

# Was the War of Northern Aggression a Marxist Revolution?

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by Al Benson Jr.



The title of this article is asked as a rhetorical question, as Donnie Kennedy and I have already dealt in depth with this subject in our book *Lincoln's Marxists*. But it does not hurt to ask it again, as many folks have not only not read our book, but they have never been confronted with some of the information that is now out there dealing with this subject. The leftist radicals in the early Republican Party were not bashful in giving away their socialist tendencies when they commented on the South and their plans for it and its people after the War.

James M. McPherson, who is by no means my favorite “historian” has dealt with some of this in an Internet article—*Some Thoughts on the Civil War as the Second Revolution*. McPherson seems to enjoy dealing with the subject of the War as if it were, indeed, a revolution, only he quotes the people that portray the Southerners as the revolutionaries. Needless to say, it was really the other way around. But then, a standard Marxist tactic is “condemn others and elevate yourself.”

McPherson noted the comments of future president James Garfield while he was in Congress, and he noted that: “During the first three of his seventeen years in Congress, Garfield was one of the most radical of the radical Republicans. He continued to view the Civil War and Reconstruction as a revolution that must wipe out all traces of the *ancient regime* in the South. In his maiden speech in the House of Representatives on January 28, 1864, he called for the confiscation of the land of Confederate planters and the redistribution of this land among the freed slaves and white Unionists in the South.” It hardly needs to be stated that such a concept is in total agreement with what Karl Marx advocated in the *Communist Manifesto*. This position was in total agreement with the first and fourth planks of the *Communist Manifesto*. Marx—sorry, I meant Garfield—then sought to excuse such Marxist confiscation on the premise that this had been done during our War for Independence with land that had belonged to the Tories. Of course a lot of the Tories had left the country, many going to Canada, and so much of their land was vacant anyway. And Garfield went on: “The leaders of this rebellion must be executed or banished from the republic...” So, was Garfield advocating mass executions of Southern leaders? Or at least their banishment so the federal government

could then control the land that had been theirs? This was the same attitude as that displayed by General Sherman regarding Southerners—and it was still consistent with Marx.

Land confiscation was a cardinal tenet of Marxism and it was also a favorite among the Northern elite. In his book *Citizen Sherman*, Michael Fellman observed: “Land confiscation as one means of displacing the Confederate leadership had been discussed widely during the war. As early as August 24, 1862, John Sherman had written his brother, ‘If we can’t depend on the loyalty of the white men of the South, I would give the land to the blacks or colonize a new set (of northern whites).’ The general too had, since 1862, threatened Southerners with dispossession, their land to be redistributed to Northern white colonists...When the inhabitants persist too long in hostility it may be both politic and right that we should banish them and appropriate their lands to a more loyal and useful population...If they want eternal war, well and good; we will dispossess them and put our friends in their place...Many people with less pertinacity have been wiped out of national existence.” Almost makes you wonder if such is a veiled threat.

And Sherman made it quite plain that he would not hesitate to practice what we today call psychological warfare on the Southern people. According to Fellman, “His army would not inflict military defeat on a Confederate army, but intentionally humiliating destruction on a peaceful, cultivated Southern landscape and her people.” Lots easier to fight mostly unarmed Southern civilians than it is Confederate soldiers that can shoot back. But this is the way Marxists fight a war. Almost makes you wonder if Lenin took lessons from Sherman.

Radical abolitionist (and Unitarian) Wendell Phillips was among the most outspoken. In his mind he insisted that the War “is primarily a social revolution. The war can only be ended by annihilating that Oligarchy which formed and rules the South and makes the war-by annihilating a state of society. The whole social system of the Gulf States must be taken to pieces.” And dear old Thaddeus Stevens, that “gentle giant” of the radical abolitionists said they had to “treat this war as a radical revolution” and “reconstruction” then needed to “revolutionize Southern institutions, habits and manners...The foundations of their institutions...must be broken up and relaid, or all our blood and treasure have been spent in vain.” So, as you can see by the statements made, the real revolutionaries in this war were not the Southern people or their leaders, but were, instead, those among the Northern elite who had imbibed the doctrines of socialism that became so clearly apparent when they spoke. What they have been describing here is nothing less than what the Communists in Russia and China did when they took over those countries—cultural genocide. Change the culture and make it totally unrecognizable to those who had lived under the old Christian culture. For “those people” the war and “reconstruction” were nothing more than exercises in Cultural Marxism—the 19th century variety.

Back in 2012, Andre M. Fleche wrote a book called *The Revolution of 1861: The American Civil War in the Age of Nationalist Conflict*. I haven’t yet read it so I can’t comment all that much on it, but Fleche does deal with the Forty-eighters that Donnie Kennedy and I deal with in *Lincoln’s Marxists*. A review by Jarret Ruminski (University of Calgary) noted that: “Fleche supports his argument for the importance of 1848 by highlighting the significant roles European revolutionaries played in shaping American nationalist debates in the years leading up to the Civil War, and showing their continued influence after its outbreak.” So Mr. Fleche also recognizes how influential the Forty-eighters in this country were before the War and how their revolutionary influence affected what went on. More and more, the general public, and especially Southerners, need to be much more aware of just how (from a socialist perspective) the North was influenced by the Forty-eighters and how that influence affected not only the War and “reconstruction” but how it has affected everything that has gone on since then.

This demonstrates that “reconstruction” never truly ended in the South, or anywhere else in the country, but is, in fact, in operation today. Obama’s plan to “fundamentally transform the United States” is all part and parcel of it. The old (Christian) culture has to be gotten rid of and a new one instituted. If you can say anything about Obama, you can truthfully say that he is a “change agent” for the New World Order, and he has taken many of his lessons in that area from Abraham Lincoln and from “Lincoln’s Marxists.”