"Karl Marx, *Address from the International Working Men's Association to President Johnson*." *Workers Unite!: The International 150 Years Later*. Ed. Marcello Musto. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. 257–258. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781501302367.0080>>.

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Karl Marx, *Address from the
International Working Men's Association
to President Johnson*⁸⁹

The demon of the 'peculiar institution' [slavery], for the supremacy of which the South rose in arms, would not allow his worshippers to honourably succumb in the open field. What he had begun in treason, he must needs end in infamy. As Philip II's war for the Inquisition bred a Gerard, thus Jefferson Davis's pro-slavery war bred a Booth.

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

⁸⁹ Following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the GC decided to send a letter to his successor Andrew Johnson. The text was written by Karl Marx (see note 1), approved at a session on May 9, 1865, and published in *The Bee-Hive* on 20 May. It is located in GC, I: 294–6.

To be singled out by the side of such a chief, the second victim to the infernal gods of slavery, was an honour due to Mr Seward. Had he not, at a time of general hesitation, the sagacity to foresee and the manliness to foretell 'the irrepressible conflict'? Did he not, in the darkest hours of that conflict, prove true to the Roman duty to never despair of the Republic and its stars? We earnestly hope that he and his son will be restored to health, public activity, and well-deserved honours within much less than '90 days'.⁹⁰

After a tremendous civil war, but which, if we consider its vast dimensions, and its broad scope, and compare it to the Old World's 100 years' wars, and 30 years wars, and 23 years' wars, can hardly be said to have lasted 90 days. Yours, Sir, has become the task to uproot by the law what has been felled by the sword, to preside over the arduous work of political reconstruction and social regeneration. A profound sense of your great mission will save you from any compromise with stern duties. You will never forget that to initiate the new era of the emancipation of labour, the American people devolved the responsibilities of leadership upon two men of labour—the one Abraham Lincoln, the other Andrew Johnson.

⁹⁰ William H. Seward, Lincoln's Secretary of State and a strong opponent of slavery, together with his son, were seriously wounded in an assassination attempt coincident with Booth's shooting of Lincoln. The initial response to the Southern rebellion in 1861 was military mobilization for 90 days.