the rule of a minority, as a permanent arrangement, is wholly inadmissible; so that, rejecting the majority principle, anarchy, or despotism in some form, is all that is left.

The idea that minorities can secede after losing an election must destroy democracy because the principle of majority rule, one of the aspects together with the enforcement of freedom and equality would then be impossible.

For Lincoln the government’s war aim in his *First Inaugural Address* is a defensive war to protect the aims of the Revolution and its power, the will of the people. Or, as he argues in *The Gettysburg Address* the duty to ensure **that government: of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth**. This was not a war to end slavery. On 26 November 1864 Marx wrote to his uncle Lion Philips:

When you reflect, my dear Uncle, how at the time of Lincoln's election 3½ years ago it was only a matter of making *no further concessions* to the slave-owners, whereas now the avowed aim, which has in part already been realised, is the *abolition of slavery*, one has to admit that *never* has such a gigantic revolution occurred with such rapidity. It will have a highly beneficial influence on the whole world.

Marx had read Lincoln, studied the Civil War and wrote extensively on the British government's support for the South. Lincoln loved reading and he was an avid reader of newspapers. He wrote: "A capacity, and taste, for reading, gives access to whatever has already been discovered by others. It is the key, or one of the keys, to the already solved problems." However, during the war he could not read newspapers. Instead, his secretaries prepared a press digest for his attention from a few key newspapers. One of these newspapers Marx had contributed to since the early 1850s was the New York Tribune. Horace Greeley was its editor, an abolitionist, a critic and supporter of Lincoln. The Tribune was then the largest newspaper in the world with a circulation of 200 000 copies.

On 11 October 1861, The New York Tribune published one of the most detailed analysis by Marx on *The American Question in England*. Marx showed a detailed knowledge of US history addressing every assault by the slave-owners on the values and principles of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution including a legal understanding of the Dred Scott decision which sought to diffuse slavery through the "Federal Power" of the Supreme Court "as the law of the American Constitution". Occasioned by the vitriolic response of the English press to a letter from Harriet Beecher Stowe to Lord Shaftsbury a former critic of slavery now a supporter of the South, Marx's article traversed the history of the conflict.

Mrs. Beecher Stowe's letter to Lord Shaftsbury, whatever its intrinsic merit may be, has done a great deal of good, by forcing the anti-Northern organs of the London press to speak out and lay before the general public the ostensible reasons for their hostile tone against the North, and their ill-concealed sympathies with the South...

“In the first place says *The Economist*, “the assumption that the quarrel between the North and South is a quarrel between Negro freedom on the one side and Negro Slavery on the other, is as impudent as it is untrue. “The North,” says *The Saturday Review*, “does not proclaim abolition, and never pretended to fight for Anti-Slavery. The North has not hoisted for its *oriflamme* the sacred symbol of justice to the Negro; its *cri de guerre* is not unconditional abolition.

Now, in the first instance, the premiss must be conceded. The war has not been undertaken with a view to put down Slavery, and the United States authorities themselves have taken the greatest pains to protest against any such idea. But then, it ought to be remembered that it was not the North, but the South, which undertook this war; the former acting only on the defense. ... It confessed to fight for the liberty of enslaving other people... The Confederate Congress boasted that its new-fangled constitution, as distinguished from the Constitution of the Washingtons, Jeffersons, and Adams’s, had recognized for the first time Slavery as a thing good in itself, a bulwark of civilization, and a divine institution. If the North professed to fight but for the Union, the South gloried in rebellion for the supremacy of Slavery. If Anti-Slavery and idealistic England felt not attracted by the profession of the North, how came it to pass that it was not violently repulsed by the cynical confessions of the South?

Exposing the South’s “fight for the liberty to enslave other people” Marx rejected the opinions of the ruling class newspapers that the South was simply fighting for its own freedom. He understood that Lincoln posed the war as one of defence of the Constitution. By the time of the Gettysburg Address, Civil War had raged for more than two years, the counter-revolutionary South was bleeding and the Emancipation Proclamation had come into effect but Lincoln’s assertion that the United States was based on liberty and the proposition of equality for all was always central to his thought and practice.

Lincoln was re-elected in November 1863 by an increased majority. Marx wrote to Lincoln on behalf of the International Working Men’s Association prior to the Second Inauguration. The minutes of the First International records the discussion

Dr. Marx then brought up the report of the subcommittee, also a draft of the address which had been drawn up for presentation to the people of America congratulating them on their having re-elected Abraham Lincoln as President. The address is as follows and was unanimously agreed to."

The minutes of the meeting continue:

A long discussion then took place as to the mode of presenting the address and the propriety of having a M.P. with the deputation; this was strongly opposed by many members, who said workingmen should rely on themselves and not seek for extraneous aid.... It was then proposed... and carried unanimously. The secretary correspond with the United States Minister asking to appoint a time for receiving the deputation, such deputation to consist of the members of the Central Council."

The letter presented to American Ambassador Charles Francis Adams in November 1864 reads in part.

Sir

We congratulate the American people upon your re-election by a large majority. If resistance to the Slave Power was the reserved watchword of your first election, the triumphant war cry of your re-election is Death to Slavery.

From the commencement of the titanic American strife the workingmen of Europe felt instinctively that the star-spangled banner carried the destiny of their class. The contest for the territories .. was ... to decide whether the virgin soil of immense tracts should be wedded to the labor of the emigrant or prostituted by the tramp of the slave driver.

...The workingmen of Europe feel sure that, as the American War of Independence initiated a new era of ascendancy for the middle class, so the American Antislavery War will do for the working classes. They consider it an earnest of the epoch to come that it fell to the lot of Abraham Lincoln, the single-minded son of the working class, to lead his country

through the matchless struggle for the rescue of an enchained race and the reconstruction of a social world

Two months later on 1 February 1865, Marx writes excitedly to Engels:

You must excuse the scraps of English in my epistle as there was a *sitting of the Council* yesterday which lasted until *One o'clock*. ('Liquor' and 'smoke' are *banned* from these '*sittings*'.) The first thing was the answering epistle from Lincoln, which you may find in tomorrow's *Times* and certainly in *The Daily News* and *The Star*. In the reply to the *London Emancipation Society* ... published in yesterday's *Evening Star*, the old man drily dismisses the fellows with two formal clichés ...whereas his letter to us is in fact everything we could have asked for, and, in particular, the naive assurance that the *United States* could not involve itself directly in '*propagandism*'. At any rate, it is the only answer so far *on the part of the Old Man* that is more than a strictly formal one.

Lincoln's reply was transmitted through Ambassador Adams:

Legation of the United States
London, 28th January, 1865

Sir:

I am directed to inform you that the address of the Central Council of your Association, which was duly transmitted through this Legation to the President of the United [States], has been received by him.

So far as the sentiments expressed by it are personal, they are accepted by him with a sincere and anxious desire that he may be able to prove himself not unworthy of the confidence which has been recently extended to him by his fellow citizens and by so many of the friends of humanity and progress throughout the world.

The Government of the United States has a clear consciousness that its policy neither is nor could be reactionary, but at the same time it adheres to the course which it adopted at the beginning, of abstaining everywhere

from propagandism and unlawful intervention. It strives to do equal and exact justice to all states and to all men and it relies upon the beneficial results of that effort for support at home and for respect and good will throughout the world.

Nations do not exist for themselves alone, but to promote the welfare and happiness of mankind by benevolent intercourse and example. It is in this relation that the United States regard their cause in the present conflict with slavery, maintaining insurgence as the cause of human nature, and they derive new encouragements to persevere from the testimony of the workingmen of Europe that the national attitude is favored with their enlightened approval and earnest sympathies.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

Charles Francis Adams

Beecher-Stowe's tribute in February 1864 to Lincoln illustrates the centrality of the idea of free labour to Lincoln's experience she writes:

Abraham Lincoln is in the strictest sense *a man of the working classes*. ... His position now at the head of one of the most powerful nations of the earth, is a sign to all who live by their labor that their day is coming. Lincoln was born to the inheritance of hard work as truly as the poorest laborer's son that digs our field.

IV. SOCIALIST INTERNATIONALISM AND GLOBALISING THE CONFLICT

Global citizenship is an exercise of solidarity with oppressed, marginalized and vulnerable people everywhere. Free people everywhere have the duty to defend these rights everywhere they are violated and to secure their redress. Global citizenship also encompasses the principle of a positive solidarity to improve the conditions of oppressed and marginalised people across the planet. This both Lincoln and Marx understood.

After his *Second Inaugural Address* Lincoln accepted honorary membership of the New York Workingmen's Democratic Republican Association. This occurred after race riots in New York encouraged by the Democrats against the *Emancipation Proclamation*. I cite his reply extensively because he defines global citizenship as solidarity across race and class.

The honorary membership in your Association, as generously tendered, is gratefully accepted.

You comprehend, as your address shows, that the existing rebellion, means more, and tends to more, than the perpetuation of African Slavery--- that it is, in fact, a war upon the rights of all working people. ...

... None are so deeply interested to resist the present rebellion as the working people. Let them beware of prejudice, working division and hostility among themselves. The most notable feature of a disturbance in your city last summer, was the hanging of some working people by other working people. It should never be so. The strongest bond of human sympathy, outside of the family relation, should be one uniting all working people, of all nations, and tongues, and kindreds. Nor should this lead to a war upon property, or the owners of property. Property is the fruit of labor ---property is desirable --- --- is a positive good in the world. That some should be rich, shows that others may become rich, and hence is just encouragement to industry and enterprize. Let not him who is houseless pull down the house of another; but let him labor diligently and build one for himself, thus by example assuring that his own shall be safe from violence when built.

I quote what most socialists would describe as a contradictory impulse in Lincoln's thought – his argument that the “strongest bond of human sympathy outside the family relation, should be one uniting all working people, of all nations, and tongues, and kindreds” with the notion that “this should not lead to a war upon property, or the owners of property”. In an expanded version of this discussion I will address Lincoln's analysis of capitalism. The significant question tonight must be his thought and practice to secure human freedom and equality through a moral consensus against slavery and the

rights of working people everywhere. This was not a recent expedient thought as a consequence of the Civil War. Lincoln's internationalism had its roots in global solidarity with democratic revolutions.

Lincoln was wrongly and condescendingly described as an aboriginal with no horizon beyond America by the *eminence grise* of American literature Ralph Waldo

He was thoroughly American, had never crossed the sea, had never been spoiled by English insularity or French dissipation: a quite native, aboriginal man, as an acorn from an oak; No aping of foreigners, no frivolous

Lamenting universal male franchise Emerson writes:

We shall have coarse men, with a fair chance of worth ... but not men to please the English or French. You cannot refine Mr. Lincoln's taste or extend his horizon; he will not walk dignifiedly through the traditional part of the President of America

Lincoln and Marx had a principled internationalist outlook. Marx wrote and participated in the Revolutions of 1848. He wrote of the revolution against the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its impact on Europe and saw working people as the only guarantors of democracy. Lincoln wrote the following resolution on behalf of the citizens of Illinois to the Hungarian freedom fighters.

**Resolutions of Sympathy with the Cause of Hungarian Freedom
September 6, 1849**

Resolved, That in their present glorious struggle for liberty, the Hungarians, command our highest admiration, and have our warmest sympathy.

Resolved, That they have our most ardent prayers for their speedy triumph and final success.

Resolved, That the Government of the United States should acknowledge the Independence of Hungary as [a] Nation of freemen, at the very earliest moment consistent with our amicable relations with that Government, against which they are contending.

Resolved, That in the opinion of this meeting, the immediate acknowledgment of the independence of Hungary by our government, is due from American freemen, to their struggling brethren, to the general cause of Republican liberty, and not a violation of the just rights of any Nation or people.

The smug Northern elite, its academics, politicians and many of its writers (Walt Whitman being an exception) misconstrued the self-taught lawyer's lack of formal education for a "homely and honest ignorance". Like the Southern ruling class, they underestimated Lincoln. Marx and Engels understood the value of his work and it directly influenced their understanding of international working class solidarity and political economy. In 2002, an American academic John F. Welsh published an essay titled *Reconstructing Capital: the American roots and humanist vision of Marx's thought*. His aim was to recover from Stalinist history the American roots of Marx's work.

This essay contributes to the renewed dialogue on Marx by exploring the influence of the Civil War in the United States on the organisation, methodology and content of *Capital* and its implications for the relevance Marx's thought in the post-modern world. My argument is that the Civil War prompted Marx to pursue major reconstruction of Capital eventually centering the work on the lived experiences of workers under capitalism.

Welsh correctly identifies the influence of the Civil war on Marx's work but reduces it to its impact on political economy, the writing of *Capital* and the lived experience of the working class. The relationship between Lincoln and Marx, the aims of the American Revolution liberty and equality, and the prosecution of the Civil War on a democratic basis, the building of socialist solidarity all elude this otherwise commendable effort by Welsh.

On 25 July 1867, the preface to *Capital*, Marx tantalisingly invoked Perseus, the son of Zeus and slayer of monsters to explain the impact of the Civil War on the European working class and its more or less brutal or humane struggle based on its political strength.

Perseus wore a magic cap so that the monsters he hunted down might not see him. We draw the magic cap down over our eyes and ears so as to deny there are any monsters. Let us not deceive ourselves about this. Just as in the eighteenth century the American War of Independence sounded the tocsin for the European middle-class, so in the nineteenth century the American Civil War did the same for the European working class. In England the process of transformation is palpably evident. When it has reached certain point, it must react on the Continent. There it takes a form more brutal or more humane, according to the degree of development of the working class.

Almost twenty years later, on 5 November 1886 Engels would elaborate this idea of “a more brutal or humane” struggle which depends on “the degree of development of the working class”. In his Preface to the English translation of *Capital* when speaking of the economic crisis born of competition to the British economy from Germany and the other European countries, Engels concludes:

England is the only country where the inevitable social revolution might be affected by peaceful and legal means. [Marx] certainly never forgot to add that he hardly expected the English ruling classes to submit without “a pro-slavery rebellion”, to this peaceful and legal revolution.

The European ruling classes such as the German ruling class most notably Otto von Bismarck would all struggle under the dual impact of universal male suffrage of free labour in the United States and the revolutionary organisation of the working class in Europe.

Marxist and socialist historiography claimed and proclaimed the legacy of the French Revolution, the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution, the great movements of working and poor people in Europe and the former colonial world. For many generations activists globally sought inspiration from the European and Chinese revolutionary models for political, economic, social and practical struggle. We ignored the United States because of an imperial appropriation of US history. All of us vaguely recalled that Karl Marx had “in passing” made comments about the American Civil War. Marx himself understood the legacy of Lincoln differently and in a revolutionary manner. One of the

finest appreciations of Lincoln is recorded in *The Address from the Working Men's International Association to President Johnson* written by Marx after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln:

It is not our part to call words of sorrow and horror, while the heart of two worlds heaves with emotion. Even the sycophants who, year after year, and day by day, stick to their Sisyphus work of morally assassinating Abraham Lincoln, and the great Republic he headed, stand now aghast at this universal outburst of popular feeling, and rival with each other to strew rhetorical flowers on his open grave. They have now at last found out that he was a man, neither to be browbeaten by adversity, nor intoxicated by success, inflexibly pressing on to his great goal, never compromising it by blind haste, slowly maturing his steps, never retracing them, carried away by no surge of popular favour, disheartened by no slackening of the popular pulse, tempering stern acts by the gleams of a kind heart, illuminating scenes dark with passion by the smile of humour, doing his titanic work as humbly and homely as Heaven-born rulers do little things with the grandiloquence of pomp and state; in one word, one of the rare men who succeed in becoming great, without ceasing to be good. Such, indeed, was the modesty of this great and good man, that the world only discovered him a hero after he had fallen a martyr.

Lincoln's murder by the South was tragic but his philosophy and practice lives not only in the defeat of the slave-owners but in our struggles.

Even Marx underestimated the towering intellect of this President and single-minded son of the working-class. Lincoln's legacy is best encapsulated in these words from his speech on Dred Scott, words that demonstrate that the struggle for freedom, equality, dignity and social justice is a permanent struggle.

I had thought that the Declaration contemplated the progressive improvement in the condition of all men everywhere...

The assertion that "all men are created equal" was meant to set up a standard maxim for free society, which should be familiar to all, and revered by all; constantly looked to, constantly labored for, and even

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