

The Federative Principle and the Necessity of Reconstituting the Party of the Revolution

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Chapter IX: Slavery and the Proletariat

What is happening on the other side of the Atlantic, three thousand leagues from the regions where the Mazzinian idea soars, is dazzling proof of the reality that, besides federalism, politics tends to degenerate into tyranny, plunder and extermination regardless of the virtue and leniency of the heads of state.

For half a century, the republic of the United States passed for the model society and type of government. In fact, an incomparable freedom was displayed there, along with unprecedented prosperity, but that federalist republic was infected with profound defects. The fever of exploitation, imported from Europe with religion and laws, and the pride of blood and wealth, had developed the principle of inequality and class distinctions to a frightening degree and made the return to unitary government inevitable.

Three categories of subjects make up American society: *black workers* (slaves), *white workers*, who are day-by-day more submerged in the proletariat, and the landowning, capitalist, industrialist aristocracy. Because slavery and the proletariat are incompatible with republican values, the southern states, although they call themselves DEMOCRATS, were the first to collaborate on the idea of centralising the United States and controlling the confederation. At the same time, they wanted to develop their *particular institution*, black servitude, that is, over the entire republic. Rejected by those in the North, who were in the vast majority and who preferred to cloak themselves with the mantle of REPUBLICANS, those in the South, struck down in their local interest by this majority, which intended to use its power and speak in the name of the entire Union, broke the federal pact and formed a slaveholder democracy, apparently unitary.

To save the Union, two things were necessary through common accord and energetic will: 1) free the blacks and give them civil rights [*droit de cité*], of which the northern states only granted half and the southern states did not want to grant at all; 2) energetically resist the growing [size of the] proletariat, which entered into no one's perspective. Threatened in the South by black servitude and in the North by the white proletariat, the confederation was in danger: the obstinacy of both parties made the evil almost incurable. In fact, if things had been left alone, if the owning class of the North and the aristocracy of the South had remained united and concerned solely with developing their respective forms of exploitation, doing nothing for paid or enslaved workers, unconcerned with regard to the time when the two would meet, we could predict that, on the day the two floods collided, the democratic

multitude of the South would infiltrate the republican mass of the North and vice versa. Then white workers and black workers mixing and quickly getting along, the exploiting class, to protect itself from the slave and proletarian insurrection, would no longer only have to change its confederation into a unified state with police forces and a large standing army, centralised administration, etc., but, if it did not want to be exposed to slaves and the proletariat marching against it, it would have to name an emperor, as in the case of Haiti and Mexico. If, on the contrary, the racial difference were exploited, if the divergence of the exploiters' habits and the contradiction of their interests made separation inevitable, and no force could stop it, the political, economic and strategic fortune of the North was going to be seriously compromised, and we could still predict that the time would come when the republican majority would demand alliance on its terms with the slaveholding minority. Either way, the confederation was going to perish.

In that situation, the South took the initiative and proclaimed its independence: and how did the North proceed? Intent on retaining its supremacy and whereas, according to it, the territory of the United States comprised one nation, it began by calling the separatists *rebels*; then, to remove any pretext for secession, they decided to transport all the slaves away from the republic, compensating slaveholders, but to give the slaves of those slaveholders who requested it authorisation to remain but in an inferior condition that reminds one of the condition of ungodly pariahs. Therefore, when the confederates of the South called *rebels*, who, to escape their particular exploitation, asked to leave a confederation that had become impossible, they decreed their authority to legalise and render irrevocable the political and social separation of people of colour: a new way to apply the principle of nationality! Such is Lincoln's plan. If that plan comes to pass, it is clear that black servitude will only change its form, that many blacks, indispensable for the production of southern crops, will be held in the states in which they live, that American society will not be more homogenous, that, besides the desire to prevent any future separation attempt by the southern states from taking one more step toward centralisation, the plan will ensure, the geographic composition here assisting the social composition,¹ that the federal republic of the United States will only move more quickly toward the unified system by means of Lincoln's solution.

However, the same Democracy that among us supports Italian unity also supports American unity under the pretext of the abolition of slavery, but, to better demonstrate that those two unities are, in its eyes, only two bourgeois, quasi-monarchic expressions with the purpose of consolidating human exploitation, it applauds the conversion of black slaves to the proletariat that Mr. Lincoln proposed. Compare that with the denouncement with which it has attacked socialism since 1848, and you will have the secret of this democratic philanthropy that does

¹ If ever a confederation were under disadvantaged geographic conditions, it is surely that of the United States. We can say that fate is fundamentally hostile in that regard and that freedom is very far off. The huge square continent is 600 to 1,000 leagues wide with ocean on three sides and coasts so far from each other that we can say that the sea is inaccessible to three-quarters of the population; in the middle of that continent, an immense corridor, or rather a moat (Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio Rivers), which, if not neutralised or declared common property, will only form, for nineteen of twenty riverside residents, a route with no exit: that is, in short, the general configuration of the American union. Also, the danger of secession has been immediately understood, and it is undeniable in that regard that the North is fighting for its existence at least as much as unity. Everything there right now is in opposition: whites and blacks, the North and the South, the East and the West (Protestants and Mormons), the national character (Germanic and federalist) expressed by pact, territory, interests and customs. At first glance, North America seems to be predestined to form a large united empire comparable or even superior to that of the Romans, the Mongols or Chinese. But is it not also a marvellous thing that this continent has rightly fallen into the hands of the more federalist race due to its temperament, spirit and aspirations, the Anglo-Saxon race? If Mr. Lincoln teaches his compatriots to overcome their revulsion, grants the blacks their civil rights and also declares a war on [what creates] the proletariat, the union will be saved.

not support slavery (what rubbish!) but adapts to the marvel of the most brazen exploitation; you will have the secret of all those unities, the purpose of which is to break, through administrative centralisation, any strength of resistance in the masses; you will have acquired evidence that what governs the politics of the so-called republicans and democrats in the United States, Italy and France is not justice, not the spirit of freedom and equality and not even an ideal but pure egotism, the most cynical of reasons of state.

If, in its discussions on the American affair, the democratic press had applied as much judgment as it did zeal; if, instead of pushing the North against the South and shouting “Kill! Kill!” it had sought means of conciliation, it could have provided the opposing parties wise advice and noble examples. It could have told them the following:

“In a federal republic, the proletariat and slavery both seem unacceptable; the tendency must be to abolish them both.

“In 1848, Switzerland, after including the principle of equality before the law in its new constitution and abolishing all former bourgeois and familial privileges, did not hesitate, by virtue of this new principle, to bestow citizenship and its rights on the *heimathlosen* (people without a country). Can the American confederation, without failing in its principle and without going backwards, refuse already emancipated people of colour who abound on its territory the same benefits the Swiss granted to its *heimathlosen*? Instead of rejecting and humiliating those people, must not all Anglo-Saxons, both northern and southern, receive them in harmony and hail them as fellow citizens and equals? However, the consequence of that measure would be to grant equal political rights to both the emancipated blacks and those kept in servitude until now.

“In 1860, Tsar Alexander II of Russia, after freeing the peasants of his states, more than 25 million souls, and bestowing upon them the civil and political rights of his empire's government, gave all of them ownership of the land on which before they were only serfs, the tsar himself compensating the dispossessed nobles as he could—can the American confederation do less for its emancipated blacks than Tsar Alexander, an autocrat, did for his peasants? Is it not prudent and just that it also bestows land and ownership on them so that they do not fall into a worse servitude than the one they escaped?

“The American confederation, due to the sequence of ideas that governs it and through the misfortune of its situation, must do even more: it must, upon the penalty of recrimination from the southern states, attack [what creates] the white proletariat at its sources by providing possessions for the wage-workers [*possessionnant les salariés*] and organising, alongside political guarantees, a system of economic guarantees. It is up to the North to take the initiative on that reform and lead the South by the power of example rather than the force of arms.

“Beyond that, the North's hypocritical and unholy attack against the South can only result in the ruin of all the states and the destruction of the republic.”

At least Mr. Lincoln, forced to deal with the aristocratic minds and moral revulsion of the Anglo-Saxon race, is excusable to some degree, and the sincerity of his intentions must pardon his strange philanthropy. But the French, men educated in the school of Voltaire, Rousseau and the Revolution, in whom the egalitarian sentiment must be innate, how can they not believe that the northern ultimatum resulted in all those consequences? How can

they be happy with Mr. Lincoln's pretence of emancipation? How do they have the courage to applaud the recent call for the slaves to revolt, obviously only a call from the desperate North for a means of destruction that also rejects the laws of war and the law of nations? What is the excuse of these so-called liberals? Do they not see that the feeling that guides them is neither love nor humanity but the calculated coldness of a Pharisee economist, who says to himself after comparing his costs: Certainly, it is more advantageous to the capitalist, the captain of industry, property and the state, whose interests here are one, to use *free* workers, having because of wages [to provide for] themselves and so without worrying about their subsistence, than using enslaved workers who are more troublesome than the wage workers and produce proportionally less profit?

These are the facts, analogies and considerations raised, and here are the questions I ask Frédéric Morin.²

The federative principle here appears closely related to that of the social equality of races and the equilibrium of fortunes. The political problem, the economic problem and the problem of races are one and the same problem, and the same theory and jurisprudence can resolve that problem.

Notice, with regard to *black workers*, that physiologists and ethnographers recognise them as part of the same species as whites; that religion declares them, along with the whites, the children of God and the church, redeemed by the blood of the same Christ and therefore spiritual brothers; that psychology sees no difference between the constitution of the Negro conscience and that of the white, no more than between the comprehension of one and the other; finally, that it is proven, by daily experience, with education and, if needed, interbreeding, that the black race can provide offspring as remarkably distinguished by talent, morality and industry as what the white race can and that, more than once already, the black race has been of invaluable help in reinforcing and rejuvenating the white race.

Therefore, I ask Frédéric Morin:

If the Americans, after taking the blacks from their African countries by force to make slaves of them on American soil, have the right to expel them today because they no longer want them;

If that *deportation*, which only renews in an inverse sense the horrible reality of the first removal, does not constitute, according to the so-called abolitionists, a crime equal to that of the slavers;

If, through a century of servitude, the Negroes have not acquired the right to use and inhabitant American soil;

If it would suffice for the French owners to say to their proletarian compatriots, to all those who possess neither capital nor funds and who subsist by leasing their arms, "The land is ours; you do not own an inch of it, and we no longer need your services: leave"; so that the proletariat clear off;

² Frédéric Morin (1823-74) was a French republican and journalist who opposed the coup d'état of Louis-Napoleon and stood as an opposition candidate in 1857 and 1863. (Editor)

If the blacks, as free as the whites by nature and human dignity, may, by recovering the possession of their momentarily lost humanity, be excluded from their civil rights;

If those rights are not acquired through the double fact of their recent emancipation and previous residence;

If the condition of pariah, to which the Lincoln plan would doom the blacks, would not be worse for that minority race than servitude;

If that paltry emancipation is not shameful for the North and does not mean moral victory for the claim of the South;

If *Federalists* and *Confederates*, fighting only over the type of servitude, must not be declared equally guilty blasphemers and betrayers of the federative principle and banned from all nations;

If the European press that, with its incitements, unitarianism and anti-egalitarian tendencies, is their accomplice in all this, does it not also deserve the stigmatisation of opinion?

And generalising my thought, I ask Frédéric Morin:

If he believes that the inequality of faculties among people is such that it can legitimise unequal prerogatives;

If the inequality of fortunes, for which the inequality of faculties serves as a pretext and that creates in society such dreadful antagonisms, is not much more the work of privilege, cunning and luck than that of Nature;

If the first duty of states is not, therefore, to repair, with the institutions of mutuality and a vast system of education, the insult of birth and the accidents of social life;

If it does not seem to him, therefore, that the principle of equality before the law must have as corollaries: 1) the principle of equality of races, 2) the principle of equal conditions and 3) the principle of increasingly similar, although never completely equal, fortunes;

If, based on what is happening before our eyes, it appears to him that those principles, the negation of all political, economic and social privilege, of any accepted meaning of people and races, of preferential treatment of any kind, of any class pre-eminence, could be seriously applied and continued under a government other than a federative one;

If, finally, inasmuch as logic, history and contemporary facts allow it to be judged, is there no real incompatibility between the law and destiny of the human species and the practices and aspirations of the unitary system?

Immorality and servitude are what I have discovered at the foundation of that policy of unity, both of Mazzini and the Jacobins, which tomorrow will be that of President Lincoln, if a better inspiration does not arrive to replace his compatriots' and his fateful and ruthless preventions.