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The Politics of Terror : Enforcing Reconstruction in Louisiana's Red River Valley

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2. Shaping the Peace

Conservatives, Unionists, and the Military, 1865-1867

On Christmas Eve 1865, Elizabeth Ann Scofield, of Catalpa Grove plantation in Rapides Parish, wrote to her father in New York that the freedpeople in the South did not just "want freedom, but they wanted something more, lands, houses, homes, horses, mules, farming implements, at least a year's supply provisions, in short a little capital to set up on [...] They say they were promised land with their freedom, and land they expected to get, land they were waiting for."[1] The final weeks of 1865 found the rural South in turmoil. The reality of defeat and emancipation had begun to sink in, but no one knew with any certainty what status the freedpeople were to have in postwar Southern society. In August, the recently established Freedmen's Bureau had briefly pursued a policy aimed at large scale redistribution of abandoned and confiscated lands among the freedpeople, but Andrew Johnson had quickly put a stop to the endeavor. Blacks nevertheless continued to hope that the Christmas holiday would see the fulfillment of the government's promise to provide them with land. In response, rumors ran rampant among the South's white population that blacks would "stage a coordinated 'rising,' slaughtering the whites and seizing their lands and properties."[2]

Colonel F. M. Crandal, in charge of military forces in northwestern Louisiana, assured his superiors in New Orleans that this so called Christmas Day Insurrection Scare had no foundation. He expressed "no doubt that any petition indicating trouble from the freeing of the negroes would be signed very generally by the citizens here. There is very little real loyal feeling that I have discovered and much exceedingly bitter feeling against the Govt. and the Yankees." The Bureau's Inspector General for the state, reporting on the region shortly after the scare had passed, concluded that whites had not only exaggerated the dangers, but in fact fabricated them "as a justification for the perpetration of the most flagrant outrages by the disloyal planter upon the unfortunate negro!"[3]

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[1] 'December 24, 1865, Catalpa Grove, Elizabeth to dear father,' Elizabeth Ann Scofield Letter, Mss. 5001, LLMVC [Hereinafter: Scofield Letter].

[2] Dan T. Carter, "The Anatomy of Fear: The Christmas Day Insurrection Scare of 1865," *The Journal of Southern History* 42, no. 3 (1976): 346; Hahn, *Nation Under Our Feet*, 146–147; Summers, *Dangerous Stir*, 53–54. That the freedmen of the Red River Valley widely shared in these hopes is confirmed by 'January 11, 1866, New Orleans, Crosby to Insyth [p.27],' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4495, box 1

[3] 'November 6, 1865, Shreveport, Crandal to Hoffman,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1757, box 1; 'January 11, 1866, New Orleans, Crosby to Insyth [p.65],' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4495, box 1.

Officers who investigated similar rumors elsewhere, some of which had led to the disarming of blacks by local white militias, all reported that the blacks had no intention of taking up arms against the white population. However, as Captain Thomas Kennedy reminded his superiors, whites' fears of a black insurrection were quite real, even if the danger of such an uprising was not. General Absalom Baird, in charge of both the state's military forces and the Freedmen's Bureau at the time, responded to these reports by assuaging such fears and promising planters assistance in disciplining the newly emancipated black labor force. [4]

Despite personally giving little credence to the threats reported, Kennedy ordered his officers in the field to take precautionary measures against any armed insurrection by the freedpeople. He forwarded a letter from Bureau Commissioner Oliver Otis Howard to all Bureau agents emphasizing the need to counter false impressions among freedmen regarding land redistribution at Christmas. He made no mention of countering similarly incorrect impressions among the whites regarding a black uprising. In an accompanying statement to the freedpeople, Baird reiterated that they were "free as white people are free," but went on to urge them to seek employment from white landowners, who "as soon as the little prejudices of the present are past […] will become your best friends, for it will be their interest to foster and protect you."[5]

The fear of an armed black uprising and a subsequent race war was, in Dan Carter's words, merely "a drama of the imagination," existing only in the minds of the white population. Nevertheless, the freedpeople's aspirations to economic independence, as well as their newfound assertiveness following emancipation, most certainly served to fuel the always simmering white fears of a black uprising.[6] Following the euphoria of emancipation, the black population of the South used the initial months after the surrender to test the practical limits of their freedom, moving away from their old plantation to spend time in the towns and army camps, reuniting with their families, and establishing the foundations of their own communities.[7] Economic independence, based on small-scale landownership, appeared the logical next step, but by October of 1865 the federal government made it clear that it would not redistribute land on any significant scale. Once the Christmas season had passed, the

[4] 'December 21, 1865, n.p., Ludeke to Wood,' and 'December 23, 1865, n.p., Kennedy to Wood,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4495, box 1; 'October 28, 1865, New Orleans, Hoffman to Smith,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1738, vol. 79.
[5] 'December 19, 1865, New Orleans, Baird, Circular 32,' NARA, RG 105, M1905, reel 53, frame 932.
[6] Carter, "The Anatomy of Fear," 364; Summers, *Dangerous Stir*, 59.
[7] Foner, *Reconstruction*, chap. 3; Hahn, *Nation Under Our Feet*, 230–237; Fitzgerald, *Splendid Failure*, 51–54.

possibility appeared definitely foreclosed and the freedpeople generally resigned themselves to a foreseeable future as landless laborers.[8]

The Christmas Day Insurrection Scare marked a crucial turning point in the conservative resurgence, in the wake of the Confederates' defeat the previous spring. Buttressed by Johnson's lenient policies and, at least initially, by conservative Governor James Madison Wells's support, conservative whites set out to reestablish their political, economic, and racial control of the region. By Christmas, these conservatives, many of them unrepentant Confederate soldiers and officials, had taken control of the state and local government and enacted a series of laws, the so called Black Codes, which reduced the freedpeople to a legal status not far removed from slavery. Throughout the state, meanwhile, Confederate veterans formed militia companies, which served primarily to enforce white supremacy. The federal authorities' muted response to the Insurrection Scare signaled to conservative whites that they could persecute blacks and white Unionists with near impunity. It would, in fact, be more than a year before the federal government, through the Military Reconstruction Act of March 1867, made a significant attempt to guarantee security and the civil and political rights of the freedpeople and white Unionists and Republicans. By then, however, Republicans faced the entrenched power of conservative white elites, which they had established in the first postwar years.

Defeated, Yet Defiant

After his tour of the South in May and June of 1865, Whitelaw Reid concluded that "the National Government could at that time have prescribed no condition for the return of the Rebel States which they would not have promptly accepted." Following a similar inspection in the summer and early fall of 1865, prominent Republican Carl Schurz similarly found that the Southern "mind was so despondent that if readmission at some future time under whatever conditions had been promised, it would have been looked upon as a favor." Some historians, including Eric Foner, have echoed these conclusions, arguing that the despondency and disorientation among Southern whites provided a window for the North to impose effective

[8] A final attempt at providing economic independence for the freedpeople was made the following summer with the passage of the Southern Homestead Act. The poor implementation of the law, especially in Louisiana, prevented it from having a significant impact on the future social and economic fabric of the South. Claude F. Oubre, *Forty Acres and a Mule : The Freedmen's Bureau and Black Land Ownership*, 1978, chap. 6; Michael L. Lanza, "'One of the Most Appreciated Labors of the Bureau': The Freedmen's Bureau and the Southern Homestead Act," in *The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction : Reconsiderations*, ed. Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 67–92.

reforms on the South and that it was only Johnson's lenient policy that sparked the recalcitrance and resistance that subsequently undermined such efforts. [9]

Other scholars, however, including James Roark and particularly Michael Perman, have argued that, while accepting defeat and emancipation as *faits accomplis*, Southern whites presented a defiant stand on all other matters from the outset. Those whites along the Red River who recorded their thoughts in the final weeks of the war and the months that followed, tend to confirm this latter interpretation. Many refused to admit defeat until the very end and continued to "indulge in the swagger which was so customary before and during the war." Even those who accepted the inevitability of defeat and emancipation often shared, with what Schurz claimed was a small minority of 'incorrigibles,' a "hope for a time when the southern confederacy will achieve its independence."[10]

Following the evacuation of Richmond on April 2, 1865 and Robert E. Lee's defeat at Appomattox a week later, Shreveport briefly served as the formal capital of the disintegrating Confederacy, until General Edmund Kirby Smith surrendered to General Edward R. S. Canby on May 26. While Southern Louisiana had one of the longest experiences with wartime Reconstruction, the Red River Valley was among the last regions in the South to come under Union control. The war, particularly its final year, brought many hardships on the region, including a near famine in the final months of the war.[11] Nevertheless, the final defeat of the Confederacy came as a shock to many whites along the Red River, whose only immediate experience of the war had been General Nathaniel P. Banks's Red River Campaign in 1864. Although the Union army that marched into northwestern Louisiana inflicted heavy damages along the Red River, the confrontation had ended in resounding Confederate victory at Mansfield and Pleasant Hill.[12] As late as May 12, Mary Rives, who managed her own plantation near Mansfield, defiantly rejected the possibility of defeat: "What, surrender our rights, our homes, our country, and liberty? No never! Struggle on, fight the hireling horde as

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[9] CSS, 39-1, Sen. Ex. 2, 4; Whitelaw Reid, *After the War : A Tour of the Southern States, 1865-1866* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 296; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 189–190; Carter, *When the War Was Over*, 23, 31.

[10] CSS, 39-1, Sen. Ex. 2, 5; Perman, *Reunion Without Compromise*, 3–12; Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 132–136.

[11] 'January 20, 1865, Cotile, Sullivan to Allen,' 'n.d., Shreveport, Hynson to Wise,' 'April 8, 1865, [Smart?] to Allen', and 'May 10, 1865, Natchitoches, Manning to [Allen],' James Calvert Wise Papers, Mss. 3239, LLMVC, [Hereinafter: Wise Papers], box 1, folder 10-12

[12] On the Red River Campaign see: Thomas Ayres, *Dark and Bloody Ground: The Battle of Mansfield and the Forgotten Civil War in Louisiana* (Lanham: Cooper Square Press, 2001); Gary D. Joiner, *Through the Howling Wilderness: The 1864 Red River Campaign and Union Failure in the West* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006); Gary D. Joiner, *Little to Eat and Thin Mud to Drink : Letters, Diaries and Memoirs from the Red River Campaigns, 1863-1864* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007).

long as they have a foot on our soil, and our cause is with God." Not only civilians believed in keeping up the fight until the bitter end. On May 8, James C. Wise, a Confederate Colonel from Rapides Parish, wrote to former Confederate Governor Thomas Overton Moore that "victory and independence are within our grasp if we will only strike."[13]

Others along the Red River demonstrated a more realistic appraisal of the situation during the final weeks of the conflict. William F. Murray of Shreveport, on hearing of Lee's surrender, wrote a letter expressing "the blackness of our despair [...] as the full effects of that terrible disaster manifest themselves." With the defeat at Appomattox, "at one fell blow falls head, heart, and soul of the Confederacy, and the bravest army the world ever saw, men unconquered in a hundred battles, with our most efficient generals are powerless to succor our bleeding and falling country." Mary Cornelia Wright similarly concluded that "the Confederacy, for which so much precious blood has been shed, will have to be given up." David Pierson, one of four brothers from the Bienville and Winn area to serve in the Confederate army, wrote his father from Shreveport, where he was stationed, that "my last hope died within me when Genl. Lee surrendered." He believed the Trans-Mississippi Department might hold out as long as a year, were it not for the soldiers being "destitute, disgusted, and determined not [to] sacrifice their lives to gratify anybody's ambition."[14]

James R. Andrews, a prominent conservative and soon-to-be-sheriff of Rapides parish, offered the most comprehensive and subtle analysis of the condition and mindset of the white population at the end of the war. He wrote Colonel Wise, advising him against prosecuting the war to the bitter end. Although he admitted that Wise, as a military officer, had better sources of information to judge the situation by, Andrews nevertheless could not believe "that we have the ghost of a chance of success left us." He assured Wise that "the idea of reunion cannot be more repugnant to any man than it is to me, yet when I see that there is no other alternative, I may as well look the event fair in the face and reconcile myself to my fate, all of

[13] 'Mary Elizabeth Carter Rives Diary [May 12, 1865]', Mss. 2670, LLMVC; 'May 8, 1865, Shreveport, Wise to Moore,' Thomas O. Moore Papers, Mss. 305, 893, 1094, LLMVC [Hereinafter: Moore Papers], Volume 4 [from bound transcript].

[14] 'April 30, 1865, Shreveport, Murray to Morris,' Morris-Sibley Family Papers, Mss. 562, LLMVC , box 1, folder 3; 'Mary Cornelia Wright Diary [May 12, 1865],' Wright-Boyd Family Papers, Mss. 3362, LLMVC [Hereinafter: Wright-Boyd Papers], box 9, folder 1 [transcript]; 'May 9, 1865, Shreveport, Pierson to Pierson,' Rosemonde E. and Emile Kuntz collection, Manuscripts Collection 600, Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana, Series 5, box 23, folder 86. Although the Piersons had been fierce Unionists prior to secession, they joined the Confederate cause once the war began. For the family's background and the wartime correspondence of the four brothers with their father see: Thomas W. Cutrer and T. Michael Parrish, *Brothers in Gray : The Civil War Letters of the Pierson Family* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997).

its horrors vividly settled upon my retina, our humiliated condition properly appreciated." If the population and soldiers "would resolve that every man should die rather than submit," Andrews would happily fight to the bitter end, but in reality, neither soldiers nor civilians had the inclination to sacrifice themselves for a hopeless cause and "with women and children to be brought into the account [...] why destroy them without a prospect of equivalent result."[15]

Notably, even those who accepted the inevitability of defeat, tinged their resignation with defiance. Mary Wright was "willing to wait years," but would "never say die to the Confederacy." Andrews buttressed his argument in favor of surrender by reminding Wise that "it will be an easy matter for us to make such laws as will enable us to manage [?] slave population quite as advantageously as their condition as slaves did in the event of the states getting back [?] their sovereignty, which I think will be the case."[16] In the first months following the surrender, conservative whites continued to show a similar mix of superficial resignation, with a powerful undercurrent of barely suppressed hostility towards the federal government, the freedpeople, and Southern white unionists. J. W. Shaffer, who served as the Union army's chief quartermaster in New Orleans during the war, testified before the congressional committee on Reconstruction that "the great mass [of Southerners] are intensely disloyal." Despite having lost the war, "these people are determined to accomplish, if possible, an entire separation of the two sections. They cannot divide the territory; they have failed in that, but they are determined to divide the people, socially, politically, commercially, and, if they had any standings in morals on earth, morally also."[17]

Union officers stationed in northwestern Louisiana after the surrender shared such an assessment. J. P. Hawkins, a brevet major general in command of western Louisiana, encountered "a desire to submit quietly to the government of the United States, not through any love for it, but because they have had enough of trouble and they wish prosperity to return." A month later, Carl Schurz received two reports indicating just how superficial Southern submission was. General Canby noted that "the feeling and temper of that part of the population of Louisiana which was actively engaged in or sympathized with the rebellion have not materially changed" since the surrender. A. Tullas, a former professor at the state seminary in Rapides, "found the influential men of [that] parish as hot rebels as they ever were during the rebellion. They may, by mouth, profess Union sentiments, but their hearts are

[15] 'May 7, 1865, Alexandria, Andrews to Wise,' Wise Papers, box 1, folder 12.
[16] Ibid.; 'Mary Cornelia Wright Diary [May 12, 1865],' Wright-Boyd Papers, box 1, folder 9.
[17] W. P. Fessenden, et al., *Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction at the First Session Thirty-Ninth Congress, part IV: Florida, Louisiana, Texas* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1866) [Hereinafter: JCOR], 51, 55.

filled with hatred; they are only waiting for a favorable moment to turn the wheel back to its position as it was before the war."[18]

Roark argues that many planters were more interested in economic survival than in politics following the war.[19] In the mind of white conservatives, however, their economic interests remained inseparably intertwined with white supremacy and the political system that sustained it. They themselves made little distinction between the struggle for renewed prosperity, the fight for political control of the South, and the maintenance of a rigid racial hierarchy. Indeed, Andrews's statement to Wise, cited above, illustrates that to many conservative whites, economic prosperity remained coterminous with white 'management' of the freedpeople, and hence depended on their political independence. Henry M. Hyams, a conservative lawyer, explicitly stated that continued racial superiority mattered more than mere economic survival. He wrote to Moore, under whom he had served as lieutenant governor during most of the war, that "to the loss of our property we submit as well as may, as it is the result of the war and fiat of fate, but to the degradation of being sunk even below the negro we cannot even contemplate without a feeling of horror that we cannot suppress."[20]

Mary Rives, the spinster planter who wished to prosecute the war to the bitter end, left her plantation within half a year of the surrender to go live in Shreveport, as there remained "neither profit *nor pleasure* living with [the freedpeople] now." In the intervening months she regularly complained in her diary of the blacks' refusal to work as hard and as obediently as they had done as slaves. This undoubtedly harmed her financial prospects, but the loss of mastery inherent in the new circumstances upset her as much or more than the financial hardships she faced. She repeatedly expressed annoyance at the "unsettled" and "idle" work-habits of her former chattel, with whom she had 'contracted' in exchange for being "fed, clothed, and doctored, as I have always done." The idea of offering payment to secure their labor, whether in cash or in kind, apparently never entered her mind. Ultimately, she "left home with few regrets, many true friends are left but I could not stay with the negroes."[21]

[18] 'August 7, 1865, Alexandria, Hawkins to Andrews,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1757, box 2; 'September 8, 1865, New Orleans, Canby to Schurtz,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1738, vol. 79; 'September 7, 1865, New Orleans, Tullas to Schurtz,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1757, box 4.
[19] Roark, *Masters Without Slaves*, 180–181.
[20] 'September 10, 1865, New Orleans, Hyams to Moore,' Moore Papers, volume 4 [from bound transcript].
[21] 'Entries for June 12, 1865, August 4, 1865, August 23, 1865, October 9, 1865, and November 1, 1865' [my italics], Rives Diary.

Moore himself expressed little confidence in "freedman planting," fearing that "the fruits of demoralization and idleness have not even ripened, much less been reaped."[22] The freedpeople's supposed laziness and idleness was perhaps the most common racist trope regularly perpetuated by Southern whites, not only in their private diaries and correspondence, but also in their numerous local newspapers. In April 1868, the *Bossier Banner* reproduced an article from the *Louisville Journal* that blamed the poor agricultural productivity of the postwar years exclusively on the freedpeople's unwillingness to work, ignoring not only the wartime destruction of stock and capital investments, but also the severe floods and cotton worm infestations that destroyed much of the crops throughout the region in both 1866 and 1867.[23] General Phillip H. Sheridan, who commanded the Military District of the Gulf, comprising Texas and Louisiana, explained to a congressional committee just how disingenuous whites' claims of black laziness were. The freedpeople, he admitted, "work only because necessity compels them. In this," he dryly noted, "they are like all other persons. I have never known a white or a black man who was performing manual labor for the love of it."[24]

Whites continuously complained not only of blacks' laziness, but also their purported immorality. As *Louisiana Democrat* editor Eugene R. Biossat graphically detailed, in his 46 years living in Alexandria he had never seen

> such debauchery such complaints of petty thieving, and such disgraceful and disgusting scenes in the broad glare of day. And all seems to pass by unheeded, unrebuked, unpunished! The place is overrun, overcrowded with freedmen of all classes, from decriped [sic] old age down to the juveniles, all roaming, loafing, idling, spreeing, gambling and dancing around with perfect impunity, caring for no one, respecting no one, not even the common dictates of ordinary decency; not a night passing but what they attend in crowds Balls, 'kissing parties' and what they, in desecration, call preaching. And at these assemblies the morals of barbarians would be shocked to have to endure! They have their gambling halls on every square, and they

[22] 'December 31, 1865, Crockett and Moore to Wise,' Wise Papers, box 1, folder 12.
[23] BB, 68-04-04. For other references to blacks supposed idleness, see i.a. LD, 65-07-05, 65-10-18; BM, 65-11-04, 66-02-17; BB, 66-04-21, 66-10-06, 66-12-22
[24] 'March 31, 1866, New Orleans, Sheridan to Williams,' Philip Henry Sheridan Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC [Hereinafter: Sheridan Papers], reel 2, frame 314.

> can even be seem gambling in the public streets! When these evils will be checked, whose business it is to abate them, we know not.[25]

The freedpeople's immorality, according to some conservatives, threatened their very survival. Released from the "restraining influence of whites," the *Banner* concluded, "promiscuous intercourse, freedom of will and want of interest in their proginy [sic], has checked their increase by natural means."[26] For the first year following emancipation, conservative newspaper editors regularly predicted that the black population, "free - so called - free from the protection and support of his former master, his only friend - free to become a wandering vagabond to perish on the high-way, [...] like the unfortunate Red man, must recede before the advancing tide of civilization, and vanish from the face of the earth, as 'the last wave settles over him, forever.'"[27]

A final central element in whites racist portrayal of the freed black population was the latter's inclination to criminality, a result of their supposed inability to work productively unless coerced. According to the *Banner*, "negroes in the South monopolize the criminal calendar," and every Southern paper published "two paragraphs daily recounting thefts by negroes, and many additional attempts at robbery and even higher crimes."[28]

Despite the enormous changes in our understanding of Reconstruction since the Dunning era, much modern scholarship on Reconstruction, both in Louisiana and elsewhere, has continued to reflect the assumption that blacks did in fact widely engage in petty theft, condoned by their own community as a more or less justifiable response to their dire economic straits. Even Vandal, who explicitly debunks the "impressionistic and often distorted image" of rampant black violence, asserts that "being a thief was not […] an abstract phenomenon for freedmen, but an alternative mode of industry to satisfy their hunger, even if it meant living outside the abstract rules of law."[29]

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[25] LD, 65-12-20
[26] BB, 66-04-21.
[27] BM, 66-01-20. See also: LD, 65-06-28, 65-12-27; BB, 66-10-06, 66-12-22.
[28] BB, 66-05-26. See also BM, 66-01-13, 66-0217; NT, 66-02-07, 66-09-26; LD, 66-09-26. See also Gilles Vandal, "Black Violence in Post-Civil War Louisiana," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 25, no. 1 (1994): 48–49.
[29] Ibid., 49; Gilles Vandal, "Property Offenses, Social Tension and Racial Antagonism in Post-Civil War Rural Louisiana," *Journal of Social History* 31, no. 1 (1997): 142; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 361, 422–423; Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 154. For a more critical perspective on the supposed crime wave by blacks: Waldrep, *Roots of Disorder*, 105; Mary Ellen Curtin, *Black Prisoners and Their World, Alabama, 1865-1900* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 43–45.

Evidence from the DeSoto Parish district court records, however, suggests that such assumptions need to be reevaluated. These records show that while individual blacks faced charges of petty theft, larceny, and horse theft, the black community as a whole did not condone such acts as a reasonable response to their social and economic position.[30] Even in conservative publications, specific references to blacks committing crimes are far rarer than general statements about black criminality, while even such specific cases often lacked the evidence to back up the charge. Delos W. White, a Freedmen's Bureau agent in Winn parish, noted in December 1867 that in every case of hog stealing reported, "there is always some white man at the bottom of the affair." In one case, a white man named Warmock hired a freedman to kill some hogs, which turned out to include animals belonging to Henry Teagles. Without the Bureau agent to investigate such case, whites quickly blamed the freedpeople "for being a lawless and worthless people when it is the white man that is to blame and not the freedman."[31] Even the conservative *Natchitoches Times* placed the brunt of the blame for corn and cotton theft at the doorstep of crooked white merchants and not the freedmen. The editor advised planters "in no instance [to] disturb the freedmen while in the act of stealing, but follow them, and find out the merchant buying this stolen property, and prosecute him to the full extent of the law."[32]

Southern whites' deeply rooted racist mindset had the paradoxical effect of somewhat leavening their contempt for the freedpeople with a measure of pity. Being naturally unsuited to freedom, whites blamed blacks' laziness, immorality, and criminality on the "radical emissaries," who taught them to "believe that laziness would make their fortunes and establish their supremacy, and that they would be liberally supplied from the North with whatever they wanted and couldn't steal."[33] No such extenuating circumstances existed in the Southern mind to temper their hatred of and contempt for Northerners and Southern white Unionists. Elizabeth Scofield noted in December 1865 that "the older children have all imbibed a feeling of prejudice, dislike, disgust, if not almost hatred for everything, and almost

[30] Mark Leon de Vries, "Between Equal Justice and Racial Terror : Freedpeople and the District Court of DeSoto Parish, Louisiana during Reconstruction," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, forthcoming 2015.
[31] 'December 20, 1868, White, trimonthly report,' NARA, RG 105, M1905, reel 89, frame 393.
[32] NT, 66-09-26.
[33] BB, 68-04-04.

anybody, northern." Mary Wright, wistfully contemplated "how happy we should all be" if the South "never again should see or hear of a Yankee."[34]

Even as ardent a Unionist as Governor Wells shared in the prejudices so common to white planters from rural Louisiana. Wells's contempt of Northerners served as a prime motivator for his conciliatory policy, which handed control of the state and local government to unrepentant former rebels. Wells also shared white Louisianians' racial attitudes. He complained of "the lawless conduct of the negroes. Most of them have fire arms, which they use in shooting down stock; theft and burglary are of everyday occurrence and murders have been committed on defenseless women and children" In thus writing to President Johnson, Wells appealed to the latter as a fellow Southerner. "Your knowledge of the race, Mr. President, must convince you that if left to themselves, they will not work. I tremble for the consequences if they are allowed to congregate in large bodies in a state of idleness, which they will surely do if they have the liberty." The governor's disgust also extended to large numbers of colored troops stationed throughout the state. He warned the president that "their very presence demoralizes the negroes for all purposes of useful industry."[35]

The mindset that pervaded Southern white society - from planters, politicians, and newspaper editors along the Red River up to the governor in New Orleans - played an important role in their subsequent violent response to the national government's attempts to provide the freed slaves with the privileges of citizenship. Even the majority resigned to defeat and emancipation, remained defiant and unrepentant, resenting any intrusion in their affairs that threatened their political, economic, and racial dominance. Furthermore, their deep-rooted racism made it almost impossible for Southern whites to conceive of blacks as citizens who might actively, independently, and intelligently participate in the political and legal process. At most, they were willing to accord them a second-class citizenship, with which they would enjoy the limited protection of a political and judicial system controlled entirely by whites. Finally, their wartime experience left former Confederates, both soldiers and civilians, with a bitter hatred of Northerners and Southern white Unionists. They barely tolerated those, such as Wells, whom they considered politically useful. Most others faced the threat of violent retaliation by their neighbors, unless protected by federal troops.

[34] 'December 24, 1865, Catalpa, Elizabeth to Dear Father,' Scofield Letter; 'Mary Cornelia Wright Diary [May 12, 1865],' Wright-Boyd Papers, box 1, folder 9.
[35] Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 97–98.; 'July 5, 1865, New Orleans, Wells to Johnson,' and 'October 20, 1865, New Orleans, Wells to Johnson,' James Madison Wells Microfilm, Mss. 1219, LLMVC [Hereinafter: Wells Microfilm].

Conservative whites later transferred this hatred to those whites, Northern or Southern, who defected from the ideology of white supremacy to join the Republican Party, the 'Carpetbaggers' and 'Scalawags' of Reconstruction legend.

Status Quo Ante

Large parts of Louisiana experienced extensive wartime Reconstruction and, as a consequence, Unionists had a well-organized Free State Party in New Orleans, which might have served as the nucleus for a Republican controlled state government.[36] This party, however, was an uneasy alliance comprising conservative Unionist planters, moderate and radical politicians, and the free blacks of New Orleans, the so called *gens de couleur*. While the more radical Unionists urged immediate emancipation and even partial enfranchisement for the free black population, more conservative Unionists opposed all political and civil rights for the black population. With the support of the military commander, Nathaniel P. Banks, moderate Unionist Michael Hahn was elected governor in February 1864 over the more Radical Thomas J. Durant. More importantly, at least in retrospect, the conservative Unionist and wealthy Rapides Parish planter Wells was elected lieutenant governor on the same ticket.[37] As a result, when the legislature elected Hahn to the US Senate, Wells acceded to the governorship on March 4, 1865. A conservative planter, who had no affinity with either the black population or Radical Northern politicians, controlled the state government of Louisiana as the Civil War drew to a close and the question of Southern blacks political status took on increasing political importance.

Although Wells had bucked the mainstream of opinion among his social peers by opposing secession and actively supporting the Union effort during the war, as soon as he became governor, in March of 1865, he turned to the traditional planter elite of which he was a part as his natural base of support. When Johnson acceded to the presidency following Lincoln's assassination, Wells supported the new president's lenient policy towards Southern whites and continued to use his vast patronage power to return conservative whites to positions of statewide and local power in Louisiana. In a June 10, 1865, address to the 'people of parishes recently returned to the Union,' Wells asked the citizens of each parish to make

[36] On wartime Reconstruction in Louisiana see: Ibid., chap. 1–3; McCrary, *Lincoln and Reconstruction*; C. Peter Ripley, *Slaves and Freedmen in Civil War Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), chap. 9.

[37] On Wells see: Walter M. Lowrey, "The Political Career of James Madison Wells," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 31 (1948): 995–1123.

recommendations for officers to fill the positions of sheriff, recorder, clerk of court, and police juror provisionally until elections could be held. Within a month these positions had been filled in Rapides, Caddo, and, presumably, most other parishes along the Red River. The conservative *Louisiana Democrat* heartily endorsed the appointments, which included a number of prominent conservatives who would later play a leading role struggle against Congressional Reconstruction over the next decade, such as Albert H. Leonard, James J. Weems, and Michael Ryan.[38]

Initially, Wells demanded that those he appointed be able to take the oath prescribed by Johnson in his amnesty proclamation, but by early July he had relaxed even that precondition. Wells assured the president that former rebels "manifest the greatest readiness to comply with the requirements of your amnesty proclamation and submit themselves to the laws, and I do not know, nor have I heard of in any quarter, any threat or even empty bravado suggesting vindictive or resentful feelings." Wells had such confidence in the sincerity of returned Confederate soldiers that in making appointments to the "parochial machinery for administration and judicial purposes I have been less exacting in regards to the antecedents of said candidates." This laxity extend in particular to "remote sections," such as the Red River Valley, "where trouble was feared from disbanded soldiers, run away negroes, and other outlaws who might seek to disturb society, I appointed some fine men of resolution and Intelligence, who had some military service in the rebel ranks."[39]

Wells's conservative inclinations initially gained him the support of the vast majority of white conservatives, some of whom considered him "as their savior." Others were less enthusiastic about the former Unionist, but nevertheless supported him on strategic grounds. Henry Hyams wrote to ex-Governor Moore, to assure him that, despite their wartime positions, Wells and Johnson would prove to be friends of the Southern whites. "Their instincts, if not of the states' rights school, are yet for justice to the South and they are and will show themselves true to their instincts." Under the circumstances, he argued, Wells was by far the best choice to ensure "a Reconstruction of the Union on the basis of the perfect equality of the States." [40] Canby, the military commander in Louisiana, believed Wells to be sincere in his attempt to establish a loyal government, although he privately expressed doubts as to "the loyalty and the honesty (political) of some of his advisers, and I look with

[38] LD, 65-06-21, 65-07-05.
[39] 'July 5, 1865, New Orleans, Wells to Johnson,' Wells Microfilm.
[40] 'December 31, 1865, Crockett, Moore to Wise,' Wise Papers, folder 12; 'September 10, 1865, New Orleans, Hyams to Moore,' Moore Papers, vol. 4 [from bound transcript].

apprehension upon many of the appointments made under these influences during the past two months." Officially, however, he followed Johnson's orders to recognize the Wells government, instructing his officers that officials appointed by the governor "will be respected and supported by the military authorities."[41]

Conservatives further' cemented their power in Louisiana at the statewide elections held in November 1865. Wells easily won election as the candidate for both the Democrats and the moderate Republicans, while the more radical Republicans boycotted the elections. Wells thus stood unopposed, except for former Confederate governor Henry Watkins Allen, nominated by a small number of last-ditchers, such as *Democrat* editor Biossat, who refused to accept even Johnson's moderate Reconstruction program and claimed the 1852 constitution to be in force.[42] More significant than Wells's victory, was the election of dozens of conservative state legislators. These legislators aggressively pursued policies that soon aroused slumbering divisions between the moderate Wells and the hard-line conservatives whites he had helped into power. Their legislation, particularly the infamous Black Codes, also angered politicians and public opinion in the North, disrupting the amicable restoration of civil rule that Wells and Johnson had hoped for.[43]

Following the elections, Wells immediately called a special session of the new legislature, and in the final weeks of 1865 it went to work to enact the conservative legislation favored by its white constituents. Many conservatives along the Red River felt that the main business of the special session should be the calling of a convention to replace the 1864 constitution, in the framing of which the region had not taken any part. Initially it appeared that the legislature might do so, but by early January 1866 it became clear that they would take no action on the matter, to the chagrin of the conservative press, which accused them of representing "the views of the Radical party [...] rather than those of their constituents."[44] J. R. Head, the conservative representative from Bienville, became the target of the *Bienville Messenger*'s hostility when he introduced a resolution that accepted the 1864 constitution as the *de facto* basic law of the state. He argued that by accepting the constitution mandated by the federal government, the legislature could in turn force the federal government to recognize

[41] 'September 8, 1865, New Orleans, Canby to Schurtz,' and 'September 23, 1865, New Orleans, Canby to Hawkins,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1738, vol. 79.
[42] LD, 65-10-25.
[43] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 70–73; Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 100–101.
[44] LD, 65-12-06; BM, 66-01-13.

its legitimacy. Since the constitution enshrined white-only suffrage it could be tolerated until a more propitious time for calling a convention.[45]

In numerous other matters, however, the legislature proved true to its conservative credentials. Lawmakers appointed a disabled Confederate veteran as doorkeeper, and allowed him to serve in his military uniform.[46] Other measures went beyond symbolism. The legislature passed a bill that suspended the collection of taxes owed for the years 1861-1864 in areas then under Confederate control. Wells promptly vetoed the bill, one of the first major disputes to arise between the governor and the legislature. The governor argued in his veto message that the proposed measure would not only "sanctify rebellion to the government, and treason to the nation," but also unduly affect the loyal men of Southern Louisiana who during those years "alone have had the entire burden thrown upon them of sustaining the State and local administration." Such arguments, however, held little appeal to the whites of northwestern Louisiana, who had already paid heavy taxes to "support their own *de facto government*." Wells, according to the *Messenger*, showed "his cloven-foot in vetoing the bill." The editor left it to what Wells had called the "bad men who took up arms" to decide for themselves the merits of the veto.[47] In February, the governor did sign a subsequent compromise bill, which suspended the collection of wartime taxes throughout the entire state, but the damage to Wells's relationship with conservatives throughout the state was not so easily repaired.[48]

While the tax law - as well as some other less important measures - created a rift between the legislature and the governor, other acts passed by the legislature served to inflame northern public opinion. The so called Black Codes were a series of laws passed in late December, in part as a response to the Christmas Insurrection Scare, which severely curtailed the freedom of black agricultural laborers. Unlike the earlier Black Codes of Mississippi and South Carolina, the Louisiana laws did not explicitly make any racial distinctions, in an attempt to placate Northern public opinion. However, they allowed local magistrates great leeway in interpretation, and with blacks precluded from voting and office-

[45] BM, 66-01-06. No one expected the conservative legislature recently elected to implement the limited enfranchisement of blacks theoretically permitted under the 1864 constitution.
[46] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 80.
[47] BM, 66-01-20; LD, 66-01-03, 66-01-31.
[48] 'Act 24,' in *Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana at the First Session of the Second Legislature, Held and Begun in the City of New Orleans on the 22d of January, 1866* (New Orleans: State Printer, 1866)

holding, the legislature expected conservative white officials to apply the laws in a discriminatory fashion.[49]

At the center of the Black Codes stood the labor and vagrancy statutes. The first, officially entitled the *Act to provide for and regulate labor contracts for agricultural pursuits*, obligated agricultural laborers to sign yearlong contracts by January 10 of each year. Once they signed, laborers remained bound to their employer for the entire year and would receive payment only at year's end from the proceeds of the crop. Employers could deduct wages for sickness, damages done to animals and tools. They also had the authority to fine freedmen one dollar for various acts of 'disobedience,' including, among other things, "leaving home without permission" and "impudence, swearing or indecent language."[50]

The new vagrancy statute authorized any citizen to make a complaint to a local magistrate to have someone arrested for vagrancy. If convicted, either by confession or competent testimony, such vagrants were to post a bond for their future good behavior. If no bond could be posted, the vagrant would either be hired out to a planter or put to work repairing roads and levees. The planters employing them would pay their salary into the parish treasury, with the laborer receiving only "such clothing, food and medical attention as [the planters] furnish their other laborers."[51] Other laws forbade the carrying of firearms on plantations without the owner's consent; set harsh penalties for entering a plantation without the owner's permission; forbade the "tampering with, persuading or enticing away, harboring, feeding or secreting" of laborers employed on a plantation; and provided for the apprenticing of orphans and indenturing of the destitute. Wells signed every one of these laws, although he did successfully veto an act that would have made any freedperson unable to provide himself or herself with shelter and employment subject to arrest and the sale of their labor.[52]

The Black Codes created a system of regulations that severely curtailed both the physical and the economic mobility of landless laborers. In the racially discriminatory application envisioned by the legislature the laws placed the freedpeople under the strict control of either his or her employer or, if unemployed, of the local white community as a whole. In Bienville Parish, for example, militia commander, W. D. Candler instructed his

[49] Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 100–101.
[50] This and other Black Codes can be found in CSS, 39-2, Sen. Ex. 6, 181 -187; and in *Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana at the Extra Session, Held and Begun in the City of New Orleans on the 23d of November, 1865* (New Orleans: State Printer, 1866) [Hereinafter: *Acts Passed, 1865*]; A summary of the central provisions of these acts is in CSS, 42-2, HOR. Rep. 92, 31.
[51] 'Act 12,' in *Acts passed 1865*.
[52] 'Act 10,' Acts 11,', 'Act 16,' 'Act 19,' and 'Act 20,' in *Acts Passed 1865*; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 101.

subordinate officer, Captain Moss, to arrest "all persons without visible means of support, without regard to color," singling out for particular attention "all Freedmen without homes and employment." Although Canby found the new laws distasteful, he insisted that the army had no right to interfere with the constituted civil authorities.[53]

Not surprisingly, the conservative press approved of what they euphemistically called 'labor regulations.' The *Democrat* claimed that the legislation was to the benefit of the freedpeople, curtailing "all opportunities for extortion, oppression, cruelty, and unfair dealing." The *Messenger* concurred, claiming that the legislature had "enacted more favorably for the freedmen than the magnanimous Bureau, with its swarms of superfluous agents." At the same time, Conservatives assured themselves, the laws would guarantee that the freedpeople would not give in to their supposed natural laziness, forbidding them, "at their own cost, to pass their time in idleness." The Bureau, according to conservative whites, did nothing but issue orders "for no other purpose than to annoy the people of the South and to put it out of their power to do anything for the unfortunate race who are unable to do anything for themselves." [54]

The legislature convened for its first regular session on January 22, 1866, a month after the close of the extra session in which it had passed the Black Codes. Lawmakers quickly ordered parochial and municipal elections, hoping to oust Wells's political allies throughout the state, most prominently New Orleans mayor Hugh Kennedy who lost to former Confederate Mayor John T. Monroe in March. Wells managed to delay parochial elections until May, but by then the governor had lost all support among the conservative press in northwestern Louisiana. The *Democrat* warned voter that it would be "their own fault if the imbecility which now characterizes the office holders throughout the state, shall continue for any length of time."[55]

The press gave little attention to the elections, beyond publishing the names of the candidates and the outcome. With blacks precluded from voting, as General Sheridan correctly predicted, "glorification of the Rebellion means that those who participated are more likely to be elected."[56] Nearly all candidates reflected the conservative views of the white majority. After James R. Andrews won the Rapides sheriffalty by seven votes over the incumbent deputy C. V. Ledoux, *Democrat* editor Biossat merely expressed disappointment that "*both* gentlemen could not have been elected." The outcome of the election, which

[53] BM, 66-01-06; Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction*, 31.
[54] LD, 65-12-27; BM, 66-01-20
[55] LD, 66-03-28; Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 102–103.
[56] 'March 31, 1866, New Orleans, Sheridan to Williams,' Sheridan Papers, reel 2, frame 314.

replaced all of the incumbent Wells appointees, generally pleased the *Democrat*'s editor, notwithstanding that he had greeted those same appointees with enthusiasm just a year earlier.[57]

The rising political fortunes of the conservative whites resulted not only in the passage of the repressive Black Codes and control of local offices, but also in the establishment of a militia force in many parishes, the primary purpose of which was to enforce white control over the freedpeople. In November of 1865, the *Messenger* approved Bienville militia captain J. Lang Lewis's policy of recruiting on a volunteer basis, as under existing laws a draft would apply equally to both races indiscriminately and the editors did "not wish to *compromise the dignity of the Freedman* by compelling him to serve in the ranks with *us poor white trash*."[58] Around the same time whites also organized militias in DeSoto, Caddo, Rapides, and, presumably, most other parishes. In Caddo, the local army commander warned that "no worse choice could have been made" in the selection of commanders.[59] In Rapides, on the contrary, Colonel Scofield not only authorized the establishment of 'vigilance committees,' but even ordered his troops to provide them with all lawful aid in "arresting and bringing to punishment before the proper authorities all offenders against law and good order." This earned him the gratitude of the conservative *Democrat*, which praised his efforts to "make the people feel that the troops are here for their protection and not their oppression.[60]

The stated purpose of these militia companies was to "protect[...] their families and property from the violence and lawless depredation of [...] bands of thieves." However, wartime Unionist Dennis E. Haynes, who had suffered physical violence at the hands of conservative whites both during and after the war, complained to General Canby in November that the commanders appointed with Scofield's approval included the "notorious murderers Bill Smart and Bob Martin," who during the war had "with bloodhounds hunted down Union men." A few months earlier, Haynes had made similar complaints to Wells in an anonymous letter published in the *New Orleans Times*. He could not abide that Smart, Martin, and "a host of other man-destroying villains, are at their respective abodes, enjoying in peace the fruits of

[57] BB, 66-04-28, 66-05-12; BM, 66-04-14, 66-05-05, 66-05-12; LD, 65-06-21, 66-04-18, 66-05-16.
[58] BM, 65-11-18.
[59] 'November 6, 1865, Shreveport, Crandal to Hoffman,' NARA, RG 393, part 1 ,entry 1757, box 1.
[60] 'Endorsement by Scofield to October 11, 1865, Alexandria, petition signed by C.V. Ledoux, Jno. Roach Williams and Mick Ryan,' enclosed in 'December 7, 1865, Alexandria, Scofield to Lowell,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1757, box 2; LD, 65-10-18.

their bloody deeds," while Haynes and his fellow Unionists suffered persecution and ostracism.[61]

Scofield justified his decision by insisting that the men appointed came highly recommended by the district judge, the parish sheriff, and the sheriff's principal deputy. All three of these officials, however, were conservatives appointed by Wells, who shared in the racial prejudices of their class. Although the district judge, Michael Ryan, had opposed secession, he would run for Congress as a conservative Democrat in the extremely violent 1868 elections and later led a walkout of all whites from the district court to protest the participation of blacks as grand jurors. Sheriff John Roach Williams had owned nearly over two hundred slave before the war and served in the Confederate cavalry. Williams's deputy, Ledoux, had been a small slaveholder and a member of the Know Nothing Party before the war and a Wells appointee to the conservative postwar police jury. Although a wartime Unionist, who could swear the required test-oath to become sheriff in 1868, Ledoux did not join the Republican Party until 1872, when he promptly received its nomination for parish judge. Such men, we may assume, had no qualms about appointing unrepentant Confederates to lead the local militia, nor did they object to the militia's employment as a tool of racial control.[62]

Although there is no record of the Rapides militia persecuting either the black population or white Unionists and Republicans, evidence from other places along the Red River and throughout the state illustrate that the militia forces established in the fall of 1865 regularly did so. The army records include numerous reports of militia companies disarming the black population, among others in DeSoto, where such action resulted, "as it has done elsewhere in this state, in the commission of several robberies and other outrages, and one murder."[63] In a report on the condition of the entire Red River region from the period, the Acting Assistant Inspector General J. Schuyler Crosby accused the militias in the region of cruelly and brutally punishing any negroes found outside of their former plantations." This prevented the freedpeople from traveling to other plantation to seek employment elsewhere. These militias, he concluded, represented "nothing more nor less than the rebel army

[61] Ibid.; 'November 17, 1865, New Orleans, Hayes to Canby,' enclosed in 'December 7, 1865, Alexandria, Scofield to Lowell,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1757, box 2; 'September 18, 1865, 'Cato' to Wells,' reprinted in Dennis E. Haynes, *A Thrilling Narrative : The Memoir of a Southern Unionist*, ed. Arthur W. Bergeron Jr. (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), 87–90.

[62] '1860 US Federal Census, Slave Schedules: Rapides Parish Louisiana [pages 18, 24-27],' Ancestry.com; CSS, 41-2, HOR. Misc. 154, part 1, 279; LD, 59-09-07, 65-08-02, 66-05-16, 68-02-19, 72-04-24, 72-10-09.

[63] 'April 10, 1866, New Orleans, Canby to AdG,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1738, vol. 80; 'November 25, 1865, Mansfield, Macpherson to Parsons,' NARA, RG 393, part 5, Post Shreveport, letters received 1865-1866.

reorganized, who seem to defy the authority of the United States and who are outspoken in their sentiments of disloyalty."[64]

The Black Codes and the formation of militias embodied the legislative and executive culmination of conservative white political restoration in the months following the surrender. By early 1866, conservatives controlled nearly every important state and local office; had passed laws that transferred the individual control of the master over his slaves to a collective control over the black population by the white community; and had organized militias, reminiscent of the antebellum slave patrols, to enforce political, economic, and racial control over the freedpeople. With political power in the hands of the traditional elites, those who opposed them politically soon found themselves at the mercy of the very men whom they had believed defeated just six months earlier.

Persecuting the Victors

The rapid return to power by conservative whites spelled disaster for those who opposed their political interests. Freedpeople, Republicans, wartime Unionists, Northern immigrants, federal officials, and even US soldiers, suffered indignities and persecution at the hands of conservative white militants, who met little opposition in settling scores, both personal and political, against their enemies. The army had neither the resources nor the mandate to curtail such violence, contributing to a general atmosphere of lawlessness and impunity that fostered widespread, often politically-motivated, violence against freedpeople and white Republicans.

It is not always straightforward to distinguish politically motivated violence from the more mundane crime engendered by the anarchic conditions that followed the Civil War. Conservatives, moreover, consciously confused the issue by repeatedly denying that violence against Unionists served a political purpose. They conveniently blamed violence on the so-called Jayhawkers, bands of outlaws, mostly Confederate deserters and former Unionist scouts, who committed depredations simply from pecuniary motivations. Such gangs most certainly existed, especially in northwestern Louisiana, where outlaws could easily escape across state lines into Arkansas and Texas. A self-proclaimed 'loyal citizen' from Mansfield wrote General Sheridan to inform him that "companies of Jayhawkers have been organized between Mansfield and Shreveport and are committing […] all sorts of outrages: murdering, robbing, and burning down houses. The country is terror stricken and expects prompt action

[64] 'January 11, 1866, New Orleans, Crosby to Insyth [pp. 64-65],' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4495, box 1.

on your part to put an end to the depredations of these outlaws."[65] In fact, thefts committed by these outlaw bands may well have accounted for a portion of the widespread property crime that whites conveniently blamed on the freedpeople. The lines, however, between common criminality and political violence, as well as that between respectable citizens and outlaws, often proved blurrier than the public statements by conservative whites suggested.

A case in point is the burning of a cotton gin owned by Luca Radisach, a relatively wealthy, 64 year old planter from Winn parish, who had moved to Louisiana from his native Italy more than 30 years before the Civil War. On May 27, 1865, the day after Kirby Smith's surrender, a gang of outlaws robbed a neighbor of Radisach's and rumors circulated that the Italian was to be their next victim. When the gang came to his property two nights later, he was prepared to meet them with guns and pistols loaded. Assisted by his "little son and a negro boy [...], gun in hand," he made the unwelcome visitors wait outside his gate and sent his daughter out to negotiate. The gang members claimed to be paroled soldiers from Mobile, looking for something to eat. Radisach asked his daughter to examine their paroles and to promise them food in the morning it they camped outside the gate to his plantation. Refusing to show her their papers, they departed, but as they withdrew, they "struck a fire and set light to the gin house, containing 80 bales of cotton, his crop for the previous 3 years, and 100 bushels each of wheat and rye and all his farming utensils."

The next day, Radisach and his neighbors followed the trail left by the desperadoes and came upon a "coat, belonging to John Mooney covered in a peculiar mud from Radisach's plantation." They arrested Mooney, who promptly confessed and gave up his accomplices, claiming that William Thornton was their leader and Thomas Crawford his lieutenant. The outlaws had heard that Radisach had a lot of money in the house and went to rob him, but, finding him too well prepared, had fired the gin to lure him out. The posse reluctantly arrested Thornton, a well-respected local resident, but released him upon his denial of involvement. When the rest of the gang confirmed his participation, however, they rearrested Thornton, and, after deliberating whether to lynch them, handed the outlaws over to the recently arrived military force at Natchitoches. A military tribunal held a brief trial, releasing the suspects after hearing only two unimportant witnesses. By the time Brevet

[65] 'July 17, 1865, Mansfield, Smith to Sheridan,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1756, box 4; See also: 'August 7, 1865, Alexandria, Keeting to AAG,' Nara 393, part 4, entry 28, Post Alexandria; 'December 7, 1865, Alexandria, Scofield to Lowell,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1757, box 2; 'July 24, 1866, Shreveport, Lowell to Lee,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4495, box 3. On the continuity between the Civil War and postwar violence see also: Carter, *When the War Was Over*, 11–19.

Brigadier General Napoleon B. McLaughlin reopened the investigation in the summer of 1867 all the suspects had moved to Texas.[66]

There is no immediate evidence that the attack on Radisach had political motives. His foreign birth and opposition to secession may have marked him as an outsider an thus a relatively easy target to avoid community outrage. On the other hand, Winn parish had harbored more Unionist sentiment than most parishes along the Red River and after secession Radisach had supported the war effort and his son, Anthony, had served in the Confederate army. It was the army's negligence, moreover, rather than community's disinterest that prevented conviction of the perpetrators. Two years later, however, when McLaughlin reopened the investigation, local resident immediately politicized the case by incorrectly claiming that the perpetrators had been Union men. By then, opposition to the Military Bill and to increased federal interference had trumped whatever Unionist sentiment existed.[67]

The persecution suffered by Dennis Haynes, the wartime Unionist who complained to Canby about Scofield's militia appointments, was more overtly political. Haynes, a native of Rapides parish, had moved to Texas shortly before the war, but returned to Louisiana in 1863. He assisted the Union war-effort, until captured by Confederate forces in 1863. He escaped and began to make his way home to Rapides, but was shot by guerrillas along the way and subsequently, from August 1864 until July 1865, served as acting military sheriff in Madison parish, in northeastern Louisiana.[68] After the war, he returned to Rapides, where he found his home burnt and the vast majority of his white neighbors extremely hostile. Both Haynes himself, as well as friends who tried to assist him, regularly received threats of violence. When he tried to initiate legal proceedings against the guerrillas who shot him and against others who had beaten him during the war, not a single lawyer would take the case, including a Unionist acquaintance who feared "he would lose caste in that community by allowing himself to be employed by a Union man."[69]

On September 4, these simmering tensions boiled over, when Joseph Texada severely beat Haynes in the streets of Alexandria, badly injuring the shoulder in which he had been shot. Texada and his relatives were notoriously violent men. Freedmen's Bureau agents in Alexandria regularly received complaints of maltreatment from the black employees of

[66] 'July 31, 1867, Sparta, McLaughlin to Mower,' NARA, RG 393, part 3, entry 287, box 2.
[67] Ibid.; For evidence of wartime Unionism in Winn see: United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: a Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC: GPO 1880-1901), Series 1, Volume XXX, part III (1880), 732-733.
[68] An 1866 account of Haynes's wartime experiences was recently republished: Haynes, *A Thrilling Narrative*.
[69] JCOR 59-60.

Joseph and other Texada family members, including the deadly shooting of a 13 year old black boy named William Polydore by Joseph Texada in April of 1868.[70] As their violent habits remained restricted to assaults on blacks and white Unionists - as well as an incident in which one brother shot and nearly killed another - the Texadas remained in good standing with the white community and the conservative civil authorities. Following the murder of Polydore, Bureau agent George Buttrick complained to his superiors that Joseph was a "notorious brawler, who has frequently committed assaults upon the negroes, but has always escaped punishment at the hands of the civil authorities." Conservative whites, in fact, rewarded the Texadas for their violent resistance to Reconstruction. They elected Joseph to the conservative legislature in November 1865 and his older brother Lewis went on to hold positions of leadership in the parish Democratic Party. Joseph later served as a captain to one of the companies involved in the Colfax massacre of 1873.[71]

Haynes had no more success than the Bureau agents in bringing Texada to justice. The district court convened about a month after the beating, with Michael Ryan presiding. Haynes presented himself to the grand jury to make his complaint against Texada, but "was cursed and grossly insulted by one of the members of that body. I verily believed I would be assassinated had I remained." He provided the clerk of the court with a legal brief containing his complaints against Texada and the men who had shot and beaten him during the war and quickly left Alexandria for the relative safety of Pineville, across the river, where federal troops were stationed. The grand jury ignored his complaint, instead issuing indictments against Haynes for larceny and fencing, based on actions he committed on a wartime foraging mission under military orders. Not much later he fled northwest Louisiana. He first went to New Orleans, where he wrote General Canby an account of his experiences, warning him to "anticipate another 'bloody picture in the book of time' being enacted by the assassination of the Union men and the discharged colored soldiers" in the rural areas of the state. In December he traveled on to Washington, where he testified before the Congressional Joint

[70] 'Registry of complaints: May 20[?], 1867, June 8, 1867, September 5, 1867, 24 April, 1868' NARA, RG 105, M1905, reel 54, frames 207, 208, 217, 229; 'May 15, 1866, Alexandria, Webber to Burbank,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1756, box 6.

[71] 'April 30, 1868, Alexandria, Buttrick to Sterling,' NARA, RG 105, M1905, reel 52, frame 512; LD, 66-07-04, 70-09-07, 71-05-31, 73-11-05; 'November 13, 1873, New Orleans, Kellogg to AG,' NARA, RG 60, M940, reel 1, frame 857; James K. Hogue, "The 1873 Battle of Colfax : Paramilitarism and Counterrevolution in Louisiana," 2006, www.libertychapelcemetery.org/files/hogue-colfax.pdf.

Committee on Reconstruction about his own experience and the prosecution of Unionists and freedpeople generally.[72]

After Congress passed the Civil Rights Act in April 1866, Haynes again sought redress against Texada - as well as against Archie Smith, the man who had beaten him in 1863 - through the federal judiciary. He lodged a complaint with United States Commissioner Shannon, who had Texada and Smith arrested in Alexandria and brought to New Orleans for examination. The defense counsel for Smith and Texada argued that, as this was a criminal case, only the state of Louisiana and the defendants had standing as litigants under the provisions of the recently enacted Civil Rights Bill. Haynes, as a victim, was not a party to the case and therefore his complaint was invalid. Moreover, the defendants "had not denied redress to Haynes" – the courts had done that - and therefore they had "in no manner or form violated the Civil Rights Bill." The commissioner could, at most, prosecute "the justice who had refused to receive the complaint, the grand jury who had turned him away, the district attorney who would not file an information, or the Judge who declined to enforce the law." Finally, the defense also pleaded that all facts in the case preceded the enactment of the Civil Rights Bill, making the case an unconstitutional ex post facto prosecution.[73]

The legal arguments employed in Texada's defense reflected accepted antebellum legal thinking and precedent. Criminal prosecution had traditionally rested almost entirely with the individual states, and victims had no standing to appeal to the federal judiciary, as they were not a party to the case between the state and the defendant. Shannon declined to rule on the intricate legal points, releasing the defendants on bail to appear before the federal district court in November. Less than two weeks after their arrest, Texada and Smith returned home. For unknown reasons the case never came to trial in New Orleans, and the extent of federal jurisdiction in civil rights cases remained unresolved until Supreme Court Justice Noah H. Swayne ruled in a Kentucky case involving similar issues a year later. His opinion rejected the conservative arguments for a narrow ruling and opened the way for victims of racially motivated crimes to appeal to the federal judiciary.[74]

Around the time Texada and Smith returned from their hearing in New Orleans, another conflict erupted in Rapides between conservative whites and a local Unionist, Henry N. Frisbee, a wartime colonel of a regiment of colored troops. This case, which revolved

[72] 'November 17, 1865, New Orleans, Haynes to Canby,' enclosed in 'December 6, 1865, Alexandria, Scofield to Lowell,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1757, box 2; JCOR, 62 and passim.
[73] LD, 66-07-04, 66-07-25.
[74] LD, 66-07-18, 66-07-25; Kaczorowski, *Politics of Judicial Interpretation*, 9–12.

around an alleged infraction of the new Black Codes, initiated a back and forth between local and federal courts similar to the Texada case. Following the war, Frisbee settled on a plantation in Rapides, not far from the home of the governor's brother and Confederate war hero Montfort Wells. He brought with him a large sum of capital and nearly 400 black veterans from his regiment, whom he employed to work his plantation.[75] According to Lieutenant Colonel Orin McFadden, in charge of the troops stationed near Alexandria, Frisbee "treats his laborers decently and accords to them the common rights of humanity." This infuriated his neighbors, who claimed his conduct "is demoralizing the labor on other plantations. Yet the labor on Col. Frisbee's plantation is not demoralized, but on the contrary is the most effective in the parish."[76]

In April 1866, relations between Frisbee and his neighbors remained amicable. Following some trouble between Wells and his employees, Frisbee informed Captain T. G. Calvit, a manager or overseer on Wellswood plantation, that he refused to employ one of the freedmen discharged by Wells for misconduct. Over the subsequent months, Wells repeatedly complained to the Bureau agent about the difficulties they had disciplining their labor force, although none of these complaints mentions Colonel Frisbee.[77] Then, on July 11, Wells and Calvit had Frisbee arrested and taken before Alexandria justice of the peace R. M. Kilpatrick on charges of "enticing away negroes from their employers before the term for which they had contracted had expired," an offense made punishable by the recently enacted Black Codes. Justice Kilpatrick placed Frisbee under bond to appear at the next session of the district court for no less than $2000, twice as much as the bond placed on Texada by Commissioner Shannon in New Orleans.[78]

Frisbee responded by filing a complaint with US Commissioner Hiestand in New Orleans against Wells, Calvit, and Kilpatrick, as well as the sheriff and the prosecuting attorney, William A. Seay, for "collusion to prosecute him maliciously." The commissioner dismissed the charges against Seay and the sheriff, but had the other three defendants brought to the state capital under guard of a deputy US marshal.[79] No more mention is made of the case against Wells, Calvit and Kilpatrick, but the conservative *Democrat* made a point of

[75] CSS, 39-2, HOR. Rep. 16, 412.
[76] 'July 15, 1866, Alexandria, McFadden to Burbank,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1756, box 4.
[77] 'April 21, 1866, Wellswood, Calvit to Butler,' 'April 25Wellswood, Wells to Butler,' 'July 3, 1866, Wellswood Wells to Williams,' and 'July 20, 1866,Wellswood Wells to Williams,' 'NARA, RG 105, M1905, reel 53, frames 368, 377, 421, 440.
[78] LD, 66-07-18.
[79] LD, 66-08-08, 66-08-15.

emphasizing that the jury at the district court ultimately acquitted Frisbee of the charges of enticement. The newspaper even published a letter signed by Frisbee to his lawyers Ryan and White, thanking them for their service and expressing his unexpected relief that he received "the same consideration and protection as any citizen," from a jury that included "original secessionists, who would be supposed to have the strongest prejudices."[80]

Other evidence, however, casts severe doubts over the sincerity of this letter. When Frisbee's case came to trial, the Republican judge William H. Cooley, of the 7th district by chance replaced the far more conservative William B. Lewis who normally served Rapides. Cooley later testified before a congressional committee that the jury acquitted Frisbee - against whom "there was no more evidence of his guilt than there was of mine" - only because "they knew I would set aside their verdict as soon as they brought it in." Judges had no such power to set aside an acquittal, and Cooley entertained no doubts that in Alexandria no jury would convict a white man suspected of crimes against freedpeople, Bureau agents, or white Unionists.[81] In this case, conservative whites, realizing they could not obtain a conviction under Cooley, decided to make the best of the situation and use the jury's acquittal and the letter from Frisbee as a propaganda tool to refute accusations of lawlessness and political persecution in the parish. In all likelihood Frisbee wrote the letter under duress, or the *Democrat's* editor simply fabricated it, as two months later he fled the parish as a result of continual threats against his life and property.[82]

Even the hero's status accorded to Confederate veterans offered little protection from persecution to those who subsequently cooperated with the federal forces. T. J. Mackey served as a captain of engineers in the Southern army during the Civil War, rising to chief engineer for the trans-Mississippi department by the war's end. Following the surrender he volunteered to assist the Union forces in restoring order in northwestern Louisiana and northeastern Texas. He first served seven weeks as special provost marshal for Lamar county, Texas and adjoining counties and then worked three months as a volunteer collecting "many thousands stands of arms, several hundred wagons, an many hundred mules, &c., the property of the late Confederate States," reporting first to the commanding officer at Shreveport and later to General A. J. Smith, commander of the Western District of Louisiana at Alexandria.[83]

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[80] LD, 66-10-24.
[81] CSS, 39-2, HOR. Rep. 16, 424-427.
[82] LD, 66-10-31, 67-04-24; CSS, 39-2, HOR. Rep. 16, 412-413.
[83] JCOR 150-151.

Mackey soon found the mass of people in the region "bitterly antagonistic to all who declared themselves as willing to act in good faith towards the government. Good faith to the government, in the judgment of the people at large in Texas, meant bad faith to the community."[84] As special provost marshal, he attempted to prosecute those who had murdered civilians suspected of Unionist sympathies during the war, but lacking a constabulary force to support him he had but little success in the face of community opposition. In August 1865 some men ransacked his office while he was away. With the assistance of a detachment of troops he succeeded in arresting at least one of the men responsible, but while he was examining the suspect in his office, the man's father assaulted him, the suspect grabbed his gun and a firefight ensued in which Mackey was shot five times, before he could fend off his attackers, two of whom did not survive the encounter. Civil authorities in Texas immediately initiated legal proceedings against Mackey, who had fled to Shreveport. Colonel Crandal, commanding at Shreveport, sent an armed guard to transport the property collected by Mackey and escort his family to join him in Louisiana. Even federal troops were not safe in Texas, however, and "two of the company were murdered in cold blood, and in open day, under circumstances that marked the deed as one of extraordinary atrocity."[85]

The widespread persecution of white Unionists had implications beyond the security and wellbeing of the immediate victims. Men such as Haynes, Frisbee, and Mackey might have provided the nascent Republican Party with competent local leadership as well as substantial economic resources. By the time, however, that Congress had passed the Reconstruction Acts and the Republican Party began seriously organizing in northwestern Louisiana, they all had fled the region.[86] The violence also served as an unmistakable warning to any white man who might contemplate defying public opinion by supporting substantial rights for the freedpeople. They were certain to face social ostracism and economic isolation at best, and, at worst, their very life might be endangered. As a result, the Republican Party in the rural northwest of Louisiana consisted for the most part of the great mass of freedpeople, a

[84] Ibid., 151. Although Mackey restricts his observations to Texas, he later notes that "the same characteristics prevail to some extent in upper Louisiana, though there is a higher order of intelligence there." Ibid., 153.
[85] Ibid., 151-152.
[86] Haynes, Frisbee, and Mackey all explicitly testified to fleeing the region out of fear. Luca Radisach did remain in Winn with his family, but as an old man in a majority white parish there was little he could do to aid the cause of Reconstruction, even had he dared. http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=try&db=1870usfedcen&h=26069139

small number of white Northerners and only a very few Southern whites brave enough to fly in the face of community opinion.

Buffalo Soldiers in Dixie

With conservatives in firm control of state and local government, the freedpeople and white Unionists could turn only to the federal government for protection from persecution. The army, however, lacked both the resources and the mandate to effectively police the vast and sparsely populated areas of the rural South, including the Red River Valley. On May 1, 1864, a few weeks before General Nathaniel P. Banks embarked on his unsuccessful campaign up the Red River, the Union army had over 60,000 active troops stationed in the Department of the Gulf, about ten percent of the total number available for active duty. By March of 1865, as the war drew to a close, the number was reduced to just over 35,000, less than six percent of the total. Less than six months later, on August 3, 1865, General Sheridan, in charge of the newly created Division of the Gulf received orders to discharge "all white troops, infantry, cavalry, and artillery," stationed in Louisiana, "which, in your judgment, could be dispensed with."[87]

As a result of these orders, less than 8000 active duty forces remained stationed in Louisiana by the close of 1865. General Canby, commanding the Department of Louisiana, wrote to Division command that the rapid demobilization threatened to "reduce the troops so far as to seriously embarrass the service." A month earlier, Colonel Crandal had warned his superiors in New Orleans that northwestern Louisiana and eastern Texas was "a dangerous place for a Northern man to live in. Robbery and murder are common, Northern men and US Officers are insulted on boats and in the country, where there is no danger of arrest from the military authorities." A further withdrawal of troops, he warned, would result in "an exodus of all Northern men."[88] Despite these warnings, Canby received orders in early January to "muster out of the white volunteer troops all but about five hundred (500) and of the colored troops all but about five thousand (5000) of the force present within your department." To accommodate these further reductions, Canby recommended concentrating all remaining

[87] CSS, 39-1. HOR. Ex. 1, 5, 14,28. For an overview of the demobilization effort in general in the first 18 month after the surrender see: Ibid., 1-48; CSS, 39-2, HOR. Ex. 1, 1-16.
[88] 'December 30, 1865, New Orleans, Canby to Forsyth,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1738, vol. 79; 'November 6, 1865, Shreveport, Crandal to Hoffman,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1757, box 1.

forces along the Red River in Alexandria, leaving only a small garrison at Shreveport to guard the public property there.[89]

The rapid and massive demobilization of the army following the Confederate surrender had an indelible and long-lasting impact on the course of Reconstruction. As a result, the army lacked the resources to adequately police the South and enforce the political and civil rights of the freedpeople, even if the political will to do so had existed. In the short term, moreover, the army inevitably expended a great deal of available energy and manpower on the enormous logistical and administrative operation involved in demobilization, leaving little available for the administration of civil affairs. The discharge of large numbers of soldiers also affected the Freedmen's Bureau, which was mostly staffed by detached troops. As these troops received their muster out, the Bureau lost experienced personnel, as replacements, if these arrived at all, often lacked the knowledge of local affairs essential in dealing with racial, political, and economic tensions.[90]

The demobilization also affected the quality and racial balance of the regular troops in Louisiana. As early as August 17, 1865, Hawkins, the brevet major general in command of western Louisiana, complained of a lack of qualified officers and while "the white regiments may manage somehow to get along without officers, [...] the colored regiments cannot."[91]From early 1866 onward, however, blacks comprised the vast majority of troops stationed in Louisiana, and this caused issues for the military beyond a mere lack of manpower. About 90 per cent of the forces that remained in Louisiana were colored troops, with the vast majority of white forces being mustered out post haste. This made good military sense, as most white units had seen far longer service, and most Northern soldiers had little interest in occupational duties.

Black troops, on the other hand, had far more incentives to stay in the service. They had few other opportunities to earn a comparable salary, while at the same time obtaining valuable skills and education. The freedpeople also had an immediate and personal interest in policing Reconstruction. As a result, the black troops stationed in Louisiana showed far better

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[89] 'January 19, 1866, New Orleans, Hartsuff to Canby,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4477, vol. 248DG; 'April 6, 1866, New Orleans, Canby too AAG Military Division of the Gulf,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4495, box 2.
[90] 'August 22, 1865, Alexandria, Webber to Thomas,' NARA 396, part 1, entry 1757, box 4; 'December 20, 1865, New Orleans, Lee to Canby,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4477, vol. 248DG; 'August 28, 1866, New Orleans, Burbank to Hayden,' Ibid., vol. 546DG; 'September 24, 1866, Alexandria, McFadden to Williams,' NARA, RG 105, M1905, reel 53, frame 493.
[91] 'August 17, 1865, Alexandria, Hawkins to Andrews,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1757, box 2. A similar complaint was made around the same time by Colonel Watson Webber, commanding the 5th USCI at Alexandria: 'August 22, 1865, Alexandria, Webber to Thomas,' Ibid.,, box 4.

morale and discipline than many of the white units. On an inspection tour of northwestern Louisiana, J. Schuyler Crosby found the 80th USCI at Shreveport, under Lieutenant Colonel McFadden, unsurpassed "by any regiment in this Department" in "efficiency, discipline, and general appearance and intelligence of officers." The 652 colored soldiers at Alexandria, while not top-notch, were well drilled and disciplined. In comparison, he found many white units, particularly cavalry, to be demoralized, poorly disciplined, and restive.[92]

Such reports notwithstanding, the preponderance of black soldiers inevitably led to tensions between the federal authorities and the local white population. Following the muster-out of almost all white volunteers, Canby reassured General A. J. Smith, commanding forces in western Louisiana, that he was "impressed with the necessity of white troops in western La and therefore [had] requested a battalion of regular forces for the purpose." Colored troops frequently clashed with the local white population and an inspection report in March 1866 noted that around Shreveport "a colored soldier can scarcely travel on the boats, without danger to property and life." Whites in the region, the inspector continued, felt that black troops "have a bad influence on laborers. They encourage idleness, breed discontent and carry off the women."[93] Such tensions only increased when, in the summer and fall of 1866, the army began recruiting local freedpeople to fill the ranks of discharged soldiers. The state commander specifically prohibited recruiters from interfering in existing labor contracts, but along the Red River such restriction made recruiting almost impossible as "nearly all freedmen are under contract." As a result, recruiting parties often disregarded their instructions, bringing them into conflict with planters who felt they intruded upon both their property and their prerogatives.[94]

Already in August 1865, even before the final discharge of all but a handful of white troops in the state, the citizens of Shreveport presented a petition to the military authorities, claiming that "the peace and quiet, order and security of our community is greatly disturbed and endangered by the conduct of the colored troops." Colored sentinels allegedly fired on citizens almost every day "for violating some unknown and unpublished order." They also

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[92] 'January 11, 1866, New Orleans, Crosby to Insyth,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4495, box 1. A briefer inspection report at the end of February reached similar conclusions: 'February 25, 1866, New Orleans, Nelson to Canby,' Ibid., box 2.

[93] January 5, 1866, New Orleans, Hoffman to Smith,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1738, vol. 80DG; 'March, 1866, Kip to AAG,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4495, box 2.

[94] 'August 16, 41866, New Orleans, Lee to Commanding Officer 65th USCI,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4478, vol. 258/546DG; 'September 5, 1866, Shreveport, Mudgett to Lee,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1760; 'register of complaints, entries for October 10 and 12,' NARA, RG 105, M1905, reel 54, frame 197; 'October 26, 1866. Bayou Beouf, Key to Williams,' NARA, RG 105, M1905, reel 53, frame 534.

accused the colored soldiers of undermining the freedpeople's labor discipline, not just by encouraging, or even compelling, them to break their contracts, but also by supposedly "instigating the former slaves of the country to deeds of insurrection and massacre." Worst of all, these soldiers, who had only just emerged victorious from a long and bloody war, had the audacity to "frequently walk four abreast on our sidewalks while off duty and compel all white persons to give way to them and take the streets." If the military authorities did not remove the colored soldiers from the area, a "great public calamity, the nature of which we have alluded to above," would be certain to occur, although it remains unclear whether this was intended as merely a warning or as a thinly veiled threat.[95]

In response, Canby wrote Wells that he believed that "at Shreveport, as I have found upon investigation to be the case at other places, that the prejudice against color is the substantial foundation of the complaints that are made. The complainants are unwilling to accept from a colored soldier what they would not object to if the sentinel conformed to their prejudices." Wells, who shared these prejudices, nevertheless warned President Johnson of "the baneful influence exercised by the presence and insubordinate conduct of colored troops on the surrounding population of the same color," claiming that "wherever colored troops have appeared, their very presence demoralizes the negro for all purposes of useful industry."[96] Fortunately for Wells, the rapid demobilization of the army meant that but very few places in the South saw troops of either complexion.

While defending his men to the governor, Canby nevertheless acknowledged to Hawkins, in Alexandria, the existence of

> a disposition on the part of the colored troops to avenge the wrongs they have suffered from the whites. There is no doubt that in many cases the exactions of the colored sentinels have been unwarranted by any necessity, and the practice of firing in the street of a city for an inattention to, or even disobedience of, the orders of a sentinel, is unwarranted, when, as is almost always the case, the means are at hand to secure the arrest of the offenders.[97]

This hardly represented a ringing endorsement of the colored troops on whom the army depended. Canby, like many senior officers in New Orleans throughout Reconstruction,

[95] 'August 18, 1865, Shreveport, petition of citizens to Canby,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1757, box 4.
[96] 'August 26, 1865, New Orleans, Canby to Wells,' NARA, RG 393, part1, entry 1738, vol. 79; 'October 20, 1865, New Orleans, Wells to Johnson,' Wells Microfilm.
[97] 'August 28, New Orleans, Canby to Hawkins,' NARA, RG 393, part1, entry 1738, vol. 79.

preferred erring on the side of caution, rather than endangering the reputation of the military by forcefully opposing the racial or political prejudices of the local white populace.

By October, following a second petition from citizens of Bossier and Caddo parishes, Canby did not even attempt to defend the conduct of colored troops to the governor, instead promising him to "order an additional force of white troops to Shreveport and place the whole subject under the control of an intelligent and discreet officer." He assured the governor that the "army already does all it can to see that post commanders are aware of feelings in their area" and "arrangements have already been made to disabuse the negroes of any wrong impression that may have been implanted upon them."[98] With the highest commander in the state kowtowing to conservative white prejudices, the freedpeople and white Unionists in northwestern Louisiana could hardly depend on the army for protection. By the fall of 1867, the army had given in to such pressure and removed all black troops from the South.[99]

Canby's efforts at conciliation failed to resolve matters. A year later, he still received incessant complaints regarding alleged misconduct of colored troops in and around Shreveport. Robert V. Marge, the clerk of the Caddo police jury sent Canby a list of robberies and murders supposed by the local white community to have been committed by colored soldiers. Edward S. Leonard and others testified that six months prior "a party of negroes, whom he *believes* to have been US soldiers came to the house of his father and commenced stealing poultry and taking and killing hogs." He chased them off with gunfire and followed them until they split up, "some heading towards the town and others towards the regimental camp." He recognized them as soldiers from "the arms they had, from the words of command given, from their regular order of marching, and from seeing their uniform, though indistinctly at a distance of some fifty yards or so, by the light of a camp fire while following them."[100]

Simultaneously, the *Shreveport Semi-Weekly News* published an editorial complaining of nearly perpetual outrages by black troops. The whites had, by necessity, "learned to excuse our military commanders from any effort to protect our property or persons from their utter want of ability or their indifference to 'd--d rebels.'" The newspaper made particular notice of a recent raid by a party of fifteen blacks, "dressed in US Uniforms," on the house of a Mr.

[98] 'October 21, 1865, New Orleans, Canby to Wells,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1738, vol. 79.
[99] Ira Berlin, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, eds., *Freedom : A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867 - Series II: The Black Military Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 736.
[100] 'July 21, 1866, Shreveport, Marge to Canby,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1757, box 5. This Leonard was the elder brother of prominent Shreveport lawyer and future White League leaders Albert H. Leonard.

Cane, near Shreveport. They took over $200 in gold and valuables, shot his dogs, and then murdered Cane's stepson and severely wounded his room-mate. The editors had no doubt that "these robbers belong to General Mudgett's command[and] that he had failed to perform his duties." [101]

General William S. Mudgett himself was temporarily absent from the Shreveport post at this time, but his second-in-command, Major Charles M. Lowell offered a firm rebuttal to all these accusations. The editorial cited above was merely a specimen of similar ones "constantly appearing in this sheet." These kept the white populace in a "state of excitement and prejudice against us [and] talk is continuously made of driving 'nigger soldiers' out of the country, having another war, etc." As to colored soldiers' involvement in any wrongdoings, the editor was "grossly mistaken in his information or maliciously intend[ed] to excite the populace." In the two months that Lowell had commanded the post, he had made every effort to "keep the men close at hand and avoid all collision with citizens, as I knew the bitter prejudice and malignity that exist towards all US Troops and especially colored troops." As a precaution, he and other officers made nightly inspections of the barracks and held unannounced roll-calls "out of regular hours." Whites blamed soldiers for nearly every crime committed, despite the fact that "the whole country is armed, white and black, and more or less firing may be heard every night." Numerous outrages against the freedpeople went unreported, but the newspapers

> are very particular to publish in gleaming colors and in exaggerating everything when it is possible for a soldier to be engaged in any wrongful act, and as the country is filled with old army clothing, these thieves and robbers would very naturally assume the disguise of colored soldiers.[102]

Around the same time, a little over a hundred miles to the South, near Alexandria, McFadden encountered similar opposition to black troops. When citizens applied to him for help in strengthening the levees, he sent seventy men under Captain Potter, who divided them into several squads, each led by a non-commissioned officer. At one point, a citizen "attempted to make a [black] corporal, in charge of a squad, go to work; a row ensued, of course, and but for the prompt interference of [Freedmen's Bureau Agent] Bvt. Major Williams [...], who happened to be present, it would have ended in bloodshed." McFadden

[101] *Shreveport Semi-Weekly News*, 66-07-21, enclosed in 'July 24, 1866, Shreveport, Lowell to Lee,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4495, box 3.
[102] 'July 24, 1866, Shreveport, Lowell to Lee,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4495, box 3.

had two of the white men involved arrested, but did not detain them longer than to give them a good lecture on the altered condition of affairs, and the absurdity of attempting to treat colored soldiers as slaves."[103]

In the same report, just three weeks after he took command, McFadden reported several cases of cruelty against freedpeople. A month later, things had only gotten worse. White Unionists, both Northern and Southern, "are living in extreme jeopardy of their lives." The freedpeople had it even worse and came to his camp in droves

> from this and adjoining parishes with complaints which indicate a state of things disgraceful to humanity and which must prove destructive to the material prosperity of the country. The supervisors of labor on most of the plantations go armed and hold the hands in complete intimidation. Whipping - if that is the proper name for knocking down, kicking, and shooting men - is still practiced and there seems to be, with a large class, an unyielding determination to reestablish practically, if not in theory, the defunct 'peculiar.' Civil authorities did little to prevent such outrages, and even if negro testimony were admitted from political necessity, juries would give it little credence.

As a result, even those "who are really friendly to the negro and seem to deprecate the lawlessness of others, [appear] to have no confidence in the civil law and seldom dare do anything further than give the freedmen good advice."[104]

Officers such as Lowell and McFadden clearly understood the threat that conservative white recalcitrance posed to the physical safety of freedpeople, white Unionists, and even colored soldiers, in the rural South - let alone to any effort to enforce the political and civil rights of the black population.[105] However, with few troops at their disposal and hardly any mandate to interfere with civil government, these officers could do little more than use their informal influence to mitigate the worst of the abuses and report their observations to their superiors in the hope that the federal government would take a more forceful stance. Other

[103] 'June 16, 1866, Alexandria, McFadden to Burbank,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1757, box 5.
[104] Ibid.; 'July 15, 1866, Alexandria, McFadden to Burbank,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1757, box 4.
[105] Lowell returned to Shreveport in 1867from Kansas as a Republican organizer and Warmoth supporter. In August 1868 he was elected speaker of the state legislator. By the early 1870s he held a position as federal postmaster and was an influential member of the Custom House ring. See:, Henry Clay Warmoth Papers #752, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill [Hereinafter: *Warmoth Papers*], reel 1, frames 985, 986, 987, 991, 999, 1044, 1065, 1069; BB, 68-08-01; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 212–216; Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction*, 142–143.

officers, however, did not even do that much, and from indifference, incompetence, or ideological conviction provided conservative whites with the implicit support of the army.

We have already seen how Colonel Scofield allowed the white elites in Rapides to appoint Confederate veterans, notorious for their violence against Unionists, as militia commanders in Rapides. Scofield understood Haynes's position and sincerely praised him for "his loyalty in a community and state where to be so was the greatest crime, punished most summarily with loss of life and property." He nevertheless dismissed the Unionist's objections to the militia captains appointed, relying instead on the recommendation of the traditional elites. Scofield simply could not imagine that such men would favor unrepentant Confederate veterans, who had committed atrocities against Haynes and other more ardent Unionists during the war. Haynes's accusations, he felt, were the result of his bitterness as he could not "reasonably be expected to show much charity to those who robbed [him] of all [he] possessed and then sought [his life], hunting [him] through the swamps."[106]

Brevet Brigadier General B. L. Domblasser, in command at Shreveport from late 1865 through early 1866, went even further than Scofield in his support of the conservative white militias, giving them implicit permission to disarm the black population in Bossier and Caddo parishes. General Canby initially dismissed rumors to that effect, informing Governor Wells that Domblasser had in fact reported critically on militia activities, warning that "the frequent and flagrant outrages committed by the militia, or parties claiming to be such, are driving the negroes to desperation and if an insurrection does take place - of which I see no prospect - it will be brought about by the whites denying to them their right to life, liberty, and property."[107]

As it turned out, however, Domblasser had indeed given the militias authority "to take from the negroes all government arms and also their private arms, in case they (the militia) apprehended insurrection." The general himself expected no such insurrection, but by leaving that judgment to the militias themselves, he effectively gave government sanction to their illegal actions. Canby immediately replaced Domblasser with Brevet Brigadier General J. A. Sheets, instructing him to revoke Domblasser's order. Canby explicitly reminded Sheetz that "the right of American citizen, white or black, to bear arms is undoubted," and "that the same laws which govern the whites, govern the blacks, and that in all matters of their rights under

[106] 'December 7, 1865, Alexandria, Scofield to Lowell,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1757, box 2.
[107] 'January 31, 1866, New Orleans, Canby to Wells,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1738, vol. 80DG.

the law, you will treat them equally."[108] The damage, however, had been done by then, as the military had no means to force the militias to return the arms already confiscated.

Scofield's and Domblasser's support for conservative white militias resulted from naivety and indifference, rather than disregard for the rights of the freedpeople and white Unionists. Brevet Lieutenant Colonel J. M. Cutts, however, actively and deliberately supported the local white elites during the political struggles that followed the passage of the Reconstruction Act in March 1867. While other military commanders, Freedmen's Bureau agents, and local Republicans reported incessant violence and intimidation by the conservative white majority, Cutts claimed in April 1867 that the "kindest feeling exists on the part of the citizens, and no antagonism whatever has arisen between citizens and soldiers." He showed his support for the conservative element in Caddo Parish by trying - unsuccessfully - to use his influence to have the Republican registrar C. L. Sweet replaced by the more conservative J. B. Thompson. Cutts claimed Thompson was "a citizen of high character," who had been "always an opponent of secession and rebellion," although, in reality, he had served on the last Confederate police jury of the parish in early 1865.[109]

Cutts also resorted to bureaucratic infighting in support of conservative white elites. In May, he refused to comply with Freedmen's Bureau agent Thomas Monroe's request for a detachment of troops. Monroe wanted to arrest planter William Harrison for interfering with his employees' voter registration and then shooting a black youth for "not pay[ing] attention to him." Although standing orders clearly authorized Bureau agents to call on the military for assistance in such cases, Cutts claimed he could not provide the detachment without "an elaborative statement and endorsement from headquarters," that proved the civil authorities had failed to act. Any subsequent communication, he advised Monroe, would have to go through the Bureau's sub-assistant commissioner for the region, making it even more difficult for the local agent to secure military assistance in a timely fashion.[110]

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[108] 'February 1, 1866, New Orleans, Hoffman to Sheetz,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1738, vol. 80DG; 'January 31, 1866, Shreveport, Sheetz to Hoffman,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 1756, box 6.

[109] 'April 6, 1867, Shreveport, Cutts to Forsyth,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4498, box 1; 'April 23, 1867, Shreveport, Cutts to Hartsuff,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4575, box 6; 'Caddo Police Jury Minutes [January 2, 1865 and April 3, 1865],' W.P.A. Collection Historical Records Survey Transcriptions of Louisiana Police Jury Minute Records, Mss. 2984, LLMVC [Hereinafter: WPA PJ Minutes], reel 62. On Sweet's continued service as registrar through the September 1867 elections, see: 'October 5, 1867, Shreveport, Sweet to Mower,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4575, box 4.

[110] 'May 20, 1867, Shreveport, Monroe to Sterling,' and 'May 14, 1867, /Shreveport, Monroe to Cutts [with Cutts's endorsement thereto],' NARA, RG 105, M1905, reel 100, frames 393, 394; 'November 23. 1866, New Orleans, Hayden, Circular 12,' NARA, RG 105, M1905, reel 53, frame 943.

By June, complaints about Cutts began to reach the military command in New Orleans. According to the *New Orleans Republican*, "the country on Red River, from Alexandria to Shreveport, seems to be the most rebel-cursed corner of the American continent," a situation the editorial blamed on a failure of the local military commanders. Around the same time, a local white Unionist named G. W. Smith complained that Cutts had rudely sent away both his wife and himself when each had gone to the camp to request payment for a load of firewood delivered on credit during the harsh winter. The executive committee of the Caddo Republican Club wrote to General Sheridan to warn him of the pervasive insecurity facing the freedpeople and white Republicans, "owing principally to the commandant of this post, Bvt. Lt. Col. J. M. Cutts, who has affiliated with disfranchised Ex Confederates to such an extent as to utterly destroy that confidence which the presence of Unites States Troops is intended to convey to a newly enfranchised people."[111]

Cutts disregarded any and all criticism directed towards him. He not only denied the allegations in the *Republican*, which had singled out his command for criticism, but also went out of his way to respond to a Republican state convention committee report that claimed "that freedom and security for freedmen [is] only to be found in four parishes," to wit: Orleans, St. James, St. John, and West-Baton Rouge. Although the article mentioned Caddo as a particularly violent parish, it also included many others. Cutts nevertheless considered the report a "personal affront" and an "assault and malignant slander" on the entire military administration. A freedman named John Jones had told him that James H. Ingraham, a Caddo member of the Republican convention and chairman of the committee that wrote the report, was nothing but "a self-constituted delegate and absolutely unworthy of belief." Although Cutts admitted that he had since learned that Ingraham "was given assent by the Republican Party to act as delegate," he nevertheless enclosed Jones's statement in a backhanded attempt to discredit the entire report.[112]

In July, Cutts was finally relieved and subsequently permanently removed from his command after attacking B. H. Peterson, a federal prisoner suspected of attempted tax fraud on board a New Orleans bound steamer. He attacked the prisoner in a drunken rage, and later

[111] 'extract from *New Orleans Republican*, June 4, 1867,' enclosed in 'June 11, 1867, Shreveport, Cutts to Hartsuff,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4575, box 6; 'June [?], 1867, Shreveport, Smith to Forsyth,' and 'June 24, 1867, Shreveport, Register a.o. To Sheridan,' NARA, RG 393, part 3, entry 287, box 2.
[112] 'June 31, Shreveport, Cutts to Hartsuff,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4575, box 6.

went "about the boat in nothing but his shirt."[113] The leading Republicans of Shreveport applauded his removal and protested the disgraced colonel's attempts to have himself reinstated. Benjamin McLevan, a former US Soldier and corresponding secretary of the local Republican club accused him of being "notoriously intemperate," and hoped the state command would permanently "remove this viper from our midst." In September, Cutts once again petitioned his superiors to have him reinstated, but he never again served in northwestern Louisiana during Reconstruction.[114]

By then, however, Cutts's actions had severely damaged the military's reputation. His implicit support for white conservatives caused Republicans to face increasingly violent opposition to their attempts to organize for the first biracial elections in the state. McLevan wrote Ingraham in August that "the military are of no avail, while civil authorities are hostile. [...] The truth is, it looks rough. The colored people will support us to the extent of their abilities," but "it may be best if we do not realize what we expected." So little security existed for Republicans in Caddo, Bossier, and DeSoto parishes, that anyone elected risked being beaten, driven off, or even killed.[115] Indeed, the political violence in these parishes in the summer of 1867 sowed the seeds for the far more vicious and widespread political terror a year later. Cutts's support for white conservatives, while exceptional in its degree, exemplifies how the lack of effective military authority fostered an atmosphere of lawlessness and impunity in which political terrorism could develop and eventually flourish.

Conclusion

The first two years following the surrender of the Confederate forces shaped the Southern political, economic, and social landscape in ways that had a crucial impact on the subsequent development of Reconstruction. Military defeat and emancipation left Southern whites not only economically, but also ideologically and mentally, devastated. Nevertheless, from the very outset many whites showed a tenacious recalcitrance towards any reforms that either benefited the black population or increased federal interference in local affairs. President Johnson readily obliged them, embarking on a policy that limited the scope of federal

[113] 'July 7, 1867, Shreveport, Cutts to Spalding,' 'July 9, 1867, Shreveport, Latchford to Spalding,' and 'July 29, 1867, Shreveport, Cutts to Hartsuff,' NARA, RG 393, part 3, entry 287, box 2; 'July 8, 1867, papers re. the arrest of Dr. B. H. Peterson by Bvt. Lieut. Col. Cutts,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4575, box 3.
[114] 'July 28, 1867, Shreveport, McLevan to Brown,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4575, box 3; 'September 2, 1867, Shreveport, Cutts to Burbank,' NARA, RG 393, part 3, entry 287, box 2.
[115] 'August 7, 1867, Shreveport, McLevan to Ingraham,' enclosed in 'August 13, 1867, New Orleans, Flanders to Sheridan,' NARA, RG 393, part 1, entry 4575, box 3.

oversight to a bare minimum and returned the Southern states to self-rule as quickly as possible.

As a result of Johnson's leniency, Southern whites' self-confidence burgeoned, along with their recalcitrance. Conservative Unionists and outright conservatives, dedicated to upholding white supremacy, took control of state and local government within months of the surrender. The elections of November 1865 returned an even more conservative legislature, which quickly enacted the Black Codes and forced Wells to hold local elections the next spring which returned equally conservative local officials. The military, initially more involved with its own demobilization than with policing Reconstruction, lacked both the resources and the mandate to prevent conservative whites from rapidly reestablishing economic, political and racial control, especially in remote areas such as the Red River Valley, where the federal presence was limited. These developments, combined with the economic and social dislocation caused by the war, fostered a climate of lawlessness and impunity in which some conservatives resorted to violence in settling personal and political scores with their Unionist neighbors and to abuse and oppress the newly freed black labor force. This violence presaged the more overtly political terror that erupted across Louisiana following the passage of the Reconstruction Acts and the enfranchisement of the blacks. By then, however, federal authorities and local Republicans faced an uphill battle to reclaim the political control that they had ceded to the white conservatives in the immediate postwar years.