

# ***"He is Proud, Self Reliant, And I Fear Stubborn"***

## **Jefferson Davis and The Problem of Western Command**

Bert Barnett

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The year of 1863 was destined to be, as 1862 had been, a difficult one for Confederate President Jefferson Davis. While the Army of Northern Virginia had functioned fairly well under the command leadership of Generals Lee, Jackson and Longstreet, in the western theater things had been different. Problems with command structure, defense priorities, politics, and personal animosities had been difficult issues in the past year, and had contributed to many lost opportunities and much lost territory. Resolving them would be critical if the Confederacy was to survive.

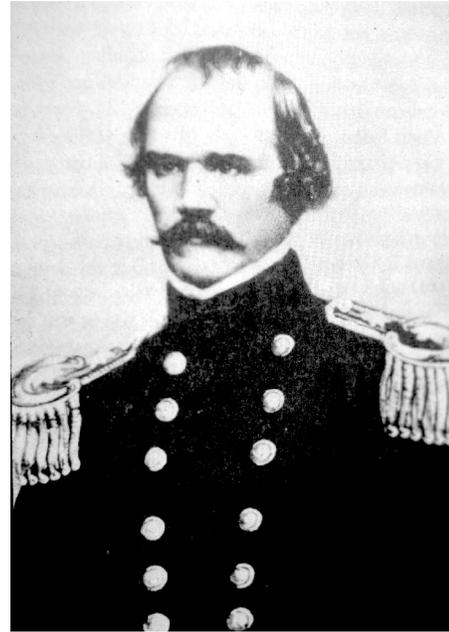
Davis' personality played a key role in much of this. As a West Point graduate of the class of 1828, Mexican War hero and former Secretary of War under President Franklin Pierce, he was highly confident in his own military leadership skills. At the outset of the conflict, his experience was respected by many. However, this bred in Davis the potential to micro-manage problem areas. Further, the President complicated matters with his tendency to gauge the effectiveness of subordinates by personal loyalty rather than through battlefield performance. Davis also charitably, but firmly and mistakenly, believed that professional soldiers were capable of sublimating their personal disagreements in the face of larger, more critical tasks.<sup>1</sup>

The first critical task, at the onset of the war, had been to establish a strategy to protect the new nation. After recognizing that a *cordon* system of defense around the entire perimeter of the Confederacy was impossible due to manpower shortages, Davis carved the nation into "Departments". This gave the appearance of military control over the vastness of the country. The state of Georgia, for example, was larger in area than the combined states of Vermont, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Delaware. Consequently, the departmental system diffused some political pressures away from Richmond to diverse portions of the nation, and aided in the establishment of a military framework of command posts and operational theaters. As originally drawn, some of these were small regional affairs; Department

Number 1, for example, commanded by General David L. Twiggs, was responsible for the lower Mississippi River and New Orleans.<sup>2</sup>



*Confederate President Jefferson Davis*  
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*General Albert Sidney Johnston*  
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Other departments would be much larger. In July of 1861, Davis placed West Point classmate and friend Leonidas Polk in temporary charge of Department No.2, which had originally stretched from the mountains of East Tennessee to the Kansas frontier. At that time, it included the upper portions of Mississippi and Louisiana that formed the Mississippi valley exclusive of New Orleans, and parts of eastern Arkansas and Tennessee, west of the Tennessee River. Although Polk had resigned his commission shortly after graduation to enter the clergy, Davis felt that his personal knowledge of Polk, his military education, and his ties to the Confederate southwest (he was Bishop of Louisiana) made him an ideal choice to manage things until the arrival of General Albert Sidney Johnston, Davis' selection for permanent command of the department. Johnston was also a friend of Davis, and the President was confident in this general's ability to handle a large theater command. This confidence did not get the benefit of a lengthy test. On the first day of the Battle of Shiloh, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1862, Johnston was killed. Davis, who had many of his defensive hopes for the Western theater pinned upon Johnston's back, was crushed.<sup>3</sup>

Command now passed to General P.G.T. Beauregard. Although popular as one of the Confederacy's first heroes of the war for his roles at Ft. Sumter and First Manassas, Beauregard did not measure up to the requirements of his larger responsibilities. He concealed the true losses suffered at Shiloh from Davis and the extent of the retreat that followed the battle. After the fall

of Corinth, Mississippi, his shortcomings as a field commander became more obvious. Davis was concerned. In a letter to his wife, dated June 13<sup>th</sup>, he observed that:

There are those who can only walk a log when it is near to the ground, and I fear that (Beauregard) has been placed too high for his mental strength, as he does not exhibit the ability manifested on smaller fields.<sup>4</sup>

Seven days later, Beauregard claimed illness, taking an extended medical leave from the army. Davis, unimpressed with such behavior, acted with alacrity. He relieved Beauregard, and appointed General Braxton Bragg to command the department. This was a critical decision, for the President hoped Bragg would give form and direction to the Army of Tennessee, as its main army came to be known. It would, in time, reflect much of its commander. Bragg, a North Carolina-born West Point graduate, had, like Davis, won renown for his exploits in the Mexican War. He had spent the early part of the war on the Florida coast, and had fought at Shiloh as a corps commander.<sup>5</sup>

While Davis had a fairly high opinion of Bragg the reverse could not be said. This could be traced back to Davis' tenure as Secretary of War, when he had proposed reforms for the artillery, Bragg's branch of service. Bragg objected strongly to some of these ideas and in 1855 he went to see Davis in Washington to discuss them. When he failed to dissuade Davis from making changes, the meeting ended, and Bragg handed in his resignation shortly thereafter. The Secretary readily accepted it. Colonel Bragg retired to a new career—running a plantation in Louisiana. While Bragg carried his resentment over this incident into the Confederate service, Davis remembered and valued Bragg's organizational and leadership skills.<sup>6</sup>

But Bragg was a problematic personality. Like Davis, he could be prickly to deal with, especially if convinced he was right. At one location in the pre-war army, Bragg had temporarily served both as a company commander and acting post quartermaster. As a company commander, Bragg made a requisition upon the post quartermaster—himself—for something he wanted, which he, acting again as post quartermaster, refused. Donning his company commander's hat once more, Bragg proceeded to appeal to the post quartermaster as to the necessity of the requisitioned items, which were again refused by Bragg, the quartermaster. Finally, Lt. Bragg referred the entire matter to the captain commanding the post. Upon seeing the correspondence, his superior remarked:

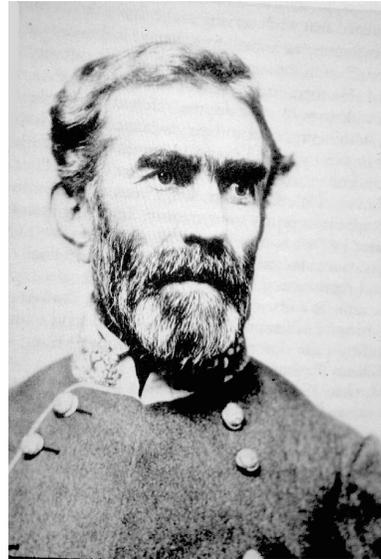
My God, Mr. Bragg, you have quarrelled with every officer in the army, and now you are quarrelling with yourself!<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the President believed that Bragg could fight as intensely as he argued. The general, however, was a better organizer than battlefield leader, where working with others required close cooperation. It was his inability to work well with his subordinates that would cause Davis many

headaches throughout his tenure as a department commander and commander of the Army of the Tennessee.



*General Pierre G. T. Beauregard*  
National Archives



*General Braxton Bragg*  
Library of Congress

The relationship between the Confederate President and his new department commander did not start off well. Shortly after taking the job, Bragg wrote to headquarters expressing his concerns for the command he had just assumed. In addition to observations regarding transportation and subsistence, the general also chose to lecture Richmond as to the unsuitability of many of the various officers within the department, and his desire to replace them. In a letter to Inspector General Samuel Cooper, dated June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1862, Bragg stated:

The next great want of this army is that of proper commanders for its sub-divisions...Of all the major-generals, indeed, in this army now present, since the transfer of Van Dorn, Breckinridge, and Hindman, but one [Hardee] can now be regarded as a suitable commander of that grade...Could the Department by any wholesome exercise of its power or policy relieve this army from a part of this dead-weight it would surely give confidence to the troops and add much to our efficiency. I acknowledge the difficulties in the way and the delicacy of the measure, but the safety of our cause may depend on it.<sup>8</sup>

Here Davis was caught was caught in something of a trap, the kind that would plague him throughout the life of the Army of Tennessee. General Polk was the senior major general in General Bragg's army, second only to Bragg himself. Bragg had taken a hard look at the

Episcopal Bishop and realized that he was not competent for the task. Therefore, Bragg had asked for permission to relieve him. Davis' sense of personal loyalty to his friend Polk, however, would not permit him to relieve that general of his command. On July 22<sup>nd</sup>, Davis had Cooper send a response to Bragg, utilizing the thinnest of fig leaves as a legal pretext for not addressing the problem.

Your letter of the 29<sup>th</sup> was duly received and submitted to the President...I am instructed by the President to say that he feels himself not a little embarrassed in carrying out your wishes on account of the restrictions of law. By the Act of Congress, March 6, 1861, "to provide for the public defense", the President is authorized...to appoint the commanding officers of ...*brigades and divisions* (emphasis added)... To this extent and no further has the President the power to appoint general officers.

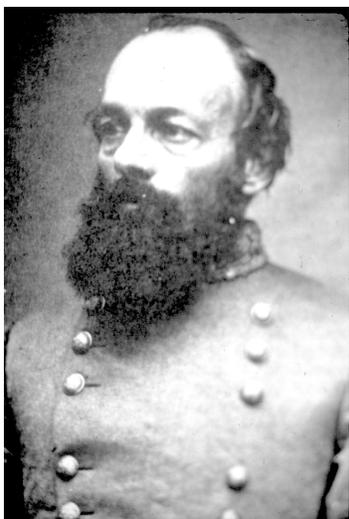
To emphasize the point, Davis himself sent a message to Bragg on this topic four days later. The last line of this brief correspondence chided the general that "Only generals for brigades and divisions can be appointed by me, as legally authorized." In other words, the President would let the seniority system protect his friend. Bragg would have to make do with Polk. With this decision, Jefferson Davis effectively dodged his responsibility as commander in chief and placed a major stumbling block into the path of any hoped-for efficiency within the ranks of the Western army.<sup>9</sup>

Davis' friendship with Polk was only not the only the problem area that made life difficult for Bragg. His own relationship with the President subjected him to criticism. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of August, Davis, under increasing attack in the Confederate Congress and in the papers, wrote to the general about potential hostility from anti-administration forces in Richmond.

You have the misfortune of being regarded as my personal friend, and are pursued, therefore, with malignant censure by men whose want of principle to guide their conduct renders them incapable of conceiving that you are trusted because of your known fitness to command and not because of friendly regard.<sup>10</sup>

The letter proved prophetic. Even though the President spoke of Bragg's "known fitness to command", that did not keep the general from having to endure the personal embarrassment of seeing fifty-nine members of the Congress circulate a petition calling for his removal in September.<sup>11</sup>

The general now had enemies in Richmond, and problems in the army. He was also concerned with Davis' lack of strategic vision. To repulse the deep Federal penetration that had resulted in the loss of much of Tennessee in the spring of 1862, Bragg planned a



*General Edmund Kirby Smith*  
Library of Congress

sweeping counterthrust into Kentucky. Utilizing his Mississippi-based forces in concert with those of General Edmund Kirby Smith's Department of East Tennessee, Bragg hoped by rapid maneuver to force the Unionists out of the occupied areas. While laying out his plan for this operation he requested Davis place Smith's department under his control to unify command. Davis failed to do this. Instead, he merely assured Bragg that Smith, a West Pointer from Florida, was "one of our ablest and purest officers." The President felt he could "confidently rely" on their ability to work together. This was charming and patriotic stuff, but it concealed a serious operational flaw. As long as the two forces were together, Bragg's seniority gave him overall command. If separated though, outside of Bragg's departmental limits, Smith was free to pursue his own course. At the time the offensive was planned, however, Smith promised to follow Bragg's lead, so no trouble was foreseen. If the advance went as Bragg envisioned it, he noted in a letter to Smith, "we may all unite in Ohio."<sup>12</sup>

But Bragg's vision of unified forces acting in concert to push the Federals back did not work as he planned. The coordinated movements that would be the key to a successful operation dissolved as General Smith decided to independently head for Lexington, Kentucky, while Bragg's army operated closer toward Bardstown and Frankfort. Bragg found himself in the middle of a long, drawn out campaign without Smith's support. To try and rally the hesitant Kentukians to the Confederate cause, on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1862, Bragg attended the installation of a pro-secessionist governor in Frankfort, to legitimize recruitment and conscription efforts in the state. This left the command of the army with the incompetent Polk, who disregarded Bragg's orders to attack a section of the Federal army caught between Bragg and Smith. Instead, Polk retreated, which forced Smith to retreat as well. Following the unsuccessful campaign bitterness and recriminations about its lost opportunities began to poison the atmosphere of Bragg's senior leadership, until its corrosive effects were everywhere evident. By the time the President would feel it necessary to become directly involved, the stain was too well set to eradicate.<sup>13</sup>

Following the debacle of Bragg's failed Kentucky invasion, the War Department transferred Department No. 2 to General Joseph E. Johnston on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1862. Bragg retained control of the Army of Tennessee, while Johnston, his superior, was appointed to command the entire department. Johnston had recovered from his wound at Seven Pines in May and was again fit for the field. Jefferson Davis hoped that he would provide the firm hand the department required.<sup>14</sup>

The two men shared a long, and at times checkered history. Johnston and Davis had been together at West Point, with Johnston graduating in 1829, a year after Davis. Johnston's class rank was considerably higher than Davis' and he landed a position in the artillery while Davis

landed in the infantry. During the Mexican War, Johnston was wounded twice and was promoted from captain to the brevet rank of lieutenant colonel. At the close of the war, he returned to his permanent grade of captain. This did not sit well with him, and he protested this “unfair” treatment in front of two sequential Secretaries of War, both of whom refused his claim to the promotion. The second refusal had come at the hand of Jefferson Davis. The decision did not reflect on Davis' opinion of Johnston and in June 1860 he recommended him for the post of Quartermaster General.<sup>15</sup>



*General Joseph E. Johnston*  
National Archives

However, future conflict between the two men lay ahead. Johnston resigned his U. S. commission on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1861. Assigned a command in Virginia, he played a signal role in the victory at the First Battle of Manassas on July 21. That fall, he was surprised to learn that he was fourth of five officers nominated as generals in the Confederate service. (Samuel Cooper, Albert S. Johnston, Robert E. Lee, Joseph E. Johnston, and Beauregard) As he was the only general in the U.S. service to resign his commission and go with the South, he fully expected to hold the highest Confederate rank. On September 12<sup>th</sup>, therefore, Johnston sent the Confederate President a three-page letter, full of emotion and invective, decrying this slight.

President Jefferson Davis...

I will not affect to disguise the surprise and mortification produced in my mind by the action taken in this matter by the president and by congress...these proceedings are in violation of my rights as an officer, of the plighted faith of the Confederacy, and of the Constitution and of the laws of the land.

He went on to discuss rankings and dates of commissions of the other generals commissioned above him, and continued:

I was a general thenceforth or never. Heretofore those who disputed my authority as general have done so because they denied the existence of the Government whose officer I claimed to be. *Now that government joins the hostile power in denying my authority.* (emphasis added)<sup>16</sup>

Davis viewed things differently. He believed that Johnston's rank as general in the Quartermaster General's office was as a staff-officer, who did not directly command field troops. Therefore, according to Davis, his last field rank was lieutenant-colonel, which put him subordinate to Cooper, A. S. Johnston, and Lee, who were all full colonels in the old army. He was also rather irritated by Johnston's argumentative letter, responding:

Sir – I have just read your letter of the 12<sup>th</sup> instant. Its language, is, as you say, unusual, its arguments and statements, utterly one-sided, and insinuations as unfounded as they are unbecoming.

Jefferson Davis<sup>17</sup>

In spite of this unseemly correspondence over rank, Davis still held high hopes for his West Point classmate. On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1861, Johnston was given command of the Department of Northern Virginia and its army. His handling of this force was, in the eyes of many, less than stellar. The general repeatedly retreated before a Federal army that threatened Richmond. When he was wounded at the Battle of Seven Pines on May 31, 1862, Davis replaced him with General Robert E. Lee.<sup>18</sup>

Johnston spent a good bit of his recovery convalescing at the home of Louis T. Wigfall. Wigfall had served as a U.S. Senator, commander of the Texas brigade, and then a Confederate Senator. His anti-Davis views were well known. As Johnston's wounds healed in the Wigfall home, and he realized that Davis would not reappoint him to command the Army of Northern Virginia, he began to spend more time in the circles of those who opposed the president.<sup>19</sup>

Davis did have another command in mind for General Johnston when he recovered. On November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1862, Johnston received Special Orders Number 275, which gave him command of a somewhat adjusted Department Number 2. He now controlled Bragg's army, Edmund Kirby

Smith's army, and the forces of General John C. Pemberton at Vicksburg. It was a tremendous responsibility, reflecting a great deal of trust in Johnston's abilities. To a certain degree it denied what he had already shown as a field commander in the East; a hesitancy to fight unless everything was perfect. This was underscored by his response on the same day to the receipt of his orders:

...If I have been correctly informed, the forces which it places under my command are greatly inferior to those of the enemy opposed to them, while in the Trans-Mississippi Department our army is very much larger than that of the United States. Our two armies on this side of the Mississippi have the disadvantage of being separated by the Tennessee River, and a Federal army [that of Major-General Grant] larger, probably, than either of them.<sup>20</sup>

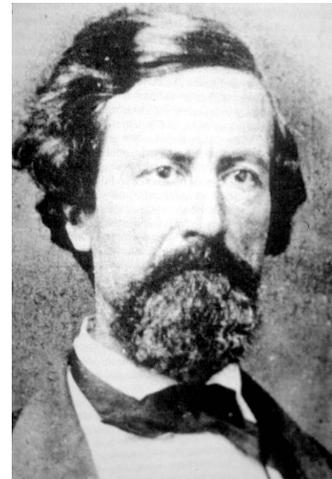
This was not a very inspiring start. To top it off, the remainder of that communication had suggested to the President the idea of having Lieutenant-General Theophilus H. Holmes, commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department, combine his forces with those on the eastern side of the Mississippi. On October 27<sup>th</sup>, Davis' previous Secretary of War, George W. Randolph, had actually granted to Gen. Holmes the discretion to make such a move if he saw fit. Davis countermanded the order on November 12<sup>th</sup>, which provoked Randolph to quit immediately thereafter.<sup>21</sup>

Realistically, Holmes was actually in a better position to relieve some of the pressure of the threatened areas more quickly than were Johnston's forces. However, a number of factors came into play at this point, not the least of which was Holmes own honest appraisal of his abilities. A West Pointer (1829) with Indian fighting experience, Holmes was made commander of the Department of North Carolina in March 1862. By May, he recognized he was in over his head and confessed to the President, "This field is entirely too comprehensive for my capacity", and asked to be relieved. Davis, a personal friend of Holmes, finally agreed to this, but in October 1862 he promoted him to lieutenant-general and a new theater command of an even larger Department, the Trans-Mississippi. Holmes held this post until February of 1863. While the large number of troops commanded by Holmes got Johnston's attention as a possible source of quick re-enforcement for Pemberton, Davis, upon sober reflection of Holmes' self-analysis, might have had a quiet second thought about placing him in command of so many.<sup>22</sup>

Johnston traveled to Chattanooga and established his headquarters there, reaching that location on December 4<sup>th</sup>. There, the supreme commander of the western department found a communication from the President urging Johnston to strip Bragg's army of a "sufficient force" (around 9,000 men) capable of strengthening the threatened garrison under General John C. Pemberton at Vicksburg.<sup>23</sup>

Pemberton, an 1837 West Point graduate from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, had married a Virginian and adopted the South. When the war came, he resigned his commission as an artillery

captain in the Regular U.S. Army and was commissioned a lieutenant-colonel in the Virginia volunteers. In doing so, he forfeited a considerable family inheritance. On the October 13, 1862, he was promoted to lieutenant-general. Four days later, he took command of the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana. His responsibilities were heavy, for they included the defenses of Vicksburg and Port Hudson; two vital strategic spots along the Mississippi River that barred unhindered Federal access to the strategic waterway. If these positions fell, the Confederacy would be severed in two. Distrusted by many as a “Yankee,” Pemberton nonetheless held the respect of Jefferson Davis, whose family home lay not many miles from Vicksburg.<sup>24</sup>



*Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton*  
National Archives

Johnston felt that he had not had time to examine the situation thoroughly. He also felt, as he had expressed earlier, that troops from Holmes’ Department would be best suited to reinforce any threat to Vicksburg. On December 7<sup>th</sup>, Johnston sent Cooper the following message from Murfreesboro, thirty miles southeast of Nashville:

Sixty thousand Federals at Nashville; forty thousand on railroad and in Kentucky. To send south would lose Tennessee and greatly disorganize this army. Only route south [railroad] would take at least a month. Holmes can arrive much sooner. Will not send south unless ordered. I shall go to Mississippi in a few days.

On the same date, Davis sent Pemberton a short telegram. “Are you in communication with General J.E. Johnston? Hope you will be re-enforced in time.” When Davis heard of the stubbornness of his departmental chief, he was determined to pay him a visit in Chattanooga. Davis therefore left Richmond on December 10 to check up on what was going on at Johnston’s headquarters.<sup>25</sup>

Once in Tennessee, Davis summoned Johnston to headquarters to again discuss sending a portion of Bragg’s force for the relief of Vicksburg. At this meeting, Davis did not find the general eager to comply with this suggestion. Following this conference, the President went on to Murfreesboro to review and inspect the army. While there, he held similar discussions with General Bragg about the relative wisdom of reducing his army for the benefit of General Pemberton. Bragg felt as strongly as Johnston did, and said so:

I told the President that Grant’s campaign would be broken up by our cavalry expeditions in his rear before [our re-enforcements] could meet him in front, but he was inexorable, and reduced me to the defensive, or,

as he expressed it, "Fight if you can, and fall back beyond the Tennessee".<sup>26</sup>

In spite of his field commanders' warnings, Davis managed to convince himself that the Federals in Middle Tennessee had bedded down for the winter. Under his own authority, therefore, he issued orders for General Carter L. Stevenson's division and another brigade to move from Tennessee to Mississippi. Nearly nine thousand infantrymen would be in transit for three weeks, of no use to Bragg or Pemberton during that time. The move proved unnecessary though, for as Bragg predicted, southern cavalry effectively disrupted Grant's efforts well before the arrival of Stevenson's re-enforcements.<sup>27</sup>

Minus 9,000 men Bragg became a target that Federal General William S. Rosecrans, commanding the Army of the Cumberland at Nashville, could not ignore. When Stevenson's division left for Mississippi, the Federals began to advance, and by December 30<sup>th</sup> they were ready to launch an attack the next morning at Stones River, near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Both commanders drew up essentially the same battle plan: to hold with the left, and strike the right of the opposing army. The Federals planned to begin their advance just after breakfast.

After the frustrations of Kentucky, Bragg was hungry for a victory first. He ordered his men in at daybreak-only to find that General Polk, who commanded the corps making the attack, had spent the previous evening revamping the entire command structure of his corps. The resultant confusion lost the Confederates precious time as the attack developed. Similar failures of leadership occurred throughout the fighting on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

While they did not impede the general success of the Confederates on the first day of the battle, the failures of Polk and some of the other subordinate commanders that Bragg had earlier tried to remove prevented the Battle of Murfreesboro from becoming the sweeping single-day sort of victory that Bragg thought that it should have been. At the end of the fighting on the 31<sup>st</sup>, General Bragg fully expected the badly repulsed Federals to limp back to Nashville, leaving the victorious Confederates in possession of the field. He sent off a telegram to Richmond, proclaiming, "God has granted us a Happy New Year."<sup>28</sup>

But the Army of the Cumberland did not withdraw, and the two opponents faced each other down for a day. On January 2, 1863, Bragg, growing concerned about the occupation of a small hill near the Confederate position by the persistent Federals, directed one division to drive them off. The result was a disastrous charge into Union artillery that left nearly 2,000 casualties in twenty minutes. With this experience fresh in mind, added to the knowledge that re-enforcements were thought to be moving towards the Federal forces already in front of them, Bragg took counsel from his generals and began to plan a retreat. Perhaps the New Year was not going to be so happy after all.<sup>29</sup>

The President, in his discussion with General Bragg at Murfreesboro, had earlier advised falling back as far as the Tennessee River if necessary. This would have meant abandoning the entire region of Middle Tennessee, and withdrawing the army nearly to the gates of Chattanooga. Instead, Bragg pulled the army back almost forty miles to the Shelbyville-Tullahoma-Manchester

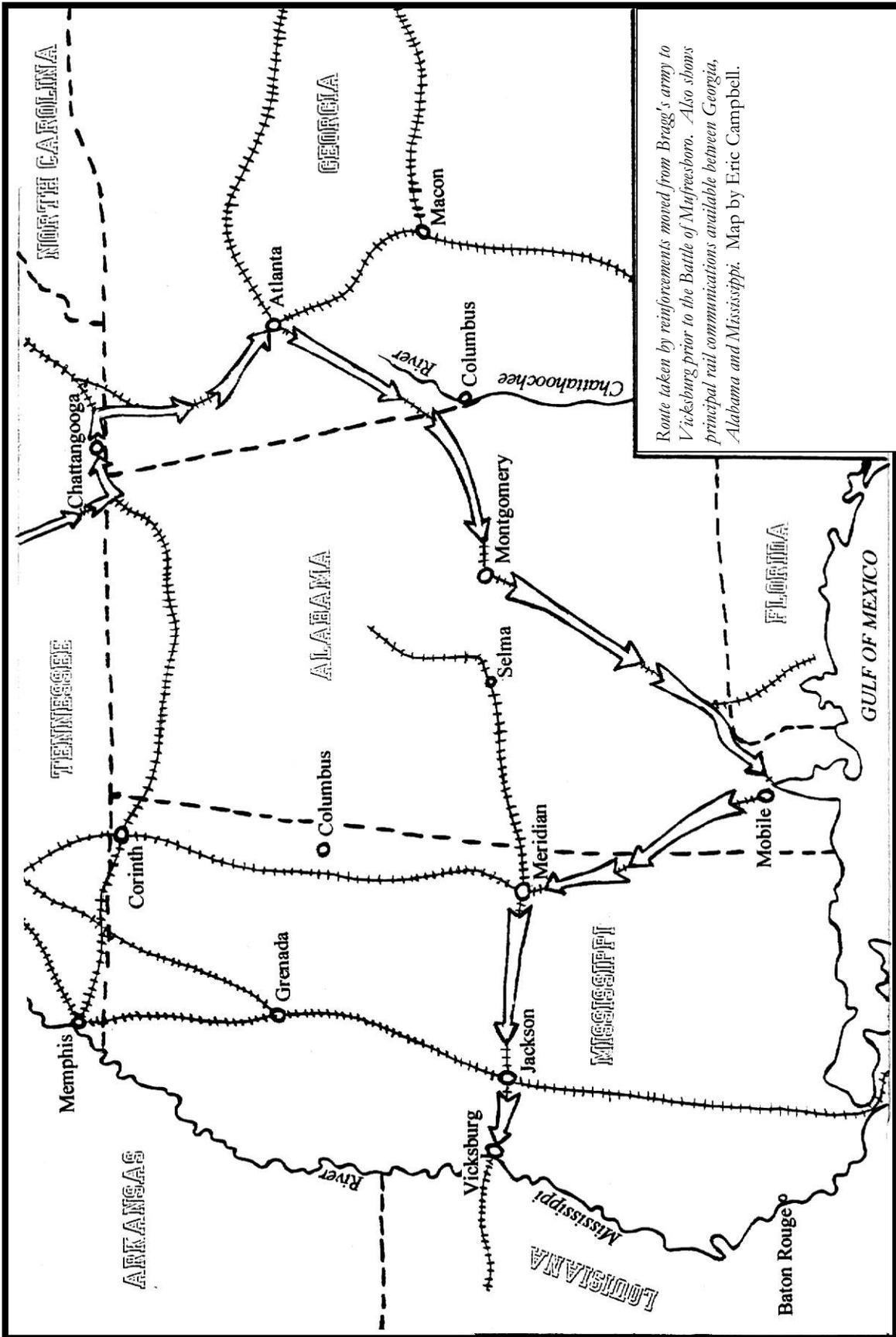
area. This was a tactical withdrawal, yet still held the promise of protecting the central part of Tennessee.

The news of the withdrawal, however, hit the President hard. After completing his western inspection trip visiting Mississippi with General Johnston, he had returned to Richmond. There, he publicly mentioned the Murfreesboro ‘victory’ in connection with Lee’s recent success at Fredericksburg and the defeat of the Federal forces at Milliken’s Bend, near Vicksburg. In a speech given at the Executive Mansion on January 5<sup>th</sup>, Davis announced:

In the West, too, at Murfreesboro, you have gained a victory over hosts vastly superior to our own in number. *You have achieved a result there as brilliant as that which occurred on the soil of Virginia* (emphasis added); and contemporaneously at Vicksburg, where they were struggling to get possession of the great artery, the control of the Mississippi River<sup>30</sup> ...

But then, almost as soon as he had mentioned it, he was forced to recant it, when news of Bragg's retreat reached the city. That opened the gates for anti-Bragg (and by extension, anti-Davis) factions in the Richmond papers and the Confederate Congress to launch a new round of attacks upon the President. In the midst of this came a communication from General Johnston that shook him – he wanted to resign his command in favor of a smaller one. He felt that he was hamstrung as a theater commander and could not effectively act within the framework established for his Department:

The distance between the two theaters of operation, and the different objects of the two armies in my command makes it impossible for me to exercise any general control. I must either take the immediate direction of one of these armies, thus for a time superseding its proper commander – which I believe was not intended – or be idle except on those rare occasions when it might be expedient to transfer troops from one army to the other. In the first contingency I should deprive an officer, in whom you have confidence, of the command for which you have selected him. Which I believe was not intended – which would have produced a discontent that would interfere with the cordial cooperation so necessary... In the second, I should generally be a spectator of the services of my comrades – a position which would inevitably disgrace me... With these views, I respectfully and earnestly beg some other position which may give me better opportunity to render such service as I may be capable of.<sup>31</sup>



Route taken by reinforcements moved from Bragg's army to Vicksburg prior to the Battle of Mufreesboro. Also shows principal rail communications available between Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. Map by Eric Campbell.

This was but the first of a number of correspondences that Davis would receive from Johnston expressing, in some fashion, that general's rationale for not being able to perform the tasks expected of him. At the moment, however, Davis was more concerned with one of Johnston's subordinates. Braxton Bragg was again the center of controversy.

Stung by the overwhelming criticisms about the decision to withdraw from Murfreesboro, some of which suggested the retreat was undertaken while the enemy was in full retreat, the general attempted to clarify the record. On January 11<sup>th</sup> Bragg requested confirmation from his senior officers to sustain his actions in the field. But by this time many of these men distrusted him and detested his leadership. Bragg was not unmindful of this, and one gets a sense, reading his circular to his officers, what sort of abrasive atmosphere existed at his headquarters:

Finding myself assailed in private and public by the press, in private circles by officers and citizens, for the movement from Murfreesborough, which was resisted by me for some time after advised by my corps and division commanders, it becomes necessary for me to save my fair name...*It has come to my knowledge that many of these accusations and insinuations are from staff officers of my generals, who persistently assert that the movement was made against the opinion and advice of their chiefs* (emphasis added)...Unanimous as you were in council in verbally advising a retrograde movement, I cannot doubt that you will cheerfully attest the same in writing. I desire that you will...be candid with me, as I have always endeavored to prove myself with you.<sup>32</sup>

The general's subordinate's made short work of this, exploiting to the fullest the opportunity provided by Bragg's desire for candor. Word of this activity quickly reached Davis, and on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, the President ordered General Johnston to Bragg's headquarters to check up on matters. Davis himself continued to express faith in Bragg, but recognized that if the general was widely distrusted, "disaster may result". Bearing in mind Johnston's correspondence from earlier that month, the President closed his letter to the general with a reminder to Johnston of his authority as the commander of the Western Department:

As that army is a part of your command, no order will be necessary to give you authority there, as whether present or absent, you have a right to direct its operations and do whatever else belongs to the general commanding.<sup>33</sup>

General Polk, always ready to undercut Bragg, was relieved when Johnston arrived. On February 4<sup>th</sup>, he wrote Davis to express his opinion that another position should be found for Bragg. In that letter, he concluded;

I have only to add, if he were Napoleon or the great Frederick he could serve our cause at some other points better than here. *My opinion is that he had better be transferred* (emphasis added). I remember you having said, speaking of having him transferred from this command, "I can make good use of him here in Richmond." I have thought that the best disposition for him and for the service of the army that could be made. His capacity for organization and discipline, which has not been equaled among us, could be used by you at headquarters with infinite advantage to the whole army.

I think, too, that the best thing to be done in supplying his place would be to give his command to Joseph E. Johnston...If General Lee can command the principal army in his department in person there is no reason why General Johnston should not.<sup>34</sup>

Davis had much the same idea in mind. However, his intent was foiled when Johnston reported to him the results of his visit. On February 12<sup>th</sup>, the general wrote to President Davis from Tullahoma, Tennessee observing that while there were a few grumblers in Polk's corps, overall, the morale of the army was high. He stated:

My object has been to ascertain if the confidence of the troops in the ability of the army to beat the enemy is at all impaired. I find no indication that it is less than when you were in its camp...To me it seems that the operations in Middle Tennessee have been conducted admirably.<sup>35</sup>

He expressed similar sentiments in letters to his powerful friend Senator Wigfall. This made it doubly difficult for Davis to remove Bragg from command without provoking an attack from within. He would have to face the growing anti-Davis elements in the Congress that would seize upon the fact that no less a figure than General Joseph E. Johnston himself had reported to the President that Bragg was doing a fine job leading the nation's second largest army. It was an impossible political position, and Davis knew it.<sup>36</sup>

Added to this, in an earlier letter on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, Johnston had suggested to the President that if Bragg *was* found wanting, that "no one in this army or engaged in this investigation ought to be his successor". This was most curious, for it meant that Johnston himself did not wish to be chosen for the post if Bragg was relieved. Given General Johnston's apparent unhappiness as a theater commander, he was the one Davis had thought of as a replacement for Bragg. Now there were considerations of General Johnston's honor, should Bragg be removed and he appointed in his place. On the February 19<sup>th</sup> the President touched on those issues in a letter to Johnston:

You limit the selection to a new man, and in terms very embarrassing to me, object to being yourself the immediate commander. I had felt the importance of keeping you free to pass from army to army in your department, . . . and command in person whenever present. You have borne no part in the investigation of General Bragg, other than that which seems to me appropriate to your position. . . . Therefore, I do not think that your personal honor is involved, as you could have nothing to gain by the removal of General Bragg. You shall not be urged by me to any course which would wound your sensibility or views of professional propriety, though you will perceive how small is the field of selection if a new man is to be sought whose rank is superior to that of the lieutenant-generals now in Tennessee. I expect to hear further from you on this subject.<sup>37</sup>

Evidently the President did not hear anything ‘on this subject’ from Johnston in a timely fashion. On March 9<sup>th</sup>, General Johnston was directed by the War Department to dispatch Bragg to Richmond, allegedly for a conference. In Bragg’s absence, Johnston was to assume “direct charge” of the army in Middle Tennessee. In typical Johnston form, he hesitated. He responded to the order three days later, stating that he would obey it “as soon as I can”. Elsie Bragg, then with her husband at Winchester, Tennessee, was ill and presumed to be near death, and Johnston refused to pass the order down to him at that moment. With Elsie continuing to linger on, Johnston presumptively decided on his own to negate the order entirely, as the roads were becoming usable again, and there was a possibility of enemy activity. On March 19<sup>th</sup>, he explained to the Secretary of War, ”Should the enemy advance, General Bragg will be indispensable here.”<sup>38</sup>

This state of affairs lasted for some two weeks, until the frail and supposedly near-death Mrs. Bragg recovered. However, to retain the services of Bragg with the army, it was necessary for General Johnston to somehow become disabled for service. Not surprisingly, this was exactly what took place. On April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1863, Johnston wrote to the President, providing all the needed details:

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of March . . . , I informed the Secretary of War . . . , that Gen. Bragg could not be sent to Richmond, as he had ordered, due to the critical condition of Mrs. Bragg. Being unwell then, I afterward became sick, and am not now able to serve in the field. General Bragg is therefore necessary here.

General Johnston was nevertheless determined to keep up the appearance of full co-operation. He therefore continued:

If conference with him (Bragg) is still desirable, might not a confidential officer visit him, for the purpose, in Tullahoma? <sup>39</sup>

Bragg's removal had now been delayed for more than a month, and Johnston had successfully evaded taking official command of his army. With the defeat at Murfreesboro and the resultant crises in leadership, Davis had responded with appeals that in the end produced nothing. Both Bragg and Johnston remained in their previously assigned commands for the upcoming campaign season, although their flaws were apparent to Davis by this time.

This whole episode highlighted one of Davis' key flaws as a military leader. In one respect, Abraham Lincoln, with his civilian background, held a distinct advantage over Jefferson Davis. As Commander-In-Chief, Lincoln spent the first two years of the war hiring and (in many cases) firing generals who failed to perform. A number of these men were virtually unknown to the politician from Illinois, which made this aspect of the job somewhat easier. Davis' military background condemned him to a familiarity with many of the officers in the service, and he was reluctant to dismiss them. It was a serious shortcoming and plagued the Confederacy to the end of the war. Lincoln, when presented with similar situations where outright dismissal was impossible for political or personal reasons, at least had distant departments and commands where offending incompetents might do little or no harm. Davis' Confederacy, threatened at all points, had no similar refuge for such men. It needed the best from every commander it possessed, however little that contribution might be.

In early April, about the same time that sickness overtook the Confederate command structure in Tennessee, the Federals began to grow restless on both western fronts. In Middle Tennessee, General Rosecrans steadily accumulated supplies for a spring offensive. To President Davis, Grant's shuffling of reinforcements along the Mississippi gave appearances of actually pulling out much of his army to reinforce Rosecrans and his larger Union army in Murfreesboro, aimed at General Bragg. General Pemberton, suspicious of this new development, was nonetheless requested by Johnston on April 11<sup>th</sup> to return the 8,000 men taken from the Tennessee army prior to the Battle of Murfreesboro. <sup>40</sup>

The first inkling that all was not well for Vicksburg came on April 16<sup>th</sup>. Rumors of troop movements were confirmed as Confederate shore batteries shelled Federal gunboats and a number of empty transports ran south past the river bluffs. Grant was preparing to shift his forces across the river below Vicksburg and then move overland to strike at the city from the south or east. . Unless the Confederates acted quickly to defeat this force, Grant would try to take the town from the south or the east, and possibly trap its defenders against the river. <sup>41</sup>

Accordingly, Secretary of War Seddon ordered Johnston on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1863, to move to Mississippi and assume "chief command" of all the forces in the region. He was also to take 3,000 reinforcements from General Bragg's army with him. Although he proclaimed himself "unfit for field service" when he received the order, he made ready to immediately comply with it. <sup>42</sup>

Other correspondences flew back and forth during this near panic-stricken period. Gen. Pemberton was aware of a large-scale Federal raiding party, led by Major Benjamin Grierson, which had begun moving south on April 17<sup>th</sup>. As Grierson and his men roamed the countryside, they distracted the Confederates from focusing on the main body of Grant's advance. Pemberton was in dire need of cavalry troops to help blunt this thrust. Unfortunately, General Johnston had squeezed Mississippi of nearly all the cavalry it possessed over the last winter, in order to build up strength in that arm in Middle Tennessee. Now it was desperately needed in Mississippi. A few units were promised, but it would take time to get them there.<sup>43</sup>

As Grant advanced, and Johnston hesitantly began to move westward, General Pemberton attempted to give battle outside of, but never far from his base at Vicksburg. When he failed to defeat the Union forces in a series of battles around the town, he withdrew into its defenses. Grant promptly besieged the city. The onus now fell on Johnston to assemble a new force and raise the siege. Upon reaching Jackson on May 13<sup>th</sup>, however, the potential savior of Vicksburg despaired of the situation. He foredoomed to Richmond:

I arrived this evening, finding the enemy's force between this place and General Pemberton, cutting off the communication. I am too late.<sup>44</sup>

Davis and the Confederate War Department were probably not surprised by this gloomy communication from Johnston, given his history of pessimism. Nonetheless, on May 23<sup>rd</sup> Secretary of War Seddon wrote a 'morale boosting' letter to Johnston to try and revive the general's fighting spirit. In it the Secretary observed that:

Now, to retrieve our grave disasters and save...the all-important command of the Mississippi River, is felt to be dependent on the presence and inspiration of your military genius...All aids and facilities in the power of the Department to render you aid will be promptly and heartily given, but they are felt to be far less adequate than we would gladly furnish...Unfortunately, our latter reinforcements may not reach you in time for the decisive struggle, but such despondent notions will not be entertained...

The Secretary closed his letter noting that:

I can only assure you of my full appreciation and confidence, and cheer myself under the darkening aspect of our late reverses by unabated reliance on your zeal, fertility of resource, and generalship.<sup>45</sup>

Seddon's platitudes did little to change General Johnston's overall outlook. In his response to the Secretary, dated May 5<sup>th</sup>, Johnston responded with a tone both diffident and doubtful:

I thank you cordially for your kind letter..., but almost regret that you feel such confidence in me as is expressed in it. From the present condition of affairs, I fear that confidence dooms you to disappointment. Every day gives some new intelligence of the enemy's strength...Our resources appear so small, and those of the enemy so great, that relief of Vicksburg is beginning to appear impossible to me. Pemberton will no doubt make a gallant and obstinate defense,...but unless we assemble a force strong enough to break Grant's line of investment, the surrender of the place will be mere question of time.<sup>46</sup>

To bolster Johnston's force with troops from other theaters, Davis had considered sending a portion of General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia to Pemberton. However, during Johnston's travel to Jackson, the President received Lee's views on this topic:

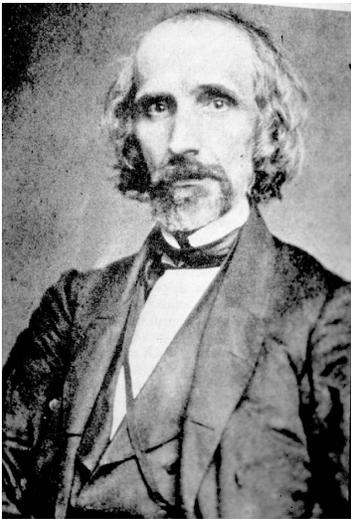
If you determine to send Pickett's division to General Pemberton,...it could not reach him until the last of this month...(T)he uncertainty of its arrival and uncertainty of its application cause me to doubt the policy of sending it. Its removal from this army will be sensibly felt. *We may be obliged to withdraw into the defenses around Richmond* (emphasis added). [General Hooker has more than 159, 000 men] We are greatly outnumbered by the enemy now...You can therefore see the odds against us and decide whether the line of Virginia is more in danger than the line of the Mississippi.<sup>47</sup>

Ultimately, Lee would have Davis choose between an endangered Richmond and an endangered Vicksburg. In this case, Davis saw the point of Lee's argument and chose Richmond. Relief, if it could be had, was not going to come easily. Davis would have Johnston's own department scrape together more reinforcements from wherever they were available. The President therefore could not have been happy when he received the following message from Johnston on June 12<sup>th</sup>. With it, Johnston attempted to box in Davis and the War Department, explaining why he could do nothing more. He declared:

(I) have not felt authorized to take troops from (Tennessee) after having been informed by the Executive that no more could be spared. To take from Bragg a force which would make this army fit to oppose Grant would involve yielding Tennessee. It is for the Government to decide between this state and Tennessee.

Further, he stated that he had not considered himself in command of any troops in Tennessee since his assignment to Mississippi. This was something of a sore spot between himself and Davis, as it begged the question of departmental command. Since Johnston had been 'ordered' to Mississippi, he felt, or hoped, that he was no longer authorized to command all the forces within Department Number 2. It appeared to be Johnston's persistent way of trying to find a smaller field of responsibility.<sup>48</sup>

The President personally responded to this on the 15<sup>th</sup>. He noted that the order to go to Mississippi still left Johnston within the area covered by his original assignment as theater commander, and did not reduce his authority in Tennessee. Davis pointedly inquired as to the source of "the information from me restricting your authority to transfer troops because no more could be spared?" The President also observed that, "Officers ordered to you for duty generally are, of course, subject to assignment by you."



Secretary of War James A. Seddon  
National Archives

Johnston replied to this dispatch the following day. He started off with the dubious explanation that he *meant* to tell the Secretary of War that he felt his new orders limited his authority to Mississippi. Johnston further detailed his belief that "whether commanding there or not, that your reply to my application for more troops that no more could be spared would have made it improper for me to order more from Tennessee." This singular claim may very well be legitimate: if Johnston felt that he had to compete against the War Department, it *would* have been improper for him to do so. However, when Johnston really wanted something (such as proper ranking among the original five Confederate generals) he was not averse to loudly protesting for it.

Perhaps the most tellingly accurate comment in the general's letter was this statement:

Permit me to repeat that an officer having a task like mine, *far above his ability* (emphasis added), cannot in addition command other remote departments. No general can command separate armies.<sup>49</sup>

This statement is noteworthy. For in it, Johnston frankly admitted that he felt incapable of doing what Davis anticipated of him as chief of the Western Department. As the commander charged with such critical responsibilities, the President properly expected Johnston to do more than passively wait to embrace a coming defeat. Yet Davis had no one to turn to at this most critical of junctures to replace his faltering general. He therefore became a partner, of sorts, waiting with Johnston for what he may too have begun to feel inevitable - the collapse of Vicksburg.

If there was any subconscious recognition on Davis' part as to the impossibility of Johnston's present position, it did not show. On the 15<sup>th</sup> Johnston also sent a message to Secretary Seddon,

closing with "...The odds against me are much greater than those you express. I consider saving Vicksburg hopeless."

The following day, Seddon, speaking for the President, replied:

Your telegram grieves and alarms me. Vicksburg must not be lost without a desperate struggle. The interest and honor of the Confederacy forbid it. I rely on you still to avert the loss. If better resources do not offer, you must hazard attack.<sup>50</sup>

The Secretary apparently still held out some hope that Johnston would do something. Johnston continued to attempt to convey that it was impossible to do anything. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, Johnston responded:

Dispatch of the 16<sup>th</sup> received. I think that you do not appreciate the difficulties of the course you direct nor the probabilities or consequences of failure... We cannot combine operations with General Pemberton from uncertain and slow communication. The defeat of this little army would at once open Mississippi and Alabama to Grant. *I will do all I can, without hope of doing more than aid to extricate the garrison* (emphasis added).<sup>51</sup>

In the midst of this situation, critical to the life of the nation, the President was fighting a different battle. Davis, with his lawyer's mind for pettifogging details, was motivated to prove himself clearly right in one facet of his ongoing battle with Johnston. On the 17<sup>th</sup> and again on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, he wrote the general, asking him to submit documents showing he had been constrained from drawing troops from Tennessee to aid the Vicksburg garrison. In his letter of the 30<sup>th</sup>, Davis stated:

After full examination of all the correspondence between you and myself... I am still at a loss to account for your strange error stating to the Secretary of War that your right to draw re-enforcements from Bragg's army had been restricted by the Executive or that your command over the Army of Tennessee had been withdrawn.

With the very next paragraph, however, the President granted one of Johnston's wishes:

In compliance with your request, I am engaged in correspondence with General Bragg on the subject of making such new arrangements as shall relieve you hereafter of the command of his department.<sup>52</sup>

During this time, things had continued to grow more desperate in the Vicksburg trenches. In his last dispatch to Johnston, dated June 22<sup>nd</sup>, General Pemberton suggested that his commander propose terms to Grant, surrendering the town but not the troops within it. Five days later, Johnston responded, praising Pemberton's determination, but noting that, "[I]f it should become necessary to make propositions to General Grant, they must be made by [you], as my making them would be an impolitic confession of weakness." With that point clarified for him, Pemberton began discussing terms shortly thereafter. The city fell on Independence Day.<sup>53</sup>

After writing his dispatch to Pemberton of June 27<sup>th</sup>, Johnston again turned his attention to the President. On July 5<sup>th</sup>, as yet unaware of the surrender of Vicksburg, the general responded to Davis' message of June 30<sup>th</sup>. Although in the last line of the letter Johnston thanked the President for approving several of his recommendations, he opened it with a strong repetition of the arguments from his letter of June 12<sup>th</sup>. He stated further, "I regret very much that an impression which seemed to me to be natural should be regarded by you as a strange error."<sup>54</sup>

Johnston's real error was in sending the letter. It arrived in Richmond on July 7<sup>th</sup>, the same day as did his message to Secretary Seddon announcing Vicksburg's capitulation. Davis, although very sick at the time, was now entirely frustrated and fully determined to finally put the general in his place. The next day, the President sent Johnston a short note that tersely warned, "Your dispatch of the 5<sup>th</sup> received. The mistakes it contains will be noticed by letter." He then began a week-long examination of every communication, order and dispatch between himself and General Johnston; beginning with the latter's assignment to command the Western Department. The result of this research was an impressive thirty-four paragraph document some fifteen pages in length that showed Jefferson Davis at his combative best. In it, he demolished, in sequence, the various arguments that Johnston had used throughout the campaign to contravene the President's plans. With a sense of finality, Davis concluded:

Now that Vicksburg has disastrously fallen, this subject would present no pressing demand for attention, ... had not your dispatch of the 5<sup>th</sup> instant, with its persistent repetition of statements which I had informed you were erroneous, and without adducing a single fact to sustain them, induced me to terminate the matter at once by a review of all the facts. The original mistakes in your telegram of 12<sup>th</sup> June would gladly have been overlooked as accidental if acknowledged when pointed out. The perseverance with which they have been insisted on has not permitted me to pass them by as mere oversights...<sup>55</sup>

Johnston received this missive on July 28<sup>th</sup>, and prepared a carefully worded but only partially repentant response on August 8<sup>th</sup>. In it, he claimed that he was justified in making the mistakes that he had, and that his errors had no effect upon his military course. Predictably, this did not sit well with the President. When Josiah Gorgas, the Confederacy's chief of ordnance, later mentioned to Davis the likely possibility that Pemberton had surrendered because the garrison

had been starved out, the President responded, “Yes, from a want of provisions inside and a general outside who wouldn’t fight.”<sup>56</sup>

The President also had a deeper loss he could credit to the failure of General Johnston. With the collapse of the Mississippi defensive line, Federal troops began to move inland from the river. Soon they encountered the location where much of Davis' private property had been secreted. When the identity of its owner was confirmed, the soldiers’ plundering went into high gear. In addition to the ‘usual’ casualties suffered during such encounters- the soldiers found and drank all his wine- they also took the irreplaceable books and papers from his early career, as well as the intimate and deeply personal letters of his deceased first wife Sarah and the few papers that he had of his father. This was a crushing emotional loss for Jefferson Davis.<sup>57</sup>

All of this took its cumulative toll. The Vicksburg experience conclusively proved to the President Johnston’s weakness as a commander. In an unsent letter intended for the Confederate Congress, the President noted in February of 1865 his feelings on the matter:

My confidence in General Johnston’s fitness for separate command was now destroyed. The proof was too complete to admit of longer doubt that he was deficient in enterprise, tardy in movement, and singularly neglectful of the duty of preserving our means of supply and transportation, although experience should have taught him their value...I came to the conclusion, therefore, that it would be imprudent to intrust General Johnston with another independent command for active operations in the field.<sup>58</sup>

Although Davis’ last wartime thoughts on his subordinate’s flawed abilities were clear, he would later feel forced to reinstate him twice due to a perceived lack of suitable leadership material in the western theater. Johnston, for his part, began to resent Davis more than ever following the loss of Vicksburg. Mary Chesnut, wife of Davis' aide Col. James Chesnut, noted in October:

(Col. Chesnut) knows that the president detests Joe Johnston for all the trouble he has given him. And General Joe returns the compliment with compound interest. His hatred of Jeff Davis amounts to a religion. With him it colors all things...Being such a good hater, it is a pity he had not elected to hate somebody else than the president of our country. He hates not wisely but too well.

Incredibly, Davis would later still believe, or hope, that Johnston might somehow sublimate his natural instincts and contribute to a possible Confederate victory. For his part, a bitter Johnston thought that Davis later reinstated him specifically to bear the disgrace of being the general present at the final surrender.<sup>59</sup>

On July 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, at the time that Pemberton made final preparations to surrender Vicksburg, things were beginning to grow more critical in Tennessee. On those same days, General Bragg crossed his army over the Tennessee River into Chattanooga. In a short, quick campaign of maneuver, begun on June 24<sup>th</sup>, the Confederates were flanked out of Middle Tennessee. General Rosecrans, after sitting idle at his supply base at Murfreesboro for more than six months, was now poised to split the Confederacy yet again, if he could gain control of Chattanooga—and the rail line to Atlanta.

The Confederate withdrawal towards Chattanooga had been difficult. Made through a period of very bad weather, the army lost nearly 5,000 men during this time, mostly due to desertion and straggling. Bragg was also poorly served by his cavalry, which failed to provide him with adequate intelligence as to Rosecrans' intentions during this period. Fortunately for Bragg, the advance had been as wearing for the Federals as the withdrawal had been for the Confederates. Finding the town too heavily fortified to confront directly, Rosecrans decided to halt west of Chattanooga.<sup>60</sup>

The President wanted to attempt an offensive against the Federals to help reverse Confederate fortunes in the west. Using Bragg's army, along with troops transferred from Johnston's Mississippi command, in addition to those of General Simon Bolivar Buckner's Third Corps (Previously the Department of East Tennessee under Johnston), Davis envisioned massing these forces to drive Rosecrans out of Tennessee.

Unfortunately for Davis, the flicker of optimism regarding this plan faded upon Bragg's contact with Johnston and Buckner, who offered no encouragement as to its ultimate success. Thus convinced of the folly of striking out at the enemy, Bragg wrote to Inspector-General Cooper on August 5<sup>th</sup> to explain his reasons for not proceeding. He cited the disparity in numbers, the difficulties of maneuver, and what he believed were dubious chances for success. If things went wrong, the general observed, "the enemy need only avoid battle for a short time to starve us out."

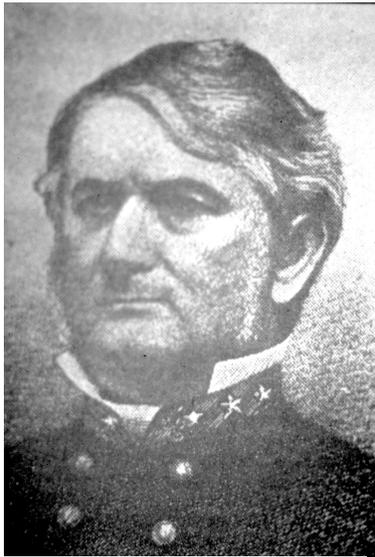
Davis received this letter from Secretary Seddon on August 10<sup>th</sup>. The President did not attempt to directly order Bragg to go forward with an attack. His endorsement on the letter suggests a man drained and chastened by his experience with the frustrations of Joseph E. Johnston:

However desirable a movement may be, it is never safe to do more than suggest it to a commanding general, and it would be unwise to order its execution to one who foretold failure.<sup>61</sup>

Others were beginning to wonder why the President had not yet relieved the dyspeptic general. One such man was Bragg's senior corps' commander. Leonidas Polk possessed an irresistible tendency towards insubordination that extended into the ranks of the high command and the Executive branch of the government as well. He began to get frustrated that his suggestions regarding his commander had not been responded to by his old friend Davis. He shared with a

fellow bishop outside the service his thoughts on his commander-in chief's failure to relieve Bragg:

The truth is, I am somewhat afraid of Davis. He has so much at stake on this issue that *I do not find myself willing to risk his judgement* (emphasis added)... He is proud, self reliant, and I fear stubborn. (He should) lean a little less on his own understanding (and recognize that) there were some minds in the land from whom he might obtain counsel worth having.<sup>62</sup>



Lieutenant General Leonidas Polk  
National Archives

Polk's commentary here is instructive, as it reveals a man very reluctant to sublimate his instincts to the views of any superior he disagreed with. Bragg had known of this trait of Polk's since before the Kentucky campaign, but thanks to the protecting hand of Jefferson Davis, he had been forced to retain him within the army. There, Polk led a number of other disaffected officers as the head of an anti-Bragg *cabal* that had existed at headquarters, where they actively worked to weaken their commander's effectiveness. The net result of this was to play a prominent part as Bragg attempted, but failed, to deliver a knockout blow to the Federal invaders outside Chattanooga.

By the early part of September, Bragg had strengthened and skillfully maneuvered the Army of Tennessee into a position whereby he would have the upper hand against Rosecrans. In late August, nine thousand men had been taken from Johnston's command and shipped east to bolster Bragg's force. Following the fall of Knoxville and the Cumberland Gap, troops previously used in defense of these locations were combined with Buckner's Third Corps and the Army of Tennessee. It was also determined about this time to detach a portion of the Army of Northern Virginia, under General James Longstreet, to act as a re-enforcement as well. It would, however, take some time to get Longstreet's corps from Virginia to Georgia. They would not arrive until the Battle of Chickamauga was underway.<sup>63</sup>

As he moved from Chattanooga, Bragg kept a careful eye on his pursuers. His evacuation of the city gave the impression to Rosecrans that the Confederates were continuing to flee from his advancing forces. Chattanooga was occupied by a portion of Rosecrans' army on September 9<sup>th</sup>. The Union commander, now firmly convinced of a major Confederate withdrawal, attempted to cut off Bragg's possible routes of "retreat". In doing so, Rosecrans spread out his own army too thinly among the hills, with his supporting corps out of reach of each other.<sup>64</sup>

This gave the Confederates splendid possibilities for truly decisive engagements between September 10<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup>. However, the anti-Bragg dissention in the high command of the army had reached such a level that none of the senior officers trusted Bragg, or responded positively to his orders. Thus, the chances to inflict serious damage on Rosecrans' army at Dug Gap and McLemore's Cove were missed. The hesitation and resistance to Bragg's directives gave Rosecrans time to gather his wits and his army and avoid disaster. He began to consolidate his forces, and a great opportunity was lost.<sup>65</sup>

Bragg, however, was determined to keep the pressure on and moved between the Federal army and Chattanooga, precipitating the battle of Chickamagua. On the evening of September 19<sup>th</sup>, the first elements of Longstreet's troops arrived on the field to find Bragg already engaged with Rosecrans. To make use of his new resource, Bragg reorganized the army that night. He gave Longstreet command of the left wing, and Polk command of the right. Polk was instructed to open the attack at dawn the following morning, and cut the road that connected the Federals with Chattanooga. With Rosecrans' thus isolated, Bragg hoped to finally crush him.<sup>66</sup>

Polk failed to carry through his attack as ordered and did not deliver his "dawn" attack until nearly 10 a.m. This delay contributed materially to the failure of the original plan to separate Rosecrans from Chattanooga, as the Army of the Cumberland was able to escape destruction by retreating into the city. Instead, the best that could now come would be a successful siege operation, starving out the under-supplied Federals trapped there. The failures of Polk's corps had yet again foiled the intention of the commanding general.<sup>67</sup>

Bragg was livid. Although proud of the achievements of his fighting men, he wasted no time in lambasting those whose failures, in his view, prevented a more complete success. In a letter to Secretary of War Seddon, dated September 25<sup>th</sup>, Bragg complained of Polk:

(He) is luxurious in his habits, rises late, moves slowly, and always conceives his own plan the best. (His refusal to carry out prescribed orders) has proved an injury to me on every field where I have been associated with him.<sup>68</sup>

The Secretary also received a somewhat impertinent letter shortly thereafter from General Longstreet, interjecting his thoughts and opinions on Bragg's army, the campaign and battle:

Sir: May I take the liberty to advise you of our condition and our wants?...To express my convictions in a few words, our chief has done but one thing that he ought to have done since I joined his army. That was to order the attack upon the 20<sup>th</sup>. All other things that he has done he ought not to have done. *I am convinced that nothing but the hand of God can save us or help us as long as we have our present commander* (emphasis added).

Now to our wants. Can't you send us General Lee?... (O)ur operations here should be offensive-until we have recovered Tennessee, at all events. We need some great mind as General Lee's [nothing more] to accomplish this. You will be surprised to learn that this army has neither organization nor mobility, and I have doubts if its commander can give it to them.<sup>69</sup>

Bragg agreed with the idea of change, but wanted one of a different sort. He was fed up with Polk and finally ready to remove him. On September 29<sup>th</sup>, Bragg issued Special Orders No. 249, which announced Polk's suspension from command for his failure to attack on the morning of September 20<sup>th</sup>. On the same date, Bragg sent a notice to General Cooper in Richmond, thereby officially informing the President. The stage was now set for a full-blown confrontation between Davis and Bragg over Polk.<sup>70</sup>

The President's response to Bragg's stated intent to act against Polk was two-fold. He sent a reply to the general, stating that, "It is now believed that the order in his case should be countermanded." Secondly, he noted that Bragg was required to show cause for Polk's arrest by preferring charges. If these steps were designed to dissuade Bragg from proceeding, they failed. As the general observed in a telegram to the President on October 1<sup>st</sup>:

My action in the case of Lieutenant General Polk was only after the receipt of an unsatisfactory written explanation. *The case is flagrant and but a repetition of the past* (emphasis added)... Our cause is at stake. Without vigorous action and prompt obedience (it) cannot be saved. My personal feelings have been yielded to what I know to be the public good, and I suffer self-reproach for not having acted earlier.<sup>71</sup>

The President took due notice of the undertones contained in this communication, but was determined one more time to try and keep his friend Polk out of trouble. He sent a letter to Bragg on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, in which he noted:

I can well appreciate the disappointment resulting from the delays and disobedience of orders to which you refer, and I sincerely regret the consequences which resulted therefrom... The opposition to you both in the army and out of it has been a public calamity in so far that it impairs your capacity for usefulness, and I had hoped the great victory which you had recently achieved would tend to harmonize the army and bring to you a more just appreciation of the country.

With a heavy hand of political sarcasm, Davis also recalled Bragg's problems with Polk and other generals following the Battle of Murfreesboro. The President went on to observe that:

I can but regret that the explanation you have received has been found insufficient to enable you to overlook the offense... You will not fail to perceive how readily others predisposed to censure you will connect the present action with former estrangement said to have followed an expression of opinion by your generals in answer to interrogatories propounded by you.<sup>72</sup>

This might have changed the mind of a less resolute man, but Bragg was now determined to pursue the matter. By now, so was the President. Two specific charges, those of disobeying the command of his superior officer and neglecting his duty to the good order and discipline of his command, had been filed against Polk. Additionally, on October 4<sup>th</sup>, a number of the senior officers in the Army of Tennessee sent Davis a communiqué exceedingly critical of the lost opportunities in the recent campaign. They laid many of the failures squarely on the shoulders of Braxton Bragg without naming him directly. Using ominous words and subliminally mutinous tones, these generals called for his removal.

In making these representations to Your Excellency your petitioners are aware that the proceeding is unusual among military men..., *While Your Excellency may be assured that any commander whom you assign or retain in this army will receive their earnest support, as far as their ability extends, your petitioners cannot withhold from Your Excellency the expression of the fact that under the command, as it now exists, they can render you no assurance of the success which Your Excellency may reasonably expect* (emphasis added).<sup>73</sup>

To see what could be done to remedy these problems, Davis determined to once again pay a visit to army in the field. He also brought with him a traveling companion, General Pemberton. Referred to as “the most hated man in the Confederacy” since the fall of Vicksburg, Pemberton hoped that there might be a vacancy in the Army of Tennessee where he could be of some use. Davis, who had seen nothing wrong in Pemberton’s actions during that campaign, had written him a laudatory letter in August:

General Lee and yourself (seem) to me to examples of the (same) class, and my confidence in both has not been diminished because ‘letter writers’ have not sent forth your praise on the wings of the press. I am myself no stranger to the misrepresentations of which malignity is capable..., and have been taught...how slowly the Messenger of Truth follows that of Slander. The court which has been ordered (to examine

the collapse of Vicksburg)...will, I trust develop the real cause of events, and give to the public the means of doing justice to the actors.<sup>74</sup>

Now as the President and the general traveled south, each looked to the future with differing expectations. Pemberton would find his post-Vicksburg reputation unshakeable, with no invitations forthcoming to command anything. Davis was thinking about the agony of yet another inquiry involving a friend and what might be done to mitigate it.<sup>75</sup>

Due to the losses in East Tennessee, Davis took a roundabout route to get to headquarters, coming first through Atlanta. There, he had the chance to visit with Polk and hear his side of the story. On the date of the President's departure from Richmond, the Bishop-General had written to Davis of his hopes for a public inquest into the whole matter.

If there be a man in the public service who should be held to a more rigid accountability for failures, and upon a larger scale, that man is General Bragg, and I shall be happy to go before a court of inquiry on charges preferred against me by General Bragg, that I may have not only the opportunity of vindicating my own conduct, but of establishing the truth and justice of what I have written of his lack of capacity as a commanding general.<sup>76</sup>

However, when Davis arrived at Bragg's headquarters, he quickly realized the necessity of supporting his embattled general. In his discussions with the President, Bragg himself asked to be relieved of command. If he were relieved, the President felt Bragg's replacement would either have to be Beauregard, Longstreet or Johnston, or some officer of lesser grade promoted expressly for that purpose. These possibilities Davis could not abide, and therefore he tried to make the best of a bad situation. He intended to elicit some support for Bragg, on the record, at least, by gathering the upper echelon of the Army of Tennessee in the presence of its general commanding. Davis felt that in this atmosphere, Longstreet, Buckner and the others would feel constrained to speak positively of Bragg.<sup>77</sup>

To that end, Davis met on October 9<sup>th</sup> with Bragg and his officers. The result was not at all what the President had expected. Rather than feel pressured to conceal their displeasure with Bragg, in his presence the leadership solidly voiced its objections to him as army commander. Davis was stunned, but pressed ahead until all had spoken out. The following day, in a separate interview with the President, some of the officers remaining loyal to Bragg told Davis that all the trouble was rooted in just a few officers. However, this was strongly contradicted by the evidence available to the President. As he reviewed units with Bragg, many of the soldiers cheered him, but when they rode past General John C. Breckinridge's division, a part of Polk's old command, "not a man opened his mouth." Clearly the feelings extended beyond just a few troublemakers. In spite of all he had seen and heard, however, the President retained Bragg as head of the army.<sup>78</sup>

Perhaps Davis now realized just exactly what sort of obstacles Bragg faced in keeping his army under control. He permitted Bragg to reshuffle his commanders to break up hostile cliques, but did not wish him to go forward with his plan to prefer charges against Polk. He agreed to see Polk transferred to Mississippi. General William J. Hardee would come east to replace Polk in Bragg's army. On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Secretary of War advised the President against holding any inquiry over the Polk matter. Davis readily agreed, and declared the matter "disposed of." This disappointed the agitator-bishop, who had hoped for a showdown. One week later, Davis wrote to Polk:

After an examination into the causes and circumstances (of all the issues regarding this case), I have arrived at the conclusion that there is nothing attending them to justify them or a court-martial or a court of inquiry, and I therefore dismiss the application. Your assignment to a new field of duty... is the best evidence of my appreciation of your past service and expectations of your future career.<sup>79</sup>

The transfer gave Bragg little reason to celebrate. With Polk gone, General Longstreet now became Bragg's principal antagonist within the Army of Tennessee. His negative comments against Bragg, begun after Chickamauga, were now insistent. He had earlier expressed the sentiment, in a letter to Senator Wigfall, "I don't think that I should be under Bragg." Upset that the President had failed to choose him to lead the army following his recent visit, Longstreet demonstrated his unhappiness by failing to follow Bragg's orders to keep an eye on the supply routes into Chattanooga. This was a serious and nearly inexcusable failure on Longstreet's part, as 20,000 Federal re-enforcements were now moving in, under the overall command of U. S. Grant.

Between October 25<sup>th</sup> and the 28<sup>th</sup>, Bragg observed Longstreet's famed sluggishness at work as the Federals in his sector took control of the northern approaches into Chattanooga with only token resistance. Clearly, something was afoot, and Longstreet should have been alive to it. Troops and supplies now began to fill the once-starving garrison, turning it into a springboard for further operations against the lower South.<sup>80</sup>

Bragg and Davis were both bitterly disappointed in Longstreet's performance. On October 29<sup>th</sup>, Davis suggested to Bragg the idea of detaching Longstreet to "expel" General Ambrose E. Burnside from Knoxville. Just two days later, however, when Davis heard from Bragg of Longstreet's failures north of Chattanooga, he wrote Bragg:

The result is a bitter disappointment...Such disobedience of orders and disastrous failures as you describe cannot consistently be overlooked. I suppose you have received the explanation due the government, and *I shall be pleased if one satisfactory has been given* (emphasis added).<sup>81</sup>

Yet Davis and Bragg *were* willing to overlook Longstreet's failures, *if* he could produce victories in the future. Both men had their reasons to separate Longstreet from the Army of Tennessee.

The President's suggestion about giving the general an independent command still stood, not in the least because Robert E. Lee had written to Longstreet, wanting him to "finish the work before you, my dear general, and return to me. I want you badly and you cannot get back too soon." To Davis and Bragg, this could be accomplished only after the Federals in Knoxville were defeated, nullifying the perceived Federal threat to southwest Virginia. If Burnside were beaten, it was believed that Grant would have to immediately pull some of his troops from Chattanooga, giving the Confederates a better chance there.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to the possible military benefits if such a plan should succeed, Bragg saw the other positive side effect: he would rid himself of another unruly subordinate, this time with the blessing of the President. Bragg was so enamored with this idea that shortly afterward he sent off General Buckner's division to support Longstreet. Buckner, previously a Polk supporter and an ally of Longstreet, had been reduced in rank steadily from department commander to division commander and had protested about his latest reduction in rank since shortly after the Battle of Chickamagua. He had been so persistent on the matter that he had become a real irritant to Bragg and some of his staff. Buckner had also written letters to Cooper and Davis, pressing the righteousness of his claim to a higher command.<sup>83</sup>

With all this going on, Bragg detached Longstreet's corps on November 4<sup>th</sup>. However, It did not begin to move for nearly a week. Buckner and his troops followed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November. During this time Bragg was hard at work streamlining his army, trying to break up other pockets of resistance. On November 12<sup>th</sup>, Bragg issued one order that contained nineteen unit transfers, in many cases taking units from one division and transferring them to another. Doubtless, it was personally satisfying for Bragg to rid himself of his opponents, but when Longstreet and Buckner departed, they took with them more than 20,000 desperately needed re-enforcements just as battle appeared imminent.

Bragg was belatedly made aware of the need for these extra troops, as the Federals advanced the next day and drove in his picket line all across the front. They also seized Orchard Knob, opposite the center of the Confederate line, and promptly mounted rifled artillery batteries on it. Bragg hastily called back a portion of Buckner's command (but not Buckner himself) to strengthen the Confederate line. It was too little, too late.<sup>84</sup>

General Bragg's inattention to the Federal movements in his front and the weaknesses in his own army cost him dearly. In the following two days, Bragg's force was driven off Lookout Mountain and the crest of Missionary Ridge. His over-stretched army had been ill prepared to receive the series of attacks that the general himself later referred to as "my shameful discomfiture." During the fighting, Bragg himself had attempted to rally his fleeing troops along the ridge, but to no avail. As one soldier recalled:

I saw (Deas) brigade throw down their guns and break like quarter horses. Bragg was trying to rally them. I heard him say, "Here is your commander," and the soldiers halloooed back, "here is your mule."...I felt sorry for General Bragg. The army was routed...Poor fellow, he looked so hacked and whipped and mortified and chagrined at defeat, and all along the line, when Bragg would pass, the soldiers would raise the yell, "Here is your mule;" "Bully for Bragg, he's h--l on retreat."<sup>85</sup>

This near-dissolution of the Army of Tennessee on Missionary Ridge stands in stark contrast to the army's other battlefield reverses. Although the position appeared impregnable, the army posted upon it was weak, in spirit as well as numbers. This was the net result of the continual attacks that had been made upon Bragg by his subordinates. By now, these attacks were well known to President Davis, who had proved incapable of addressing the problem and clearly supporting his chosen general. Thus unchecked, the issues of Bragg's leadership and competence filtered down to the soldiers, eroding their confidence in him and his abilities.

Bragg had seen the potential for this when, in his October discussions with the President, he had offered to resign his command. Then, the President had dissuaded the general from doing so. Now his army had been forced to retreat yet again, to Dalton, Georgia. Chattanooga, the "gate city to the lower South", was in Federal hands, and the route to Atlanta more accessible than ever.

Once the dust began to settle at Bragg's new headquarters, he telegraphed Cooper in Richmond to apprise Davis of the situation. He ended his message with two requests: to again be relieved from command, and for an investigation as to the cause of the Missionary Ridge disaster. The next day, he received word that Davis had granted one of them. On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, Bragg issued General Orders Number 214, announcing his resignation and that henceforth Lieutenant-General Hardee would command the army. One day before this took effect, Bragg again wrote of the Missionary Ridge fight to the President. He did not attempt to deny responsibility for what had happened, stating, "The disaster admits of no palliation, and is justly disparaging to me as a commander." Before concluding his letter, however, Bragg could not help but observe, "I fear we both erred in the conclusion for me to retain command here after the clamour raised against me."<sup>86</sup>

Shortly after Bragg wrote the President, Robert E. Lee did so as well. He had a number of concerns to share with Davis, the first being the new commander of the western army. Hardee, Lee noted, was only temporary, there to hold things together until a new commander could be found. Indeed, Hardee had indicated that he did not desire the command as a permanent assignment. Lee, knowing Davis' distaste for certain generals whom the President viewed as 'failures', attempted, in his delicate way, to suggest one of them to lead the army. He wrote, "I know the difficulties that surround this subject, but if General Beauregard is considered suitable for the position, I think he can be replaced at Charleston by General Gilmer." Although Davis had previously taken Lee's advice on many occasions, he rejected it here. His feelings about the

Creole and his capacity had not changed, and Davis still did not see him as possibly fit for the job.

The question, however, signaled political trouble ahead for Jefferson Davis. With Bragg gone, he was just about out of command-grade officers that he could trust to capably lead the nation's second-largest army. In addition, all of the officers that Davis had lost faith in each now had groups of vocal supporters in the Confederate Congress, collectively ready to assail the President for attempting to micro-manage the army to the detriment of some favorite. No doubt Lee was aware of this, as he observed in his letter, "...I know how much your attention is occupied with the general affairs of the country, *especially as the session of Congress approaches*" (emphasis added). Like the good general he was, Lee was alert to the approach of the foe; no matter from which direction he came.<sup>87</sup>

The fourth session of the First Confederate Congress opened at noon on Monday, December 7<sup>th</sup>. Deep intrigue swirled around the President, his retention of Bragg, and the loss of Chattanooga. The point man for this offensive was Tennessee Senator Henry S. Foote. The two had been political rivals since 1850; they had actually engaged in fisticuffs in 1847. Of all of Davis' critics, Foote was one of the most vocal. Following a comment by Davis that suggested the Missionary Ridge disaster could, in part, be attributed to the lack of valor among the troops (many of whom were Tennesseans), Foote went on the attack. His condemnation of the President's participation in military affairs, while not wholly accurate, served his political purpose and embarrassed Davis. A portion of the Senator's speech, taken from a newspaper account, indicated the level of hostility between the two:

The President's visits to the army had never brought out any good. They had only been productive of disaster. Had he never gone up to the army after the first battle of Manassas, our army would have taken Washington. The President ordered Bragg to fight the battle of Murfreesboro, and here again was the result of his military counsels. ***Would to God he would never visit the army again*** (emphasis added). The President had charged the army with a want of valour, but (Foote) charged the President with gross misconduct in retaining his favourites in office...which, if persisted in longer, will prove fatal to our cause.<sup>88</sup>

This charge of retaining 'favourites' has much to support it. Indeed, personal loyalty was a central part of the character of Jefferson Davis; and one of his critical weaknesses as a leader. In the post-war words of Edward A Pollard, editor of the anti-Davis *Richmond Examiner*:

While he quarrelled with such men as ... Beauregard...and ...Johnston, he maintained such favorites as Pemberton. No man was ever more sovereign in his likes and dislikes. Favorites were elevated to power, and

the noblest spirits consigned to obscurity by the fiat of a single man in the Confederacy, and that man one of the strongest prejudices, the harshest obstinacy, and the most ungovernable fondness for parasites.<sup>89</sup>

Although this opinion was somewhat extreme, Davis *had* made the year of 1863 more difficult in the western theater with his tendency to stand by his friends. The losses at Murfreesboro, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga, could, in some part, all be connected to who the President preferred to command, or who in the command he listened to. Now, as the year closed, the Confederacy had been split in two, and Tennessee lost entirely. Federal armies continued to grow in number, and extend their hold over vast amounts of territory taken in the last twelve months. This only served to increase the pressures on Jefferson Davis.

He needed fresh leadership for the army, if he was to reverse these losses. For Davis, finding someone that he could trust also meant someone *of the appropriate rank*. Curiously, while the President was not averse to trying new technologies (submarines, land mines, etc.) to help bring victory, he was personally hesitant to violate old customs and traditions that deprived a desperate Confederacy of some potential battlefield leaders. It was apparent by now that another Robert E. Lee was not available to the western army, and extraordinary measures were needed.

Unfortunately, Davis would prove incapable of meeting that test. The failures and frustrations up through the first half of 1863 had worn him down. Confronted with the combination of military disappointments, political attacks and deep-rooted infighting among his generals, he had ceased to act presidential, and mostly began to act like Jefferson Davis. As a result, there would be no substantive changes, and the western command at its upper levels would continue to be dysfunctional throughout the remainder of the war. Given the serious flaws already known to exist, this was a recipe for disaster. Confirmation of that came when Davis felt forced to appoint his old nemesis, Joseph E. Johnston, to command the army on December 16<sup>th</sup>. This move firmly intertwined the malignant tendrils of politics around the deteriorating muscles of the western army. During Bragg's feuds, the fighting had been mainly contained within the army. Many of the politicians who had intensely lobbied Secretary Seddon on Johnston's behalf were viciously anti-Davis. They felt that Johnston, in appreciation, would naturally join ranks with them, once in a position to do so, and further their cause. This tremendously weakened anything that Johnston would try to do in the upcoming season.<sup>90</sup>

The year of 1863 also marked the beginning of another fight for Jefferson Davis, which he would wage the remainder of his life, and which is carried on even now in some quarters. It would be the fight for what he hoped would be a favorable judgement from the Muse of History. Davis was enough of a realist to acknowledge that, given the losses of the year just past, Herculean efforts would be needed to bring forth a Confederate victory. If there were to be a defeat, Davis, ever the student of history, trusted that the record would vindicate his actions.

Among that lot, his role is yet debated, and the views are mixed. As a symbol of the "Lost Cause", much written about Davis must be discounted due to its political bias, both in favor of and against. Perhaps it is surprising, therefore, that one of the most perceptive evaluations of

Jefferson Davis came from a Southerner. Woodrow Wilson, as a boy of eight, saw him as a Federal prisoner pass through the streets of Augusta, Georgia following his capture at Irwinville in May of 1865. He later wrote of Davis:

He had the pride, the spirit of initiative, the capacity ... which qualify men for leadership, and lacked nothing of the indomitable will and imperious purpose to make his leadership effective...What he did lack was wisdom in dealing with men, willingness to take the judgement of others on critical matters... (and) the instinct which recognizes ability in others and trusts it to the utmost to play its independent part...He sought to control too many things with too feminine a jealousy of any rivalry in authority. ***But his spirit was the life of the Government. His too frequent mistakes were the results as much of the critical perplexities of an impossible task as of weakness of character.*** (emphasis added)  
He moved direct, undaunted by any peril...<sup>91</sup>

All these qualities of Davis' personality were on full display in 1863, as he attempted to deal, as best he could, with the fracturing of his western command. Try as he might, he could not rise above it, as he was an integral portion of it. Thus, he could not look forward to 1864 with the same optimism as he had the year just past. "God Has Granted Us a Happy New Year" had been a fleeting illusion, partly of his own creation.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Stewart Sifakis, *Who Was Who In The Confederacy* (Facts on File, New York, 1988), p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas L. Connelly and Archer Jones, *The Politics Of Command* (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1973) pp. 88-93.

<sup>3</sup> *Who Was Who*, pp. 151, 228; U. S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1890-1901) series I, vol. 4, p. 175. Hereinafter designated as *OR*. All references are to series I unless otherwise noted.

<sup>4</sup> Steven E. Woodworth, *Jefferson Davis and His Generals: The Failure of Confederate Command in the West* (Kansas University Press, Lawrence, 1990) p. 105

<sup>5</sup> *OR*, vol. 17, pt. 2, p. 614; Sifakis, *Who Was Who*, p. 31

<sup>6</sup> Grady McWhiney, *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat* (University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 1991) vol.1, pp. 189-190, 135-140; Ezra J. Warner, *Generals In Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders* (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1987) p. 30; Woodworth, *Davis And His Generals*, p. 93

<sup>7</sup> Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs Of U. S. Grant* (Webster, New York, 1886) vol. 2, pp. 86-87

<sup>8</sup> *OR*, vol. 17, pt. 2, p. 628

<sup>9</sup> *OR*, vol. 17, pt. 2, pp. 654, 658

<sup>10</sup> *OR*, vol. 52, pt. 2, p. 335

<sup>11</sup> Connelly and Jones, *Politics Of Command*, p. 50

- <sup>12</sup> Sifakis, *Who Was Who*, p. 261; Woodworth, *Davis And His Generals*, p. 136; *OR*, vol.16, pt.2, p. 749
- <sup>13</sup> Woodworth, *Davis And His Generals*, pp. 155-159
- <sup>14</sup> *OR*, 17, pt. 2, p. 757
- <sup>15</sup> Sifakis, *Who Was Who*, pp. 151, 73; William C. Davis, *Jefferson Davis: The Man and His Hour* (HarperCollins, New York, 1991) p.359
- <sup>16</sup> Sifakis, *Who Was Who*, p. 151. *OR*, Ser. 4, vol. 1, p. 605
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.611
- <sup>18</sup> Sifakis, *Who Was Who*, p. 151
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304; Craig L. Symonds, "A Fatal Relationship: Davis and Johnston at War", *Jefferson Davis's Generals*, Gabor Boritt, ed. (Oxford University, Oxford, 1999) p. 18
- <sup>20</sup> *OR*, vol. 17, pt. 2, pp. 757-758, Joseph E. Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations* (Indiana University, Bloomington, 1959) p.149
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*; *OR*, vol. 13, pp. 906, 914; Davis, *The Man and His Hour*, pp. 476-478
- <sup>22</sup> Sifakis, *Who Was Who*, p.135; Davis, *The Man and His Hour*, p. 410
- <sup>23</sup> *OR*, vol.17, pt. 2, pp.780, 777
- <sup>24</sup> Sifakis, *Who Was Who*, p. 221; John C. Pemberton, *Pemberton, Defender Of Vicksburg* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1942) p. 53; Davis, *The Man and His Hour*, p. 24
- <sup>25</sup> *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 2, p. 444, & vol. 17, pt. 2, p.786; Davis, *The Man and His Hour*, p. 482
- <sup>26</sup> Johnston, *Narrative*, p. 151; *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 2, p. 493
- <sup>27</sup> Woodworth, *Davis And His Generals*, p. 183; Johnston, *Narrative*, pp. 151, 155; Woodworth, *Davis And His Generals*, p. 184
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 187-188; James L. McDonough, *Stones River-Bloody Winter in Tennessee* (University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville,1982) p. 159
- <sup>29</sup> Stanley F. Horn, *The Army Of Tennessee* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1953) p. 208; *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, p.662
- <sup>30</sup> Lydia L. Crist, Mary S. Dix,, Kenneth H. Williams, eds., *The Papers of Jefferson Davis* (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1997) vol. 9, pp. 10-16
- <sup>31</sup> Crist, Dix , and Williams, eds., *Davis Papers*, vol. 9, p. 19
- <sup>32</sup> *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, p. 699
- <sup>33</sup> *OR*, vol. 23, pt. 2, pp. 613-614
- <sup>34</sup> *OR*, vol. 20, pt. 1, pp. 698-699
- <sup>35</sup> *OR*, vol. 23, pt. 2, p. 632
- <sup>36</sup> Clement Eaton, *Jefferson Davis* (The Free Press, New York, 1977) p. 181
- <sup>37</sup> *OR*, vol. 23, pt. 2, pp. 624, 640
- <sup>38</sup> *OR*, vol. 23, pt. 2, p. 674; McWhiney, *Braxton Bragg*, vol.1, p. 387; *OR*, vol. 23, pt. 2, p.708
- <sup>39</sup> *OR*, vol. 23, pt. 2, p. 745
- <sup>40</sup> *OR*, vol. 24, pt. 3, pp.719, 734
- <sup>41</sup> Woodworth, *Davis And His Generals*, p. 203
- <sup>42</sup> *OR*, vol. 24, pt. 1, p.215
- <sup>43</sup> Mark M. Boatner, *The Civil War Dictionary* (David McKay, New York, 1959) pp. 359-360; *OR*, vol. 23, pt. 2, pp. 839, 841
- <sup>44</sup> *OR*, vol. 24, pt. 1, p. 215
- <sup>45</sup> *OR*, vol. 24, pt. 1, p. 219
- <sup>46</sup> *OR*, vol. 24, pt. 1, p. 224
- <sup>47</sup> Clifford Dowdey and Louis H. Manarin, eds., *The Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee* (Little, Brown, Boston, 1961) p. 482, letter # 438
- <sup>48</sup> *OR*, vol. 24, pt. 1, pp. 226-227
- <sup>49</sup> *OR*, vol. 24, pt. 1, p. 196
- <sup>50</sup> *OR*, vol. 24, pt. 1, p. 227
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>52</sup> *OR*, vol. 24, pt. 1, p. 198
- <sup>53</sup> Johnston, *Narrative*, p. 196. July 4<sup>th</sup> was not celebrated as a holiday again in Vicksburg until 1957, when President Eisenhower came to town on that date.
- <sup>54</sup> *OR*, vol. 24, pt. 1, p. 198
- <sup>55</sup> *OR*, vol. 24, pt. 1, p. 199; Woodworth, *Davis And His Generals*, p.218; *OR*, vol. 24, pt. 1, p. 207
- <sup>56</sup> *OR*, vol. 24, pt. 1, p. 209; Eaton, *Davis*, p.183

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- <sup>57</sup> Davis, *Man and His Hour*, p. 513
- <sup>58</sup> *OR*, vol. 47, pt. 2, p. 1308
- <sup>59</sup> C. Vann Woodward, ed., *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1981) pp. 482-483; Symonds, "A Fatal Relationship", p.23
- <sup>60</sup> *OR*, vol. 23, pt. 1, pp. 585-586; Judith Lee Hallock, *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat* (University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 1991) vol. 2, p. 23; Woodworth, *Davis And His Generals*, p. 226. A note on *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat* – There was a gap of some twenty-two years between the publication of the two works. The author of the second volume was a graduate student for the author of the first. She took on the task of completing McWhiney's history of Bragg's role in the war.
- <sup>61</sup> *OR*, vol. 23, pt. 2, pp. 948, 952-953
- <sup>62</sup> Woodworth, *Davis And His Generals*, pp. 226-228
- <sup>63</sup> *OR*, vol. 30, pt. 4, p. 541; James Longstreet, *From Manassas To Appomattox* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1960) p. 435-437
- <sup>64</sup> *OR*, vol. 30, pt. 2, p. 22; Woodworth, *Davis And His Generals*, p. 230
- <sup>65</sup> Hallock, *Braxton Bragg*, vol. 2, pp. 54-63
- <sup>66</sup> Longstreet, *Manassas To Appomattox*, p. 438; *OR*, vol. 30, pt. 2, pp.26-37
- <sup>67</sup> Woodworth, *Davis And His Generals*, p. 236
- <sup>68</sup> *OR*, vol. 30, pt. 2, p. 35; Hallock, *Braxton Bragg*, vol. 2, p. 78
- <sup>69</sup> *OR*, vol. 30, pt. 4, pp. 705-706
- <sup>70</sup> *OR*, vol. 30, pt. 2, pp. 56, 55. Normally, an officer is "relieved" from command in a case of this sort, but Gen. Bragg specifically used the term "suspended" in Special Orders No. 249.
- <sup>71</sup> *OR*, vol. 52, pt. 2, p. 533; *OR*, vol. 30, pt. 2, p. 55; *OR*, vol. 52, pt. 2, p. 534
- <sup>72</sup> *OR*, vol. 52, pt. 2, p.535
- <sup>73</sup> *OR*, vol. 30, pt. 2, pp. 55, 66
- <sup>74</sup> Pemberton, *Defender Of Vicksburg*, p. 247
- <sup>75</sup> During his visit, Davis reviewed the troops accompanied by Bragg and Pemberton. According to Senator Henry Foote of Tennessee, a bitter Davis rival, when they inspected the army, "(A) murmur rang along the line, and the men pointed at Pemberton, saying, "There goes the traitor that sold Vicksburg." "Proceedings of the First Confederate Congress, Fourth Session", Frank E. Vandiver, ed., *Southern Historical Society Papers* (Kraus, Millwood, 1980) vol. 50, p. 22. All subsequent entries are from volume 50. Hereinafter known as *SHSP*.
- <sup>76</sup> *OR*, vol. 30, pt. 2, p. 68
- <sup>77</sup> Woodworth, *Davis And His Generals*, p. 241
- <sup>78</sup> Davis, *Man and The Hour*, p. 519-520. Curiously, Jefferson Davis does not mention this episode at all in his own memoirs, *Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, written in 1881.
- <sup>79</sup> *OR*, vol.30, pt. 2, pp.68, 70
- <sup>80</sup> Hallock, *Braxton Bragg*, vol. 2, pp. 121-123
- <sup>81</sup> *OR*, vol. 52, pt. 2, pp. 554, 558
- <sup>82</sup> Dowdey and Manarin, eds., *Wartime Papers*, p. 604-5, letter # 559; *OR*, vol. 29, pt. 2, p. 742
- <sup>83</sup> *OR*, vol. 31, pt. 3, pp.650-668
- <sup>84</sup> *OR*, vol. 31, pt. 2, p. 657; pt. 3, p. 686-687; pt. 2, p. 659; pt. 3, p. 685-686; Hallock, *Braxton Bragg*, vol. 2, p. 131
- <sup>85</sup> Woodworth, *Davis And His Generals*, 253; Sam R. Watkins, "CO. AYTCH" (Broadfoot, Wilmington, 1987) pp. 125-126
- <sup>86</sup> *OR*, vol. 31, pt. 2, p. 682; vol. 31, pt. 3, p. 775; Woodworth, *Davis And His Generals*, p. 253
- <sup>87</sup> *OR*, vol. 31, pt. 2, pp. 779-780
- <sup>88</sup> *SHSP*, p.1; Sifakis, *Who Was Who*, pp. 93-94; Davis, *Man and His Hour*, pp. 171-172; Thomas L. Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865* ( Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1971) p. 284; *SHSP*, p. 23
- <sup>89</sup> Edward A. Pollard, *Southern History of the War*, (The Fairfax Press, New York, 1977) p. 636
- <sup>90</sup> Davis, *Man and His Hour*, p. 532; Connelly, *Autumn of Glory*, pp. 282-289
- <sup>91</sup> Elisabeth Cutting, *Jefferson Davis, Political Soldier*, (Dodd, Mead, & Co, New York, 1930) pp.ix, x, citing Woodrow Wilson, *A History of the American People*, (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1918) vol. IV, pp. 310-311.