

**Jefferson Davis speech “To the People of the Confederate States of America in  
Danville,” Va., April 4, 1865**

The General in Chief of our Army has found it necessary to make such movements of the troops as to uncover the capital and thus involve the withdrawal of the Government from the city of Richmond.

It would be unwise, even were it possible, to conceal the great moral as well as material injury to our cause that must result from the occupation of Richmond by the enemy. It is equally unwise and unworthy of us, as patriots engaged in a most sacred cause, to allow our energies to falter, our spirits to grow faint, or our efforts to become relaxed under reverses, however calamitous. While it has been to us a source of national pride that for four years of unequalled warfare we have been able, in close proximity to the center of the enemy's power, to maintain the seat of our chosen Government free from the pollution of his presence; while the memories of the heroic dead who have freely given their lives to its defense must ever remain enshrined in our hearts; while the preservation of the capital, which is usually regarded as the evidency to mankind of separate national existence, was an object very dear to us, it is also true, and should not be forgotten, that the loss which we have suffered is not without compensation. For many months the largest and finest army of the Confederacy, under the command of a leader whose presence inspires equal confidence in the troops and the people, has been greatly trammelled by the necessity of keeping constant watch over the approaches to the capital, and has thus been forced to forego more than one opportunity for promising enterprise. The hopes and confidence of the enemy have been constantly excited by the belief that their possession of Richmond would be the signal for our submission to their rule, and relieve them from the burden of war, as their failing resources admonish them it must be abandoned if not speedily brought to a successful close. It is for us, my countrymen, to show by our bearing under reverses how wretched has been the self-deception of those who have believed us less able to endure misfortune with fortitude than to encounter danger with courage. We have now entered upon a new phase of a struggle the memory of which is to endure for all ages and to shed an increasing luster upon our country.

Discussion Questions:

- 1.) Even though Jefferson Davis alludes to General Robert E. Lee twice in this excerpt, why does Jefferson Davis never mention Lee by name?
- 2.) From this excerpt, does Jefferson Davis agree or disagree with the withdrawal of troops from Richmond? Give evidence supporting your claim.
- 3.) During the whole four years of war, both sides had maintained their capitals and thought it important to do so. (Remember Lincoln's concern for Washington.) Why were the capitals so important? Can you think of any modern day examples of such importance to a cause?
- 4.) Did Jefferson Davis believe the Confederate States of America to be fully separate and that they would remain so? Give support for your answer.
- 5.) Do you believe that Jefferson Davis foresaw that five days after giving this speech, the Confederate Army would be surrendering? Why?