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Chad Morgan. *Planters' Progress: Modernizing Confederate Georgia.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005. xii + 180 pp. $55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8130-2872-9.

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Statists, All!

This slender, elegantly written work is sinewy with the author's informed exploration of industrialization in antebellum and Confederate Georgia. The planter-dominated state of Georgia–no ascendant plain folk here–followed "an inverted Prussian Road" to modernization (p. 68). Inverted because, unlike the landed Junkers who put up their own money to industrialize Germany, Georgia planters preferred to use the state. This is an intriguing blend of economic and intellectual history set before the compelling backdrop of a society hurtling toward secession, war and defeat.

The author ably recounts Georgia's planter-led march to modernity before and during the Civil War with an emphasis on understanding planters' decisions within a theoretical framework. Morgan pays much attention to antebellum writers Henry Hughes and George Fitzhugh, and both their efforts to make "progress" (of the material variety) fit with a worldview committed to the perpetuation of slavery. For the reader, a passing acquaintance with the history of Southern economic development is a plus, but not a must. The author does a good job of providing brief, sturdy historiographical foundations. Indeed, this is one of the several strengths of this altogether well-done work.

Georgia's planters were opportunistic statists. While their representatives voiced *laissez-faire* rhetoric, they carefully used the power of government–along with the people's money–to build Georgia's industrial infrastructure. They chose that route specifically to control the process and keep down the rise of a powerful bourgeoisie with free labor democratic ideals. Thus, they favored not only the generous incentives modeled on those handed out by Northern state governments, but Georgia's decision-makers also embraced state/private partnerships and, eventually, state-owned manufacturing. And, upon secession, when forced to choose between states' rights and independence (with its promise of their continued power), they nimbly sacrificed states' rights to Confederate centralization. Protecting their dominance, their slave-ownership, wedded them to this government-centered approach which Morgan believes would have led to fascism had it succeeded.

Morgan organizes the work into three introductory chapters laying out snapshots of Georgia's weak antebellum industrial development along with a rich chapter on the intellectual origins of the dominant planters' notions of modernization. Four chronological chapters detailing Georgia's Confederate experiment and spectacular failure follow. This lean treatment is undergirded with plenty of evidence from numerous public records from Georgia and the Confederacy along with dozens of collected papers, newspapers and contemporary writings. Additionally, the author has apparently read and put to appropriate use every historian writing on antebellum industrialization.[1]

Georgia's and the South's antebellum writers regularly touted industrialization with the full support of the planter class. According to the author, their antipathy toward Northern society stemmed from their dislike of bourgeois liberal values (free labor, democracy, upward mobility) and fears of being dominated by the North, not an antipathy toward the growth of manufacturing in their midst. "Indeed, planters did not intend to suppress industrial development. But they very much wanted to control it" (p. 17).

A well-known coterie of Southern writers articulated planter interests, none more important than George Fitzhugh in *Sociology for the South* (1854) and *Cannibals, All!* (1857), and Henry Hughes in *Treatise on Sociology* (1854). Morgan finds Virginia's Fitzhugh and Mississippi's Hughes compulsory reading for those seeking to understand the planters' program for progress. Essentially, Morgan believes, these two led the way for Southern elites like Georgia planters to see statism as the only route that could combine slavery and material progress. "Slavery, progress, and *laissez-faire* could not coexist in

the same society. Any one of them could accommodate itself to any one of the others, but not to both" (p. 27). Forced to choose, Georgia's elite (and the South's, Morgan believes), chose progress and slavery over *laissez-faire*. These writers called for greater equality of education among whites and even suggested schemes to distribute token slave ownership more deeply into the ranks of the plain folk in order to strengthen support for the peculiar institution among the white majority. All of these measures were to be dictated by the state, controlled of course by elected officials able to meet stiff property qualifications for office-holding (who could vote mattered less than who could hold office). Neither does the author see Hughes and Fitzhugh as impossible dreamers; if not for Northern victory in the Civil War, Southerners would have created the fully functioning, industrial, slavery-based, materially progressive, dystopia Fitzhugh and Hughes envisioned.

In these pages Morgan also illuminates the apparent connection between secession and industrialization, at least in Georgia. Georgia's infant industries could not hope to compete with the older, bigger, more efficient establishments of the North. But, in a protected independent Southern economy, especially with generous support from government at both the state and Confederate level, Georgia's planter-industrialists thought they saw a boon. Thus, secession became the progressive decision. Those least anxious to industrialize had the least reason to break away from the U.S. economy. "One's approval or disapproval of the region's economic trajectory thus influenced one's stance on secession" (p. 30). Industrialization made rapid by the Civil War was no necessary evil, but instead a long-sought goal by Georgia's planter elite who also had no difficulty in using the power of government both to further and to control that process.

That process Morgan deems a booming success in the short run. Confederate factories built in Atlanta, Augusta and Macon transformed Georgia's villages into cities and turned out more war material than the leadership predicted. Further, the government-owned facilities spurred the "takeoff of private manufacturing," as well (p. 45).

Georgia's rapid wartime industrialization strained the social fabric to the breaking point. Both publicly and privately owned factories scrambled to maintain production while balancing the prejudices of the culture. In place of the Prussian king, racism ruled as the monarch binding planter to plain folk in Georgia. Thus, while they gathered together an unprecedented number of workers, black and white, men and women, the industrialists struggled to emphasize as much racial and gender stratification and separation as possible. Free white men and women and enslaved black men and women all worked (never together) in Georgia's Confederate industries under "reprehensible conditions" (p. 86). Yet, their output effectively supported the Confederate war effort as well as demonstrated how slavery could coexist with industrial development.

"Reprehensible conditions" soon became the norm for much of the Georgia population, whether working in industry or agriculture. Morgan details the efforts of the state government to meet the misery of the new teeming labor and refugee camps with a "bold and ambitious" welfare plan. By the end of 1864, Confederate Georgia spent half of its annual budget on public relief.

Morgan chronicles the speedy and painful end of Georgia's war. Gen. William T. Sherman's army traumatized Georgians and their agriculture but did not destroy Georgia's rising industries. The Union Army had only to lay waste to Atlanta to accomplish the tactical goal of freezing in place the garrisons guarding the other industrial sites; this allowed Sherman to go almost untouched about the business of destroying the supply lines, thus rendering those very factories "superfluous" (p. 107). Consequently, the existing industrial infrastructure in Macon and Augusta survived. More to the point, Morgan argues forcefully "when the Union conquered the Confederacy ... it did not kill off some obsolete and moribund society. It sealed the triumph of one vision of modernity over another" (p. 69). Indeed, the Union Army guaranteed the development of liberal capitalist democracy in Georgia and the South when it "slew the twin demons" of slavery and statism and saved the region from a fascist future. Thanks to Union victory, "in postwar Georgia, *laissez-faire* reigned supreme" (p. 115).

While he acknowledges that Georgia planters were not monolithic in their statist tendencies, it would have been interesting to read more about any such dissenters. Were they too small in number to have had much impact? Also, while this matter may well lie outside his intended scope, this reader would have benefited from some hint of the process by which Confederate Georgia's nascent industrial infrastructure found its way into postwar private hands.

Morgan makes good use of the evidence and has produced a gracefully written and intelligent work. It will be valuable for upper division undergraduate and graduate students as well as specialists in antebellum Georgia, the Civil War, Southern industrialization and Southern intellectual history.

Note

[1]. Most importantly he takes appropriate note of debts to Barrington Moore, Jonathan Weiner, and Mary De Credico. See Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); Jonathan Weiner, *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); and Mary A. De Credico, *Patriotism for Profit: Georgia's Urban Entrepreneurs and the Confederate War Effort* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

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