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History

Senior Thesis

### Lee, Honor, and the Confederacy

Honor played a vital role in southern culture and was not taken lightly, for one of the reasons the South seceded was that southerners believed their honor had been insulted. The traditions of the South demanded control of land and the independence to act for the good of family and community. The South began to feel the pressure of servitude to political forces that denounced practices like slavery, particularly in debates over the spread of slavery in western territories. Secession, then, can be understood as an effort to restore southern honor.<sup>1</sup> One of Virginia's leading gentlemen, Robert E. Lee, joined the Confederacy in 1861. With him, he brought not only his extraordinary military talents but an unwavering sense of honor and virtue that he possessed not only in wartime but throughout his entire life. For Lee, honor required action for the overall public good. Lee had devoted thirty years of his life to the U.S. Army yet during the Civil War he forfeited his Arlington Plantation along the Potomac River, had sons and relatives captured, and suffered physical hardships himself. If the Confederate cause was to succeed, Lee felt that private citizens and public figures would have to cooperate, sacrifice, and accept their duty. During the Civil War, the Confederate States of America learned quickly that the many independently functioning factions within their ranks did not have a cohesive intent or purpose. While Lee depended on honor and virtue to sustain the South, the very concept was virtually lost in the face of war. Lee, like so many others, lost sight of the Confederate vision as the difficulties of their individual situations were intensified.

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<sup>1</sup> Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over* (New York: Vintage Civil War Library, 2007), 20-23. Author's note: Abbreviation C.S.A. will be used which stands for Confederate States of America.

This paper will examine southern honor and how the belief in this tradition because of its localistic tendencies to protect family, property, community, and state before national interests affected the outcome of the Civil War. The argument relies on the wartime letters, telegrams, reports, and diaries of Robert E. Lee, who was in frequent contact with politicians in Richmond, the Confederate capital, and the southern states. These communications reveal the ways in which southern leaders in the most dire of times interpreted military needs in terms of localism so fostered by the southern sense of masculine honor.

The ideology of honor that defined southern culture was not enough to overcome the obstacles to mobilize for war. The rapid birth of the Confederacy with its traditions of independence, states rights, and intolerance for domination from federal influences, did not allow the South to develop a cohesive purpose or unity. Through war correspondence, Robert E. Lee and other southern men illuminate the C.S.A's inability to provide sufficient manpower and supplies to the army, due to divisions within the political structure of the Confederacy and the honor-bound localities inability to rise above the revered yet constraining traditions. Lee, himself, honor bound and Virginia-centric, did not recognize the same qualities in others as he criticized their lack of cooperation. As the threat to the Confederate homeland was imminent, the demand for protection from Union invasion grew rapidly. Confused by the inability of the government to protect their homes and families, many politicians and citizens were reluctant to assist the greater war effort. The fabric of southern life caused it to crumble as the south lost direction and the greater public good fell to self interest and self preservation among localities. The Confederacy had to overcome its local-bound attitudes, consolidate their strategy, and defend strategic points for the greater good. In the end, the honor society was not able to fully cooperate with the military and this deficiency contributed to the likelihood of failure.

Honor was the basis of southern culture and greatly shaped how the South operated as a society. Historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown describes honor as being, “a sense of personal worth and it is invested in the whole of the person. Yet the whole covers more than the individual--it includes the identification of the individual with his blood relations, his community, his state, and whatever other associations the man of honor feels [is] important for establishing his claim for recognition.”<sup>2</sup> Author Williamjames Hull Hoffer, describes a person with southern honor as one who, “must never be shamed or act in a shameful manner at the risk of public opprobrium and one must never allow another to bring disgrace on one’s name or that of family members.”<sup>3</sup> Upholding the family name and status within society depended on standards of virtue and behavior. The opinions of others and the public acceptance or denial of members within southern society was essential to the success or failure of an individual or family. Hoffer points out honor was “linked to one’s public reputation, honor was more than just manliness, character, and position in society. It undergirded everything that made you who you were, from your credit worthiness-- a critical item in an economy built on debt-- to your social life.”<sup>4</sup> Honorable qualities included self restraint, moderation, character, pride, and calmness, while “the man of honor feels that defense of reputation and virility must come before all else.”<sup>5</sup> The honor culture defined the South.

In the era of the Civil War, the patriarchal society embedded in southern culture demanded the protection of family above all else. Historian Chandra Manning believes “recognition of a man’s honor chiefly depended on his demonstration of authority over

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<sup>2</sup> Bertram Wyatt- Brown, “Honor and Secession,” ed., Michael Perman, *Major Problems in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Boston: Houghton & Mifflin, 1998), 80.

<sup>3</sup> Williamjames Hull Hoffer. *The Caning of Charles Sumner: Honor, Idealism, and the Origins of the Civil War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, 81.

subordinates, including women, children, and African Americans, whether or not they owned slaves.”<sup>6</sup> A respectable gentleman was responsible for those who depended on him and if he failed to successfully accomplish this task he was a failure by southern standards. There was no question about who ordered and maintained family and community as their society was based on protecting the virtue of white women within their sphere of influence.<sup>7</sup> Related to these concepts was the total dependency and subordination of slaves within southern society. While white men protected white women and family members, “slaves had no respectable rank, no honor, and could not claim the rites or rights that the honor system conferred.”<sup>8</sup> It was an unfathomable idea to suggest freedom and equality for slaves within the framework of southern society.

Southern culture emphasized that honorable men sacrificed for the greater public good and restraint of self-interest to protect a way of life, property, and white citizens. The issue was that these beliefs concentrated on local concerns not global ones. Due to these traits honor was very localized. Family, property, and tangible items under their control had to be secured above all. Small farm owners, poor white farmers, plantation owners, politicians, generals, and the governors recognized that their first duty was to their home, county, and state. The strength of these beliefs was unique to the South and did not affect the rest of the U.S. in the same way.<sup>9</sup> Because of its traditions of an honor-based society, the South struggled with the concept of a national war that required everyone in the Confederacy to put aside their local interests to concentrate on the success of the entire nation. The greatest sacrifice in an honor-bound society was “death in defense of community and principle,” which Wyatt-Brown terms, “a path to glory

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<sup>6</sup> Manning, 38.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 36.

<sup>8</sup> Hoffer, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Though localism was not dead in the North, the transportation revolution that connected countryside to growing cities, including those with large immigrant populations, fostered trans-local connections and identities much more than in the South. James M. McPherson, “The Differences between the antebellum North and South,” ed., Michael Perman, *Major Problems in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1998), 21-30.

and remembrance, whereas servile submission entails disgrace.”<sup>10</sup> As the South left the Union and the war began, southerners rebelled against federal interference and fought to protect their way of life.

Lee brought his own set of difficulties to his command of the army. Historians have noted Lee’s Virginia-centric view of the war had its roots well before the conflict. Lee was a loyal Virginian who struggled with his decision to leave the Union and join the Confederacy. Steven Woodward says that Lee, “vacillated somewhat during the months leading up to Fort Sumter, sometimes talking as if he would fight for Virginia, whichever side it took.”<sup>11</sup> When Virginia left the Union, so did Lee. Woodward recognizes Lee’s devotion to Virginia stating “... Virginia did charm him. He loved the state and recoiled at the thought of siding against it, with the antislavery Northerners he so much disliked.”<sup>12</sup> Virginia remained the focus of his policies and war strategy. Paul Escott explains that Lee was not interested in issues outside Virginia, and he suggests “perhaps he centered his gaze on Virginia because of his oft mentioned love for his home state, or perhaps he believed that the major battles would be fought between Richmond and Washington.”<sup>13</sup> In January of 1865, Davis named Lee as overall commander of Confederate forces in both the Eastern and Western theatres. Escott points out that in doing this, Davis needed to give, “assurance that Lee would continue to be in immediate command of his troops in Virginia, for Lee had made plain on many earlier occasions that he was not willing to leave the Virginia theatre.”<sup>14</sup> Gabor Borritt agrees, “Lee’s preoccupation with Virginia” was “a

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<sup>10</sup> Brown, 85.

<sup>11</sup> Woodward, Steven E. *Davis and Lee at War* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995), 16.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>13</sup> Escott, Paul D. *Military Necessity: Civil-Military Relations in the Confederacy* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 62.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 156.

consequence of parochialism that limited his vision to the east while the war was being lost in the west.”<sup>15</sup> Lee’s Virginia-centrism determined his views of the Confederacy.

There were many different approaches to the war. Lee’s plan for winning the war often collided with others’ ideas of how to succeed. In the midst of the War, Lee faced governors, states, and public figures, who became increasingly self serving and unwilling to serve selflessly for the benefit of the Confederate States. In addition, Lee’s Commander-in-Chief, Jefferson Davis, also caused problems for the general. Secession threw the South into an internal battle for direction as well as the bloody fight. Davis vacillated between the role of controlling meddler and an inexplicably affable friend to some of his bungling generals. What seemed to be a unified effort between Davis and Lee was a collision of tactics and vision. As Gabor Borritt puts it, “Lee knew...the president had a different strategic vision from his own...and because the general never wrote or spoke his heresy...the Confederate president believed, that Lee and Davis were in strategic accord when, in fact, they were not.”<sup>16</sup> It is a testament to Lee’s diplomatic ability that Davis did not realize the chasm between them but in the end the division led to failure.<sup>17</sup> Lee managed the differences between himself and Davis but every impasse in their military plans affected the outcome of the war. The Confederate States faced a determine enemy that proved over time to have greater cohesion and cooperation without the level of internal chaos. As the war progressed, Robert E. Lee found himself and his armies at the mercy of self interest, a lack of unified leadership, and an enemy of increasing power.

Lee’s ability to deal with superiors and subordinates was well known. He was able to avoid conflict and pursue his goals without offending the people he had to work with. Lee maneuvered around his generals but kept their honor intact. Historian Steven Woodworth notes

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<sup>15</sup> Gabor S. Borritt, *Jefferson Davis’s Generals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 172.

<sup>16</sup> Borritt, 29.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 35.

that after a series of terrible losses, in which James Longstreet was in part to blame, “Lee appreciated Longstreet’s strengths, and if he recognized the weaknesses, he kept a tactful silence on them.”<sup>18</sup> Lee was successful not only because he was determined but because he could work well with people. While there were many internal conflicts within the Confederacy, most historians believe Lee was widely regarded as a good manager and a capable leader who got along well with others despite the difficult circumstances in the war.

Nonetheless, Lee’s own prestige could not overcome localisic concerns of southern governors and others who understood their first responsibilities as honorable men was the ability to protect their families and homes. Through constant communication with these leaders, Lee pleaded for more supplies and men but with very little positive response. He did not seem to realize, however, that these leaders felt their own states were as important to their honor as Lee did Virginia. They on the other hand did not seem to recognize that Lee’s determination to defend Virginia might have been more important to the Confederate success than the defense of their own states.

Lee came from a highly respected family with a history of government service. Robert E. Lee’s father, Henry Lee III, better known as “Light Horse Harry” was a Revolutionary War hero, a powerful figure and one of several members of the Lee kin to leave a profound mark on the newly formed United States. Henry Lee was born in Virginia in 1756 to great wealth, land, and prominence. He grew up on the Stratford plantation and graduated from Princeton University in 1773. At the outbreak of the American Revolution, Henry Lee joined the First Continental Army Dragoon Cavalry division. “Light Horse Harry” was quickly recognized for “his skill as a

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<sup>18</sup> Woodworth, 177.

horseman, as well as his temperament made him a natural cavalryman.”<sup>19</sup> Henry Lee became a famous war hero when he led a surprise attack at Paulus Hook, New Jersey. He captured over four hundred British soldiers while the Americans suffered only one casualty. George Washington and Henry Lee III became great friends and depended on each other for the remainder of the war.

After the American Revolution ended in 1783, Henry Lee III began a career as a public official. He served as a member of the First Continental Congress, supported ratification of the Constitution, was governor of Virginia from 1791-1794, and won election to the Sixth Congress in 1799 as a member of the Federalist Party.<sup>20</sup> When George Washington died in December of 1799, Henry Lee delivered the eulogy at the first president’s funeral and famously described Washington as “first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.”<sup>21</sup> Following his father’s footsteps, Robert E. Lee idolized George Washington as he grew up, learning to honor his father’s friend. Henry Lee exhibited many virtuous qualities, bravely fought for independence, and served the public good during the nation’s infancy.<sup>22</sup>

Robert E. Lee was born in 1807 to the Old Dominion state of Virginia and lived on the Stratford and Arlington plantations on the Potomac River. Historian Joseph Glatthaar describes Lee as a Southern gentleman, “The scion of one of the finest families in Virginia,” who “felt at ease in the most exclusive situation. He impressed men with his dignity and gentility, and enchanted women with his good looks and flirtatious banter.”<sup>23</sup> He possessed all of the traits valued by Southern society and seemed destined for success as an American soldier. Lee

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<sup>19</sup> Stratford Hall, “Henry Lee III,” Home of the Lees of Virginia & Birthplace of Robert E. Lee. Stratford Hall, <http://www.stratfordhall.org/learn/lees/lighthorse.php>. Accessed 3-26-2011.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Royster. “Henry Lee (1756-1818),” Biographical Directory. Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=L000195>. Accessed 3-31-2011.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Stratfordhall.org

<sup>23</sup> Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Partners in Command: The Relationships Between Leaders in the Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 30.



attended West Point, finishing second in his class and he subsequently served on General Winfield Scott's staff and the Corps of Engineers. His public prestige was widely noted; Glatthaar asserts, "Every West Pointer in the Regular Army was familiar with Lee, the jewel of Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott's elite staff."<sup>24</sup> Lee's longtime commander Scott had made arrangements for Lee to command a major field army. Scott recognized Lee's brilliance and importance and as the specter of war between the North and South increased, Scott hoped to dissuade Lee from joining the ranks of the Confederacy. After resigning from the U.S. Army, Lee became a military advisor to Jefferson Davis and organized the newly formed units of Southern troops in the War's first months, then eventually became the overall commander of the Army of Northern Virginia.<sup>25</sup>

Despite early enthusiasm for the war, by early 1862, volunteer enlistment quickly declined and in order to maintain the army prominent generals like Joseph E. Johnston, Robert E. Lee, and Secretary of War, George Randolph, supported conscription and encouraged Jefferson Davis to act on the matter. The Confederate Congress passed the first conscription act in American history, which called all white men between the ages of eighteen and thirty five to serve in the army. A few weeks later, Congress amended the conscription act with an exemption. This allowed men who served or worked in government bureaucracies, as well as those in other capacities like doctors, to dodge conscription.<sup>26</sup> John B. Jones, a clerk at the Confederate capital in Richmond, once remarked in his diary "our Bureau of Conscription ought to be called the Bureau of Exemption. It is turning out a vast number of exempts."<sup>27</sup> The conscription act

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 8-10.

<sup>26</sup> Frank Vandivier. *Their Tattered Flags: The Epic of the Confederacy* (New York: Harpers Ferry Magazine Press, 1970), 129-132.

<sup>27</sup> John B. Jones. *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate States Capital* (Philadelphia: J.B Lippincott & Co, 1866), 260.

changed as the war proceeded. Exemptions were added and repealed; for instance, in 1865, the substitution law that allowed those able to pay a three hundred dollar fee, to send substitutes in place of themselves, was repealed. The age of men drafted was raised to between seventeen and fifty, and in the final weeks of the war, slaves were drafted to the army in exchange for their freedom at the war's end.

The draft, an imposition of centralized authorities, provoked much opposition in the states. Men like Georgia Governor, Joseph E. Brown, "saw the draft as a blow to their authority and rummaged among political expedients to raise again the standard of the state rights."<sup>28</sup> Historian J. William Harris notes, "Enforcement of conscription compounded the Confederacy's problems. It required the imposition of a new centralized bureaucracy on a population with hardly any experience in dealing with such an institution."<sup>29</sup> Many felt the central Confederate government infringed on personal and state liberties, rights, and policies. Harris comments, "as the war stretched on, the Confederate government had to interfere in the lives of its citizens in countless ways, and that interference provoked resistance from many who regarded it as an unjustified assault on the independence and autonomy of states, local communities, and individuals."<sup>30</sup> The new Confederate government began to impose the same intrusions on personal rights that the Union government had attempted, and many southerners resisted the expansion of centralized authority.

The controls placed on the Confederate States and the demands for men and supplies outside local jurisdictions caused the divisions among governors, Congress, and individuals to become destructive. The Confederacy was born of men, ideals, and beliefs that often collided

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 131.

<sup>29</sup> William J. Harris, "Strains of War," ed., Michael Perman, *Major Problems in the Civil War and Reconstruction*. Boston: Houghton & Mifflin, 1998, 239-240.

<sup>30</sup> Harris, 238.

with the established order. There were many eccentric Congressmen who were disgruntled with Confederate leadership from the outset of the war. The Congress consisted of men who were “ambitious and outspoken individuals who craved the spotlight and sought to make impressions.... Southern politicians felt it was desirable to dissent, to take a stand on principle, and to go against the majority and fight against the long odds.”<sup>31</sup> This caused several divisions within the political structure of the C.S.A. Congressmen conspired with unhappy Confederate generals like P.G.T. Beauregard and Joseph E. Johnston, who had strained relations with Jefferson Davis. The generals hoped to receive a higher military rank and approval of outlandish battle plans while politicians wanted a greater say in troop movement and where supplies were utilized.<sup>32</sup> An undermining, hostile, and outspoken Congress contributed to the South’s problems when they were called upon to pass key legislation and support the Confederate central government in the war.

Dissension extended into the executive branch. Alexander Stephens, a Georgia native and Vice President of the Confederacy, greatly disliked Jefferson Davis and generated controversy within the government. As Escott puts it, “Stephens felt little or no affection for Davis and found it difficult to keep up limited communications with him...[He] was deeply agitated about what he saw as violations of principle and constitutional rights in government measures such as impressments, conscription, and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus.”<sup>33</sup> By 1864, Alexander Stephens, along with his brother Linton Stephens and Georgia governor Joseph E. Brown “joined in a serious attack on the government’s war policies.”<sup>34</sup> These politicians pursued

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<sup>31</sup> Escott, 17.

<sup>32</sup> Escott, 20-22.

<sup>33</sup> Escott, 147.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

an individual course of action without regard to the effects of their behavior on the Confederacy as a whole.

Linton Stephens levied attacks on Davis. His disagreements with the President were personal as well as professional and he despised Davis so much that at times he hinted that Davis should have been assassinated. He called the President, “mad, infatuated, a bloated piece of incompetence and a fool.”<sup>35</sup> The discord among the Confederate leaders was ongoing and severe which was a detriment to the unity required of the states during the war. The local interest of many politicians was fueled by anti-government rhetoric and the strain caused some leaders to focus even more on their own jurisdictions. Vice President Alexander Stephens moved back to Georgia shortly after the war began, and he stayed there for the duration of the war. Stephens and others abandoned congressional decision-making to focus on their private concerns. The results were severe for the C.S.A.

The support of southern governors was vital to the Confederacy. From secession and throughout the war their cooperation was essential. These men were relied upon to provide troops for the military along with overseeing food production and weapons manufacturing. Historian W. Buck Yearns contends that almost all of the southern governors did a commendable job and provided as many services as possible. However, he adds:

The Confederate governors, like their northern counterparts, found themselves enmeshed in a world of changing political power. They had been bred on states’ rights doctrines and reared in a prewar political atmosphere which, for all the arguments to the contrary, still left a great deal of power at the state level. But exigencies of wartime changed all this... Upon enactment of such extreme war measures as conscription, impressments, suspension of habeas corpus, regulation of state blockade-runners, and taxation in kind, most governors automatically protested.<sup>36</sup>

The southern politicians created tremendous strife and obstacles for success at the same time they were entrenched in old political views and an honor-based society. Most state governments

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<sup>35</sup> Escott 147.

<sup>36</sup> W. Buck Yearns, *The Confederate Governors* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 9.

gave vast amounts of supplies and manpower to the cause but ultimately wanted what was best for the states they represented in order to protect their way of life. As Union armies began to threaten the South, cooperation from the states decreased while the call for Confederate protection of their states greatly increased, creating a no-win situation that put a strain on political, military, and personal relationships.

Northern advantages in manpower were felt early on, particularly in places where water and transport were available; the Confederacy could not compete in all theatres of the war. The Union Navy was vastly superior to that of the South and a blockade along the entire Confederate coast began quickly and lasted for the duration of the war. Due to the blockade, supplies from foreign nations were eliminated at the same time it produced constant pressure and threats of invasion in the South. Due to inferior man and naval power, the Confederacy was not able to protect all of its states or citizens equally. Certain points and areas received much more attention including Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia among others because of the extensive amount of railroads, food, animals, and men in those states. Places like Florida could not be completely defended and were overtaken in part because of their geography, characterized by coastal dominated location and resources.

The Union armies began their invasion of southern soil in mass force by 1862. Union generals like Juan Carlos Buell and Ulysses S. Grant began their fight in the western areas of the Confederacy in Kentucky and Tennessee. General Grant captured Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in February of 1862. Capturing these Confederate strongholds allowed Union forces passage down the Mississippi River and opened up the gates into Tennessee.<sup>37</sup> Buell drove the Confederates out of Kentucky with a victory at Perryville in October 1862. Meanwhile in the

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<sup>37</sup> Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), 289.

East, Union General George McClellan and other Union forces threatened to overrun Virginia by mid 1862. After a protracted siege at Yorktown, McClellan was just outside of Richmond. He was eventually driven out of Virginia along with the other Union forces by southern armies around June of 1862.<sup>38</sup> (See Map Theater of War 1861-1862).<sup>39</sup>

The Mississippi River was under firm control by Union forces by July 1863. Grant and northern armies, by the late spring and summer of 1863, had won costly victories at places like Memphis, Nashville, Jackson, Mississippi, and New Orleans. For Grant, the biggest victory in 1863 came at Vicksburg, Mississippi which was one of the last Confederate strongholds in the western theatre of war. After a long siege, southern forces surrendered the town and over 20,000 soldiers. While the same day, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1863, Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia were repelled at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Lee had been on the offensive for over a year and while Union forces had success in the West, northern armies had been routed in the East, especially in Virginia.<sup>40</sup> (See Map Theater of War 1862-1864).<sup>41</sup>

By 1864 and 1865, Union forces began to overwhelm the rest of the Confederacy. Union General William T. Sherman embarked on a devastating “scorched earth” military campaign from Chattanooga, Tennessee. His objective was to capture the city of Atlanta and destroy everything of any military value, while he made southern citizens feel the impact of war. After months of resistance by the Army of Tennessee, Sherman captured Atlanta in late December of 1864. From Atlanta, Sherman implemented his “scorched earth” policy to the Georgia coast and then through South Carolina and North Carolina.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile Grant was able to bottle up Lee in a siege at Petersburg, Virginia. Lee surrendered his army on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1865. Though Union

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 296.

<sup>39</sup> Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative*, vol. 1, (New York: Random House Publishing, 1958).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 349-353.

<sup>41</sup> Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative*, vol. 2, (New York: Random House Publishing, 1958).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 402-404, 415.

victory was uncertain for some time, once Atlanta was captured, it was only a matter of time before President Lincoln, the North, and its armies were able to achieve victory. (See Map Theater of War 1864-1865).<sup>43</sup>

As commander for the C.S.A., Robert E. Lee soon discovered that the Confederacy lacked fundamental strengths and a clear, cohesive direction from the top of its hierarchy to the most basic agreement among the states. By the time Lee assumed command of forces for the C.S.A., major problems had developed behind the scenes among politicians and states. These preliminary difficulties, as well as the major crises that affected the most embattled states, hindered the General's ability to provide for his armies and progress efficiently. As Lee proposed his battle strategies, President Davis wrestled with governors who had witnessed the destruction of their cities and occupation of portions of their states. Lee entered the arena forced to confront a number of bitter politicians who felt abandoned by the Confederate government in Richmond.

Lee proceeded to take charge of troop dispersal, fortifications, and supplies. The General visited the defenses of Richmond, the Confederate Capital, and he was displeased. He wrote to Virginia Governor John Letcher telling him that progress was slow because of the lack of workers and suggested "that you may submit it to the city counsel for their consideration and action. I beg leave, also to suggest that all available persons in Richmond be organized."<sup>44</sup> Supplies were limited for all of the volunteers throughout Virginia. Lee responded to William Parks in Grayson County, Virginia and his request for arms saying, he could not help him

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<sup>43</sup> Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative*, vol. 3, (New York: Random House Publishing, 1958).

<sup>44</sup> Robert E. Lee to Letcher, June 14, 1861, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Vol. 2, (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 926.

because “the supply of arms available for arming the volunteers for Virginia is so limited.”<sup>45</sup> Lee told Parks that he had spoken to Governor Letcher about the problem and that he hoped to obtain some old flintlocks. Not only were states competing with each other for supplies but localities within particular states as well. Lee was already suggesting that some of the officials were not fully honoring their commitments to the South but harboring supplies for themselves.

From the beginning, Lee was forced to appeal to politicians to get goods, even obsolete weapons, the soldiers needed. The General wrote to Letcher and gave an overall assessment of the state of affairs in Virginia. Lee was serious but positive, mentioning an arms order had been placed and if his calculations were correct, forty thousand men could be armed and ready for service while he reminded Letcher that since, “this body of men were called from a state of profound peace to one of unexpected war, you will have reason to commend the alacrity with which they left their homes and families and prepared themselves for the defense of the State.”<sup>46</sup> Lee presented these volunteers to the governor as honorable and virtuous, suggesting that Letcher might have to sacrifice to get them what they needed. Lee later noted that enlistments were not the problem but supplies, and everything was needed from food to gun powder.<sup>47</sup> While soldiers were sacrificing everything, the citizens, States, and officials were slow to respond to their needs.

While the troops struggled with the lack of necessities on the battlefield, their families suffered as well. Many members of the army looked to their leaders to protect their homes while they fought. Jefferson Davis was contacted by a civilian named John H. Ruckman, who resided in Mill Point, Pocahontas County, Virginia. Ruckman claimed his county was desperate, in danger from a strong enemy force that would likely take the area within two weeks, and he

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<sup>45</sup> Lee to William Parks, June 18, 1861, in *W.O.R.*, Vol. 2, 937.

<sup>46</sup> Lee to Letcher, June 15, 1861, in *W.O.R.*, Vol. 2, 928.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*



claimed there were very few Confederate soldiers to protect them. Ruckman pointed out that their county was loyal to the South. They had sent lead pipe to be melted for arms, collected fifteen thousand dollars for a war fund, and sent most of the men to volunteer companies. The community was now in dire straits, as Ruckman explained, “there are not men sufficient left to raise our crops or save our harvests. We have urged the Governor time after time, again and again to grant us arms, ammunition and men...Will you help us? Can you help this time?”<sup>48</sup>

Ruckman framed local needs in a broader perspective, pointing out that Confederate soldiers would not benefit from the fertile products of the area. He continued saying that his county was an area that needed protection to help the Confederacy succeed. Moreover, Ruckman pointed out that his three sons were in the army and that he was leaving to join. By juxtaposing local and personal sacrifice, Ruckman pleaded with Davis and the government to protect its citizens. This letter must have torn at Davis, for surely he wanted to help but as the war continued it would be impossible to protect virtuous citizens like John Ruckman. Private citizens and General Lee suffered the privations of war. Sacrifice and virtue were not always rewarded in either sphere.

Intensifying the difficulties Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia faced, the currency and payment crisis became an issue for everyone in the South. General John B. Magruder, a Virginia native who served in the Confederacy’s eastern and southwestern theatres of war, wrote to Lee and told him that supplies and money would not be able to be transported across the Mississippi River region once Union “river police” were firmly established. Magruder stated that along with arms, money needed to be shipped at once for soldiers on the other side of the river for wages and to buy goods. He requested that Lee consult with the President on the matter and

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<sup>48</sup> John Ruckman to Jefferson Davis, June 10, 1861, in *W.O.R.*, Vol. 2, 919.

to get back to him as quickly as possible.<sup>49</sup> The potential split of the Confederacy at the Mississippi presented a huge crisis. How could troops be willing to fight without money? Funds dried up and nothing could be bought. Davis wrote to the governors of Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Missouri and reassured them that their states were still vitally important to the cause. Responding to proposals to establish a regional treasury department, Davis told them that “there will probably be more difficulty in meeting your desires than you are aware of. The law does not now permit it and I am not sure that the project is feasible...I hope successfully to prevent any further injury to service from want of funds.”<sup>50</sup> Davis infuriated and frustrated these politicians but he had no power to change the law. These issues only grew worse with time.

Supplies were not only scarce; that which was available could be difficult to obtain. In late September of 1862, Lee wrote Secretary of War George Randolph and discussed his trip to the disputed territories in Virginia and Maryland, where there was a large population of Union loyalists.<sup>51</sup> Lee and his officers had to use Confederate money to purchase supplies, and led Lee to charge, “There are capitalists in the country, and persons perhaps inimical to us who refuse to take from the planters and farmers who furnish our army with subsistence, Confederate notes in payment of their debts.”<sup>52</sup> He told Randolph the government needed to make the currency legal in those hostile places to make it easier to obtain goods. The General again followed up on the issue saying it was a matter for Congress and not executive authority. Solving this problem was critical and he expressed his opinion, “it is the only money paid by the Government for the supplies, which it purchases from its citizens and I think should be made legal currency within

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<sup>49</sup> Magruder to Lee, June 26, 1862, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Vol. 13, (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 845.

<sup>50</sup> Davis to Govs, Sept 12, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 13, 879.

<sup>51</sup> Note: Western Virginia had a large loyalist population and the State of West Virginia would be created during the war.

<sup>52</sup> Lee to Randolph, Sept 29, 1862, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Vol. 14, part 2, (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 635.

the Confederacy.”<sup>53</sup> He concluded that this type of payment should be limited to the army to pay for goods and if they were not sold willingly, items were to be impressed, and then patrons would be paid with treasury notes. Lee suggested, in effect, that the army would force the sale of goods the army needed and guarantee payment by the Confederacy.

In addition to the supply issues, the war caused inflation. Inflation numbers rose over 3,000 percent by the end of the war in the South. Lee wrote to P.S. Roller of Mount Crawford, Virginia who had complained about prices for wheat and flour. Roller felt higher prices were paid to other areas of Virginia and Lee wanted a universal price for flour. Lee noted Roller’s region was paid two dollars higher per bushel than the Shenandoah Valley and Lee “hoped the presence of the army would prove beneficial to the country affording the farmers a fair price for produce that would be likely otherwise to be taken by the enemy without compensation.”<sup>54</sup> This must have irked Lee; he paid the farmers but the growers were still bickering and wanted more money for themselves. The General had much greater problems to worry about than a few dollars for wheat but even individuals within the same state were looking to get the most money and best deals possible from region to region. Lee wrote to James Seddon, Secretary of War during 1863 and 1864, when he heard about Virginia counties with meat surpluses. Lee proposed a plan to save the government money to procure food, trading sugar for bacon since “they now have to pay \$1.25 per pound for sugar and bacon costs 35 cents per pound.”<sup>55</sup> If the Confederate armies bartered for what they needed, provisions were more attainable, especially if currency was not widely accepted. Lee found it necessary to engage in constant negotiations to obtain the supplies he needed.

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<sup>53</sup> Lee to Randolph, Oct 16, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 14, part 2, 668.

<sup>54</sup> Lee to Roller, Nov 7, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 14, part 2, 702.

<sup>55</sup> Lee to Seddon, Jan 20, 1863, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Vol. 21, (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 1100.

One of the biggest issues facing the Army of Northern Virginia and the rest of the Southern armies was getting paid on a regular basis. Three months after the Battle of Gettysburg, Lee heard grumblings about the lack of pay within the army. No one had been paid in months and the men had a hard time making ends meet for themselves and families back home. But there were impediments to satisfying the soldiers.<sup>56</sup> Confederate money was becoming worthless and gold became the only acceptable form of payment by the end of the Civil War. More and more money was printed but inflation wiped out the value of paper money. Confederate war clerk John Jones wrote an undated entry in his diary, “Confederate money still depreciates....Some brokers are demanding ten dollars of Confederate notes for one in gold! That is bad, and it may be worse.”<sup>57</sup> In February 1865, Lee wrote to James Longstreet, one of his corps commanders, who remained with Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia until the end of the war. Lee recognized that if the army had gold they could get anything the army needed easily, but “the great difficulty is to obtain gold. It is not in the coffers of the Government or the banks but it is principally hoarded by individuals throughout the country and inaccessible to us.”<sup>58</sup> Prominent southerners’ failure to sacrifice for the cause was understood by Lee as a cause of his men’s suffering.

Lee’s supply issues were a constant concern and the struggle to obtain goods from government officials caused enormous hardship within the army. In September of 1862, Lee wanted to enter Maryland but before he could do so he needed shoes and ammunition for the troops, both of which were unavailable. His men had been suffering from cold weather since the month of September began and Lee asked Davis to tell the Ordinance Department and Quartermasters Department to speed up the process and to send as many supplies as possible

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<sup>56</sup> Lee to Davis, Oct 3, 1863, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Vol. 29, part 2, (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 769.

<sup>57</sup> Jones, 277.

<sup>58</sup> Lee to Longstreet, Feb 22, 1865, in *The Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee*, ed., By Clifford Dowdey, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1961), 907.

because the South “cannot afford to be idle.”<sup>59</sup> Lee also demanded food for his animals. The General thought he might use Maryland’s ex-governor Lowe as a guide, which he hoped would make citizens more cooperative. Hoping to find forage, Lee told Davis that if his campaign was successful he planned to continue onward into Pennsylvania.<sup>60</sup>

Upon entering Maryland Lee issued a proclamation to the state. Denouncing Lincoln’s imposition of martial law and the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, Lee proclaimed he had come to help and protect Maryland’s loyal citizens, who had “under the pretense of supporting the Constitution but in violation of its valuable provisions your citizens have been arrested and imprisoned upon no charge contrary to all forms of law.”<sup>61</sup> The General further appealed to the citizens of Maryland to throw “off this foreign yoke to enable you again to enjoy the inalienable rights of freemen, and restore independence and sovereignty to your state.”<sup>62</sup> Lee hoped the citizens would rise up and help the South. He offered protection and anticipated men and supplies would be given to him in return. As the Army of Northern Virginia marched towards confrontation with northern forces, citizens did not fully respond in mass force and Lee was forced to retreat from Maryland back into Virginia after the battle of Antietam.

Soldiers of the Army of Northern Virginia suffered during the hard winter, desertions increased, and so did Lee’s request for goods. Lee faced soldiers leaving because he learned they were going to take care of their families who were also suffering from starvation and lack of supplies. Learning from Secretary of War George Randolph that requests had been sent to Texas for food and horses, Lee responded that he still had two thousand men barefoot and that flour and meat were becoming tougher to obtain in the winter from the surrounding countryside. The

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<sup>59</sup> Lee to Davis, Sept 3, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 14, part 2, 590-591.

<sup>60</sup> Lee to Davis, Sept 4, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 14, part 2, 591-592.

<sup>61</sup> Lee Proclamation, Sept 8, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 14, part 2, 601-602.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

General wanted to increase food rations to keep everyone happy, and he made special mention of a need for vegetables. Lee noted how he had already talked to the Commissary General but nothing had been done. He hoped the Secretary of War would be able to use his influence to get what the army needed.<sup>63</sup> Lee also contacted Senators about supply issues. In a letter to Louis T. Wigfall, a senator from Texas who was famous for noncooperation and who hated Jefferson Davis, Lee asked for a few regiments. He concluded the letter reminding Wigfall that he “has the honor to be your obedient servant.”<sup>64</sup> Lee graciously appealed and likely hoped Wigfall would serve him and do his duty as a senator. Lee asked Governor Letcher of Virginia to send agents with railcars of food to distribute the goods among the citizens to keep everyone happy.<sup>65</sup>

Even this was a challenge. The railroad in Virginia suffered extensively from the plight of war. This was due to heavy fighting in Virginia and the railroad was being destroyed by Union forces to hinder supply operations and troop movement. Lee said the Engineering Department must act because train cars were running off the track and if the issue was not fixed he could not receive food or move troops, which left the most fertile ground in Virginia open to the enemy.<sup>66</sup>

By early 1864 Lee had grown extremely frustrated. Uncharacteristically, Lee wrote a scathing letter in a tirade to L.B. Northrop, who was the Commissary General, and in charge of supplies. Lee said once again he was in need of rations and his army was never getting enough and was starving. He declared his Army of Northern Virginia was in wretched conditions, the weather was horrible, and he heard armies in other Southern regions were receiving many more goods than his had received. The other forces always seemed to have enough materials even

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<sup>63</sup> Lee to Randolph, Nov 17, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 21, 1016.

<sup>64</sup> Lee to Wigfall, July 26, 1862, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Vol. 11, part 3, (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 655.

<sup>65</sup> Lee to Letcher, Nov 6, 1863, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 29, part 2, 823-824.

<sup>66</sup> Lee to Seddon, Nov 12, 1863, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 29 part 2, 832-833.

though they had better weather conditions. Lee noted that General Johnston supposedly received delicacies of whiskey and molasses. Lee stated,

I have been mortified to find that when any scarcity existed this was the army in which it was found necessary to reduce the rations....Many of these troops are in a measure stationary, less exposed to inclemency weather, and undergoing less hardship and danger than the troops of this army....I understand that at the present time, the army of General Johnston is receiving full rations of meat, bread, rice, molasses, and some whiskey...all ought to be fair if possible.<sup>67</sup>

This was very uncharacteristic of Lee and his writing. Lee wanted his basic necessities met and he felt he was being mistreated. This would not be Lee's last encounter with Northrop and a few days later Lee responded to a letter from Northrop who suggested every army should take care of itself and rely solely on the land and its citizens. Lee said he had no power to take control of the possessions of citizens and stated, "It is plain in my mind that Congress intended the power of impressments gives to commanders in the armies in the field should depend upon emergencies in fact growing out of their situation and not difficulties created by law or orders of the department."<sup>68</sup> Lee knew it would spell the end of the Confederacy if the armies took care of themselves. He could not get what he needed from the government and law limited his ability to confiscate goods. If raiding occurred, citizens would abandon the war effort since it was considered abuse of the law. These problems were never resolved. In countless other letters there were charges of corrupt officials who had stolen food, sold it to citizens, and discrepancies in records between what was sent and actually received by Lee. Northrop often reacted to criticism from the army staff with sarcasm, as in this remark from clerk John Jones who noted that Northrop said, "the peasants of Europe rarely have any meat, and in [sic] Hindostan never."<sup>69</sup> In 1864, the General wrote to Davis and told him that supplies would only last for two more days, stating "I cannot see how we can operate without supplies" and if nothing could be

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<sup>67</sup> Lee to Northrop, Jan 5, 1864, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Vol. 33, (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 1064-1065.

<sup>68</sup> Lee to Northrop, Jan 13, 1864, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 33, 1087.

<sup>69</sup> Jones, 385.

done he warned "...it is impossible for me to keep the army together and might force me to retreat to North Carolina."<sup>70</sup> Threatening to leave his home state of Virginia in search of supplies, Lee expressed great frustration at the situation.

As the manpower problems and supply issues persisted for Lee, he often had to tell his generals to ask the state governors for the troops needed. For instance, Lee ordered General Gwynn to ask the Governor of North Carolina for troops and that in return he would send him two hundred laborers.<sup>71</sup> Lee also wrote Secretary of War, Leroy Walker, an Alabamian, that he was "very much embarrassed in furnishing troops which have been called into service by the State of Virginia with arms, ammunition, and the necessary accruements...I beg leave to suggest that the troops ordered to this state may come provided and their organization be as complete as practicable."<sup>72</sup> Lee expected one of the highest ranking government officials to deal with this problem and correct the situation but they like so many others were unable to produce any results.

As the South faced money problems and supplies became more and more depleted, a new government policy further inflamed politicians and civilians. In 1862, Conscription was adopted by the Confederacy to help fill the dwindling ranks. The government wanted every able bodied man to serve his country. This decree created an uproar and became impossible to enforce by the end of the war. When conscription quotas went unfilled, Governor of Virginia, John Letcher, issued a proclamation calling on citizens to rally around their state and for local officers to recruit in their counties. Letcher declared that they needed to "expel the enemy" and become

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<sup>70</sup> Lee to Davis, April 12, 1864, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 33, 1275.

<sup>71</sup> Lee to Gwynn, May 22, 1861, in *W.O.R.*, Vol. 2, 866.

<sup>72</sup> Lee to Leroy Walker, May 25, 1861, in *W.O.R.*, Vol. 2, 877.



“true sons of Virginia” declaring it was everyone’s duty to serve.<sup>73</sup> Letcher, like Lee, shared the same localistic outlook for Virginia and wanted to make sure everything was being done to protect its valuable resources and cities from the enemy. Lee learned that after some success against the enemy in Virginia, many counties had new recruits who could be drafted. He asked George Randolph, to notify the governors to enact the law and have all men sent to Richmond as soon as possible.<sup>74</sup>

Outside Virginia, governors were less cooperative. Lee had countless correspondences with governors throughout the C.S.A. From the start of the war, he faced the time consuming task of trying to get these state leaders to cooperate with the military effort. The delays due to internal squabbling cost the Confederacy at every turn. Lee, upon visiting Savannah, learned from the newspaper that an attack on Charleston or Savannah was likely to occur and he noticed the building of defense works was proceeding slowly. He noted that he had not received the number of troops he had expected from Georgia and South Carolina and “forces of the enemy are accumulating and apparently increasing faster than ours.”<sup>75</sup> Lee notified Sam Cooper, the Adjutant Inspector General of the Confederacy, that men must be quickly pulled away from other points to protect cities. Fearing the enemy was fast approaching, Lee wrote to Joseph Brown, the Governor of Georgia, about the coastal town of Brunswick, and suggested that it be destroyed, which “showing our determination to defend the country at any sacrifice, its destruction would deprive the enemy of comfortable quarter... There are other considerations besides those purely military involved in this question, I am unwilling to order the destruction of

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<sup>73</sup> Letcher Proclamation, Aug 30, 1862, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Vol. 12, part 3, (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 947.

<sup>74</sup> Lee to Randolph, Sept 3, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 14, part 2, 589.

<sup>75</sup> Lee to Cooper, Jan 8, 1862, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Vol. 6, (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 367.

the town without the knowledge and approbation of your Excellency.”<sup>76</sup> Brown emphatically replied that he would set fire to his own house and “private property and private rights must yield to the great public interest now at stake... When the war is over, justice to the sufferers will no doubt be done.”<sup>77</sup> However, Brown’s early fiery patriotism would wane as the war continued and he grew less inclined to help for the greater good. The utter lack of cohesion among the Confederate states delayed important decisions and caused derision among the political ranks, thwarting Lee’s efforts toward success. Lee constantly tried to maneuver politicians into taking charge of their situations. While he argued with and tried to appease the individual personalities, the whole of the C.S.A. suffered from the lack of decisive cohesion.

As the war grew nearer to Georgia, Lee contacted Brown and encouraged him to allow construction of the railroad to proceed as quickly as possible to protect the supply lines that were at risk. Lee even offered to have the Confederacy pay for the work if the governor acted quickly and allowed the works to be built.<sup>78</sup> In May 1862, Brown wrote to Secretary of War, George Randolph, that “the State has placed all her means of defense in the hands of the President.”<sup>79</sup> Brown believed the railroad from Chattanooga to Atlanta was being threatened and if captured would cause Georgia’s ruin. Brown pointed out that they had been taking and sending food from the “cotton region,” and wheat crops had been destroyed by rust. Brown wanted the pressure on Georgia relieved and he suggested moving the war towards Kentucky. Brown’s primary concern was to make sure his state, resources, and citizens were protected before giving any more to the national war effort. Georgia’s governor also requested troops be diverted to avoid starvation in his state, while he reminded Randolph, “Georgia has sent so many troops to the field, it is injury

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<sup>76</sup> Lee to Brown, Feb 18, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 6, 391.

<sup>77</sup> Brown to Lee, Feb 22, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 6, 396.

<sup>78</sup> Lee to Brown, Feb 22, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 6, 397.

<sup>79</sup> Brown to Randolph, May 1, 1862, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Vol. 10, part 2, (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 480.

to leave her vital points exposed...The President has her men and her guns and she looks to him.”<sup>80</sup> Conscription also had taken Georgia’s citizens away but the government in Richmond did not have assistance or arms to give them. Georgians quickly felt the peripheral effects of war and lost much of their interest in full cooperation. Internal struggles with men like Governor Brown forced Lee to fight internal battles for resources so he could fight the Union Army.

The governors communicated with each other about Lee’s requests and the lack of protection from the army. Like Governor Brown, other politicians first and foremost wanted to secure needed services for their own territories before they contributed to the C.S.A. John Milton, the Governor of Florida, wrote extensively to Lee, Davis, and other officials about his state’s situation and the need for men to protect it. Lee suggested to Milton that, as governor, he should try to raise some forces not only for the Confederacy but for his own state’s protection.<sup>81</sup> Lee’s letter expressed frustration and as though he had had this conversation with Milton before. The General reminded the governor that some of Florida would have to be sacrificed and only certain points could be defended due to the vast Florida coastline and superior Union navy. Lee explained to Milton, “the Governor of Georgia has been obliged to refuse my recent application to him for two regiments.”<sup>82</sup> Lee continued telling Milton “it will be necessary for the citizens of Florida to turn out to defend their homes and the sooner your Excellency can impress upon them this fact, the easier it will be its accomplishment.”<sup>83</sup> Milton wrote to Judah Benjamin, Confederate Secretary of War in 1862, complaining that he received word that Lee ordered troops to protect only certain areas in the state. Milton complained, “the effect of the order [is] to abandon Middle, East, and South Florida to the mercy and abuse of the Lincoln Government. It

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 480.

<sup>81</sup> Lee to John Milton, Feb 19, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 6, 393.

<sup>82</sup> Lee to Milton, Feb 24, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 6, 400.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*.

cannot be possible...and I will not believe that an order to have that effect would have been issued without previous notice to the executive of the State.”<sup>84</sup> Milton asserted that the lives, liberty, and property of those who are being abandoned were at stake and “we do not wish to give up our personal rights without striking a blow.”<sup>85</sup> Milton was clearly frustrated and appalled that Florida would be sacrificed in this manner and he directed his anger toward Lee. It was not feasible that the Confederacy should or would be able to protect all of Florida, due to its location in the South and the vast coastline that was easily overtaken by the superior Union navy.

Milton suggested the creation of a regional War Department, headed by a brigadier general, for the states of Florida, Alabama, and Georgia.<sup>86</sup> Milton wrote to Joseph Brown about the proposed department and tried to entice him saying “Georgia and Alabama derive even more commercial advantages from [sic] Apalachoia\* than Florida herself.”<sup>87</sup> Milton contended that these states benefited from Florida and that it would serve their best interests if they were protected by their own military department. Stated dissatisfaction with the centralized war effort of the Confederacy was manifest in this plan to develop regional commands.

In November 1861, Milton told Davis that troops were needed and military men with experience and education to assist in Florida’s defense “and if not promptly aided Florida may be lost to the Southern Confederacy. Her citizens almost [are] despaired of protection from the Confederate government and will lose confidence in it.”<sup>88</sup> Milton believed that every corner of the state had appealed to him for protection and requested that he should assume command but he told Davis as much as he wanted to he could not because it was not the policy of the

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<sup>84</sup> Milton to Benjamin, March 5, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 6, 402.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 403.

<sup>86</sup> Milton to Davis, Oct 29, 1861, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 6, 300-302.

<sup>87</sup> Milton to Brown, Oct 31, 1861, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 6, 304. \*This is how Milton spelt the word, today we consider the spelling as Apalachicola. This is a river in northwest Florida and was a major river to ship goods for Florida, Georgia, and Alabama. It can be referenced on Theatre of War map 1861-1862.

<sup>88</sup> Milton to Davis, Nov 19, 1861, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 6, 325.

Confederacy.<sup>89</sup> The Florida governor felt his citizens were virtuous and honorable, while he portrayed himself similarly when he spoke about turning down a military post in order to govern his state. Milton followed national policy and he expected as much from the central government leaders. While Milton pleaded for help and troops Lee wrote to Randolph, “I regret to hear the capture of the batteries on Saint John’s River, Florida” he continued, “So far from being able to comply with Governor Milton’s wishes in sending troops to Florida, I would rather ask for re-enforcements to the Florida regiments here.”<sup>90</sup> In spite of Milton’s desperation, Lee was concerned with the needs of his army in the state of Virginia. Realizing imminent defeat, Milton became so desperate that he declared before the Florida legislature, “death would be preferable to reunion.”<sup>91</sup> Milton who was defined by his honor-bound duty toward his state, committed suicide days before the war ended in April, 1865. His allegiance to the Confederacy was outweighed only by his devotion to his state. And that was the problem.

While Lee was an as active field commander, he still retained his duties as a bureaucrat making sure conscription, food, arms, and everything else reached his army. Lee still dealt with complaints and requests for protection. Henry Clark, governor of North Carolina, wrote to Lee and asked for troops because of Union raids (in an unspecified area) and destruction that terrorized his state. Lee acknowledged that he had “been an eyewitness to the depredations upon private property committed by the enemy,” and told Clark that he wanted to protect everyone’s private interests.<sup>92</sup> The problem was that there were not enough men to cover all of North Carolina and Virginia and raw troops had been left in Clark’s state. Lee learned Clark was

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Lee to Randolph, Oct 9, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 14, part 2, 658.

<sup>91</sup> Robert Sobel, “Florida Governor John Milton,” Governors Information. National Governors Association, <http://www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem>. Accessed 4-22-2011.

<sup>92</sup> Lee to Clark, Aug 8, 1862, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Vol. 9, (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 478.

unhappy with “the character of the officer appointed to command the troops in North Carolina.”<sup>93</sup> Lee wrote to Clark a few days later appointing J.G. Martin to command and hoped this better pleased the governor as he expected Martin to “reach a high degree of efficiency and nothing be neglected which can advance and protect the interests of North Carolina.”<sup>94</sup> General Lee did his best to alleviate each situation even though southerners in general did not seem to understand their role or the consequences of war.

Clark had appealed to Davis a few months earlier about the same situation in the city of Wilmington. Clark stated that there was a lot of industry that needed to be protected along with its citizens and “if the great public interest will not secure a defense for them, they must secure their private interests as far as possible...I will take the liberty of further adding that the adjacent counties to Wilmington have sent out an unusual number of volunteers who are now absent on duty elsewhere.”<sup>95</sup> Clark was very upset and almost threatened Davis that if troops were not sent, the citizens would have to look out for their own interests. North Carolina’s governor was not afraid to completely denounce the Confederacy. He was ready to look out solely for the liberty and well being of his state, as he portrayed his honor-bound tendencies. Henry Clark declared that Wilmington deserved protection since they had large numbers of troops fighting in other states. Despite this, Davis wrote Clark just a few months later for more regiments to serve outside North Carolina.<sup>96</sup>

Relations between Lee and North Carolina did not improve when Clark’s successor, Zebulon Vance, became governor of North Carolina. Vance created a great deal of hostility because of his criticism and rejection of the central government. Vance was a staunch opponent

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 479.

<sup>94</sup> Lee to Clark, Aug 12, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 9, 479.

<sup>95</sup> Clark to Davis, March 17, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 9, 446.

<sup>96</sup> Davis to Clark, May 23, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 9, 472.

of national government interference and historian Marc Kruman explains that many “North Carolinians entered a war that they expected to win quickly, and they assumed that such a war would leave in tact their traditionally aloof relationship with the central government.”<sup>97</sup> North Carolinians felt the central government infringed on their personal liberties and rights. John B. Jones remarked in his diary, “Gov. Vance writes a most indignant reply to a letter...that North Carolina has been wronged by calumnious imputations and many in the army and elsewhere made to believe she [North Carolina] was not putting forth all her energies in the work for independence. He declares that North Carolina has furnished half the killed and wounded.”<sup>98</sup> Vance’s distrust of Lee and the Confederate government led him to request of Lee permission for a newspaper correspondent to accompany the troops to, as clerk Jones put it, see that justice was done for North Carolina troops.”<sup>99</sup> Clark’s departure from office did nothing to diminish resentment that North Carolina troops were taken from his state and used elsewhere.<sup>100</sup>

Similar concerns about state defense were expressed by Governor John Shorter of Alabama. When Davis, encouraged Shorter to comply with the conscript law, he mentioned how patriotic and noble his state was and asked that “gallant troops” be sent to Richmond.<sup>101</sup> Shorter refused. He told Davis that he could not comply with the conscription quotas at the time because his state was threatened with attack and the men did not want to leave their families and their

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<sup>97</sup> Marc Kruman, “Dissent in the Confederacy: The North Carolina Experience,” ed., Michael Perman *Major Problems in the Civil War and Reconstruction*. Boston: Houghton & Mifflin, 1998, 226.

<sup>98</sup> Jones, 340.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 391.

<sup>100</sup> While Vance fought with central command, there was unrest on the North Carolina home front. The governor wrote to Jefferson Davis and told him a Georgia regiment had marched through the capital, Raleigh, and while passing through they had destroyed some property. Vance noted the residents of the city were so angry “a mob of citizens destroyed the office of the State Journal in retaliation.” Vance demanded troops no longer be allowed to travel through Raleigh and he mentioned that if something was not done his state would fall into complete anarchy. Vance to Davis, Sept 10, 1863, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 29, part 2, 710.

<sup>101</sup> Davis to Shorter, Oct 29, 1862, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Vol. 15, (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 847-848.

property. Rather, Shorter declared they would fight in a state guard until the threat weakened.<sup>102</sup>

As soldiers stayed to protect their home states, the conscription problem grew worse because there was almost always a perceived threat somewhere. Troops were reluctant to leave their families and communities unprotected as issue that was essential to maintaining their honor.

As Union forces fought their way down the Mississippi River in what would be a successful assault on New Orleans, Louisiana governor, Thomas O. Moore, contacted Jefferson Davis and expressed his grievances with the war effort in the state of Louisiana. Complete chaos engulfed his state and Moore noted that he expected the central government to help him because “part of my state is now in possession of our ruthless enemy; the remainder is a prey to internal dissension on the perils of demoralization produced by the disorganized condition of Confederate forces.”<sup>103</sup> Moore further complained that he did not have a competent officer to confer with on the military situation in his home state and Davis needed to send someone. Moore bitterly cried that he had “sent more than 30,000 men into the field, everyone fully armed and equipped besides emptying the arsenal I seized for the benefit of the neighboring States with my own...and have now in our calamity not an officer to advise with or a man to execute an order.”<sup>104</sup> The governor believed that Louisiana deserved better treatment from the Confederate central government.

Moore took matters into his own hands but still sought aid from the Confederate government in Richmond. He told Davis that he “authorized suitable persons to enroll companies of partisan rangers in accordance with the act of Congress.”<sup>105</sup> The governor said that these rangers’ orders were to help defend his state because troops from elsewhere were not coming. He

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<sup>102</sup> Shorter to Davis, Jan 10, 1863, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 15, 939-940.

<sup>103</sup> Moore to Davis, May 21, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 15, 740.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Moore to Davis, June 2, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 15, 747.



asserted that though the rangers were for state use only, the Confederate government was responsible for paying, clothing, and feeding these troops, since Moore had “neither the authority nor the means to organize, equip, and subsist an army in Louisiana.”<sup>106</sup> Moore pointed out that the loss of his state to the Confederacy would make supplies much more difficult to move by land or water. Threatened by the enemy, any help that Louisiana could obtain from the armies of Tennessee or Virginia would be of great assistance. Moore told Davis he would use these partisan rangers to protect property, crops, and that Louisiana would continue to fight valiantly for the South.

Moore recommended that the western military department “modify the operation of the conscription law to the extent of retaining conscripts in his department and forming them (temporarily) into new companies instead of reserving them as recruits to regiments east of the Mississippi...without it, I have some apprehension that law cannot be enforced except with much difficulty.”<sup>107</sup> He noted many of the Louisiana troops were far from home and by rearranging the implementation of the conscript laws the soldiers would be more satisfied since their families were protected. The governor argued that this would improve the overall effectiveness of the army in the West. Moore further noted, “the feeling prevails throughout the State that no more men or arms should be spared for distant service till yet uninvaded parts of the State is guarded...Many plantations have but a single white man to superintend them, while others have not even one.”<sup>108</sup> Moore told Davis conscription quotas simply could not be met with half of his state “under enemy influence” and the central government needed to reduce their demands on Louisiana. Receiving these complaints, requests, and demands, Davis sent a general to Moore and promised troops were to be sent as soon as possible. The President added that, “with respect

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 748.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 749.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

to the conscripts, the law of Congress does not allow new regiments to be formed from their number.”<sup>109</sup> In spite of this, Davis complied with Moore’s request for temporary companies. The President concluded telling Moore to be patient and noted that the C.S.A “with your assistance and the co-operation of the patriotic citizens of Louisiana, would be able to keep the enemy in check and afford protection to the greater portion of the State until we should be able to drive the invader altogether from the soil.”<sup>110</sup> Davis tried to pacify Moore but he did very little to remedy the situation. Moore’s situation was similar to that of John Milton’s in Florida; both wanted their territories protected and they needed assistance.

New Orleans and Louisiana were vital locations to the Confederacy. If the North overtook these areas they would have full control of the Mississippi River and cut the Confederacy in two. New Orleans, the most populated city in the South, fell to Union General Benjamin Butler in June 1862 and most of Louisiana remained occupied by the North for the duration of the war. Upon the capture of New Orleans, Moore’s administration moved to Opelousas, Louisiana. The governor wrote to Davis and told him the citizens were truly shocked and appalled that their city had been captured. Moore was very angry but not discouraged. He told Davis New Orleans could easily be recaptured for “the army of Butler is insignificant in numbers and that fact makes our situation all the more humiliating. He has possession of New Orleans with troops not equaling a city mob.”<sup>111</sup> Moore continued that any force the C.S.A. spared could evict the Union soldiers but sneered that only if Louisiana’s men and resources “are not taken from us by a too literal enforcement of the conscript law.”<sup>112</sup> Thomas Moore, like so

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<sup>109</sup> Davis to Moore, June 26, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 15, 767-768.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 768.

<sup>111</sup> Moore to Davis, June 12, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 15, 754.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

many other governors, was focused on his own state unable to see the serious national issues the South faced.

Moore's bitterness over the loss of New Orleans mushroomed into rage when C.S. General Van Dorn took heavy and light artillery from Louisiana. The governor wrote angrily to Secretary of War George Randolph,

Am I ever to get even my own property? I hope you will order your officers to return at once the material of war they have taken that this State has paid for its own defenses. The Confederacy has never sent me a musket. Let it not take what I have paid for...It is hard enough to bear invasion and the articles of Butler and at the same time receiving no aid but to have taken from me what I had provided without help. I demand the return of 2, 720 rifles and ammunition seized by General Van Dorn.<sup>113</sup>

Randolph tersely responded, "I presume you do not desire more than this?"<sup>114</sup> This was not the last clash between civil and military authorities in Louisiana or the South during the Civil War. These problems only worsened with time. Moore wrote to Davis again and complained, "I assure you sir, it is with regret I find myself continually brought as it were into conflict with the military authorities whom I am most desirous to assist in every legitimate way but a widespread ignorance of the rights of citizens or indifference to them often renders it imperative."<sup>115</sup> The governor felt the Confederate government interfered with citizens' personal liberty and rights and therefore refused to help. As Louisiana was over run by the Union, Moore threatened to secede from the Confederacy in an effort to be free of obligation, remove the state from conflict, and salvage what he could. When the military finally arrived to lend assistance, the governor balked and nothing was accomplished.

After the conscription proclamation, General Lee identified the problems with enforcement policies and the continued lack of commitment of many prospective soldiers. After the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863, Lee sent word to Davis about the problems with

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<sup>113</sup> Moore to Randolph, June 25, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 15, 766.

<sup>114</sup> Randolph to Moore, June 27, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 15, 769.

<sup>115</sup> Moore to Davis, Oct 3, 1862, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 15, 893.

conscription. General Lee pointed out that, “there are many thousand men improperly absent from this army...I would respectfully submit to your Excellency whether, in the arrangements necessary under the late proclamation something may not be done to remedy the defect.”<sup>116</sup> Lee was particularly desperate for reinforcements since he had just lost thousands of troops in the biggest battle of the Civil War and men were needed to maintain his war machine. There were huge lists of absentees from all over the South. Lee forwarded the names of those who left to the Bureau of Conscription so they could notify the states to arrest them.<sup>117</sup> Lee constantly appealed to the bureaucracy to do their job so he could make the army productive. By 1864, with many men under his command who no longer wanted to fight for anywhere but their home state Lee complained, “the evils of the system have already been experienced. Men who so enlist conceive that they have a kind of right to serve in certain localities and are [sic] averse to being transferred to others.”<sup>118</sup> The local orientation of his troops harmed the effectiveness of his command.

Frustrated by men and governors, Lee turned to Secretary of War, James Seddon in early 1864. The General asked Seddon to step in so “that I may not be deemed improper by the department to communicate these facts to the governors of the several states.”<sup>119</sup> Lee continued, “the country has yet to learn how often advantages, secured at the expense of many valuable lives have failed to produce their legitimate results...”<sup>120</sup> He blamed defeat in many battles on a lack of manpower. The General told Seddon, “the people of the Confederate States have it in

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<sup>116</sup> Lee to Davis, July 27, 1863, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Vol. 27, part 3 (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 1041.

<sup>117</sup> Lee to Cooper, Aug 15, 1863, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Vol. 29, part 3, (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 647.

<sup>118</sup> Lee to Davis, Jan 13, 1864, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 33, 1085.

<sup>119</sup> Lee to Seddon, Jan 10, 1864, in *W.O.R.* Vol. 21, 1085.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

their power to prevent a recurrence of these misfortunes.”<sup>121</sup> Lee felt it was the duty of the department to get compliance from the state governors but more importantly it was the duty of the people to serve and be successful. Lee wanted the cooperation of the people because he believed he could win with enough manpower in his ranks. He also entrusted the government to carry out their policies and regulate its citizens.

Lee appealed to Conscription Bureau Chief John Preston and urged the repeal of the substitute law and the strengthening of the conscription law. Citizens in the South were exempt from duty if they could pay three hundred dollars or more to hire a substitute to take their place in the army or for every twenty slaves owned a white man was exempted. Lee noted he was receiving very few men now and believed those volunteering were abusing their privileges. He accused South Carolina and North Carolina of forming regiments only to keep them in their own states or split into smaller units so they would not have to be deployed to fight elsewhere. Lee believed immediate action was required since the effectiveness of getting conscripts determined how successful he was to be in the upcoming year with a large portion of the fighting occurring in his state of Virginia. Preston responded to Lee sympathetically but claimed the problems were not under his control. The conscription chief said many states were in chaos while “state, executive, and judicial authority, popular disaffection, incomplete, and indefinite classification, the want of authority for efficient organization and incompetent officers all combine to render service less than productive than could be desired.”<sup>122</sup> Though Preston recognized the evils of which Lee complained, he offered no solution, claiming “the remedy is not within the

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Preston to Lee, Jan 15, 1864, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Vol. 35, part 1, (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 627.

competency of the conscription authorities.”<sup>123</sup> The problem was never fully resolved and while some states hoarded conscripts, others like Arkansas and Missouri simply had none to give. The Confederate government never developed the authority or organization that was needed to overcome the localistic sensibilities of state authorities.

Lee was the commander of the Army of Northern Virginia for over three years. According to Gabor Boritt, “In the spring of 1861, Robert E. Lee possessed an abundance of reputation and a dearth of experience as credentials for a command in combat.”<sup>124</sup> While he was an honored southern gentleman from a respected family with accomplishments of his own, Lee faced monumental obstacles during the Civil War. The rapid birth of the Confederacy with its traditions of independence, states rights, and intolerance for domination from federal influences, did not allow the South time to develop a cohesive purpose or unity.

Robert E. Lee relied on honor in the Southern tradition to bring the Confederacy to a successful end in the war. As the conflict wore on however, Lee discovered that, in addition to the political upheaval the new nation experienced, the very fabric of their culture caused the South to crumble. Borritt comments that, “Many Southerners seemed to lack any sense of urgency about the war.”<sup>125</sup> But they did have a sense of urgency about local defense. Confederate soldiers, their states, and communities were stunned and confused by the lack of support for the most important aspect of their lives in an honor-bound society - protection of their homes and families. The South lost direction and the greater public good fell victim to the self interest and self preservation. Lee himself was, from the beginning, Virginia centric and because of this

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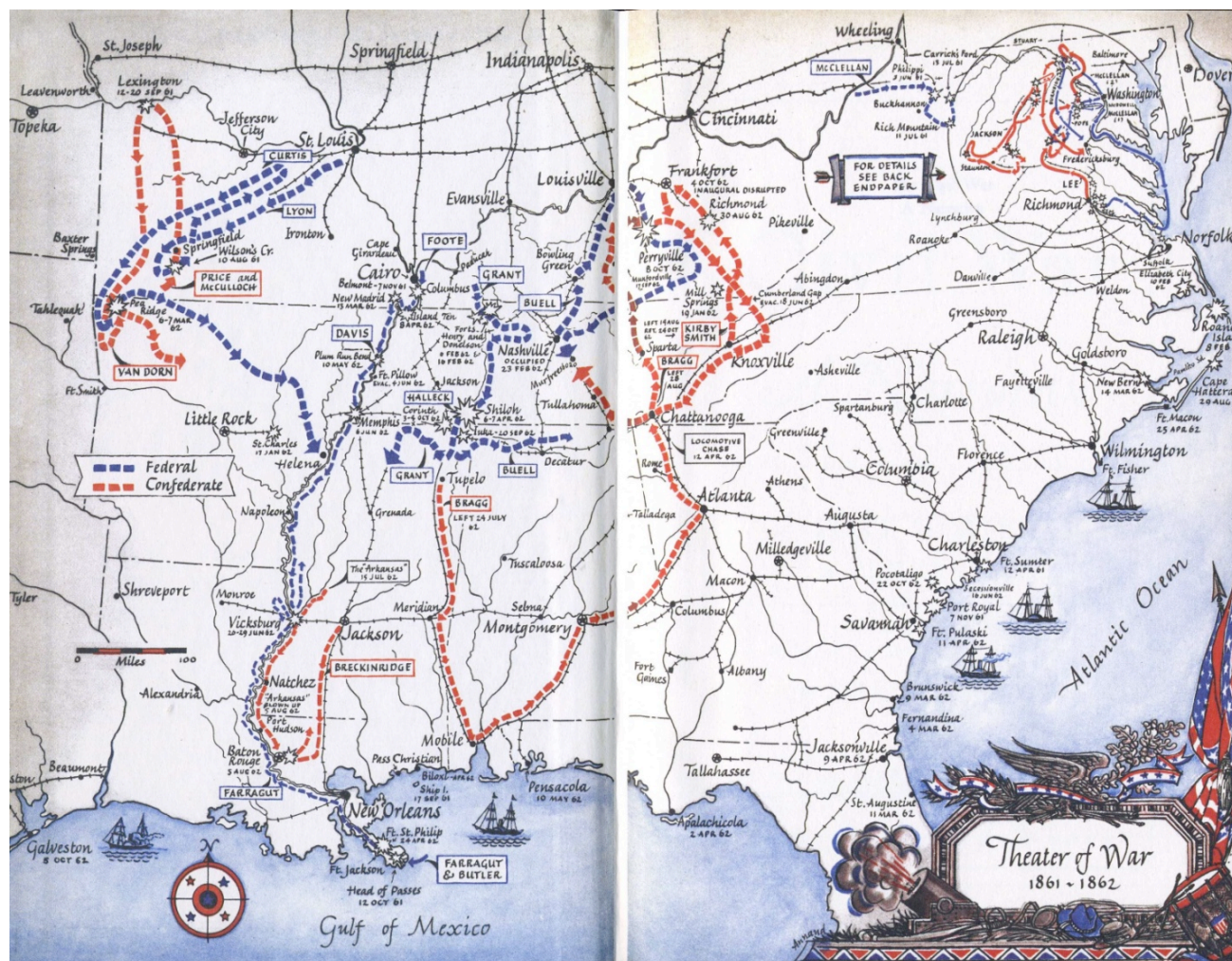
<sup>123</sup> Preston to Davis, Jan 22, 1864, in *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Vol. 36, part 1, (Washington D.C: GPO, 1889), 627.

<sup>124</sup> Borritt, 29.

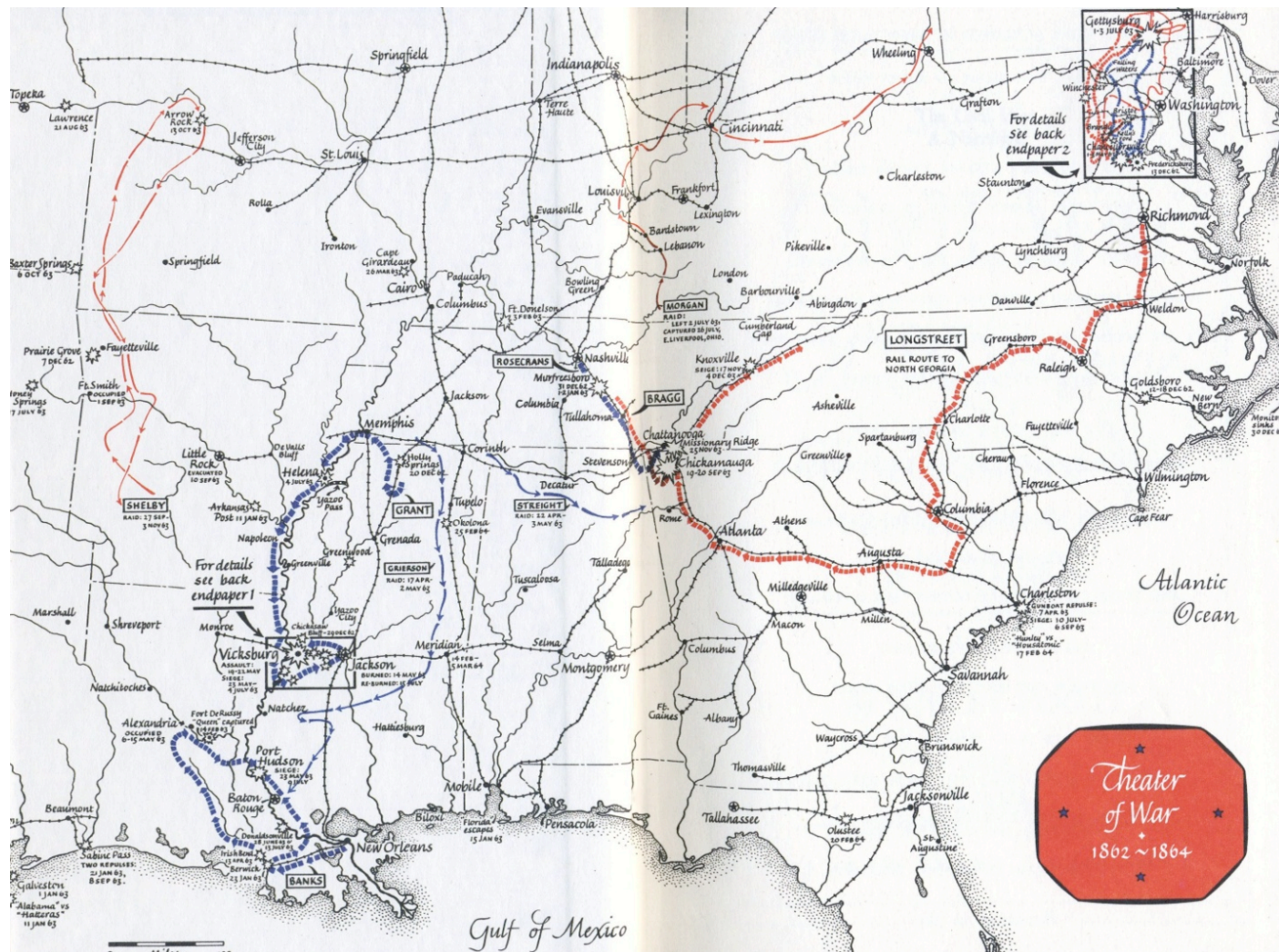
<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

should have recognized the desperation in the southern citizens he critiqued for their lack of sacrifice.

The Confederacy was born of long held traditions that included independence, an intolerance of a strong federal government and the rabid defense of states' rights. Men like Robert E. Lee, John Milton, Thomas Moore, and countless others were dedicated to the Confederate cause at the same time they were deeply entrenched in the southern notion of honor to protect their own states, families, communities, and localities before seeking to serve national interests. The ideals that the South valued were crushed as the Union overtook them, a defeat not only of their military but of the very essence of their lives.











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