The Diplomatic Mission of Yancey, Rost and Mann: The Inadequacies of Confederate Foreign Policy, 1861

Paul Zingg

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarship.richmond.edu/masters-theses

Part of the American Studies Commons, and the History Commons

Recommended Citation
http://scholarship.richmond.edu/masters-theses/1251

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.
THE DIPLOMATIC MISSION OF YANCEY, ROST AND MANN:
THE INADEQUACIES OF CONFEDERATE FOREIGN POLICY, 1861

BY

PAUL JOSEPH ZINGG

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
IN CANDIDACY
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY

AUGUST 1969

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
VIRGINIA
Approved for the Department of History
and the Graduate School by

__________________________
Director of Thesis

__________________________
Professor of History

__________________________
Professor of History
To

Dolores Lucking Zingg
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. The Challenge of King Cotton</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Three Diplomats in Search of a Mission</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. A European Debut for Southern Diplomacy</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Confederate Propaganda -- A Negative Approach</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. The South Demands Recognition.</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. A Last Hope -- The Trent Affair</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

This short treatise on one aspect of Confederate diplomacy is the result of a pleasant synthesis of interests in United States history. The author's personal interest in American foreign relations and his recent involvement in Civil War studies contributed to the selection of the thesis topic.

The paper is the extension of research originally initiated under the supervision of Professor W. Harrison Daniel, to whom the author wishes to extend appreciation for a current and developing interest in Civil War history.

The author expresses deep appreciation to Assistant Professor Ernest C. Bolt, Jr., who not only has carefully directed the completion of this thesis but who has increased the author's awareness and interest in matters of American Diplomatic History.

Finally, the author commends the patience and assistance of his wife, Carolyn, whose understanding attitude consistently eased the burdens of graduate study.
INTRODUCTION

During the secession movement of January-February, 1861, which culminated in the Montgomery Constitutional Convention, the young Confederate government established well-defined policy objectives for the purpose of securing European allies and material assistance. Basically these aims were three-fold: to secure recognition of the sovereign status of the Confederate States; to induce intervention by the European powers on the side of the Confederacy; and, after April, 1861, to gain a repudiation of the Union blockade from these same powers. Relying predominantly on the coercive power of cotton, the South began its quest for these objectives with diplomatic efforts directed at the leading European commercial nations.

Great Britain immediately became the focal point of the diplomatic ventures. Since Britain stood to be the most affected by any severe interruption of the cotton supply, the Confederates decided that all possible pressures should be put on her to sharpen her awareness of this fact and to lure her to economic
security through alliance with the cotton capital of the world, the Confederate States.

Despite the clear definition of Confederate foreign policy aims, the initial Southern mission to Britain and the Continent revealed the great disparity between diplomatic theory and diplomatic performance. The activities of William Lowndes Yancey, Pierre A. Rost, and Ambrose Dudley Mann, the first Southern envoys to Europe, were constantly suppressed by the inadequate formation and execution of their diplomatic instructions.

It is on this matter of Southern policy formation and implementation that the author assumes disagreement with the heretofore definitive work on Confederate foreign relations, Frank L. Owsley's *King Cotton Diplomacy*. Professor Owsley has written a massive and scholarly contribution to the history of Southern diplomacy. Yet, through his total reliance on the theme of cotton, he has ignored or discarded as irrelevant those factors which would challenge the unanimity of Southern support behind the "cotton famine" policy of Jefferson Davis. As a result, Owsley has entered an explanation for the failure of cotton diplomacy based on the ineptitude of the Confederate envoys and the pressures of external conditions rather than on the basic policy itself.
Through the benefit of subsequent scholarship and the convenient acquisition of primary materials, the author intends to present a more thorough and objective analysis of the Yancey-Rost-Mann mission. Although, as Owsley and others admit, external factors arose to frustrate the Southern overtures, more often than not, the grounds for the failure rested with the Confederates themselves. As the author proposes to demonstrate, the failures of the first Southern mission to Europe originated not with the commissioners, or Union counter-diplomacy, or even in European neutrality, but with the inadequate, restrictive policy upon which the Confederate representatives relied.

During the commission's European appointment, March, 1861, to January, 1862, many of the principal domestic and foreign crises of the Civil War took place. From the capture of Fort Sumter and Lincoln's declaration of a state of internal insurrection to the institution of the Northern blockade, First Manassas, and the Trent affair, the ministers gauged the climate of European opinion in expectation of some favorable commitment to the Confederate cause. Though personally optimistic in the power of cotton and confident in the righteousness of the Southern action, the commissioners operated in a predominantly hostile atmosphere where
their apparent allies were the political opportunists and economic speculators of England and France.

This paper, then, attempts to investigate and evaluate Confederate foreign policy through the Yancey-Rost-Mann mission to Great Britain. The approach is largely chronological, although there is some topical presentation. The basic intent of the study is to examine the foundation and formation of Southern foreign policy, the actual operation and strategy of the Yancey-Rost-Mann mission, and finally, the failures and inadequacies of the policy both in execution and in theory.
CHAPTER I
THE CHALLENGE OF KING COTTON

In the very first line of his standard monograph on the foreign relations of the Confederate States of America, *King Cotton Diplomacy*, Professor Frank L. Owsley states unequivocally that cotton was the foundation of the Confederacy.¹ No truer yet more obvious summation has been made of the basis of Southern social and economic life, and eventually, of Confederate diplomacy. Yet Owsley, through his unfailing devotion to the theme of cotton, would have us believe that there not only was complete unanimity within the South in regard to the power of cotton but also total accord concerning the specific use of cotton to achieve the Confederate diplomatic aims.

By 1861, a universal Southern confidence and

¹Frank L. Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy* (Revised edition, Chicago: 1959), 1. Although the author is in disagreement with Owsley concerning the formation of Confederate foreign policy, he does not intend this paper to be merely a refutation of some aspects of *King Cotton Diplomacy*. In questioning the conclusiveness and reliability of some of Owsley's explanations, the author only intends to demonstrate that there is room for much clarification in certain areas of Confederate diplomacy.
awareness in the power of cotton definitely existed. What did not exist was complete harmony among Southern leaders over the actual employment of cotton as an international allurement. Through his conspicuous omission of evidence concerning the formation of Confederate foreign policy, Owsley would have us falsely accept the existence among the Southern policymakers of a total concordance in regards to both diplomatic tactics and objectives. It is the formation of policy, rather than the basis for the policy, which deserves reconsideration. Before taking up the matter of actual policy formation, however, it is necessary to understand the policy basis -- cotton.

On March 4, 1858, amidst the feverish debates and bitter quarrels in the United States Senate over the Kansas situation and especially over the Lecompton Constitution and its validity, Senator M. B. Hammond of South Carolina challenged the North and the world to adhere to the power of Southern cotton. In ringing tones he accented the strength of Southern cotton and its controlling influence in world economic circles. He concluded by asserting that cotton was too formidable a foe for the North, or anyone. "Cotton is king," spoke Hammond, and "no power on earth dares to make war
upon it."  

The origins of this philosophy, so passionately and confidently spoken by Hammond and echoed throughout the entire South by 1861, go back several decades to the development of slave-state cotton as the primary substance for the looms of the United States, Great Britain and the Continent. This was principally achieved through the occurrence of two events at opposite ends of the globe in the first half of the eighteenth century. In America, the invention and development of the cotton gin resulted in the production and refinement of a brand of cotton far superior and cheaper than any previously used. In India, English investigations in the early 1840's revealed that the Indian soil could not grow the type of outstanding cotton which flourished in the rich southern soils of America. Thus, by 1845, there was almost a complete transfer of the British and Continental cotton industries from the use of Indian and Egyptian cotton.

---


3Although Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin in 1793, refinements brought more efficiency by 1861. The employment of slave labor for agricultural rather than industrial purposes in the South was the natural result of the cotton gin's improvements and potentialities.

4Owsley, King Cotton, 5.
cotton to American, or more specifically, southern cotton. The result was near total reliance of the European cotton interests on the supply of American cotton.

It was in Great Britain, though, where the nation's largest industry depended so completely on a foreign market, that the enormous and serious problems caused by such an adverse economic situation were most clearly demonstrated. By 1860, "about one-fifth of the population of England" -- or as the London Economist estimated, "nearly four than three millions"\(^5\) -- depended, directly or indirectly, upon the cotton industry for its livelihood.\(^6\) Almost eighty per cent of the staple that maintained this huge activity came from the South.\(^7\)

This economic situation created great consternation among many British politicians and economists who anticipated a national calamity in the event of disruption or loss of the American cotton crop. In 1853, the London Economist warned that "any great social or physical convulsion" in the United States would adversely affect all of England. The Economist cautioned that any distress in

\(^5\)London Economist, January 19, 1861, in Owsley, King Cotton, 8-9.


\(^7\)Ibid., 333.
America would force the idleness of hundreds of ships, the closure of thousands of mills, and the starvation of millions of people.  

"The destiny of the world hangs on a thread," exclaimed the London Times; "never did so much depend on a mere flock of down."  

And so it seemed. To the British economic and political alarmists, perhaps unaware of the enormous cotton surplus on hand in Britain in 1861, and unable to foresee the course of events of the impending American Civil War, the Southern fiber was a national life-line. To the Southern leaders, the continuous arguments by the English that Britain's very existence depended upon their cotton were exactly what they wanted to hear.  

These portentous arguments, expressed in commercial journals, daily newspapers, and in the Houses of Parliament and supported by statistics which proved England received from three-fourths to five-sixths her total cotton supply from America, produced a smug satisfaction among the Southern planters. Southerners were proud that the export commerce of the slave states was the richest in the world, that, in fact, for the fiscal year ending on June 30, 1859, exports initiating in the slave states were valued at $188.6 million compared to  

---

8 London Economist, 1853, in Owsley, King Cotton, 11.
9 London Times, June 1, 1861, in Owsley, King Cotton, 11.
$5.3 million for the Northern free states. Southerners were proud, too, that not only England but the United States and the European Continent, although on a much lesser scale than Great Britain, demonstrated a comparable reliance on Southern cotton.

But more important, Southerners were confident -- due to the positive power of cotton -- to demand secession, whether this be achieved peacefully through diplomatic channels or combatively through civil war. As this confidence in the dominance of cotton continued to be bolstered by current articles and political addresses both in England and the South, a growing concept concerning the allegiance of Great Britain to the South in case of an outbreak of civil war in America became increasingly popular. Secessionist Southerners, as exemplified by Hammond, believed that the commercial interests of Europe would demand a peaceful secession with no break in the supply of cotton. A powerful coalition of the forces of Europe would interfere to prove that "the world must have the South's cotton at any price."

---


11 Owsley, King Cotton, 14-15.

12 James M. Callahan, Diplomatic History of the Southern Confederacy, (Baltimore, 1901), 79.

It seemed certain that since Great Britain in particular was "the cotton factory of the world," her economic and commercial interests would require an unhampered flow of cotton from America to her shores. Otherwise she would intervene to restore and insure such a flow. The English satirical magazine, Punch, seemed to phrase the British view:

Though with the North we sympathize
It must not be forgotten
That with the South we've stronger ties
Which are composed of cotton.

Convinced that the commercial powers of the world "could not live without southern cotton," more and more Southern statesmen came out arrogantly in defense of the slave states' trump card -- cotton. Led by David Christy, who first phrased the term "king cotton," Senator Alfred Iverson of Georgia, Major W. B. Chase of Florida, J. D. B. De Bow, the editor of the pro-Southern, pro-slavery De Bow's Review, and Hammond, the South indicated its obsession with the idea of cotton

---

14 Owaley, King Cotton, 10.


16 Owaley, King Cotton, 15.

17 David Christy, Cotton is King; Or Slavery in the Light of Political Economy (Cincinnati, 1855).
power with a thorough repetition and amplification of
the boldest "king cotton" testimonials. 18

"The slave-holding South is now the controlling
power of the world," announced Hammond in the fall of
1860. 19 A few months later Major Chase reported that any
attempted blockade of the Southern ports "would be
swept away" by a vigilant British fleet stationed near
the Southern coasts to insure "the free flow of cotton
to English factories." 20 Senator Iverson informed the
North in his departing speech from the Senate: "Cotton
is king and will find some means to raise your blockade
and disperse your ships." 21 With the merits of "king
cotton" now proclaimed to the world, the Southern
political leaders retired to design an appropriate for­
eign policy which would utilize the strength of cotton
to the fullest.

18E. D. Adams, Great Britain and the American Civil
War (2 vols., New York: 1925), II, Chapter 10 "King Cotton,"
1-32; and Owsley, King Cotton, Chapter 1 "The Foundations

19 E. D. Adams, Trans-Atlantic Historical Solidarity,
66, in Adams, Britain and Civil War, II, 2.

20 Major W. B. Chase, De Bow's Review, New Series Vol. V,
No. 1 (January, 1861), 94-95.

21 Senator Alfred Iverson, "Departing Speech to the
United States Senate," in Callahan, Diplomatic history of
Confederacy, 79.
Meeting in Montgomery, Alabama, in early 1861, the Confederate Provisional Congress and Cabinet officials faced the arduous task of devising an effective and consistent foreign policy. From the myriad diplomatic plans and counter-plans which first circulated through the congressional halls of Montgomery, there emerged by February, 1861, two very definite, yet opposite, policy proposals. United only in their mutual dependence on cotton, the two plans, presented respectively by Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Robert B. Rhett and by President Jefferson Davis, contrasted absolutely on the tactical use of cotton and on the decision to award either the United States or Europe precedence in any initial Confederate diplomatic efforts.

Robert B. Rhett of South Carolina, twenty years a member in the United States Congress, brought to the Confederacy a life of experience in the study of revenue and commercial laws. In the secession convention of South Carolina, November 13 to December 24, 1860, he had discussed a proposed treaty between the European commercial states and the imminent Southern Confederacy. He


based this suggested treaty on the belief that if Great Britain were offered favorable trade inducements, she could be persuaded to recognize Confederate independence.24 Now in the formative months of the Confederacy, Rhett developed a foreign policy based solely on economic overtures to the commercial interests of England and the Continent.

The Rhett scheme was a three-point program to secure recognition through the establishment of both offensive and defensive treaties with the powers of Europe.25 He advocated, primarily, a treaty of commercial alliance between the Confederacy and England and France, for a duration of not less than twenty years and dependent, of course, on their recognition of Southern independence. In addition, the South would impose an import duty, no greater than twenty per cent, ad valorem, on British and French goods; only a basic tonnage duty would be levied, sufficient enough to maintain the Confederate harbors; and the European states would be permitted coasting rights, subject only to the police


25 Rembert W. Patrick, Jefferson Davis and His Cabinet (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: 1944), 77.
regulations of the Southern states themselves. Secondly, the South would impose a discriminatory tariff of ten per cent on all goods of all nations who refused to accept the treaty. Finally, Rhett advocated that the Confederate diplomatic commissioners be empowered, after the manner of Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deans, and Arthur Lee during the Revolutionary War, to form both military and commercial alliances with the European powers and to make guarantees to them concerning their North American possessions. 26

Confederate Secretary of State Robert Toombs, arguing that "ninety per cent of war was business," reiterated Rhett's demand for liberal powers to the Confederate ministers who could negotiate treaties based on a reciprocity of benefits. 27 By no means was the suggestion by Rhett and Toombs for exceptional and compensatory terms of a commercial treaty original. Rather, the Rhett proposal was a "practical confronting of an emergency" based on the proven success of the Revolutionary War pacts. 28 For Rhett and Toombs, then, any economic advantages the Confederacy held through control of the

26 Du Bose, VANCY, 598-599.

27 Flora Millard, "The Foreign Policy of the Confederate States," Confederate Veteran, XXVI (June, 1918), 246.

cotton market could best be exerted through contracts of a commercial nature based on the availability of the noble fiber.

In summary, the Rhett-Toombs plan rested primarily on the practical use of Southern cotton through trade alliances. Rhett would readily make cotton available to the European commercial powers if they accepted the basic Confederate condition to recognize officially the Southern government. Unlike the strategy of President Davis, this first plan offered immediate economic advantages and guarantees. It did not rely on future uncertainties -- European desperation for cotton -- but on present realities -- a mutually favorable trade agreement.

In advocating also an immediate diplomatic mission to Europe, before any preliminary negotiations with the United States, Rhett and Toombs found an additional ally in the Confederate Vice President, Alexander H. Stephens. Although Stephens emphasized the retention of cotton as a purely commercial power more so than the quasi-political status which Rhett and Toombs would give it, he nevertheless favored early negotiations with Europe in preference to the United States.²⁹

²⁹Callahan, Diplomatic History of Confederacy, 86.
Stephens, while questioning the full sincerity of Europe's intentions towards the divided American Union, hesitated to rely on European intervention even with Confederate economic assurances. despite these reservations, though, Stephens bolstered the Rhett-Toombs premise, which, in turn, challenged the policy of President Davis for governmental sanction.

Jefferson Davis, meanwhile, had followed with great interest the debates and discussions among the English political, financial and industrial leaders concerning the contingent dependence of Britain upon Southern cotton. Influenced still further by Christy's Cotton is King and similar publications and arguments on the American side of the Atlantic, "he became a firm believer" in the power of cotton to procure European intervention on the side of the Confederacy in the event of civil war with the North. Convinced that the


31 William L. Yancey, who later headed the first Confederate mission to Europe, similarly supported the arguments of the Rhett-Toombs forces. As we shall see in succeeding chapters, he accepted the responsibility of the diplomatic mission with considerable reservations as to the success it could generate without the liberal powers of negotiation which Rhett sought.

32 Owsley, King Cotton, 15.
mills of England would demand governmental action to insu­
 sure and protect the cotton market from the South, Davis
 proclaimed his "cotton famine" policy as the basis for
 his administration's foreign relations. 33

The "cotton famine" policy rested wholly on the
economic importance of the staple crop. Without offering
any trade alliances, Davis fervently believed that com­
certrial pressures would prostrate a suppliant Europe be­
fore "king cotton." Thus, there was no need to propose
trade agreements contingent on European recognition of
the Confederacy. To Davis and the "king cotton" patrons,
such recognition must come -- and would come -- first
before the cotton became available again to Europe. In
contrast to the Rhett-Toombs scheme, the Davis plan ad­
vocates felt that cotton stored by the government on the
plantations, rather than offered in international markets,
"was the best basis for ... European diplomacy." 34

In addition to basing his diplomacy on the im­
portance of the cotton crop, Davis further relied on the
legality of secession itself. He contended that since the
American republic rested on the common consent of the


34 Frederick S. Daniel, Editor, The Richmond Examiner
during the War, or the Writings of John M. Daniel (New
York, 1868), February 26, 1862, 43.
governed, "it is the right of the people to alter or abolish" that government which in any way becomes "destructive of the ends" for which it was established. In composing the new Confederacy, the sovereign states were merely insuring for themselves those rights which the present Union had violated or curtailed. As an independent entity, the Confederate States were justly entitled to "recognition as a member of the family of nations."36

Writing several years later, Davis revealed more clearly this aspect of his diplomatic views. In his lengthy history of the Confederacy, the former President indicated that a higher code of international morality demanded recognition for the Confederacy. As an independent country, the Southern Union was entitled to such recognition -- the refusal of which Davis termed "unjust" and a breach of "the performance of a duty" which "the conscience of sovereigns" owed to the new state.37

Davis, too, found influential allies for his moralistic "cotton famine" policy. In addition to the ardent


36 Ibid., 76.

"king cotton" advocates already mentioned, the policy gathered support from such Southern leaders as Judah P. Benjamin, future Confederate Secretary of State, and Edmund Rhett, a cousin of Robert Rhett of South Carolina, who declared that because of England's need for cotton "you British must recognize us before the end of October (1861)." Secretary of the Treasury Christopher G. Memminger similarly voiced "cotton famine" sympathies by confidently supporting a complete halt of all cotton shipments to Europe until the anticipated pressure of the famine would necessitate European intervention and recognition to again restore the cotton flow. Memminger's idea of hastening the cotton famine in Europe through a restrictive embargo on the valuable staple was by no means his alone. Throughout the first year of the war, the idea was both a popular one and an enthusiastically pursued one.

The Rhett and Davis plans clashed on the floors of the Provisional Congress meeting in Montgomery in the early

---

38 See pages 11-12.
40 Daniel, Richmond Examiner during the War, 43.
41 On the cotton embargo, discussed as it affected initial diplomatic missions to Europe by the Confederacy, see Chapter V below.
weeks of February, 1861. The commercial treaty resolution defended by Rhett and Toombs was presented to the Congress for consideration with little change from the original draft. In fact, only a suggestion by John Perkins of Louisiana which reduced the stipulation of the trade alliance from twenty to six years was noteworthy.

Despite the practicality and validity of their argument, the Rhett-Toombs forces could not realize the support they needed for adoption of their resolution. President Davis neither appreciated nor accepted the propositions of his Secretary of State and the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations. Relying on a policy which accented the economic importance of the South to the world and on a platform which defended the moral right of secession and consequently demanded recognition, Davis could not compromise with such an adverse position.

42The Journal of the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States of America, unlike the Congressional Globe, is extremely deficient in its treatment of Congressional debates. In the Journal we can only follow the various resolutions concerning foreign affairs and reports of the implementation of these resolutions. Since there was a notable difference of opinion between the Rhett-Toombs faction and the Davis wing concerning the approach to diplomatic relations, we must assume, therefore, that differences were apparent in private sessions and committee meetings. See proceedings of the Provisional Congress in Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America (7 vols., Washington: 1904-1905), 1, 7-158.

43Du Bose, Yancey, 600-601.
plan as the others offered.

In reality, the Davis plan had already been put into operation with the dispatch of three commissioners to the United States before his final rejection of Rhett's scheme. For all practical purposes, he and his fellow "king cotton" patrons had fully committed the South to the "cotton famine" policy. For better or for worse, the Confederacy and a distinctive Southern foreign policy had been joined together to win international recognition and assistance. Although Rhett continued as Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Toombs shortly resigned his post as Secretary of State. In doing so, he fully acknowledged the inoperativeness to which his department was relegated through the administration's acceptance of the "cotton famine" program.  

44 For a further explanation of Toombs' resignation as Secretary of State, see Chapter V, footnote No. 1, below.

45 Patrick, *Davis and his Cabinet*, 86.
CHAPTER II
THREE DIPLOMATS IN SEARCH OF A MISSION

On February 25, 1861, as the first official diplomatic act of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis authorized the appointment of three commissioners to the United States.¹ This action, in direct opposition to the "European-first" suggestions of the abandoned Rhett-Toombs plan, gambled that secession might be peaceably achieved with little or no hindrance on the part of the Federal government. Davis, in an attempt to demonstrate "that a civilized and moderate administration had assumed the reins of the Confederate government,"² pressed on Washington the demand for recognition, which, he contended, the legality of secession ordered.

In his controversial history, The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government, Davis indicated that the moral righteousness of secession would necessitate Union capitulation and eventual European recognition.³ He

¹Richardson, Messages and Papers of Confederacy, I, 55.
²Blumenthal, "Confederate Diplomacy," 156.
³See footnote No. 37, Chapter I, for a complete citation of Davis' Rise and Fall, and a further explanation of the views which he voiced in it.
qualified this statement with examples of the stability and strength of unification which the Confederacy had exhibited to him throughout the four years of the war. However, in February, 1861, there was no independent Southern experience to cite. Rather, the entire argument for secession which the "first envoys of the cotton kingdom" presented was this idealistic conception that secession was not only legally, but also morally, justified. Rhett, Toombs, Stephens, Yancey and others warned that a commission to the United States based solely on the Davis premise could not possibly succeed. Yet, rejecting the practical warnings of his political adversaries, Davis directed Confederate diplomacy along a path which they regarded inept.

Martin J. Crawford, John Forsythe and A. B. Roman arrived in Washington on March 5, 1861, the day after the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln. On "principles of right, justice, equity, and good faith," they petitioned both the President and his Secretary of State, William Henry Seward, for interviews. "With a view to a

4Owsley, _King Cotton_, 51.

5"A Resolution for the Appointment of Commissioners to the Government of the United States of America," February 15, 1861, in Richardson, _Messages and Papers of the Confederacy_, I, 55.
speedy adjustment of all questions growing out of ... (the) political separation," the commissioners anxiously awaited a reply.

On March 15, Secretary Seward, through a State Department memorandum, "respectfully declined" to enter into any negotiations with the Confederate commissioners. He acknowledged to the Southern delegation that he was fully aware of the "events ... and conditions of political affairs" which currently existed between the states of the Union. However, Seward viewed the Southern coalition of states not as a result of a "rightful and accomplished revolution and (hence) an independent nation," but as "a perversion of a temporary and partisan excitement" which he confidently expected soon would be brought to an end. To Forsythe, Crawford and Roman, the Secretary of State admitted "that he has no authority" to recognize their credentials as diplomatic agents from a non-existent and extra-legal foreign state. 7

For nearly a month the three Southern representatives remained in Washington. Although they never met

---


7"Department of State Memorandum, March 15, 1861," in Rowland, Jefferson Davis: Constitutionalist, V, 87-91.
with Seward, they continued to send him notes in which they reiterated the familiar demands and principles for recognition. Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, John A. Campbell, who later served as the Confederate assistant secretary of war, relayed many of these messages to Seward while serving in an unofficial capacity as an intermediary between the two forces. Nevertheless, the Federal position remained as firm and determined to resist the Southern overtures as the Confederacy was to attain her independence. With the outbreak of hostilities at Fort Sumter on the morning of April 12, all preliminary negotiations with the United States ceased and the Confederate commissioners withdrew from their Washington posts.

While the abortive mission to the United States was still in progress, Davis and his foreign policy advisors realized that the Confederate request for recognition and independence would not immediately be forthcoming from the Union. The Crawford-Forsythe-Roman mission, sentenced to failure through inadequacies of both purpose and method, futilely remained in Washington despite their initial rejection. The senselessness of any prolonged

---

stay by these commissioners in the North's capital, so aptly demonstrated by the inability of the mission to even meet with Seward, much less win recognition, demanded that the Confederacy redirect its diplomacy to seek from the states of Europe that recognition and support which the northern states of America firmly and unequivocally withheld.

In accordance with the nomination of Davis, on March 16, 1861, Confederate Secretary of State Robert M. T. Toombs appointed the initial Southern diplomatic mission to the major states of Europe. To William L. Yancey of Alabama, Ambrose Dudley Mann of Virginia, and Pierre A. Rost of Louisiana, he entrusted the Confederate hopes for immediate European recognition and assistance.

---

9Pickett Papers, Toombs to Yancey, Rost and Mann, March 16, 1861. The principal primary source used in the research for this paper was the Official Records of the Diplomatic Correspondence of the Confederate States of America. These papers, located in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., consist of a number of portfolios which catalogue, according to country, the various correspondence of the Southern diplomatic agents. The bulk of this collection, and the sections with which this study is particularly concerned, are the Pickett Papers. These papers contain most of the diplomatic correspondence of the European commissioners, and until additional manuscripts were added to the collection, served as the official source for all Confederate foreign relations records. Since the Pickett Papers were used extensively in the research for this paper, they shall be referred to specifically rather than to the entire Official Records collection in future citations.
Born in 1814, William Lowndes Yancey, the youngest of the three appointees, was certainly the best known member of the commission. Through his years in the Alabama and United States Congresses, Yancey gradually and totally changed from a unionist Congressional sympathizer to a staunch states rights orator. 10 By the time of the Democratic presidential convention in Charleston, South Carolina, during the winter and spring of 1860, Yancey took the lead in open avowance of the right of secession and the concept of Southern solidarity. Demanding Federal protection to slavery in the territories, Yancey ardently called for the secession of Southern members from the convention if their terms were denied. 11 He assumed the reins of secessionist leadership in this convention and became the chief manager for the movement in the months ahead.

As an eloquent and influential speaker, a man who "had no equal in the South," 12 Yancey could hardly be dismissed from consideration as one of the leaders who


12 Ibid., 155.
would direct the new Confederacy. Yet his "unguarded eloquence and chronic dissatisfaction with the existing regime"\textsuperscript{13} made Yancey as much a threat to the new order of government as an aid. He consistently urged the reopening of the slave trade, and although the Confederate government shared his states rights and pro-slavery sentiments, the militancy of his arguments prevented any full endorsement of acceptance of them.

Like Khett and Toombs, Yancey expected nothing of consequence from the mission to Washington which could justify the delay in establishing diplomatic relations with the commercial powers of Europe.\textsuperscript{14} In addition, he firmly believed that any commissioners to Europe should be empowered to negotiate commercial treaties. Yet in defining very narrowly the direction and scope of Confederate diplomacy, Yancey at first neither expected nor desired appointment to the mission.

Just why Yancey, an aspirant to the presidency of the Confederate States, accepted the mission to Europe is a minor mystery. The fact that he accepted the commission without the instructions or powers which he admittedly esteemed essential to the success of the delegation only

\textsuperscript{13}Burton J. Hendrick, \textit{Statesmen of the Lost Cause} (New York, 1939), 141.

\textsuperscript{14}Du Bose, \textit{Yancey}, 596.
deepens the mystery. His biographer, John Witherspoon Du Bose, comments inadequately on this problem. To Du Bose, Yancey consented to the mission "with characteristic valor" out of mere patriotism to the Confederate cause.15 Du Bose further announces that his overpowering personal zeal to defend to the utmost the principle of secession moved Yancey to consent "to his own sacrifice."16

It seems Du Bose has entered an explanation based on convenience rather than actuality. Granted, Yancey was an influential Southern personality, but he was an individual who did nothing "that placed him above the average patriot of the day."17 More than one historian has concluded that Yancey's radicalism -- radical even beyond the slavocracy outcries of the Southern gentry -- could not be tolerated in the high places of Confederate government.18 In eulogizing slavery and advocating a


16Du Bose, "Yancey in History."


18In addition to Rainwater, Anthony Dillard (see footnote No. 11) and Burton Hendrick (see footnote No. 13) voiced similar skepticism as to the super-patriotism of Yancey. Frank Owsley and E. D. Adams further joined these historians in substantiating Yancey's undesirability in the South on account of his radical sentiments.
complete destruction of the Union and the Constitution, Yancey was a Southern extremist of the first rank. He not only suggested a re-opening of the African slave trade, but also insisted that enough black men should be imported "to provide every Southerner, rich and poor, city dweller to hillbilly, with at least one slave." Such drastic proposals, though approved by the minority Southern fire-eaters, did not fit the image of democratic righteousness which the Confederacy attempted to project. The mission to Europe offered Yancey's political opponents an ideal opportunity to rid the South of his dangerous oratory.

Yancey, too, thwarted in his presidential aspirations, must surely have realized the senselessness to remain in the South with any hopes of regaining his pre-secession influence. Although he outwardly voiced reluctance against the mission, his acute understanding of the internal political situation of the South must surely have overridden his objections to the mechanics of the commission. Thus, as the head of a diplomatic corps which based its arguments on the debatable importance of the cotton crop, Yancey found it expedient to compromise personal conviction with political reality. When Rhett

\footnote{Hendrick, Statesmen of Lost Cause, 140.}
heard that Yancey’s diplomacy would be based on the just-
ice of the cause and cotton, he warned the commissioner:
"Sir, you have no business in Europe." But with no
business in the Confederate States either, Yancey grudg-
ingly accepted the responsibility of the mission -- a
mission which dubiously extolled his patriotism, but
which definitely demonstrated his pragmatism.

Ambrose Dudley Mann, a native of Virginia, was
the only experienced diplomat among the trio. For
several years he served inconspicuously as a minister to
the German states while stationed at Bremen. He nego-
tiated some minor commercial treaties with Hungary (1849)
and Switzerland (1850) before being recalled to the
United States. His final position in service to the
Federal government was as Assistant Secretary of State
to William L. Marcy from 1853-1856.21

Adept in trade and commercial matters, Mann
drew popular Southern attention to himself, when, in 1858,
he advocated the adoption of a direct steamship line from
Southern ports to Europe.22 His pro-Southern and states
rights sentiments drew endorsement from Yancey, Hammond,

20Du Bose, Yancey, 600.
21Callahan, Diplomatic History of Confederacy, 85.
De Bow and others. By the time of the secessionist movement, his suggestions to eliminate Southern vassalage to Northern industry and commerce had already been translated into action and Mann was a logical Confederate foreign diplomat.

But experience, shabby though it was, and pro-Southern sympathies do not necessarily make a diplomat. Mann clearly demonstrated this. Robert Bunch, British Consul at Charleston, sarcastically reported that Mann, "the son of a bankrupt grocer," held a reputation which was "not good." Yet, his reputation was only suspect by the very fact that it was based upon an indifferent career and a flamboyant personality.

There doesn't seem to be any grounds for a popular movement to rid the Confederacy of Mann as there was with Yancey. Logically, his record as a foreign service representative indicated some basis for his appointment. As an individual, Owsley characterizes him as a man who "seemed to have stepped out of the pages of a book." Full of bombastic phrases and sophomoric sentiments, Mann was a diplomatic Polonius,

---

24 Adams, Britain and Civil War, I, 63.
25 Owsley, King Cotton, 52.
capable of doing his government harm in every situation. His credulity and lack of perspective tinged all of his diplomatic correspondence. Yet aside from these glaring inadequacies, Mann possessed a certain social charm which enabled him to penetrate inner circles and to establish contacts among influential people. 26

The South could not have chosen a more inadequate candidate to complete the commission than the third appointee, Pierre A. Rost. 27 Born in France, Rost moved to Louisiana in 1816. He served briefly in the Mississippi legislature in 1826. At the time of his diplomatic appointment, he held a judgeship in the Supreme Court of Louisiana. 28 Relatively obscure throughout the South, and with no previous diplomatic experience, Rost seems to owe his commission to his contacts with Judah P. Benjamin, later Confederate Secretary of

27 In criticizing the appointments of Yancey, Rost and Mann, the author does not intend so much as to suggest better candidates, as he does to indicate the poor selectivity of these three men in particular. Later diplomatic assignments of the Confederacy -- James Mason to England, John Slidell to France, Colonel John Pickett to Mexico, and Henry Hotze as commercial agent to Europe -- indicated that the South did have available competent individuals who could satisfactorily assume a foreign service position. But in appointing these more qualified men after the initial diplomatic failures, the Confederacy unwittingly operated in Cana-like fashion from which nothing short of a miracle could have achieved success.

28 Callahan, *Diplomatic History of Confederacy*, 85.
Secretary of State, and President Davis.

As a native-born Frenchman, Rost purported to have a thorough knowledge of the foreign language, and this, no doubt, contributed to his otherwise negligible diplomatic skills. Yet, his knowledge of French seems to have been just as negligible. Paul Du Bellet, a displaced Southerner who remained in Paris throughout the war, reported that Rost's broken French was a source of constant ridicule and embarrassment to him. Questioning the decision of Davis to send such a dubious character on such an important mission, Du Bellet asked: "Has the South no sons capable of representing our country?" 29

It is not too difficult to echo Du Bellet's query and to expand it to include the entire commission. Although they were not, as Owsley describes, "the poorest choices possible," 30 they were far from the best. All three were extreme pro-slavery advocates and eager secessionists. To send such men to the major European capitals flaunted the Old World's anti-slavery sentimentality. Moreover, the selection of Rost, a nouveau riche expatriate, "rather offended than pleased


30 Owsley, King Cotton, 51.
French officials. Yet into the hands of these three inappropriate selections the Confederate State Department entrusted a policy equally unrealistic and inconsistent with the demands of international politics.

In the same communication in which the appointment was made, Toombs outlined the State Department's instructions to the ministers. For the most part, these instructions reflected the policy and approach which Davis ordered. These same instructions, inadequate as they were inflexible, continued as the main Confederate policy for the duration of the war. Because of their persistent use, and despite their negligible success, it is necessary now to evaluate and understand them.

Toombs outlined very specifically the direction and argument for the Confederate mission. The commissioners

31 Hendrick, Statemen of Lost Cause, 140.
32 Pickett Papers, Toombs to Yancey, Rost and Mann, March 16, 1861. The following paragraphs, pages 36 to 40 are based on the instructions of Toombs to the commissioners.

33 The major deviation from the direction of Confederate diplomacy as initiated by the Yancey-Rost-Mann mission occurred in the closing months of the war with the establishment of the Kenner Mission. Offered in March, 1865, the Kenner plan was a direct proposal on the part of the Confederate State Department to abolish slavery in return for English acknowledgment of the South's independence. The plan had been designed by Judah P. Benjamin and indicated by its proposed terms the last futility and desperation of the Confederate position.
were instructed to visit Great Britain, France, Russia and Belgium and to announce to these countries that the Confederate States had "severed their connections with the United States" and had formed an independent government, "endowed with every attribute of sovereignty and powers necessary to entitle them to assume a place among the nations of the world." After listing several of their grievances against the United States which prompted the Confederate action,34 Toombs ordered the ministers to ask for the admission of the Confederacy into the "family of independent nations" and to obtain "that acknowledgment and friendly recognition which are due to every people capable of self-government and ... the power to maintain their independence." Toombs further cited that Davis and the Southern citizenry confidently expected "the enlightened Government of Great Britain" to quickly accept Confederate independence and extend diplomatic recognition.

After -- and only after -- the attainment of recognition, Yancey, Rost and Mann were further instructed to

34 Toombs contended that since 1828, the industrial Northern states had compelled the South to "pay bounties" to them through the imposition of a high protective tariff. Through this annual "extortion," the Secretary claimed that serious attempts were made to overthrow the prosperity, social system, and self-rule of the Southern states. He stressed that these grievances were not immediate or hastily construed ones, but had been built up for decades.
negotiate treaties of friendship, commerce and navigation with England. It is important to stress this aspect of their instructions. Nowhere were the commissioners empowered to negotiate treaties of any nature unless the requirement of formal recognition had been obtained. Thus, the edge of Confederate initiative was completely removed. These instructions placed the fate of the mission solely in the diplomatic decisions of Great Britain rather than on the diplomatic efforts of the Confederate agents.

In keeping with the principles of a policy based predominantly on the potential coercive power of cotton, Toombs ordered the commissioners to convince England of the advantages of an alliance with the cotton capital. He advised the diplomats to remind Great Britain of her dependency on "king cotton" and of "the condition to which the British realm would be reduced" if the cotton supply should suddenly diminish or cease.35 In addition, the Secretary of State announced, with one major reservation, that all existing treaties between the United States and England would continue in effect with the

35 As shown below, this instruction by Toombs to constantly remind the British of their precarious economic situation gradually antagonized the British statesmen. If the English economic system was in jeopardy, Englishmen hardly needed, or endured, consistent reminders to this effect from the Southern diplomats.
government of the Confederate States.

The single exception was the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, which, in addition to settling the northeastern boundary between Maine and New Brunswick, provided for a United States naval force off the coast of Africa to suppress the African slave trade. Toombs reported, that although Confederacy already "prohibited the slave trade" and intended "in good faith to prevent it" in the South, his government could not comply with this obligation. Toombs failed to elaborate the Confederate position of non-compliance with the Webster-Ashburton Treaty; but, then again, how does one explain moral propriety on the one hand with social injustice on the other?

Besides the standard passports and letters of introduction to the foreign affairs ministers of the various target nations, the commissioners carried with them a complete set of the laws of the United States, a copy of Wheaton's *International Law*, and a $1,000.00 a month salary. Any additional expenses -- postage, newspapers, entertainment fees, stationery -- must be absorbed by the diplomats themselves. Since a secondary function of the mission was to report on "the policy and views of the Government" to which the ministers were assigned, the failure by the Confederate State Department to grant the
commissioners compensation for their regular correspondent efforts demonstrated both an incompetent allotment of funds and confidence in a speedy diplomatic success.

With no creditable diplomatic experience behind them, with no expense account to subsidize them, and with no realistic policies to guide them, Yancey, Most and Mann departed for Europe. They carried with them the hopes and expectations of a secessionist coalition of Southern states. They would shortly find that the "enlightened" European states, which Toombs alluded to, dealt not in popular emotionalism but rather in political opportunism.
CHAPTER III
A EUROPEAN DEBUT FOR SOUTHERN DIPLOMACY

Having received their instructions and credentials, the three commissioners immediately set out for Europe. Yancey and Rost, traveling together, arrived in London on April 29.¹ Mann, who had taken a different route by way of Washington, reached England on May 15.² The Confederates were greeted in London by William H. Gregory, a Conservative-Liberal active member of Parliament and one of the most ardent champions of the South, who, with a host of other prominent Englishmen, comprised the influential Southern lobby.³

This pro-Confederate lobby of native English propagandists contributed valuable assistance to the Southern diplomats throughout the entire war effort. Through their influence on the Liberal government and in

¹Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 1, Yancey, Rost and Mann to Toombs, May 21, 1861.


³Adams, Britain and the Civil War, I, 90-91.
Parliament, through their efforts to mobilize public opinion for the Confederacy, and through their persuasiveness in private industry, the lobbyists assured the Confederacy that segments of the British population voiced pro-Southern sympathies. More often than not, Yancey, Rost and Mann, by associating almost exclusively with the British aristocracy that comprised the lobby, tended to exaggerate the lobbyists' overly optimistic reports. As a result of such misleading and tainted information from their British contacts, the commissioners often relayed delusive information to the Confederate capital.

It is the duty of a valuable diplomat, though, to sift and evaluate the information he receives and to draw objective conclusions from it. Through the restrictive nature of their contacts and the tendency of the Southern ministers to grasp any loose straws of encouragement, this first mission to Europe established defective precedents. This poor reportorial ability of the Southern diplomats, begun with Yancey, Rost, and Mann, continued to plague and mislead the Confederate government throughout the war years. Yet the blame for these operational failures of the mission rests as much with the commissioners themselves as it does with the Confederate State Department which accredited such inexperienced and emotionally-guided individuals.
In addition to Gregory, James M. Spence, William S. Lindsay, Alexander J. Beresford-Hope, Lord Robert Montague and others contributed their time and efforts to the Southern cause. Although they expounded the virtues of the South, an idealistic belief in the righteousness of the Confederate fight for independence was not the sole motive of these British sympathizers. Many, like Lindsay and the Laird brothers, prominent English ship-builders, were certainly affected as much by economic opportunity through cotton speculation and trade advantages as by an idealistic temperament. Others, like Eustace and Robert Cecil, Seymour Fitzgerald and Lord Campbell, saw in the American Civil War the chance to evince long pent-up hostilities against the United States. In any event, the prospect of a vast free trade market in the Confederacy, the dissolution

---

4Owsley, *King Cotton*, 62. In addition to the several lobbyists who are listed throughout the body of the paper, other influential Englishmen who contributed substantially to the Confederate cause were: Justice Haliburton, Sir E. C. Kerrison, J. T. Hopwood, G. M. W. Peacocke, W. Vansittart, W. E. Duncombe, Sir James Fergusson and James Whiteside, all Conservatives; and Frederick Peel, Secretary to the Treasury. In the House of Lords, Lord Wharncliffe, a great mine-owner, the Earl of Donoughmore, and the Marquess of Lothian were the most ardent men who comprised the Confederate lobby, see: Donaldson Jordan and Edwin J. Pratt, *Europe and the American Civil War* (New York, 1931), 89-91.

5Owsley, *King Cotton*, 62, 172.
of the high tariffs of the Union, and the potential benefit to British manufacturers and shippers from the defeat of their Northern competitors induced the upper class commercial powers of Britain to favor the South.

Until the arrival of Henry Hotze, a prominent Southern newspaperman who assumed the direction of the Confederate propaganda program in Europe in November, 1861, the Southern lobbyists delivered their appeals for Confederate support through letters to the leading English newspapers, speeches, and a limited number of topical books and pamphlets. Hotze, shortly after his arrival in Great Britain, established The Index, the pro-Southern paper which became the official mouth-piece of the Confederate lobby. But more important for the moment than these nationwide appeals to the

---


7 The most effective propaganda work by a member of the Southern lobby was Spence's *American Union*. In this book, Spence outlined the basic differences between the North and the South and argued convincingly for the sovereignty of the American states and their constitutional right to secede. *England, the North and the South* by Beresford-Hope and *A Mirror in America* by Lord Montague both contained bitter attacks on the North and voiced arguments for the recognition of Southern independence. In addition to these monographs, several pamphlets, among them *The American Question in a Nutshell* by Hugo Reid and *England and the Disrupted States of America* by Thomas C. Gratten, similarly voiced pro-Southern sentiments. For a more thorough listing of the propaganda writings by the Southern lobby in England, see: Owsley, *King Cotton*, "The Native Propagandists," 171-179.
English people was the work of the lobbyists to assure
debate on the American crisis in Parliament and to secure
for the Confederate commissioners interviews with
Lord John Russell, the British Foreign Secretary. On
May 3, 1861, principally through the efforts of Gregory,
the first vital meeting between the Southern delegation
and Russell took place.

The initial conference with Russell was a strictly
informal affair at which the Confederate ministers
neither presented their credentials nor officially
stated their purpose, but merely participated in "an
informal interchange of views upon American affairs." Russell informed the envoys that "it would give him
pleasure" to hear exactly what they had to communicate,
yet "under present circumstances," he would have little
to say. Under these discouraging terms, Yancey and
Houst proceeded to elaborate the Confederate position as
outlined in their instructions.

8 Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 1, Yancey, Houst and Mann
to Toombs, May 21, 1861. Some diplomatic correspondence
in the Pickett Papers, Library of Congress, has been pub-
lished in Volume 3, Series 11 of the thirty-one volume
Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in
the War of the Rebellion (Washington, D.C.: 1922). This
series, however, has appeared in only one printing and
was initially selective of the materials in the Pickett
Papers. Primary reliance herein is upon the original
manuscript collection. The Official Records are useful
for supplementary guidance and comparative purposes.

9 Ibid.
The commissioners stressed the legality of secession in their presentation to Russell. They placed particular emphasis on the democratic principles of self-government which demanded and directed the formation of the Confederate States. In conclusion, the Southern agents noted "the ability of the Confederacy to defend their position" and the elements of permanency and the potentialities of commercial success imbued in the Southern people. In all this the Confederates reported that Russell "manifested much interest." He concluded the interview with an indication that the matter of Southern recognition would soon be brought up for Cabinet consultation.10

All in all, it was an unobtrusive effort to stress the constitutional rights which had prompted secession and to suggest the service to world peace and the benefits to English economy which an immediate recognition of the Confederate States would achieve. Although the dispatch of Yancey, Hoot, and Mann to the State Department concerning the interview indicated that the atmosphere was congenial and the Secretary was amicable, the whole tone of the letter reflected an optimism which had

10Rickett Papers, Dispatch No. 1, Yancey, Hoot and Mann to Toombs, May 21, 1861.
little basis. The general result of the confrontation was that Russell listened, but definitely refused to commit himself to any guarantees of recognition. The commission was forced, not by consent but by the inadequacies of their instructions, to play a waiting game with the British. Thus the Confederate policy limitations against any initiatives by the ministers -- limitations which Rhett, Toombs and Yancey warned against months earlier -- appeared in the early operations of the mission. Although the ministers implied that they were content to wait on British action, in reality they had no other choice.

During the first weeks of the Confederate delegation's stay in England, "British foreign policy was rapidly matured and announced."11 Basically, Russell proposed a recognition of the belligerency of the Confederate States to be proclaimed in a joint resolution with France. Working for the most part without the interference and to a large extent without the knowledge of the Southern representatives, the British Foreign Office announced the Neutrality Proclamation on May 13, 1861.12

11 Adams, Britain and the Civil War, I, 87.
12 Owsley, King Cotton, 58.
The British position indicated primarily the desire on the part of the English commercial interests to avoid a maritime war. By recognizing Confederate belligerency, England assured a continuation of her commerce with the Southern states by granting to the Confederate merchant marine the same privileges in neutral ports which the Federal ships enjoyed. Though hardly recognizing Confederate independence, the Neutrality proclamation temporarily elevated the status of the Confederacy to a plane comparable in international law to that of the United States. The united British and French stand indicated quite unequivocally, though, that any recognition of independence would be dictated by future events. Nevertheless, a proclamation in favor of Confederate belligerency seemed to be a definite step in the progression to formal recognition in the minds of the Southern envoys. It is again important to note, however, that the British decision occurred through no influence by Yancey, Rost and Mann, whose presence in England must already have seemed somewhat superfluous.

As British policy developed in the first two weeks of May, 1861, the Confederate commissioners pressed

---

Russell for a second interview. On May 9, the ministers met with the Foreign Secretary.¹⁴ Little did they realize that already the operations of Union counter-diplomacy were at work which would make this second interview with Russell the last personal encounter between the Yancey-Rost-Mann mission and the British Foreign Office.

The primary reason for this second meeting was to relay to Russell information which the Southerners had recently received in two dispatches from Toombs. A short letter, dated April 2, informed the commissioners that the Confederate constitution had been ratified by seven states and put into effect.¹⁵ Three weeks later, however, they received Dispatch No. 2 from Toombs which announced the beginning of hostilities between the North and the South and which contained supplementary instructions for the ministers.¹⁶ The Secretary of State relayed details of the taking of Fort Sumter and of the consequences of that event, which included Lincoln's proclamation of a state of insurrection and the mobilization of

¹⁴Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 2, Yancey, Rost and Mann to Toombs, June 1, 1861.

¹⁵Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 1, Toombs to Yancey, Rost and Mann, April 4, 1861.

¹⁶Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 2, Toombs to Yancey, Rost and Mann, April 24, 1861.
Union troops. Toombs instructed the ministers "to assure all powers" that the Confederacy would take all precautions in the ensuing conflict to insure the rights of commerce to all neutral powers. Since Toombs' dispatch contained glowing reports of new states -- Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Missouri -- which "manifested a determination" to resist the "unprovoked policy of aggression" of the government of Washington, it hardly comes as a surprise that he ordered the diplomats to read the entire dispatch to the ministers of foreign affairs to which they were accredited.

To the information in Toombs' letter the commissioners reported that Russell "manifested considerable interest." The Foreign Secretary assured Yancey and Rost that the British government was anxious to communicate with the governments of Washington and Montgomery over the matters of the blockade, neutral rights and the shipments of neutral goods in enemies' ships. Yet, as before, Russell declined to offer any guarantees concerning the recognition of Confederate independence. He merely reiterated his earlier statements that the matter of recognition would be considered by the British Cabinet, and that no pledges, one way or the other, could presently be given.17

17Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 2, Yancey, Rost and Mann to Toombs, June 1, 1861.
Russell's position prompted the commissioners to report "that the British Cabinet here have no settled policy as to the recognition of our Government." Rather, the Confederate observed, England will continue to postpone a decision of recognition until "some decided advantage" is gained by the Confederate States, or until "the necessity for having cotton becomes pressing." They concluded that despite governmental inaction public journals and opinion "have been growing more favorable to our cause." Yet, for the second time in a week, the commissioners failed to evoke any assurances from Russell beyond the cursory guarantees to respect the rights of a belligerent. Russell listened to the Confederate plea "with all the polite attention and rigid reserve" which characterized the English statesmen of that era. To not the slightest degree did he commit his government.

After the interviews with Lord Russell, Pierre Kost repaired to Paris where he obtained an interview

18Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 2, Yancey, Kost and Mann to Toombs, June 1, 1861.
19Ibid.
20Ibid.
21Hendrick, Statesmen of Lost Cause, 143.
with Count de Morny, the half-brother and intimate advisor to Emperor Napoleon III.\textsuperscript{22} Rost found that the various French political parties prevented a firm commitment of the Emperor's government beyond the staid guarantees of the British. He reported that the Imperialists were "not averse to see a division of the United States," but that the Red Republicans and the Orleanists saw in the Union's dissolution the elimination of a naval counterpoise to that of Great Britain.\textsuperscript{23} Despite this very definite opposition by two of France's leading political factions against the Southern secession, Rost concluded that "the opinions of the French people and of the government ... are considered to be quite favorable to our cause."\textsuperscript{24}

It seems that Rost, in discovering no immediate unfriendliness on the part of the Emperor towards the Confederacy, expanded the attitude of the monarch to completely reflect the sentiments of the nation. In so doing, the commissioner again abandoned the quality of objectivity so necessary to his mission. Hardly a month had passed since the Southern diplomats arrived in Europe.

\textsuperscript{22}Du Bose, \textit{Yancey}, 605.

\textsuperscript{23}Rickett Papers, Dispatch No. 2, Yancey, Rost and Mann to Toombs, June 1, 1861.

\textsuperscript{24}\textit{Ibid.}
Yet in that short time, through the limited establishment of contacts with individuals who avowedly professed strong sentiments for the South, and through the bombastic generalization of attitudes which could at best be described as sympathetic, the agents erroneously created the image of a compassionate Europe which only awaited some sign of Southern stability before its full endorsement and support of Confederate independence.

The final scene in the Confederates' first act in Europe was played out in the House of Commons. On June 7, Gregory introduced a motion that the independence of the Confederate States be recognized by England.25 Yet, pressured by Russell and the commercial parties of Manchester, Liverpool, and other industrial centers which feared an immediate alienation with the United States, the motion was promptly withdrawn.26

The Confederate commissioners noted "that the consideration of the motion gave rise to debate in which great acerbity would be manifested." Such debate would tend to form opposing parties, which, in turn, would prevent the British government "from acting impartially when the proper moment for action should arise." As to

25 Pickett Papers, Yancey, Root and Mann to Toombs, June 10, 1861.
26 Ibid.
just when the "proper moment" should occur, the Southern diplomats agreed that England would decide that for herself when either the Union or the Confederacy "shall prove strongest." In the meantime, the envoys noted that both England and France would pursue the same policy of observing strict neutrality until the South demonstrated "sufficient consistency" in its internal affairs to justify recognition.27

During the two meetings of the Confederate commissioners with Russell and the first Parliamentary debate over recognition, United States counter-diplomacy, under the direction of Secretary of State Seward, swung into action. On May 13, the day the joint British and French Neutrality Proclamation was issued, Seward's new appointee as Ambassador to Great Britain, Charles Francis Adams, arrived in London.28 Scarcely one week later, on May 21, Seward dispatched his diplomatic instructions to the minister.29

Basically, these instructions reflected the

27Pickett Papers, Yancey, Rost and Mann to Toombs, June 10, 1861.


29Ibid., 52.
indignation endured on the part of the United States government through the reception -- however informal -- of the Confederate commissioners by Great Britain. In his notorious Dispatch No. 10, which Lincoln drastically modified on account of the original harshness of tone and explicitness of content, Seward ordered Adams to protest vehemently to the British government for their premature actions and declarations.30 Since, Seward reasoned, the unofficial meetings between the British Foreign Office and the Southern envoys were "useless and meaningless," they should immediately be discontinued. If not, the Secretary of State instructed Adams to "desist from all intercourse, unofficial as well as official," with the British government.31

Despite Lincoln's amendments to the dispatch, Seward's communication came dangerously close to being an ultimatum. In the hands of a lesser diplomat, they could easily have been construed as such. Since they threatened the total severance of diplomatic relations, the instructions required a clever and tactful presentation. It is to the lasting credit of Adams that he was

30Hendrick, Lincoln's War Cabinet (Boston, 1946), 195-196.

31Department of State, Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States: Papers relating to Foreign Affairs, 1861-1862 (Washington, D.C.: 1862), Seward to Adams, June 21, 1861, 90-96.
able to deliver these instructions with directness without provoking Britain into another Anglo-American conflict.

Adams presented his instructions to Russell in a most thorough and courteous fashion, which "completely disarmed the Foreign Secretary." Russell replied that there was nothing unprecedented in receiving such envoys unofficially, as it served to provide desired information in a most satisfactory and convenient way. Concerning the Confederate delegation, Russell admitted that he had already met with them twice, though on informal terms, and that "he had no intention of seeing them any more." Although not a positive pledge, the statement of Russell's intentions served Adams with a major diplomatic triumph. He succeeded in thoroughly frustrating the Confederates' attempts to continue direct negotiations with the English Foreign Office, and, as such, successfully removed another opportunity for Southern initiative.

The first efforts by the Confederate envoys to achieve an immediate and enthusiastic recognition of


33 Department of State, Diplomatic Correspondence, Adams to Seward, June 14, 1861, 104.

34 Ibid.
independence had failed. Despite the guarded optimism of the Southern lobby and the buoyant naivete' of the Confederate ministers themselves, hostile factors were quickly arising to frustrate Confederate diplomacy. The uncommitted aloofness of Russell, the unsatisfactory debates in Parliament, and the effective counter-diplomacy of Adams developed to thwart and contain the initial Confederate labors. As the summer months approached, the commissioners contented themselves with spreading Southern propaganda and laying plans for their next concerted effort to win recognition.
CHAPTER IV

CONFEDERATE PROPAGANDA -- A NEGATIVE APPROACH

Through June and July of 1861, the Confederate commissioners concentrated their propaganda efforts in repudiating the effectiveness, and hence, legality of the Union blockade, and in arousing public sentiment against the anticipated cotton famine. Since they had been excluded from any further interviews with Russell on account of the effective diplomacy of Seward and Adams, they sought a circulation of their views through personal contacts with various political leaders, newspaper reporters and editors.

Mann soon reported that he had held two favorable interviews with Paul J. Reuter, the head of the Reuter Telegraph and News Agency of London.¹ In acknowledging Reuter's virtual control of the telegraph lines in London and the news services to the Continent, Mann indicated the enormous benefit to the Confederacy if an agreement could be reached whereby news would be transmitted directly from the South to Britain.² Previously, war news from

¹Owsley, King Cotton, 62.
²Kickett Papers, Mann to Toombs, August 3, 1861.
the United States to Europe came through formal communications agencies and their dispatches from New York or Boston harbor. Since these two northern cities were currently bastions of strength in the Union camp, the news that left these ports was obviously tinted to reflect Northern sentiments.

The commissioner informed Toombs that Reuter "is not only willing but anxious to furnish his correspondents ... with the latest intelligence from both sides." Mann further reported that he and Reuter had agreed upon a plan for delivering the news, in code, to a neutral party in Ireland who would then forward the entire communication to both the Reuter agency and the Confederate commissioners. Such a plan if put into operation, noted Mann, could effectively counteract the preponderance of propaganda which is "furnished in the North for dissimination on this side of the Atlantic."

Despite the Confederate government's failure to employ the specific recommendations of Commissioner Mann, his, Yancey's, and Hest's sporadic admissions that the Southern propaganda program suffered from lack of exposure

---

3 Pickett Papers, Mann to Toombs, August 3, 1861.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
prompted later improvements along these lines. As already noted, with the appointment of Henry Hotze in November, 1861, Confederate propaganda entered a more organized, influential, and financially stable period. The inability of the diplomatic mission of Yancey, Rost, and Mann to effectively establish a formal information agency in Europe demonstrated the short-sightedness of the Confederate effort. Subsequent Southern labors in Europe attempted to overcome this inadequacy. Under Hotze, De Leon, and others, the propaganda work begun by the first envoys of the cotton kingdom and the native Southern lobbyists developed into a cohesive system which sought to counteract the Northern publicity campaigns.

The approach to propaganda activities which the initial Confederate commission assumed was a curious blend of inconsistency and inaction. On one hand, as the Mann dispatch indicates, the ministers pressed for a more active and persuasive propaganda policy. Yet, in reality, the course they actually pursued reflected the patterns of quiescence which their instructions, British policy, and Union diplomacy produced.

In their second dispatch to Toombs, the Southern envoys reported that the obstreperous attempts by the Unionist advocates to influence public opinion had met

---

6 See Chapter III, pages 44-45.
with little success. Rather, "the effect has been most decidedly to injure that cause and to incite British antagonism." Since the commissioners noted that this unfavorable reaction "has been so definitely the case," they informed the State Department that they would profit more from a policy of reserve than from one of temerity. Desiring that the publicity errors of the North should "have full effect on the public mind," the Confederates themselves declined from any active public movements so as not to divert attention from the Union propagandists. As to the success of their approach, the envoys expressed satisfaction that their course of action "has met with eminent success."

It is indeed difficult to see the "eminent success" which the current Confederate propaganda program generated. It is even harder to imagine a continuation of this policy of limited publicity with any hopes of gathering support. Yet, in the following weeks, the

---

7 Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 2, Yancey, Kost and Mann to Toombs, July 15, 1861.

8 Ibis.

9 Ibid.

10 Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 3, Yancey and Mann to Toombs, July 15, 1861.

11 Ibid.
Confederate commissioners reported that the irritable tactics of the Northern sympathizers had not only brought Britain to the point where a significant Southern military victory could instigate recognition, but also that the anti-slavery sentiment, which existed predominantly in England at the outset of the war, had dissipated to a negligible factor. At least in the eyes of the ministers, the negative propaganda of the South portended a diplomatic triumph.

What appears to be a paradoxical situation -- reports of increasing Confederate popular support despite an acknowledged paucity of Southern propaganda effort -- represents in reality a case which conforms quite easily to the patterns already established by the commission. The Confederates, as in their dealings with Russell, were less content to follow this propaganda approach as they were restricted to it. Their own inabilities and their State Department's inadequate provisions for an active propaganda agency certainly serve as more plausible explanations for the Confederate actions than the casual dismissal of the necessity of such an agency.

---

12 Rickett Papers, Yancey and Host to Toombs, June 10, 1861; Dispatch No. 3, Yancey and Mann to Toombs, July 15, 1861.

13 Rickett Papers, Dispatch No. 4, Yancey and Mann to Toombs, August 1, 1861.
by the envoys themselves. Likewise, the optimistic statements in the commission's dispatches exemplify the ministers' habit of grabbing at loose straws of encouragement. The commissioners transformed the patient non-committal attitudes of England and France into a glowing favoritism towards and endorsement of Southern secession. In advocating restraint, where there were no means for activity, and in affirming support, where there only existed the practicality of European politics, the commissioners created an illusion of contentment within their diplomatic confinement.

Although the commissioners pretended satisfaction in their restrictive communications with Russell and with their limited publicity efforts in England, they still continued active negotiations with high governmental officials in France. In mid-July, Rost obtained an interview with Edoard Thouvenal, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs. In familiar terms, Thouvenal assured Rost that France desired to see peace re-established in America, and, that for the duration of the war, she would maintain a strict neutrality.

14 Callahan, Diplomatic History of Confederacy, 119.

15 Rickett Papers, Dispatch No. 3, Yancey and Mann to Toombs, July 15, 1861.
Yancey soon followed Rost to Paris. Although he did not meet formally with either Thouvenal or De Morney, he nevertheless formed strong opinions as to the French position. In particular, Yancey felt that Napoleon regarded the French affairs in Europe "to be of more importance" than her relations with America. As such, the commissioner reasoned that France would gladly leave any decision for Confederate recognition "in the hands of the British Cabinet," and that France would continue to abide by the current English policy. Yancey further reported that "reliable sources" from Spain, Belgium and Denmark assured the Confederates that their governments entertained "the most friendly feeling" towards the Southern states.16 As with France, though, these nations would only recognize Confederate independence when Great Britain determined to do so.

Nearly four months after the appointment of their mission, the Southern delegates found that the original target for their diplomacy -- Great Britain -- remained more than ever the focal point for any European diplomatic decisions. France, Spain, Belgium and Denmark all indicated a certain sympathy towards the Confederate cause; yet, they also refused to grant formal recognition

16 Rickett Papers, Dispatch No. 3, Yancey and Mann to Toombs, July 15, 1861.
without England's lead. After July, 1861, all three commissioners returned to London, where, for the duration of their appointment, they directed their efforts exclusively towards the British Foreign Office.

Reunited in England, the Confederates intensified their attack against the legality of the Union blockade. Through services of the Southern lobby, they managed to create substantial agitation in Parliament over two delicate points in the blockade matter. In the first place, the commissioners contended that the blockade was in violation of the 1856 Declaration of Paris. This Declaration, adopted by a European congress meeting in Paris after the Crimean War, stated that blockades, in order to be binding, must be proven effective. More specifically, a legal blockade must be maintained by forces sufficient enough "to prevent access to the coast of the enemy." Through statistics of successful blockade violations from the State Department and private sources, the diplomats readily supplied Gregory, Lindsay, and other leading lobbyists with evidence for their arguments.

17 Owsley, *King Cotton*, 62.


Concerning the Paris pact, the Confederates only argued one side of the issue. Although they persisted in condemning the Federal blockade, they conveniently ignored another aspect of the Declaration -- that which outlawed privateering. Secretary of State Seward, however, did not. He instructed Adams to enter into negotiations with England to seek a convention of mutual accidence to the document. 20 The negotiations failed to elicit an agreement between the United States and Britain, though, when Russell declared that, in recognizing the belligerent status of the Confederacy, he had elevated the rank of their naval vessels from illegal privateers to legitimate warships. 21 The Foreign Secretary contended that as long as the Union and Great Britain conflicted over the status of the struggle in America, there would always exist the possibility of accusations of bad faith and of violations of the convention. 22 Despite the failure of these negotiations, the inclination of the United States to accede to the very pact which the Confederates claimed they violated substantially lessened the significance of the Southern contentions.

21 Adams, Britain and the Civil War, I, 144-145.
22 Ibid., 145
Secondly, the Southern State Department and the commissioners felt that the blockade "exposed the United States to the charge of contradictory diplomacy."\(^{23}\) The United States treated the Confederacy as nothing more than rebellious subjects, yet the very existence of the blockade seemed to violate this approach. Since the Union "could hardly proclaim a blockade without declaring itself a belligerent,"\(^ {24}\) it appeared to the Southerners that the United States had inadvertently accorded the Confederate States, too, at least the informal ranking of a belligerent.

Despite the Confederate accusations, the British Ministry continued to maintain the policy of neutrality which had been declared on May 13.\(^ {25}\) In recognizing the legality of the blockade in this declaration, the British policymakers perhaps overestimated the naval capabilities of the Union to effectively blockade a coast of over three thousand miles.\(^ {26}\) Nevertheless, whether in exaggeration of American naval power or in ignorance of the geography of the Confederate coast,

\(^{23}\) Millard, "Foreign Policy of Confederate States," 244.


\(^{25}\) See Chapter III, page 47.

\(^{26}\) Adams, _Britain and the Civil War_, I, 95.
Britain acted in a conservative, sensible, and realistic manner. Similarly, English acknowledgment of Southern belligerency, though an action far short of initial Confederate expectations, reflected the pragmatism and realism of European politics. England's consistent position was to view events patiently and to evaluate situations fully before making any total commitments.

In their dispatches to Richmond, the ministers indicated a partial, yet confused, understanding of this pragmatic quality in European politics. More than once, they informed Toombs of their confidence in a forthcoming British and French recognition of the Confederacy, contingent upon the proven stability of the South as demonstrated through the military success of the Southern armies. In late May, they reported that favorable actions concerning recognition would be forthcoming from the major European powers "upon the

27 On May 21, 1861, the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States voted to move the capital of the Confederacy from Montgomery, Alabama, to Richmond, Virginia. The move was quickly completed so that by the beginning of June, 1861, the Executive Departments were actively operating in their new seat. Davis listed as reasons for the move the fact that the Union military efforts seemed to be directed against Virginia, and "from no point could the necessary measures for her defense and protection be so efficiently protected as from her own capital." Davis, "Message to the Congress of the Confederate States," July 20, 1861, in Richardson, Messages and Papers of Confederacy, I, 117.
first decided success which we may obtain."\(^{28}\) On July 15, they wrote that "as soon as a favorable military event is officially announced" they would immediately demand official recognition of the Confederate government.\(^ {29}\) Again, two weeks later, they announced that the question of recognition rested solely upon "military events in Virginia."\(^ {30}\) On July 21, 1861, the military event in Virginia which the commissioners alluded to occurred on the fields of Bull Run, and jubilation over this Confederate victory set the stage for the final climactic act of the Yancey-Rost-Mann mission.

\(^ {28}\) Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 1, Yancey, Rost and Mann to Toombs, May 21, 1861.

\(^ {29}\) Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 3, Yancey and Mann to Toombs, July 15, 1861.

\(^ {30}\) Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 4, Yancey and Mann to Toombs, August 1, 1861.
CHAPTER V

THE SOUTH DEMANDS RECOGNITION

On July 29, 1861, Robert M. T. Hunter, who had recently replaced Toombs as the Confederate Secretary of State, informed the commissioners of the "glorious victory" of the Southern armies over the Union forces at Manassas, Virginia. Hunter enthusiastically reported that the United States "was completely routed, with a loss of 15,000 in killed, wounded, or missing" out of an attacking force estimated at 60,000 men. Furthermore, the Confederate forces, under the command of Generals Pierre G. T. Bueregard and Joseph E. Johnston, had captured all the artillery, ammunition and provisions of the enemy, "together with 2,500 prisoners, several regimental standards, and a flag of the

1Toombs resigned his post as Secretary of State on July 21, 1861. Disgruntled from the beginning with Davis' foreign policy, Toombs chose retirement from the President's Cabinet after the initial ventures of Confederate diplomacy had realized no success. His replacement, Hunter, was a close acquaintance of Davis, and, in fact, had been Virginia's favorite son candidate for the Presidency of the Confederate States. Since Davis had recently moved the capital to Virginia, the appointment of Hunter was seen as an attempt to "recognize" Virginia in the Cabinet. Hendrick, Statesmen of Lost Cause, 151, 185.
Embellishing his account with numerous references to the complete defeat of "the picked corps of the Regular Army of the United States," Hunter emphasized "the universal joy" of the people of the Confederacy at the decisive victory. The Secretary reported revitalization of the Southern spirit in a "renewed courage and valor." He announced that the victory "has removed the fears of the timid" and that it has proven beyond a doubt "that the Confederate States can and will maintain their independence and successfully resist the efforts of the United States ... to compel them ... to a political union with the North."  

Before this dispatch reached the commissioners, however, New York and London papers had announced the striking news. William H. Russell, sent to America as war correspondent for the London Times, reported the results of the battle in descriptions so uncomplimentary to the Union that Britishers of both pro and anti-Southern leanings regarded "the Northern effort as doomed to failure."  

---

2Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 7, Hunter to Yancey, Rost and Mann, July 29, 1861.

3Ibid.

4Owsley, King Cotton, 64.

5Adams, Britain and the Civil War, I, 177-178.
Encouraged by William Russell's accounts of a half-crazed and disheveled mob which had retreated in panic to Washington before the guns of the Confederate armies, the commissioners decided that the time was ripe for some definitive action. In an earlier dispatch to the State Department, the Southerners had expressed their intent to present a formal demand for recognition upon the first official reports of a Southern military triumph. The victory at Bull Run and the subsequent strengthening of the Southern position in London demanded that the envoys abandon their complacency and assume some initiative.

The report of the victory at Bull Run seemed also to have arrived at a most salutary time for the good of the commission itself. Within the commission seeds of discontent from previous failures to achieve a creditable diplomatic success had divided the ministers over certain procedural matters. In debating on a course of action to be followed in the event that the British Government still refused to receive them officially and to recognize Confederate independence, the envoys found themselves at odds with each other.

---

6See Chapter IV, page 69. Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 3, Yancey and Mann to Toombs, July 15, 1861.

7Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 5, Yancey, Rost and Mann to Hunter, August 5, 1861.
advised to "refrain from urging a decision" from Great Britain "until a change of opinion is effected."8 Yancey, either in awareness of the mechanics of British policy or in acknowledgment of the failure of the mission, suggested that the envoys resign their posts in London and "proceed to other Governments and make the same demand or ask for a recall."9 Locked in this impasse, the commissioners had referred the matter to Richmond for settlement when the news of Bull Run arrived. Thus, the Confederate victory at Manassas fortuitously served to sustain the unity of spirit within the commission as it focused attention again on a singular objective.

In the same letter to Hunter which revealed the open dissension among the commissioners, the diplomats expounded on another area of discontent which affected the mission as a whole. The envoys deeply resented the thorough snubbing, both socially and officially, they had received from the British Ministry. They reported that they had "not received the least notice or attention ... from any member of the Government since ... (their) arrival in England." Although they graciously announced that

8 Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 5, Yancey, Rost and Mann to Hunter, August 5, 1861.
9 Ibid.
this fact was mentioned "in no spirit of complaint," they nevertheless advised President Davis to consider such British actions "in weighing the conduct of this Government toward the Confederate States." With the Southern victory at Bull Run, though, there seemed to be no reason to doubt that the policy of uncivility would soon be reversed.

In order to capitalize on the emotionalism of the moment, the commissioners immediately dispatched a note to Russell urgently requesting a formal interview. The Foreign Secretary, having repaired to one of his country residences, delayed his reply for several days. When it arrived, however, it substantially erased the optimistic spirit which had engulfed the envoys since the initial reports of First Manassas. Addressed from his country estate, Pembroke Lodge, the rejoinder neither bore an official letterhead nor identified Earl Russell in any manner distinct from that of a private citizen. Redundant in informality, "the almost studied insult"

---

10Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 5, Yancey, Rost and Mann to Hunter, August 5, 1861.


12Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 5, Yancey, Rost and Mann to Hunter, August 5, 1861.
of the reply certainly injured the Confederates' pride.\footnote{Henarick, \textit{Statesmen of Lost Cause}, 151.}

More than the format of the letter, Russell's curt reply fully demonstrated the British resolve to develop a policy devoid of futile pressures of Confederate diplomacy. "Earl Russell presents his compliments," wrote the Foreign Secretary, "and would be obliged to them (commissioners) if they would put in writing any communications they wish to make to him."\footnote{\textit{Pickett Papers}, Russell to Yancey, Rost and Mann, August 7, 1861.} Nothing more. In this brief exchange, Russell virtually solidified his earlier promises to Adams to refrain from any interviews with the Southern agents.\footnote{See Chapter III, page 56.} He completely disarmed the Confederate representatives, and, once again, frustrated their initiative.

Their plan of action restricted to only one possible course, the commissioners gathered in London to prepare the formal demand for recognition. On August 14, 1861, they presented to Russell the latest declaration of the alleged right of the Confederacy to recognition from the British government.\footnote{\textit{Pickett Papers}, Yancey, Rost and Mann to Russell, August 14, 1861. The following paragraphs, pages 76 to 83 are based on this demand for recognition which the commissioners delivered to Russell.} As such, it fully marked the
apex of their mission in Europe, and has since prompted Yancey's biographer, John W. Du Bose, to comment that "upon the reasoning of this document, and its facts, the cause of the Confederate States will stand at the bar of history."17

The commissioners began their communication to Russell by reviewing the arguments for recognition which they had previously presented to him in the informal interviews of May 3 and 9. In urging the legality of secession as the spontaneous right of state sovereignty, they recalled for Russell the proofs of population, productivity and area of the Confederate States which they had formerly used to prove that they represented neither pirates nor rebels. The envoys then proceeded to elaborate on the necessity of the agricultural South to resort to privateering. The delegates defended the Confederate issuance of letters of marque for privateering purposes as "legitimate objects and means of warfare." However, despite the Southern right to defend her independence through this contractual mode of warfare, the diplomats charged that English laws of neutrality, which forbade "the entry of the public and private armed vessels of either party into British ports with prizes," operated

17*Life of Yancey*, 609.
to the "practical protection" of United States commerce and to the detriment of Confederate naval operations.

The commissioners continued with an unobtrusive explanation of their government's initial decision to offer requests rather than demands for recognition, while the proofs for the legitimacy of such action were being demonstrated in America. The commissioners then entered into a lengthy description of the power of the Confederate States. They stressed that Lincoln's "aggressive policy" and "military despotism" had already caused the states of Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Arkansas "to secede from the late Union" and join the Confederacy. Likewise, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, "agitated by the throes of revolution," were shortly expected to follow suit. The Southern agents further reported that in Illinois and several other states, "public assemblies and ... legislatures have condemned the war as subversive to the Constitution." "Striking evidences of ... increased strength," termed the Confederates -- or, more accurately, striking evidences of increased exaggeration!

Concerning the progress of the war, the Southerners dismissed as "grossly erroneous" the charges that the slaveholding states could not sustain a prolonged conflict with the North. Already, they reported, the
Southern forces had prevented the recapture by the Union of any single fortification and had restricted the advance of the Union armies to a mere five miles. Southern forces had captured "a mighty fortress on the Atlantic" (Fort Sumter) and had taken several forts along the western frontier. Furthermore, the agents dismissed the Union blockade as completely ineffectual, except on the Chesapeake, and reported that Southern ships have sailed "out of every other port at which the attempt has been made." To further substantiate their arguments, the diplomats included an anotated extract from the United States census of 1850 which favorably compared the agricultural and manufacturing productivity of the slave-holding and free states.

The letter to Russell is particularly significant for it contains the first formal defense by the commissioners of the slavery system. Previously, the Confederates had only extended guarded and subtle references to the peculiar institution. Now they openly combatted the anti-slavery sentiment of the English government in a passionate, yet evasive, plea.

They indicated, in the first place, their awareness that the British anti-slavery sentiment had prevented

---

18See Chapter II, footnote No. 32. Pickett Papers, Toombs to Yancey, Rost and Mann, March 16, 1861.
the formation of friendly relations with the Confederate government. However, they contended that the system was not uniquely Southern, but in fact, had been established by the "authors of the Declaration of the Independence" -- Englishmen. "Those great and good men" succeeded in putting into operation a plan of government which rested "upon the great and recognized distinction between the white and black man." As to the wisdom of that course, the commissioners refused to pass judgment.

Moreover, the agents argued that the United States had prosecuted war for the sole purpose of maintaining the Constitution and preserving the Union. "It was from no fear that the slaves would be liberated that secession took place." The envoys stressed that "the very party in power has prepared to guarantee slavery forever in the States if the South would remain in the Union." Thus, the anti-slavery elements in Britain, reasoned the diplomats, "can have no sympathy with the North ... (who) with a canting hypocrisy ... would enlist those sympathies on false pretenses."

Returning to the military operations of the war, they reminded Russell of "the great battle of Bull Run," where "the Federalists were defeated and driven from the field in open flight." The envoys reported that the Confederacy had recently mounted offensives of their
own. These operations, noted the commissioners, are so successful that the government in Washington has resigned itself solely to the defense of its capital and the preservation of "the remnant of its defeated and disorganized forces."

The final matter which the commissioners discussed in their definitive defense of the Confederate position concerned the cotton crop. They reminded the Foreign Secretary that the "cotton-picking season had already commenced" in the South. As an inducement to British commercial interests to break the blockade, the diplomats announced that the cotton would not only be prohibited from Southern wharves and ports until the blockade shall be raised, but that an embargo has been placed on the cotton for the ostensive purpose of preventing its shipment inland through the United States.19 In order

19 The cotton embargo plan, proposing to compel Britain to seek cotton on Southern shores and to prevent the United States from obtaining any quantities of the staple crop, was a natural extension of the Davis "cotton famine" policy. Carried to its extreme, the embargo attempted to hasten the anticipated cotton famine in Europe through willful destruction of vast stores of cotton and through legislation preventing cultivation of the fiber. This controversial amendment to the original Davis plan further alienated the foreign policy factions. Yancey, faced with the dilemma of defending a policy which he definitely opposed, yielded to the optimistic spirit of the moment -- a concession which the continuance of his appointment dictated. See Daniel, The Richmond Examiner During the War, 43, for a summary of views on the embargo by leaders of the Davis and Rhett-Toombs factions.
to obtain cotton, the agents stated that "it must be sought for in the Atlantic and Gulf ports" of the Southern states by vessels of the British merchant marine.

Yancey, Rost and Mann completed their communication to Russell with an intensive appeal that the British government extend de facto recognition to the Confederate States. They expressed incredulity in that recognition had not already been granted. Yet, they displayed confidence that Russell, having realized the necessity for the establishment of commercial relations, would "take into consideration" their arguments and immediately grant a formal acknowledgment of Confederate sovereignty.

In its entirety, the Yancey-Rost-Mann demand for recognition, although the most definitive diplomatic announcement of the Confederacy, relied wholly on the already familiar arguments for recognition. In summary fashion, the diplomats recounted the principles for secession, the evidences of stability, and the rights to recognition which had long characterized the Southern case. Yet, in its thoroughness, the letter elaborated on certain postulates which merit further comment.

In particular, the Confederate invitation to
the British to willingly violate the legally instituted blockade of the United States clearly courted a declaration of war between the two powers. It was an invitation wholly based on the basic contentions of "king cotton" philosophy. The Confederates gambled that the promise of vast stores of cotton on the Southern shores, and the pressures of an anticipated cotton famine in England would surely motivate the British to procure the staple. Although their alternative solutions indicated only a partial understanding of the factors which prevented British acquiescence to the Southern plan, Rhett, Toombs, and Yancey had recognized and forewarned the fallacy of the gamble.

On the matter of the blockade, the commissioners presented a confusing and contradictory picture. On one hand, they argued that the blockade only enjoyed success on the Chesapeake and was everywhere else as much non-existent as ineffective. Yet, they curiously reported that the Confederacy would continue to withhold its cotton until the blockade was proven inoperative. It seems the commissioners either placed an extravagant value on the commercial worth of the Chesapeake or neglected to disclose the full effectiveness and scope of the blockade. In view of the other egregious statements within their presentation, the contentious blockade accounts reflect
more than anything the desperation of the Confederate agents to employ bombastic -- almost ludicrous -- arguments to salvage a diplomatic victory.

The commissioners did not have to wait long for Russell's reply. On August 24, in a note addressed to the representatives of the "so-styled Confederate States of North America," he curtly acknowledged their communication. He firmly reiterated the British intention to strictly adhere to its declared policy of neutrality. The British government, Russell explained, "cannot undertake to determine by anticipation what may be the issue of the contest." Furthermore, the Foreign Secretary unequivocally declared that a British recognition of Confederate independence would not be forthcoming until "the fortune of arms or the more peaceful mode of negotiation" should better determine the respective positions of the two belligerents.20

There can be no doubt as to the disheartening and defeatist reception of Russell's letter by both the ministers and the State Department as revealed in the immediate consequences of the event. On August 24, the very day on which Russell had replied to the Confederate

20Tieckett Papers, Russell to Yancey, Host and Mann, August 24, 1861.
agents, Hunter instructed them to proceed to Madrid where they were to present their case before Spain and ask for recognition.\textsuperscript{21} Obviously, the communications systems of the mid-nineteenth century prevented such an immediate response to the commissioners' rejection. Rather, Hunter's dispatch definitely indicated that the decision to redirect the Confederate diplomatic operations in Europe had already been made before the formal demand for recognition. Russell's reply only substantiated this decision.

In early September, Yancey, disgusted by the British Ministry, the new instructions, and his strained relationship with Rost and Mann, intimated his desire to resign from the commission.\textsuperscript{22} Ironically, like almost every other aspect of the Confederate mission to Europe, even this decision was not left for Yancey to determine. On September 23, Hunter informed the commissioners that the President, with Congressional approval, had decided to disband the commission.\textsuperscript{23}

It seems that Davis had finally realized that

\textsuperscript{21}Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 9, Hunter to Yancey, Rost and Mann, August 24, 1861.

\textsuperscript{22}Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 10, Hunter to Yancey, September 23, 1861.

\textsuperscript{23}Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 11, Hunter to Mann, September 23, 1861.
the wait for recognition would be a little longer than originally anticipated. The dispatch to Mann revealed that, in acknowledgment of this diplomatic fact of life, permanent, resident, Confederate representatives in major European capitals would replace the roving ambassadorship of the Yancey-Host-Mann commission. Mann, himself, was instructed to assume the diplomatic position in Belgium, while the other commissioners, until the arrival of James M. Mason in England and John Slidell in France, would continue to function in a reportive and advisory capacity.24

From October to December, 1861, the commissioners occupied themselves in excursions between London and Paris in attempts to gauge popular and governmental attitudes. Yet, what appeared to be an insignificant and purely routine end to their mission shortly transformed into a period of signal enthusiasm and optimism. The moralistic case for Confederate recognition had repeatedly failed to evoke any encouraging response from Britain. But on November 8, 1861, all idealistic and abstract arguments were forgotten in the very real and flagrant violation of British neutral rights with the capture of the English steamship, Trent, by naval forces of the United States.

24 Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 11, Hunter to Mann, September 23, 1861.
CHAPTER VI

A LAST HOPE -- THE TRENT AFFAIR

The routinism which characterized the activities of the commissioners in the period between the initial notice of their mission's dissolution and the formal release from their duties was abruptly shattered with the news of the Trent affair. Mason and Slidell, the Confederate commissioners appointed to replace the Yancey-Rost-Mann mission, had boarded the British merchant vessel, Trent, in Havana, and were proceeding on their voyage to London. On November 8, 1861, the Trent was hailed and boarded in the Bahama Channel near Havana by United States naval forces under the command of Captain John Wilkes of the Union gunboat, San Jacinto. Wilkes ordered the Confederate diplomats forcibly removed from the decks of the Trent and placed under arrest.¹ Scarcely two weeks later the news of the incident reached England and ignited the most vociferous reaction against United States war

¹This brief summary of events surrounding the seizure of the Trent is taken from the personal account of the incident by James M. Mason. See, Mason, "Account of the Trent Experience," in Virginia Mason, editor, The Public Life and Diplomatic Correspondence of James M. Mason with Some Personal History by his Daughter (Roanoke, Va.: 1905), 208-254.
policies in the entire conflict.

The general resentment at the Union action focused on two points: freedom of the seas for neutrals and the right to grant asylum. Concerning these two issues, the unofficial reaction of the English press and governmental officials was one of righteous indignation. The event provided thereafter a willing audience for propaganda tactics of Southern lobbyists. Yet, Southern sympathizers hardly had to circulate passionate condemnations of the seizure, for the mere factual reports of the incident created its own propaganda bonanza.

The British press immediately commenced editorial attacks on the Northern action. Led by strong leadership of the London Times, Buck's Herald, and Punch, English columnists censured the North as representatives of "insolence and defiance of almost every diplomatic conventionality." They pictured Seward as a "reckless adventurer," who, with Lincoln, would compel Britain to relinquish her neutrality, "and by that means bring on a European war." Likewise, British private citizens joined in a critical chorus against the seizure. Even so staunch an advocate of the Union cause as Henry Sidgewick exclaimed:

---

2Jordan, Europe and the Civil War, 29-31.

3Ibid., 29.
"If Seward wants a war with England, he must have it." Prominent British citizens Matthew Arnold, Sir George Cornewall Lewis, and Sir John Acton similarly voiced indignation at the American challenge to British rights as a neutral. Henry Adams, son of the United States ambassador to Great Britain, warned of prevalent British sentiments in a letter from London: "This nation means war. Do not doubt it." When the Trent finally arrived in England, it carried not only news of the capture but also the papers and instructions which the Confederate State Department had delivered to Mason and Slidell. These were promptly forwarded to Yancey, Rost and Mann in London. The Southern envoys had already delivered to the British government "a solemn remonstrance against the outrage perpetrated by the United States" when these papers arrived. Now, supplied with fresh instructions and information, although all the material had originally been intended for the use of Mason and Slidell, the commissioners sent a

---

4 Jordan, Europe and the Civil War, 29.
5 Bailey, Diplomatic History of American People, 329.
6 Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 10, Yancey, Rost and Mann to Hunter, December 2, 1861.
7 Ibid.
second note of protest to Russell. 8

The dispatched delivered by the Trent contained, in particular, statistical accounts of successful blockade violations from April 29 to August 20. This information constituted the bulk of the diplomats' communication. They insisted that the blockade was merely a "paper" one, as clearly demonstrated by the fact that "more than four hundred vessels have arrived and departed unmolested." As such, the Union blockade definitely violated criteria for blockades established in the Declaration of Paris. The commissioners challenged the signatory powers of the Paris pact "to make good their declaration" and to consider as not binding the blockade which the South, through its evidences, had proven ineffectual. 9

Secondly, the commissioners again turned to the matter of cotton. They reported that the South anticipated a favorable action by the British against the blockade "not only by their own declaration, but by the nature of the interests affected by the blockade." They reminded Russell "that the only certain and sufficient source of cotton" rested in the Confederacy. Furthermore, the

---

8 Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 10, Yancey, Hoot and Mann to Hunter, December 2, 1861.

9 Pickett Papers, Yancey, Hoot and Mann to Russell, November 29, 1861.
Confederates proposed that cotton provided a livelihood as much for the people who planted and raised the staple as for those who transported and manufactured it. In this sense, then, the blockade -- ineffective though it may be -- still persisted as a physical impediment "to the general interests of mankind, so many of whom depend for their means of living" on the supply of cotton. Thus, the commissioners concluded, the illegality and ineffectiveness of the blockade "and the great interests of the neutral commerce of the world" categorically demanded that the British government "should take decisive action in declaring the blockade ineffective."\textsuperscript{10}

The Southern envoys shortly delivered a similar note to Thouvenal, the French Foreign Minister, in which they explained the cotton famine, illegal blockade, and public sentimentality.\textsuperscript{11} Host reported that the Minister expressed "astonishment" at the list of blockade evasions and promised "to take the matter into serious consideration."\textsuperscript{12} Encouraged by the partial interest -- not commitment -- of Thouvenal and the reactions of the English

\textsuperscript{10}Pickett Papers, Yancey, Host and Mann to Russell, November 29, 1861.

\textsuperscript{11}Pickett Papers, Host to President Davis, December 24, 1861.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
press and populace, the commissioners enthusiastically reported a decided swing of support to the Southern cause.

In individual letters to Hunter each commissioner proceeded to elaborate on the favorable change of opinion in Europe since the Trent affair. Yet, even more interesting than these ordinary accounts of British and French public sentiment was the amount of credit which each minister tried to claim for himself in the apparent alteration of the European climate of opinion. Seen in retrospect, this tendency on the part of the commissioners to offer individual rather than collective appraisals of their efforts reflected both the late-developing friction among the commissioners and their dissatisfaction with the mission as a whole. To salvage some credit from the State Department for a mission which had courted failure since its conception, the envoys turned to a self-appraisal of their respective efforts.

Mann enthusiastically reported that Confederate recognition "will not be much longer delayed." He noted that Great Britain was "in downright earnestness" to seek amends to the humiliation suffered with the seizure of the Trent. "Her voice," commented the envoy from Virginia, "will now be found in her sword." As for credit for this ostensible British sentiment, Mann admitted that "by never losing sight for a moment of the object for which ... (he) was appointed," he had succeeded "in opening channels of
communication with the most important personages of the realm." He acclaimed Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister, as "a noble statesman," whose "heart is as young as it was forty years ago." It is doubtful that Mann and Palmerston ever met, but apparently this was an incidental formality which could hardly affect the familiarity implied by the sophomoric Ambrose Mann. 13

Rost, who had been appointed to lead the negotiations in France, similarly reported that through his ability to perform "anything calculated to advance our cause" a favorable change of opinion had occurred in the Emperor's government. He noted that his association with members of the Paris Ministry "had been more and more friendly" and that Thouvenal had stated "that no one could have done or accomplished more" than commissioner Rost. What the Southerner accomplished was scarcely significant, yet he confidently reported that within months France "would come forward and command peace." 14

The third commissioner, William Yancey, imitated his associates in both the substance of his dispatches and the self-acclaim for his efforts. A further rebuttal to

13 Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 10, Mann to Hunter, December 24, 1861.

14 Pickett Papers, Rost to Davis, December 24, 1861.
his biographer's claim that Yancey was a super-patriot manifests itself at this time. Throughout the mission, Yancey had always been the first to express discontent with the fruitless efforts to win recognition. Soon after the formal demand for recognition had failed miserably in August, he had intimated his desire to resign the commission. However, with the Trent affair, Confederate diplomacy, through no efforts of its own, found itself temporarily in vogue again. Yancey promptly reversed his resignation intentions, and in a letter which emphasized his decision "to lay aside all private considerations," he affirmed his resolution to remain with the mission. True to this pattern, though, Yancey would not hesitate to resign the commission again when the Confederate cause fell from public approval -- an action hardly characteristic of a devoted patriot!

Attempting to hasten the Southern demise from popular favor, United States Secretary of State Seward and Union Minister Adams effectively arranged a graceful retreat from the brink of war with Britain over the Trent issue. Despite the popular outcries to the contrary, neither the United States nor the British government

15 See Chapter V, page 84.
16 Rickett Papers, Yancey to Hunter, November 30, 1861.
desired a formal conflict with each other. Acting upon this realization and in awareness, too, that the South had by itself proven to be a formidable opponent, Seward issued his formal reply to Britain's accusations in mid-December, 1861.17

Seward contended that although Captain Wilkes had operated without specific instructions from the United States government, his action was entirely justified.18 However, since the Confederate commissioners -- legal contraband of war though they may be -- were not taken before an American prize court for adjudication of status, they would immediately be released.19 Though short of a formal apology, the action still represented a "sacrifice of much national pride and self-glorification."20

The British Ministry similarly accepted the Seward explanation as a substantial compliance with its demands.21 By the time Mason and Slidell reached London

18Department of State, Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, Seward to Adams, December 27, 1861, 12-14.
19Ibid.
21Adams, Britain and the Civil War, II, 232.
at the end of January, 1862, amends had long been reached with the British government. The crisis had passed. The whole affair certainly stands as a tribute to the diplomatic ability of Adams, who, in the interlude between the first reports of the incident and the formal statement of Seawrda, managed to placate the British Foreign Office. Adams' tact and Seward's diplomacy insured a swift pacific settlement which consequently "prevented any special advantages to the Confederacy as had been expected from the ... seizure."^{22} Adams, in fact, writing shortly after the arrival of Mason and Slidell, metaphorically compared the Trent affair to a sharp thunderstorm, "which has burst without doing any harm, and the consequences has been a decided improvement of the state of the atmosphere."^{23}

While wheels of Northern diplomacy still turned to frustrate adverse international reaction to the Trent episode, Lord John Russell replied to the Confederate commissioners concerning their two protest notes of late November. On December 7, the Foreign Secretary delivered

^{22} Chandler, "Diplomatic History of Confederacy," 454.

to the Southern diplomats his very curt and blunt answer
to their demands. He acknowledged their previous letters,
and then explicitly announced his refusal, "in the present
state of affairs, ... to enter into any official commun-
ication with them."24

Russell's reply struck hard at the core of "king
cotton" diplomacy. Yancey, enraged by the brevity and
terseness of the rejoinder, called for an immediate
counter-reply.25 However, Rost and Mann restrained him
from further communication with Russell.26 The Foreign
Secretary's note, the last governmental correspondence
with the commissioners, unequivocally revealed the British
resolve to avoid an unnecessary war with the United States
in order to assure a regular supply of cotton for its
textile manufacturers. The theory of "king cotton" lay
exposed as "a delusion at the first test."27

Following the letter of Russell, the ministers re-
stricted themselves to purely reportorial functions.
Their pride sorely deflated, they entered into no further

24 Fickett Papers, Russell to Yancey, Rost ans Mann,
December 7, 1861.
25 Fickett Papers, Yancey to Hunter, December 31, 1861.
26 Ibid.
27 Hendrick, Statesmen of Lost Cause, 151.
communications of any importance in the weeks before the formal termination of their mission. Yancey admitted, not unexpectedly, that he wished "to leave here very much," and, upon the arrival of Mason and Slidell, he would "do so at once."\(^{28}\)

Commissioners Mason and Slidell finally reached London on January 29, 1862.\(^{29}\) Their mission now officially disbanded, Yancey, Rost and Mann went their separate ways. Mann, previously appointed to a diplomatic position in Belgium, proceeded to that nation where he anticipated to "negotiate ... the first treaty ever concluded by the Confederate States."\(^{30}\) Pierre Rost remained in the congenial atmosphere of Paris until the arrival of Slidell, and then proceeded to Spain.\(^{31}\) Finally, Yancey, having admitted that he "hardly made up ... (his) mind as to what to do,"\(^{32}\) returned to the Confederacy where he assumed a senate seat from his home state of Alabama.\(^{33}\)

\(^{28}\) Pickett Papers, Yancey to Hunter, December 31, 1861.

\(^{29}\) Mason to Hunter, January 30, 1862, in Mason, Life of Mason, 257-258.

\(^{30}\) Pickett Papers, Mann to Davis, February 1, 1862.

\(^{31}\) Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 1, Slidell to State Department, February 11, 1862.

\(^{32}\) Pickett Papers, Yancey to Davis, January 27, 1862.

\(^{33}\) Du Bose, Life of Yancey, 620.
Surprisingly, to the very end, the commissioners still expressed a feeble optimism in the inevitability of recognition. In their last dispatch to Richmond, dated January 27, 1862, Mann and Yancey reported that although they could not predict the form which intervention would assume, they felt sure "that it will take place in a short time." Such confidence, although now fading in certitude, had been consistent in the commissioners' dispatches since the inception of the mission. However, the reports of an imminent recognition -- reports which permeated the initial letters of the mission ten months earlier -- seemed, by this time, only hollow echoes.

The first Confederate mission to Europe, a mission which had courted failure and skepticism since its inauguration, ended in futility. The primary objectives of recognition and intervention had not been realized. The course of the Southern diplomats was largely staked out for them by events, and the operations that they undertook seemed less guided by Confederate initiative than by Union actions and British reactions. Confederate diplomacy, from the start buoyed by "king cotton" and the righteousness of the cause, discovered in less than a year that economic theory and political morality could not compete with the bitter realities of international power politics.

\[34\] Pickett Papers, Dispatch No. 14, Yancey and Mann to Hunter, January 27, 1862.
CONCLUSION

The fate of the diplomatic mission of Yancey, Rost and Mann was inexorably bound to the success or failure of the "king cotton" theory. When it failed to prostrate England and France before it in supplication, it removed the very foundations on which the initial Confederate envoys based their commission and relied for their arguments. The South had started the war with cotton as the primary entry on the positive side of her secession ledger. Upon the staple crop she had built her society, and under the banner "king cotton", she dared attempt independence. Though powerful enough to command the respect of the leading commercial nations of the world, cotton could not produce the sovereign status the Confederacy sought.

"King cotton" diplomacy, from the very beginning, had been an enormous gamble. Playing with this one principal asset, the Confederate States had sought to pressure Europe into recognition of her independence. Unfortunately for the South, cotton was not the only trump in this game of international political and
economic coercion.

The South soon recognized that Great Britain controlled the diplomacy of Europe as pertained to the question of Confederate recognition. When, and if, England acted would determine the position of the major continental powers. Yet, there were too many factors which prevented Britain from extending more than a conventional acknowledgment of Confederate belligerency.

In the first place, such economic pressure as the loss of cotton would ordinarily bring never developed to the point anticipated by the Confederacy. On account of an overzealous production of Southern cotton in the years immediately preceding secession, Great Britain was beset with a cotton surplus. Despite the coercive cotton embargo of the Confederate States, it would take nearly two years for this surplus to be consumed; and, by that time, a profitable cotton flow would again have been restored between the South and Great Britain to supplement the wartime supplies from Egypt, Mexico, and India. Similarly, the English merchant class benefited from the war profits it was able to attain through sales and loans, at high prices and interest rates, of the manufactured products which the South most desperately needed.
Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of the failure of cotton was its inability to produce a public outcry against the unemployment and economic hardship its absence purported to cause. Except for the fearful warnings of the few who cautioned about the impending famine, Yancey, Rost and Mann recorded virtually no grievances directed against a famine already in existence. Although the cotton famine did not reach its peak until the winter months of 1862-1863, even then the masses in the textile centers did practically nothing to turn public opinion beyond the sympathy for the North which they manifested throughout the war. Governmental subsidies and private donations kept the potential sufferings at a minimum; but, in reality, the absence of a prolonged threat to their welfare kept the inconveniences and grumblings of the affected workers substantially contained.

There were, of course, several other external factors which prevented a firm British move towards recognition and intervention. The possible vulnerability of England to a war with the United States which alliance with the Confederacy would certainly bring, and the fact that the majority of her people opposed slavery and held true to this position throughout the struggle added strength to the non-interventionist camp. These
reasons, though, important as they may be, were only components of the principal arguments which prevented a British commitment to the South. Likewise, the effective counter-diplomacy of the Union was not sufficient in itself to prevent an active British position. In the end, the failure of cotton as a commercial inducement sealed the fate of Confederate diplomacy.

The inadequate foundation for the Southern foreign policy was, of course, the root of the Confederate diplomatic failure. Strict adherence to the philosophy of "king cotton" precluded a flexibility of action and vitality of performance which hampered the Confederate diplomatic effort from the start. The commission's restrictive instructions, inadequate resources, insufficient planning, and, in particular, the unsatisfactory selection of the diplomats themselves, all contributed to suppress any initiatives which the Confederates might seek.

The argument defended by Owsley that cotton constituted a sensible and pragmatic base for Confederate diplomacy is misleading. The potential coercive power of cotton demanded some reliance on the staple by the young Confederate government. Cotton, however, neither ordered total diplomatic dependence nor the blind rejection of alternative approaches. The secessionist
Southerners rallied to the cause of their bogus "king" only to be misled by impassioned, yet exaggerated, arguments. The inadequate foundation of the Confederate foreign policy provided a lasting obstacle to the successful execution of Southern diplomacy. Granted, external factors arose to hasten the collapse of Southern foreign policy, but the vulnerability of such an inadequate policy had, from the start, guaranteed its failure.

With no substance to their arguments, no acceptance of their offers, and no reward for their efforts, the first envoys of the cotton kingdom met defeat at every turn. They found their course of action constantly dictated by events. They moved as the tide of Union actions and British reaction fluctuated. Yet, in this adverse situation, which, except for the brief reprieve of the Trent affair, deteriorated with each month of the mission, the commissioners held firm to their idealistic confidence.

Unfortunately, their optimism in the power of cotton and faith in the righteousness of the Confederate cause often clouded the envoys' observations of the true picture in Europe. This lack of perspective was reflected in their reports to Richmond. As a result, dispatches claiming that recognition was
imminent were forthcoming from Yancey, Rost, and Mann with equal animation as early as May, 1861, and as late as January, 1862.

Perhaps the basic reason why the three ministers persisted in relating such encouraging news to the Confederacy was the nature of the contacts which they had established in London and Paris. For the most part, their liaisons were aristocratic gentlemen of the Southern lobby -- men who identified with the aristocracy of the South and who saw in that culture one which closely resembled their own. These gentlemen viewed the Southern version of democracy as more in tune with the British view; and the very fact of the potential dissolution of the Union fortified their belief that the English version was superior.

Throughout the mission in Great Britain and France, the commissioners only associated with men of aristocratic caliber. They never really became involved with the common people and so could never relate to the State Department the actual solidarity of opinion of the masses for the Union. This inability on the part of the Southern envoys to effectively and completely view the whole European scene and analyze all opinions -- the masses as well as the gentlemen -- was the signal failure of Yancey, Rost and Mann as diplomats.
The amateurism of the commissioners, reflected in their excessive optimism and poor reportorial ability, coupled with the inadequacies of Confederate foreign policy and the pressures of other external factors, posed diplomatic obstacles too great to overcome for the struggling Confederacy. A mission that began with profound expectations of imminent international recognition ended in subservience to those impediments. The Confederates gambled that their policy of economic coercion and moral certitude could satisfactorily achieve their foreign political objectives. Europe countered with a deliberative policy based on international realities and political pragmatism which ultimately, and completely, dethroned "king cotton."
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Unpublished Manuscripts


The Pickett papers, which contain most of the diplomatic correspondence of the Southern agents, served as the principal primary source material for this paper. They catalogue, according to country, official diplomatic communications with the Confederate State Department, their domestic and private letters, and their correspondence with various European Foreign Offices.

Newspapers, Magazines and Periodicals

Charleston (South Carolina) Mercury
De Bow's Review
Montgomery (Alabama) Daily Advertiser
New York Times
Niles' Weekly Register
Richmond Dispatch
Richmond Examiner
Richmond Observer
Richmond Times

Dates examined in these sources are 1860-1865, unless specifically designated in a subsequent bibliographic entry.

Published Public Documents


Most of the major diplomatic correspondence of
the Southern agents, especially that which involved any communications with or actions by Jefferson Davis, is in Volume II of this work. The editor was highly selective of the correspondence he chose to include.


This was of particular value for its reprinting of the 1856 Declaration of Paris, which gave rise to spirited controversies among the Confederacy, Union and Great Britain over matters of blockades and privateering.


Most of the diplomatic correspondence of the Crawford-Forsythe-Roman mission is in Volume V.


Volumes of particular interest were XXXVI-XXXIX which recorded secessionist and "king cotton" speeches and declarations of Southern senators.


Although of no value in tracing the debates among the foreign policy factions in the Confederate Congress, the Journal revealed the course that Southern diplomacy pursued through reports of policy implementation and congressional resolutions on foreign affairs. Volume I traces the proceedings of the Provisional Congress at Montgomery, Alabama.

United States Department of Navy. Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion. 30 volumes. Washington, D.C.:

The letters and instructions of Seward and Adams were particularly useful in tracing the operations of Union counter-diplomacy. They revealed the low regard for Confederate ministers and activities held by those two leading figures of Northern diplomacy.

Published Private Manuscripts and Contemporary Literature


Christy first phrased the term "king cotton." This work expounds the theory upon which Southern diplomacy rested.

Daniel, Frederick S., editor. The Richmond Examiner during the War, or the Writings of John M. Daniel. New York: 1868.

Daniel contributes many insights on the formation of Confederate foreign policy and the implementation of that policy during the war years. His comments on the cotton embargo were particularly interesting.


This history of the Confederacy by its President reveals many of the idealistic notions which guided Davis in choosing the "cotton famine" policy. Volume II defends his diplomatic decisions.

Du Bellet was a displaced Southerner who resided in Paris throughout the war. His suggestions to the Confederate ministers on how to conduct their diplomacy were ill-received, which prompted him to write this critique. Although several of the Du Bellet papers were published for the Civil War Centennial commemoration in Richmond, Virginia, this particular paper was not. Only a limited number of copies of the Du Bellet article have been printed.


This work gives a representative sampling of the prevalent secession arguments in the years immediately preceding the war. It provided a further understanding of the widespread popularity of the legality of secession and confidence in the power of cotton.


This work contains more private correspondence of Ambassador Adams than official diplomatic communications. The letters were useful in revealing Adams' private sentiments as regards the Confederate ministers and their activities.

Mason, Virginia, editor. The Public Life and Diplomatic Correspondence of James M. Mason with Some Personal History by his Daughter. Roanoke, Va.: Stone Printing and Manufacturing Co., 1903.

The diplomatic correspondence in this work is highly selective. Mason's account of the Trent affair was particularly useful and informative.


Russell's work reveals much interesting material on the initial confidence of the South in a
cotton-based diplomacy. The records of his contacts with Southern exponents of the "king cotton" theory reveal the universality of opinion on the doctrine.


This anthology of contemporary European newspaper, magazine and individual observations of the American war is more popular than reliable.

Secondary Sources

Books


On a par with Owsley's work, Adams, however, deals specifically with English relations with both the United States and the Confederacy. His approach is topical, and generally, quite conclusive.


Henry W. Temple's brief biography of Seward in Volume VI of this series is undistinguished. He covers little of the Civil War diplomacy of Seward except for the initial instructions to Adams and his debatable scheme to declare war on France to unite the North and the South in a common cause.


This work has been entirely surpassed by Owsley's King Cotton Diplomacy with one notable exception. Callahan records dissent within Southern ranks concerning the formation of Confederate foreign policy, while Owsley completely ignores evidences of disagreement.

Donald, David, editor. Why the North Won the Civil War.

This contains Norman Graebner's article, "Northern Diplomacy and European Neutrality." Graebner defends the thesis that Southern diplomacy could not compete with the "politics of power" which characterized European foreign relations.


This outstanding biography of the United States Civil War minister to England relies heavily on the papers and works of Adams.


This account of Yancey's contributions to the Southern secession movement is overly favorable, yet still is significant for its discussion of Yancey's anti-"cotton famine" sentiments. Du Bose sheds some light on the objections raised against this policy by Rhett, Toombs and Yancey.


Hendrick contributes a minor, but informative, account of Seward's diplomacy. Particular emphasis has been placed on Dispatch No. 10, Seward to Adams, which threatened the severance of diplomatic ties with England if the British government continued to receive the Confederate commissioners.


Chapter V, "A Diplomatic Debut in England and France," treats very lightly the initial Southern mission of Yancey, Hest and Mann.


Organized in sections on France and Great Britain, emphasis is on European diplomacy and opinion rather than the efforts of Union and Confederate diplomats.

The biographical sketches by Frank L. Owsley on Mann and Laura White on Robert Rhett were useful for background material and early bibliographic guidance.


The standard survey of Confederate foreign relations, Owsley's study is massive in scope, yet decidedly pro-Southern in approach. He omits much which would suggest divided opinions among Southern policy-makers concerning the most beneficial plan of diplomacy. The theme of the work is cotton, but Owsley appears more apologetic at its failure than objective. Chapters I and II, "The Foundation of Confederate Diplomacy," and "The First Envoys of the Cotton Kingdom," give a chronological survey of the development and implementation of Southern policies with the Yancey-Rost-Mann mission.


This study contains brief discussion of Hunter and Toombs but emphasizes Davis' relations with the permanent Cabinet which was established in February, 1862.


This work is a poor summary of European ramifications of the Civil War.


The latest and perhaps best monograph on Seward, this work deals extensively with his Civil War diplomacy. The author offers particular insights to the controversy over the Declaration of Paris.

This survey of reasons behind the eventual failure of the Confederate government emphasizes reliance upon cotton.

Periodicals

Adams, H. "Why Did Not England Recognize the Confederacy?" Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, LXVI (1936-1941), 204-222.

This brief article reviews the principal reasons for no further British commitment to the South beyond the recognition of Confederate belligerency. The reasons listed are the standard explanations.


Baxter demonstrates that the Civil War reversed the traditional situation of United States attempts to maintain neutral rights against English encroachment. Little discussion of Southern diplomacy to sway the British one way or the other appears.


This article blasts Confederate diplomacy as too unrealistic to compete with the actualities of European power politics.


This contains much important information on debates in the Democratic presidential nominating convention over treaties to be offered by the Confederacy to European powers, if the failure of the North to grant concessions to the slaveholding states resulted in secession.

A brief and dated attempt to summarize operations and development of Southern diplomacy, it affords some information on the origins of the "cotton famine" policy.


The title of this biased article speaks for itself. It reflects the influence of Du Bose's interpretation of Yancey.


This offers defense of the "cotton famine" doctrine.

Du Bose further enlarges the patriotic halo which he planted on Yancey with his biography.


Moore traces the route of Mann from the South to England and suggests that Lincoln missed a great opportunity to capture the commissioner when he was in Washington.


This brief article reviews the various alternative diplomatic plans open to the South at the outset of the war. Millard defends the "cotton famine" policy as logical and necessary.

The "Notes" present very brief biographical accounts of the commissioners. It is particularly worthwhile for the sketch on Rost, who nowhere is mentioned in the *D.A.B.*


The article traces Yancey's career from that of a conservative, Unionist Congressman to secessionist.

Bibliographic Aids

In addition to the bibliographies which were contained in the various secondary sources used, several standard bibliographic materials were consulted throughout the composition of the paper. Of particular note, were the reviews and citations of current publications in the various scholarly journals which were consulted. These included: *American Historical Review, Civil War History, Foreign Affairs, Journal of American History, Journal of Southern History, Mid-America, Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, and *the Pacific Historical Review*. Below are the standard bibliographic aids used.


This series catalogues by year the various scholarly writings on American history. Although it is far from being up to date, it still serves as a valuable bibliographic material.


Chapters 22 and 23, "The Early Crises of the
Civil War" and "The Collapse of King Cotton Diplomacy," give a satisfactory general summary of the events and issues which highlighted Union diplomacy during the war period. This work was useful as an early bibliographic guide.


Chapter IV, "Diplomatic History," contains references to early bibliographic aids.


Though over forty years behind the times, this work still stands as the foremost guide to writings on American diplomatic history. Chapter XIII, "The Civil War, 1861-1865," contains two sections on Union and Confederate diplomacy: "The United States and Europe," and "Diplomatic Efforts of the Southern Confederacy."


Chapter 18 contains a major section on the Civil War and international relations. The Harvard Guide ranks with Bemis and Griffin's work as the criteria for American bibliographic aids.


Volume I contains a major section entitled "Diplomacy," and Volume II treats on "The Confederacy -- Government and Politics." It is the most current bibliography on the Civil war period and it offers an excellent commentary on the works it cites.
VITA

The son of Carl William and Dolores Lucking Zingg, Paul Joseph Zingg was born on July 22, 1945, in Newark, New Jersey. He attended Seton Hall Preparatory School in South Orange, New Jersey, before entering the minor seminary at Seton Hall University for two years. In August, 1965, he transferred to Belmont Abbey College in Belmont, North Carolina. At Belmont Abbey he participated in three varsity sports and was named to the 1968-69 Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities. In May, 1968, he graduated from Belmont Abbey with an A.B. degree in History.

He entered the Graduate School of the University of Richmond in September, 1969. He is currently a degree candidate for the award of Master of Arts in History. Mr. Zingg has taught at the Marymount School, Richmond, Virginia, and plans to continue his graduate studies to the Ph. D. level.

Having married in August, 1968, he and his wife, the former Carolyn Stelling Gabb, presently reside in Richmond, Virginia. He is a member of Phi Alpha Theta History Society, Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity, and the American Historical Association.