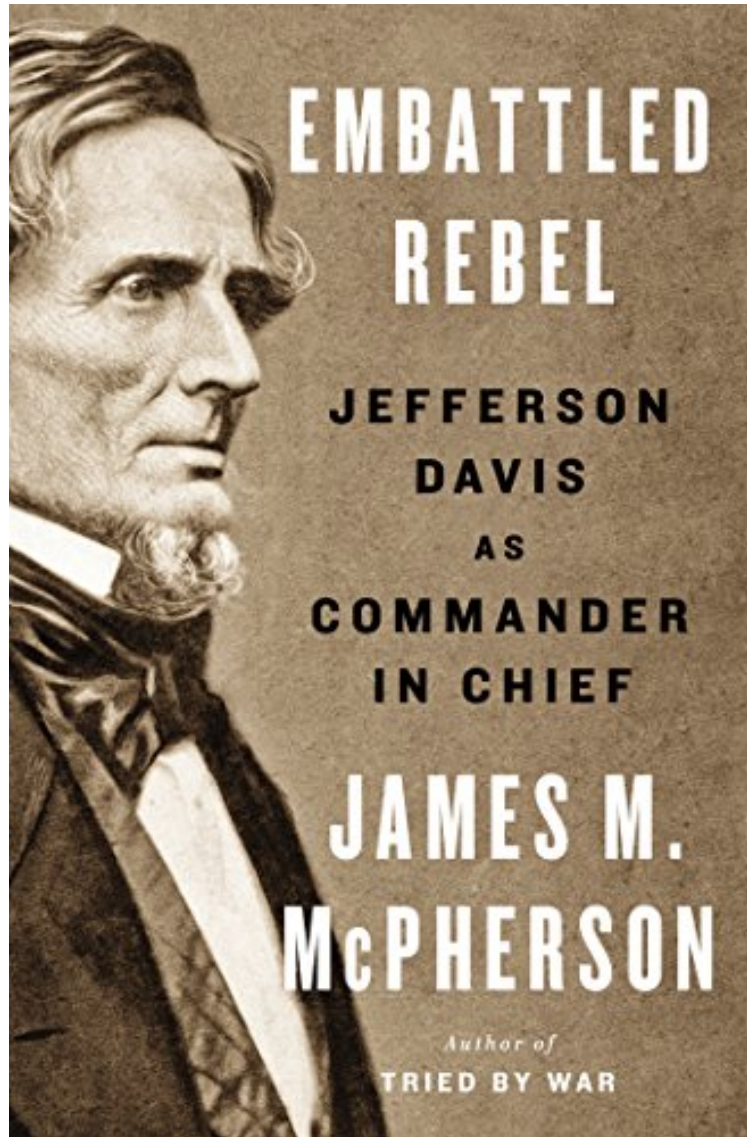


[Read ebook] Embattled Rebel: Jefferson Davis as Commander in Chief

Embattled Rebel: Jefferson Davis as Commander in Chief

James M. McPherson

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including his relationships with most of the leading Confederate Generals (more than just his already well-documented dislike of Johnston) and his own background and training at West Point and his disappointment to be stationed away from the real fighting during the Mexican War. All and all , an excellent read!0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A different perspective of the Civil War Confederate PresidentBy GrandpaMcPherson's book is the latest in his long list of Civil War related books. It concentrates on David, his personality, decision making and personal relationships. Although events of the war are discussed it is not in detail but rather from Davis' perspective as president of the Confederacy and the difficult issues with which he was faced. Like Lincoln, he had his General problems, his financial problems, his Cabinet problems, etc. It is a very interesting narrative from a different perspective.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy CustomerExcellent

From the Pulitzer Prize–winning author of *Battle Cry of Freedom*, a powerful new reckoning with Jefferson Davis as military commander of the ConfederacyHistory has not been kind to Jefferson Davis. His cause went down in disastrous defeat and left the South impoverished for generations. If that cause had succeeded, it would have torn the United States in two and preserved the institution of slavery. Many Americans in Davis's own time and in later generations considered him an incompetent leader, if not a traitor. Not so, argues James M. McPherson. In *Embattled Rebel*, McPherson shows us that Davis might have been on the wrong side of history, but it is too easy to diminish him because of his cause's failure. In order to understand the Civil War and its outcome, it is essential to give Davis his due as a military leader and as the president of an aspiring Confederate nation.Davis did not make it easy on himself. His subordinates and enemies alike considered him difficult, egotistical, and cold. He was gravely ill throughout much of the war, often working from home and even from his sickbed. Nonetheless, McPherson argues, Davis shaped and articulated the principal policy of the Confederacy with clarity and force: the quest for independent nationhood. Although he had not been a fire-breathing secessionist, once he committed himself to a Confederate nation he never deviated from this goal. In a sense, Davis was the last Confederate left standing in 1865.As president of the Confederacy, Davis devoted most of his waking hours to military strategy and operations, along with Commander Robert E. Lee, and delegated the economic and diplomatic functions of strategy to his subordinates. Davis was present on several battlefields with Lee and even took part in some tactical planning; indeed, their close relationship stands as one of the great military-civilian partnerships in history.Most critical appraisals of Davis emphasize his choices in and management of generals rather than his strategies, but no other chief executive in American history exercised such tenacious hands-on influence in the shaping of military strategy. And while he was imprisoned for two years after the Confederacy's surrender awaiting a trial for treason that never came, and lived for another twenty-four years, he never once recanted the cause for which he had fought and lost. McPherson gives us Jefferson Davis as the commander in chief he really was, showing persuasively that while Davis did not win the war for the South, he was scarcely responsible for losing it.

The New York Times Book : "The best concise book we have on the subject."The Wall Street Journal:"Mr. McPherson...mounts a defense of Davis is provocative; the book in which he argues it is quietly persuasive.... Mr. McPherson covers a great deal of ground. And there is an economical grace to his prose that makes the book a lightning-quick but lingering read that will appeal not only to Civil War buffs but also to those curious about the Southern presidency and government."The Washington Post:"[A] fine study of Davis's military leadership....To this day it is difficult for many Americans to view Davis with dispassion, but McPherson has made a noble attempt to do so....Davis himself does not make that easy."Christian Science Monitor:"Open minds are in short supply today, so it is refreshing that Civil War scholar and Pulitzer-winning author James M. McPherson has taken a fresh look at a subject with which is he eminently familiar: the life and times of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. With more than a dozen books about America's greatest crucible to his credit, the 78-year-old author is still challenging past postulations."North South Magazine:"Superb... McPherson succeeds admirably in recreating the world of 1861-1865 as seen through the eyes of a Southern nationalist and ardent defender of the established social order, and provides readers with a more balanced view of Davis than that handed down by many of his contemporaries."History Book Club:"The first work to discretely consider Davis as head of his armies and navy... Crisply written, thoughtfully considered, and ultimately persuasive, *Embattled Rebel* is McPherson and biography at their best."About the AuthorJames M. McPherson is the George Henry Davis '86 Professor of History Emeritus at Princeton University. He is the bestselling author of numerous books on the Civil War, including *Battle Cry of Freedom*, which won the Pulitzer Prize, *Tried by War*, and *For Cause and Comrades*, both of which won the Lincoln Prize.Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.Tried by WarThe Struggle for EqualityThe Abolitionist LegacyOrdeal by FireBattle Cry of FreedomAbraham Lincoln and the Second American RevolutionWhat They Fought For, 1861–1865Drawn with the SwordFor Cause and ComradesCrossroads of FreedomHallowed GroundThis Mighty ScourgeWar on the WatersPublished by the Penguin GroupPenguin Group (USA) LLC375 Hudson StreetNew York, New York 10014USA • Canada • UK • Ireland • Australia New Zealand • India • South Africa • Chinapenguin.comA Penguin Random House CompanyFirst published by The Penguin Press, a member of Penguin Group (USA) LLC,

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History has not been kind to Jefferson Davis. As president of the Confederate States of America, he led a cause that went down to a disastrous defeat and left the South in poverty for generations. If that cause had succeeded, it would have broken the United States in two and preserved slavery in the South for untold years. Many Americans of his own time and in later generations considered him a traitor. Some of his Confederate compatriots turned against Davis and blamed him for sins of ineptitude that lost the war. Several of Davis's adversaries on the Union side agreed with this assessment. Writing twenty years after the Civil War, General Ulysses S. Grant claimed that "Davis had an exalted opinion of his own military genius. . . . On several occasions during the war he came to the relief of the Union army by means of his superior military genius." A number of historians have concurred with this harsh judgment. On the centennial anniversary of the Civil War, David M. Potter famously declared that as commander in chief, Davis compiled "a record of personal failure significant enough to have had a bearing on the course of the war. . . . If the Union and Confederacy had exchanged presidents with one another, the Confederacy might have won its independence."¹ Comparisons of Abraham Lincoln and Davis as commanders in chief usually favor Lincoln, though rarely to the extent suggested by Potter. The one undeniable truth in such comparisons is that Lincoln's side won the war. But that fact does not necessarily mean that Davis was responsible for losing it. Many factors help explain the ultimate Union victory, including the North's greater population and resources, a stronger economy, a powerful navy, resourceful military leadership, and battlefield victories that blunted Confederate momentum at key points and prolonged the conflict until the weak economic infrastructure that underpinned the Southern war effort collapsed. Lincoln's evolving skills as commander in chief may also help explain Northern victory. I have written about that subject elsewhere.² But whether Lincoln was superior to Davis in this respect is impossible to say in the categorical manner stated by David Potter. Comparing Lincoln and Davis as commanders in chief is like trying to compare apples and oranges. They confronted different challenges with different resources and personnel. In the chapters that follow I have tried to avoid the temptation to compare the two leaders. I attempt to describe and analyze Davis's conception and execution of his duty as commander in chief on its own terms and merits, without reference to Lincoln. Full disclosure is necessary. My sympathies lie with the Union side in the Civil War. The Confederacy fought to break up the United States and to sustain slavery. I consider those goals tragically wrong. Yet I have sought to transcend my convictions and to understand Jefferson Davis as a product of his time and circumstances. After spending many research hours with both Lincoln and Davis, I must also confess that I find Lincoln more congenial, interesting, and admirable. That is another reason to avoid comparisons between the two men in a book about Davis as commander in chief. I wish not to be influenced by personal likes or dislikes. But in fact I found myself becoming less inimical toward Davis than I expected when I began this project. He comes off better than some of his fellow Confederates of large ego and small talents who were among his chief critics. I had perhaps been too much influenced by the negative depictions of Davis's personality that have come down to us from those contemporaries who often had self-serving motives for their hostility. Many of those contemporaries were officials in the Confederate government and officers in its army. They echoed a Southern journalist who described Davis as "cold, haughty, peevish, narrow-minded, pig-headed, malignant."³ Robert Toombs of Georgia, who never got over the selection of Davis rather than himself as president of the Confederacy, denigrated his rival as a "false and hypocritical . . . wretch."⁴ Another influential Georgia politician, Linton Stephens, brother of the Confederate vice president, sneered at Davis as "a little, conceited, hypocritical, snivelling, canting, malicious, ambitious, dogged knave and fool."⁵ General Pierre G. T. Beauregard, whom Davis had removed from command of the Army of Tennessee in June 1862, wrote, "I thank my creator that I am not the essence of egotism, vanity, obstinacy, perversity, and vindictiveness" that he considered Davis to be.⁶ In truth, Beauregard was more accurately describing himself. The same might be said of Toombs, Stephens, and others who denounced the Confederate president as hypocritical and malicious. The hostility that developed between Davis and certain generals and political leaders—whether the chief fault was theirs or his—impaired his ability to function effectively as commander in chief. To be sure, there was some substance underlying the stereotypes of Davis's

disagreeable personality. He did not suffer fools gladly, and he let them know it. He did not practice the skillful politician's art of telling others what they wanted to hear. He did not flatter their egos, and he sometimes asserted his own. He did not hesitate to criticize others but was often thin-skinned about their criticisms of him. Davis could be austere, humorless, and tediously argumentative. He sometimes misinterpreted disagreement as personal hostility. Stephen R. Mallory, the Confederate secretary of the navy, had a mostly cordial relationship with Davis. But Mallory noted that "few men could be more chillingly, freezingly cold." In the president's dealings with congressmen, "he rarely satisfied or convinced them simply because in his manner and language there was just an indescribable something which offended their self-esteem and left their judgments room to find fault with him."⁷ But a Georgia congressman who had heard and believed all the negative comments about Davis changed his mind after a long conversation with him late in the war. "He has been greatly wronged," the congressman wrote to his wife. He "is not the stern, puffed up man he is represented to be. He was as polite, attentive, and communicative to me as I could wish. He listened patiently to all I said and when he differed with me he would give his reasons for it. He was very cordial. . . . And many gentlemen tell me the same thing as to his manner with them. . . . His enemies have done him great injustice."⁸ Davis's fragile health may account for these Jekyll and Hyde descriptions of his personality. No chief executive in American history suffered from as many chronic maladies as Jefferson Davis. The malaria that killed his first wife in 1835 struck him as well, and symptoms recurred frequently during the rest of his life. Corneal ulceration of his left eye produced virtual blindness in that eye and may have caused the severe neuralgia that often racked him with excruciating pain, nausea, and headaches. "Dyspepsia," a catchall nineteenth-century term for digestive disorders that in Davis's case may have been ulcers or acid reflux, repeatedly laid him low. He had little appetite, skipped meals, and became increasingly gaunt as the war went on. Bronchial problems, insomnia, and boils added to his misery.⁹ For days and sometimes weeks at a time he was unable to come to his office, but worked from his home and occasionally from his sickbed. His workaholic habits doubtless exacerbated his illnesses. One of his worst bouts of sickness occurred in April and May 1863 during the Chancellorsville and Vicksburg campaigns. He "has not been in his office for more than a month," wrote a War Department clerk in early May, but "he still attends to business at his dwelling." He had "sent to the War Department fifty-five letters" on various subjects that day with instructions on "what he wished done in the premises. . . . I think he has been ill every day for years, but this has been his most serious attack."¹⁰ His maladies were probably made worse by stress. They may have been partly psychosomatic but were nonetheless severe. Although one cannot point to examples of how his bouts of illness affected any specific decisions or actions as commander in chief, his chronic health problems surely had an impact on his overall performance. And they no doubt helped account for the perceived irritability and peevishness that he occasionally exhibited in personal relationships.

Jefferson Davis

As a wartime commander in chief, Davis determined, performed, or oversaw five categories of activity: policy, national strategy, military strategy, operations, and tactics. Neither Davis nor anyone else defined these functions in a systematic way during the Civil War. If they had, their definitions might have looked something like these: Policy refers to war aims—the political goals of the Confederacy. National strategy refers to the mobilization of the political, economic, diplomatic, and psychological as well as military resources of the nation to achieve those war aims. Military strategy concerns plans for the employment of armed forces to win the war and fulfill the goals of policy. Operations concerns the management and movements of armies in particular campaigns to carry out the purposes of military strategy. Tactics refers to the formations and handling of an army in a specific battle. Davis shaped and articulated the principal policy of the Confederacy with clarity and force: the quest for independent nationhood. Although he had not been a fire-eating secessionist, once Davis committed himself to a Confederate nation he never deviated from this goal or compromised its purpose. In a sense, he was the last Confederate left standing in 1865. A vital corollary of this policy was the preservation of slavery as the core institution of the Confederate polity. Davis was a large slaveholder and a consistent defender of the institution of bondage. But even slavery was subordinate to nationhood, and by 1865 Davis was prepared to jettison it if doing so would help achieve Confederate independence. Although Davis played an active role in military mobilization, he largely delegated the economic and diplomatic functions of national strategy to the appropriate subordinates. Their record of achievement in these efforts was decidedly mixed, with the failures in economic mobilization and foreign policy a result of factors largely beyond presidential control. Davis made several speaking tours to rally public support for the Confederate cause, and he managed to get most war-related legislation through Congress. Growing political factionalism and the alienation of some groups from the Confederate government marked a partial failure of national strategy. Nevertheless, as Gary Gallagher has shown, the Confederate war effort persisted through great difficulties that would have broken a less determined effort, and for that achievement Davis deserves part of the credit.¹¹ During his four and one-quarter years as president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis devoted most of his waking hours to military strategy and operations. He was present on several battlefields and even took part in some tactical planning. No other chief executive in American history exercised such hands-on influence in the shaping of military strategy. These activities therefore constitute the principal story line in the pages that follow.

1.??WE MUST PREPARE FOR A LONG WAR??

On February 10, 1861, Jefferson Davis and his wife, Varina, were taking rose cuttings in their garden at Brierfield, the Davis plantation on the rich bottomland along a looping bend in the Mississippi River. Three weeks

earlier, just recovered from an illness that had kept him in bed for several days, Davis had resigned his seat in the United States Senate when he received official word of Mississippi's secession from the Union. He and his family had made their way home slowly, stopping on January 28 at the state capital in Jackson, where Davis learned that he had been named major general of the Army of Mississippi. It was a position congenial to his desires. As a graduate of West Point, an officer in the regular army for seven years, commander of a volunteer regiment in the Mexican-American War, secretary of war in the Franklin Pierce administration, and chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, Davis had vast and varied military experience qualifying him for such a position. He immediately set to work to reorganize and expand the state militia to meet a potential invasion threat from the United States Army. Davis also anticipated the possibility that the convention of delegates from six seceded states meeting in Montgomery, Alabama, might choose him as general-in-chief of the soon-to-be-created army of the Confederate States of America. But for now he was careworn and exhausted. He wanted only to get home to restore his health and energy, supervise his 113 slaves as they prepared Brierfield for the year's cotton planting, and relax by working in his flower and vegetable gardens. While Jefferson and Varina were taking rose cuttings that pleasant February day, a special messenger arrived from Vicksburg. He handed Davis a telegram. Varina watched her husband as he opened and read it. His face blanched, she recalled. "After a few minutes painful silence" he told her, "as a man might speak of a sentence of death," that the convention at Montgomery had unanimously elected him provisional president of the Confederacy—not general-in-chief but commander in chief with all of its political as well as military responsibilities and vexations. He did not want the job. He had expected it to go to Howell Cobb of Georgia. But the convention, anticipating the possibility of war with the United States, had chosen Davis in considerable part because of his military qualifications, which none of the other leading candidates (including Cobb) possessed. Despite his misgivings, Davis's strong sense of duty compelled him to accept the call. He prepared to leave for Montgomery the next day.¹ Varina Davis

On his way to the Confederate capital, Davis gave twenty-five whistle-stop speeches. While he publicly expressed hopes that his new government would remain at peace with the United States, he told Governor Francis Pickens of South Carolina that he believed "a peaceful solution of our difficulties was not to be anticipated, and therefore my thoughts have been directed to the manner of rendering force effective."² One such means was to threaten the North with invasion if it dared to make war on the Confederacy. "There will be no war in our territory," he told a cheering crowd in Jackson, Mississippi, on February 12. "It will be carried into the enemy's territory." At Stevenson, Alabama, two days later, Davis vowed to extend war "where food for the sword and torch await the armies. . . . Grass will grow in the northern cities where pavements have been worn off by the tread of commerce."³ When he arrived at the railroad station in Montgomery on February 16, he pledged to the waiting crowd that if the North tried to coerce the Confederate states back into the Union, the Confederates would make the Northerners "smell Southern powder and feel Southern steel." More soberly, in his brief inaugural address on February 18, Davis referred five times to the possibility of war and the need to create an army and a navy to meet the challenge. If "passion or lust for dominion" should cause the United States to wage war on the Confederacy, "we must prepare to meet the emergency and maintain, by the final arbitrament of the sword, the position which we have assumed among the nations of the earth."⁴ Davis and the convention delegates, who reconstituted themselves as a provisional Congress, suited action to words. On February 26 the new president signed a law creating the infrastructure of a Confederate army: Ordnance, Quartermaster, Medical, and other staff departments modeled on those of the regular United States Army, with which Davis was familiar from his years as secretary of war. Subsequent legislation provided for the enlistment of volunteers to serve one year in the provisional army. They were to be organized into regiments by states, with company and sometimes regimental officers elected by the men and appointed by governors. Brigadier generals would be appointed by the president. Under this legislation a small army and even a navy began to take shape. In this process Davis played a hands-on role, with every aspect of military organization passing across his desk and receiving his approval or disapproval. At this stage of his tenure as commander in chief, such micromanagement was a virtue because the Confederacy was inventing itself from scratch and Davis knew more about organizing and administering an army than any other Southerner. It was also a necessity because his initial choice as secretary of war, Leroy P. Walker of Alabama, was a poor administrator and was soon overwhelmed by the task. Davis had selected him mainly for reasons of political geography: Each of his six cabinet members came from one of the original seven Confederate states (including Texas when it soon joined the Confederacy), with Davis himself from the seventh. The president assigned Florida's cabinet post to Stephen R. Mallory as secretary of the navy. Mallory turned out to be an excellent choice, for he created a navy out of virtually nothing. Under his leadership it pioneered in such technological innovations as ironclads, torpedoes (mines), and even a primitive submarine. Armed forces need not only men; they also need arms and ammunition, shoes and clothing, all the accoutrements of soldiers and the capacity to transport them where needed to sustain hundreds of thousands of men who are removed from the production and transport of this matériel by their presence in the armed forces. Slavery gave the Confederacy one advantage in this respect: The slaves constituted a large percentage of the labor force in the Confederate states, and by staying on the job they freed white men for the army. But the slaves worked mainly in agriculture growing cotton and other staple crops primarily for export. In the production of the potential matériel of war, the seven Confederate states began life at a huge disadvantage. Even with

the secession of four more slave states after the firing on Fort Sumter (to be discussed below), the Confederacy would possess only 12 percent as much industrial capacity as the Union states. In certain industries vital to military production, Northern superiority was even more decisive. According to the 1860 census, Union states had eleven times as many ships and boats as the Confederacy and produced fifteen times as much iron, seventeen times as many textile goods, twenty-four times as many locomotives, and thirty-two times as many firearms. The Union had more than twice the density of railroad mileage per square mile and several times the amount of rolling stock. From his experience as secretary of war and chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs in the 1850s, Davis was acutely aware of these statistics. He also knew that the state arsenals seized by Southern militias contained mostly old and out-of-repair weapons. Despite his boast that Confederates would make Northerners smell Southern powder and feel Southern steel if they tried to subjugate the Confederacy, Davis knew that he had little powder and less steel. Three days after his inauguration as Confederate president, he sent Raphael Semmes of Alabama to the North to buy weapons and arms-making machinery.⁵ A veteran of almost thirty years in the United States Navy who would soon become the Confederacy's most dashing sea captain, Semmes also proved adept at this initial assignment that Davis gave him. But the onset of war two months later soon overwhelmed the limited matériel that Semmes was able to acquire. For the first year of the war—and often thereafter—Davis's strategic options as commander in chief would be severely constrained by persistent deficiencies in arms, accoutrements, transportation, and industrial capacity. Fast steamships carrying war matériel and trying to evade the ever-tightening Union blockade, and a crash program to build up war industries in the South, would only partly remedy these deficiencies. • • • WHILE SEMMES WAS IN THE NORTH BUYING ARMS, DAVIS was confronting his first crucial decision as commander in chief: what to do about the two principal forts in Confederate harbors still held by soldiers of the United States Army. When South Carolina seceded on December 20, 1860, the commander of the army garrison at Fort Moultrie, Maj. Robert Anderson, grew apprehensive that the hotheaded Charleston militia would attack this obsolete fort. On the night of December 26, Anderson secretly moved the garrison to the uncompleted but immensely strong Fort Sumter on an artificial island at the entrance to the harbor. The outraged Carolinians denounced this movement as a violation of their sovereignty, and sent commissioners to President James Buchanan in Washington to demand that the fort be turned over to the state. The previously pliable Buchanan surprised them by saying no. His administration even sent an unarmed merchant steamer, the *Star of the West*, with reinforcements for Fort Sumter, but it was turned back by South Carolina artillery. Meanwhile, when Florida seceded in January her militia seized two outdated forts on the mainland at Pensacola. But the stronger Fort Pickens on Santa Rosa Island controlling the entrance to the harbor remained in Union hands. Tense standoffs at both Fort Sumter and Fort Pickens had persisted for several weeks when the Confederate government organized itself and Davis became president in February. The Congress in Montgomery instructed him to obtain control of these forts by negotiations if possible or by force if necessary. Davis sent commissioners to Washington to negotiate. He also named Pierre G. T. Beauregard and Braxton Bragg as the Confederacy's first two brigadier generals and sent them to Charleston and Pensacola to take over the state militias, absorb them into the new Confederate army, and prepare to attack the forts if required.⁶ Montgomery, Alabama: The first capital of the Confederacy

The incoming Lincoln administration refused to meet officially with the Confederate commissioners. But Secretary of State William H. Seward, who expected to be the "premier" of the administration, informed them through an intermediary that he was working to get the troops removed from Fort Sumter in the interest of preserving peace. Seward hoped that such a gesture of conciliation might be a first step in a gradual process of wooing the seceded states back into the Union. General-in-Chief Winfield Scott of the United States Army supported Seward's position, as did a majority of Lincoln's cabinet at first. Jefferson Davis would have been quite happy if Seward had succeeded in his efforts to get the garrison out of Sumter. But he repudiated any notion that this gesture might lead to reunion; on the contrary, he would have seen it as a recognition of Confederate sovereignty. That is how Abraham Lincoln saw it too. Fort Sumter had become the symbol of competing claims of sovereignty. So long as the American flag flew over the fort, the Confederate claim to be an independent nation was invalid. The same was true of Fort Pickens, and Davis instructed General Bragg to prepare to attack it if and when an actual attack order came.⁷ But no such order ever went to Bragg. The standoff at Sumter eclipsed the situation at Pensacola in the eyes of both Northerners and Southerners. When Lincoln informed South Carolina governor Francis Pickens of his intent to resupply the garrison at Fort Sumter, he forced Davis's hand. If the Confederates allowed the supplies to go in, they would lose face in this symbolic battle of sovereignties. If they fired on the relief boats or on the fort, they would stand convicted of starting a war, thereby uniting a divided North. But Davis had reason to believe that an actual shooting war would bring more slave states into the Confederacy to stand with their Southern brethren against Yankee "coercion." In any case, he was convinced that he could not yield his demand for the surrender of Fort Sumter without in effect yielding the Confederate claim to nationhood. At a tense meeting of the Confederate cabinet on April 8, a majority (evidently excepting only Secretary of State Robert Toombs) agreed with Davis. From Montgomery went a telegram to General Beauregard: Demand the evacuation of Sumter, and if it was refused, open fire. Beauregard sent his ultimatum; it was rejected; Confederate guns began shooting at 4:30 A.M. on April 12; the American flag was lowered in surrender two days later; and the war came.⁸ Lincoln's call for troops to suppress a rebellion prompted four

more slave states, led by Virginia, to join the Confederacy. Neither Lincoln nor Davis could foresee the huge and destructive scale of the war that ensued. But neither shared the opinions widespread among their respective publics that it would be a short war and an easy victory for their own side. “The people here are all in fine spirits,” wrote the wife of a Texas member of the provisional Congress two weeks after the firing on Fort Sumter. “No one doubts our success.”⁹ Davis tried to discourage such optimism. “We must prepare for a long war” and perhaps “unmerciful reverses at first,” he said to one overconfident friend. Davis scotched the notion that one Southerner could lick three Yankees. “Only fools doubted the courage of the Yankees to fight,” he declared, “and now we have stung their pride—we have roused them till they will fight like devils.”¹⁰ The original bill in Congress to create a Confederate army had authorized enlistments for six months. Davis had objected, insisting that it took at least that long to train a soldier, and urged a three-year term. Congress balked, and they finally compromised on one year. After Fort Sumter, Davis pressed Congress to enlarge the army and to require three-year terms for new recruits. As administered, this law allowed enlistees who supplied their own arms and equipment to sign up for one year; those who were equipped by the government would serve three years.¹¹ As this recruitment policy suggests, a shortage of weapons and accoutrements plagued the rapidly growing Confederate army in 1861. The capture of the Norfolk navy yard on April 20 provided a windfall of 1,200 cannon, many of which were soon on their way to the dozens of forts already existing or under construction across the South. The army also could obtain plenty of horses and mules for transportation. Effective small arms and field artillery, however, were in woefully short supply. By July 1 the Confederacy had at least one hundred thousand men in its armies, many of them armed with shotguns and squirrel rifles. The War Department could have accepted thousands more had it been able to equip them. What were these soldiers expected to do? In his message on April 29 to a special session of the provisional Congress, Davis said no more about carrying the war into the North. Instead, he announced a defensive national strategy: “We seek no conquest, no aggrandizement, no concession of any kind from the States with which we were lately confederated; all we ask is to be let alone.” But if the United States “attempt our subjugation by arms . . . we will . . . resist to the direst extremity.”¹² Davis’s pledge to seek no conquest was somewhat disingenuous. He meant no aggrandizement or conquest of free states. Four border slave states had not seceded. Davis hoped that at least three of them—Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri—would join the Confederacy. And when it became possible, he was prepared to invade them to make it happen. As early as April 23 he approved the shipment of four pieces of artillery (in boxes labeled “marble”) to pro-Confederate governor Claiborne Jackson of Missouri to enable his secessionist militia to capture the St. Louis arsenal.¹³ That effort did not work out, but later in the summer Confederate troops invaded Missouri and occupied a substantial portion of Kentucky.