

There and the
decisiveness of
lincoln's suggestions.



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There can be many ways to interpret a historical event, yet the evaluation of the Reconstruction results will depend on four key factors, which are the unwillingness of the President to provide efficient reforms, the lack of funding for further development of the process, the resistance of the white population and the reluctance of the Supreme Court.

The Thirteenth Amendment was a great innovation for the USA which meant that the new era of democracy is going to begin. Abolishing the slavery, Lincoln makes the first step towards the new state. Suggesting that the South must gain financial support for further development, Lincoln created the basis of the future reforms.[1] As Lincoln provided his 10% Plan, it became obvious that serious changes are about to occur. Thus, the 10% Plan featured the following innovations. The South citizen could obtain a full pardon and have their property back with the guarantee to become absolutely free: In December 1863 Abraham Lincoln offered a plan of “restoration” to the Southern people. The president’s Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction embodied what came to be known as Ten Percent Plan.

After at least ten percent of a seceded state’s voters took an oath to support the Constitution and the Union, the state could legally establish a new government[2] The Congress responded with the Wade-Davis Bill which was directed to provide the black people with more freedom. Its main concern was that only those taking the oath of loyalty before the new government could be considered the citizen of America. Congress also created the Freedmen’s Bureau. Designed to assist the former slaves, it provided help for those who sought for employment. It seemed that the new policy would

make the segregation of the black people completely forgotten, when Lincoln was killed. Because of losing the one and only man who could act effectively and create the plan to beat the economical depression, the democratic forces slackened the process of reconstruction. As Johnson took the chair, the prognoses for the future were somewhat change.

Because of his cautious and indecisive politics, Johnson was unable to conduct the Reconstruction process in a proper way, abolishing slavery as institution.[3] Though the Civil War ended with the victory of Grant, both the South and the North sustained great losses. Thus, they were both unable to develop further on and could not focus on the Reconstruction. Although Johnson presented his own plan for reconstruction, it lacked certainty and the decisiveness of Lincoln's suggestions. Among the issues which the plan covered, there were the pardons for all the people who would take the loyalty vow, no matter whether these would be the northern or the southern dwellers, except the high officials; the abolition of slavery; and the demand for eleven states to repeal their secession ordinance.

Since the president's policy lacked the certainty about the reforms, the population began to express their concern with the new politics. Thus, the Reconstruction started regressing before it took the full swing. Electing Benjamin Butler for the position of the member of a radical Republican party to the Congress was another proof that the Reconstruction was going the wrong way. Another effect of the Reconstruction was the Black Code which restricted the rights of the Black people to their limit. Composed of four parts, the new law made the black people dependent on the white

population again. The Black Code consisted of four parts, each containing limitations for the black people.

The first part, the Apprentice Law, confirmed the dependence of the black employee on his/her employer completely, which meant turning back to the ideas of slavery. Another part of the Code, the Vagrancy Law, concerned all black homeless people, and meant fining people for vagrancy. As Berkin marked, Pleased by Johnson's conservative approach to black rights, southern legislators sought to restore the labor controls over their liberated work force by passing a series of laws collectively known as Black Codes[4] Taking the advantage of the situation, the Code demanded that all the freedmen must do their military service; otherwise the penalty would be imposed. Since it would have taken much time for the freedmen to register for military service, they could be easily imprisoned according to the Black Code. Because of the lenient reforms of Johnson, the Radical part of the Congress formed the so-called Joint Committee of Fifteen, which was supposed to conduct more efficient policy and supported rather the Congress policy than the one of the president. Since not all of the South citizens were convinced that the policy of Lincoln and Congress had the point, the specific groups were formed to take revenge on the black population. Calling themselves Ku-Klux-Klan after the sound of a gun reloaded, they were a terrorist organization in Tennessee which committed manslaughters to revenge on democrats and the defeat of the South.

As the Ku-Klux-Klan was terrorizing the black population, the Congress provide the Civil Rights Act despite Johnson's protests. The Civil Rights Act aimed at protecting the legal rights of the freedmen, among them the right

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to be heard in court, the right to sue and the right to hold property, as well as giving the black and the white population "equal civil, political and public rights"[5]. Further on, in 1866, the new amendments to the Act presupposed that the freedmen had the right to vote as well as the white people. Even though Johnson had imposed veto on the act before, the Radicals managed to put these ideas into practice. One of the greatest events in the history of the Reconstruction was the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Approved by the Congress, it meant that every freedman had the right to be the subject of the States, which meant that the black population could be granted with the freedoms and rights of American citizens. Another important addition which the Amendment made was the fact that none could be deprived of life, liberty or property from that time on. This ensured that the white people could not harm the newly-freed black people.

Finally, the amendment concerned the issue of the equality in the procession case. Thus, the Fourteenth Amendment attempted to put an end to racial segregation once and for all. Such changes could not be left without a response from the opponents. In May, 1866 the Memphis race riot erupted and took away the lives of 46 black people. Demonstrating the protest to share their rights with the freedmen, the white population of Memphis, Tennessee, committed a number of manslaughters. However, such actions gave vent to the sympathy towards the freedmen among the members of Congress.

Feeling sympathy for the black population which was suffering severe attacks, the Congress reinforced the powers and the responsibilities of Freedmen's Bureau. Though the Congress had to act despite the veto of

Johnson, the results were stunning, with more than 99, 9% male freedmen employed in 1860. Thus, it can be considered that the actions of the Bureau had great effect on the state of the freedmen.

However, the situation was rather controversial, for the more liberty the freedmen were granted by the Congress with; the more severe were the responses from the white opponents. Thus, the reinforcement of the Bureau permissions resulted in another series of manslaughter called New Orleans Race Riot. Flocking with the police of the New Orleans, the former Confederates attacked the white Republicans and the black freedmen. Unarmed and helpless, the attacked surrendered, but that was of no help - both the white and the black people taking part in the gathering were murdered cruelly.

As it could have been predicted, the local police did nothing to investigate the crime and find the real culprits. While Johnson remained calm and inactive, the Republican demanded that the Reconstruction Act should be provided. Consequently, in 1867 the first Reconstruction Act was introduced to the American society despite Johnson's veto.

According to the First Reconstruction Act, the South was supposed to be split into five military districts. This was what Norton called " social reform through military occupation." [6] Such innovation was followed by the announcement that the freedmen were allowed to take part in the elections, e. g. to vote for their candidates. The First Reconstruction Act also presupposed that the South gained readmission after they ratified the Fourteenth Amendment.

However, "radical carpetbagger regime"[7] made the black population lose their faith in the reforms held by the white politicians. The second Reconstruction Act passed shortly after the first one enabled the military forces to control the security of the freedmen in the States. Although Johnson attempted at vetoing this act, like the previous one, it was still put into practice owing to the quick reaction of the Congress. Following the Second Reconstruction Act, there was the Second Reconstruction Act produced shortly. It stated that the southern territories were supposed to be under the surveillance of the military forces, thus putting the South under their control.

The Congress also proclaimed in the Third Reconstruction Act that the Iron Clad Oath would be modified to become even more restricting. As the Third Reconstruction Act was launched, the situation in the States changed dramatically. Thus, in 1868 the first black man was chosen to represent Louisiana as its lieutenant governor. Such changes indicated that America was ready to become the democratic country, yet some more efforts were needed to make the final step. As soon as Grant became the president of the States, his administration did not prove as efficient as the Radicals thought it to be. Signifying that the period of Reconstruction was moving towards the end, the reformation process was slowly ceasing. According to the Fifteenth Amendment which was accepted shortly after Grant became the president, all American citizen, regardless of their color of skin, had the right to vote in the elections period. A major breakthrough, this was one more signal that the Reconstruction was breathing its last.

One of the most significant events of 1870 was the fact that a black man Joseph Rainey was accepted as a member of the House of Representatives

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in the US Congress. This meant that the final step towards the democracy was made and black people could not only vote free, but have the access to the governmental structure of the state. The event of crucial importance, this was the starting point for the new era in the history of the USA.

Considering that everything possible has been done, the government decided that the time had come to abolish the Freedmen Bureau. As the number of the black members in the House of the Representatives grew, the Reconstruction was slowly approaching its logical ending, partially because of the way it started acting: As Cimballa marked, " In the contest over the contours of the new labour system, Freedmen's Bureau agents were neither passive spectators nor objective mediators This caused another surge of the anti-abolitionism reaction." [8] The famous Slaughter-House Cases when the court " upheld a Louisiana law mandating the centralization of slaughtering facilities in New Orleans" [9] as the white butchers complained that they could not pursue a trade anymore signified that the Supreme Court supported the position of the conservative wing of the Congress. A perfect example of the policy of the judicial power is the one driven by Brandwein: " In the Civil Rights Cases, Justice Bradley cautioned against treating blacks as " the special favorite of the laws" [10]. Thus, local laws implied discrimination, which the white people did not fail to make use of.

Conclusion.

In spite of the fact that the Reconstruction Period was started with certain goals to achieve, under the guidance of Johnson, who could not coordinate his politics with the one of the Supreme Court and the Congress, the Reconstruction process could not continue. Due to the arguments between

the judicial, the executive and the legislative branches of power, the process of abolishing the racial segregation did not cease, but was only hindered.

Another reason for the Reconstruction to come to a dead end was the fact that the anti-racism policy demanded sufficient financial support which the government could not provide at that time. Deprived of the profit, the entire venture was ripped of its attraction for the people who started the Reconstruction. In addition, The Supreme Court failed to support the amendments which have been suggested so that the black population could become citizen of the States with all the rights that a free person can have. Without the support of the Supreme Court, the black population could not do anything to become the members of the American society. In addition, the white population finally began fearing that the black people could make use of their new privileges to take revenge on the white population, which led to the mass protests against giving full rights to the black people. Thus, it can be considered that the Reconstruction period had both the positive and the negative impact on the society and the state of affairs of the black people. What must be admitted, however, is the fact that the humanist process was launched, and white people finally realized that the black population does not differ from them anyhow and must enjoy the same rights and privileges. It is doubtless that once the government were more persistent in its efforts to abolish racial segregation, the results would have occurred much sooner.

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