Planters' Progress: Modernizing Confederate Georgia. *By Chad Morgan.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005. xii + 163 pp. Index, notes, bibliography, tables. Cloth, $55.00. ISBN: 0-813-02872-8.

Reviewed by Joseph P. Reidy

In February 1861, the Confederate States of America took its place on the world stage in a bold attempt to create an independent republic founded on slavery. Although its manufacturing capacity and its rail grid surpassed those of most nations, they were distinctly inferior to those of the United States, which stood poised to challenge the Confederacy's claim to national independence. The start of hostilities in April made clear that establishing nationhood would require self-sufficiency in producing and distributing the implements of war. In comparatively short order, Confederate authorities overcame the uneven legacy of prewar industrial development and commanded both resources and men to remarkable feats of industrial productivity.

Planters' Progress focuses on Georgia, a state firmly planted in both the cotton economy and the manufacturing and transportation networks of the antebellum South. Strategists found Georgia's geographic location deep in the heart of the Confederacy attractive in the quest for industrial self-sufficiency. Chad Morgan takes a long view of the relation between slavery and "modernization," a somewhat hackneyed term that he employs to denote "industrialization, urbanization and . . . the expansion of state power" (p. 119n1). Before the war, he claims, planters did not oppose industrialization so much as they simply took advantage of the ready supply of Northern- and foreign-made manufactured goods. To be sure, they had no desire to permit an upstart class of manufacturers to rival them politically, but such a prospect was remote in any case. With the outbreak of hostilities, planters viewed Confederate-sponsored manufacturing as the way to "regenerate a people enslaved by Yankee moneymen and seduced into depravity by their opulent wares" (p. 33). The planters managed to suppress their traditional aversion to the growth of industry by viewing it as a vehicle for reinforcing, not undermining, their political power.

Morgan claims that planters took some issue with wartime governor Joseph Brown's defiance of Confederate authorities in Richmond. The war "marked a sea change in planter attitudes toward states' rights": Brown's combativeness notwithstanding, "the defense of slavery . . . now demanded the guiding hand of a strong central government" (p. 65). Yet Morgan may overstate this distinction in the sense that planters found ideology—whether statist or antistatist—an unreliable guide through the challenges posed by the war. While they conceded to the Confederate government authority to draft their sons, they resisted demands to impress their slaves. And while they continued to insist on the integrity of the household and the patriarch's responsibility for his family, they accepted skyrocketing state appropriations for poor relief.

Given Morgan's acknowledgment of the planters' willingness to embrace industrialization, he somewhat exaggerates the level of their resistance to the industrial employment of slaves. Although historians have for some time now understood that industrial slavery (including the employment of slaves in skilled positions) did not necessarily threaten the institution, by his account planters insisted that slaves employed in Confederate weapons establishments remain strictly at the bottom of the occupational ladder. To illustrate, he cites the case of a key government armory where, over the last year of the war, between 75 percent and 89 percent of the slaves employed were unskilled. Morgan posits that such arrangements "resembled nothing so much as George Fitzhugh's proposed system of industrial slavery whereby slaves labored at unskilled 'helper' jobs while whites filled more exalted positions" (pp. 81–82).

Not necessarily. The same figures indicate that between 11 percent and 25 percent of the enslaved workforce was skilled, a remarkably high percentage by antebellum standards and one that testifies to the growing scarcity of white craftsmen caused by the Confederate draft and to the ingenuity of the facility's manager in maintaining production. Superintendents of military installations had to pay premium prices for hired slaves and then supplement customary means of compelling labor with incentives such as cash payments for overtime work, gardening privileges, housing for family members, and the like. Although Morgan dismisses "the now threadbare metaphor of negotiation" (p. 89) as an explanation for these arrangements, call it what you will, masters and slaves began interacting in new ways under the gravitational pull of Confederate authorities and

Yankee armies. In the crucible of war, previously unthinkable propositions became public policy—in the United States no less than the Confederate States.

Finally, Morgan relates the Confederate experience in Georgia to the theoretical model that Barrington Moore Jr. described in his classic *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966). Not every reader will agree with Morgan's characterization of the Confederacy as "an inverted Prussian Road" wherein the "planters used the state to bring on industrialization, not vice versa" (pp. 67–68). This formulation leaves unclear what exactly is inverted, which the failure of the Confederacy to achieve independence in the end leaves unresolved. Furthermore, Morgan's claim that wartime industrialization "eliminated what had been the slaveholding regime's Achilles' heel: dependence on the North and foreign countries for finished goods" (p. 47) ignores the fact that Confederate factories contributed inflation rather than consumer goods to the civilian economy.

These caveats suggest an overly schematic rendition of the planters' relationship with the Confederate government, but, that notwithstanding, *Planters' Progress* will appeal to historians interested in the South, the Civil War, and the evolution of central state authority. As Georgia's planters came to realize, in times of war the rights of individual citizens and of local and state governments suffer when the central government takes control of vital resources and productive capabilities. Confederate-sponsored industrialization—even when encouraged by the planter elite—neither led invariably to independence nor forestalled the emergence of political tensions that long survived the end of hostilities.

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