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Article Title

Defending the Indefensible?: The Pro-Confederate Lobby in Britain in the aftermath of the Emancipation Proclamation

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to provide the first dedicated examination of the pro-Confederate movement in Britain in the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation. By analysing the ideas and activities of pro-Confederates after emancipation the article problematizes our understanding of Civil War diplomacy and British responses to the conflict. Through an analysis of propaganda, and the correspondence between Confederate representatives and British sympathizers, it offers insights into reactions to emancipation amongst a group who were deeply invested in the conflict. It also explores how southern sympathizers attempted to publicly respond in a way that they hoped would appeal to Britons after 1863. In doing so, it emphasizes the intellectual and organizational vibrancy that characterized pro-Confederates in this period as well as the extent to which emancipation itself did not automatically determine the diplomatic outcome of the conflict. In addition, it

demonstrates that Confederate activism in Britain had always rested on shaky ideological foundations. The lack of clear moral distinction between the belligerents prior to emancipation, had allowed sympathetic Britons to project their own values on to the Confederacy. The effects of emancipation on southern diplomatic prospects were as much about revealing these internal dynamics as causing a sudden shift in attitudes towards Confederate nationalism. [Word Count, 11,359]

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Defending the Indefensible?: The Pro-Confederate Lobby in Britain in the aftermath of the Emancipation Proclamation

Any attempt to understand British reactions to the US Civil War must inevitably include an examination of slavery. Historians have debated the precise role that the "peculiar institution" had in dictating British policy towards the warring parties. A general agreement exists, however, that following the abolition of slavery in 1833, most Britons incorporated a commitment to ending slavery into their understanding of what it meant to be British. The first official Confederate commissioners to cross the Atlantic (Pierre Rost, William L. Yancey and Dudley Mann) found such a commitment to be an integral aspect of Britishness noting with exasperation in 1861 that "anti-slavery sentiment [is] universally prevalent in England." Given the role of anti-slavery in national identity it might be natural to presume that the British would throw their considerable international weight behind the Union in its war against the Confederacy in 1861. This, however, did not occur. The reasons for British neutrality during the conflict are rooted in the prewar period and can be condensed down to two key factors. In the first place, the British saw sectional divisions manifested in a range of issues beyond slavery. Secondly, they understood slavery as a national (as opposed to a southern) problem.[1]

[1] Richard Huzzey has recently published a study that emphasizes the complexity of antislavery heritage in Britain which includes a brief discussion of the Civil War. See Richard Huzzey *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithica & London: Cornell University Press, 2012). For more on the British relationship with race and abolition see R. J. M. Blackett, *Building an Anti-Slavery Wall: Black Americans and the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement 1830-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Marcus Cunliffe, *Chattel Slavery and Wage Slavery: The Anglo American Context 1830-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979); Betty Fladeland, *Men and Brothers: Anglo-American Anti-Slavery Co-operation* (Chicago & Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972). William L. Yancey, Pierre Rost & Dudley Mann to Robert Toombs,

In his 2015 work, *The Cause of All Nations*, Don H. Doyle observes that "slavery had never disqualified a nation from acceptance into the family of nations…Confederate emissaries were nonetheless instructed to avoid discussi[ng]… slavery." He then notes that "Southern diplomats crafted an appeal that evoked widely admired liberal principles of self-determination and free trade."[2] Doyle's overall analysis of the ability of Confederate diplomats to appeal to Britons from across the political spectrum is broadly accurate. The narrative of the war that Confederate diplomats relied upon, however, was only publicly viably because of a broader set of British ideas about the nature of American identity and secession. The multifaceted understanding that Britons had of sectionalism allowed supporters to claim that the Confederacy had left the Union because of its distinctive attitudes

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14th August 1861 in *The Messages and Papers of Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy Including Diplomatic Correspondence, 1861-1865 Volume Two,* ed. James D. Richardson (New York: Robert Hector, 1966). Key works on Britain and the Civil War include E.D Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War* [Two Volumes] (London: Longman's, Green's and Co., 1925); Mary Ellison, *Support for Secession: Lancashire and the American Civil War* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1972); Frank Lawrence Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931); Philip S. Foner, *British Labor and the American Civil War* (New York & London: Holmes & Meier, 1981); R. J. M. Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001); Duncan Andrew Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2003); Don H. Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 2015); Thomas E. Sebrell III, *Persuading John Bull: Union and Confederate Propaganda in Britain, 1860-1865* (Lanham, Lexington Books, 2014); Hugh Dubrulle, *Ambivalent Nation: How Britain Imagined the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2018).

[2] Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations*, 4-9. Michael J. Turner, *Liberty and Liberticide: The Role of America in Nineteenth Century British Radicalism* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2014) 131.

towards sovereignty and trade policy. To ensure that such claims possessed any moral weight within Britain it was necessary for pro-southerners to emphasise that the fate of slavery was not at stake in the war. As a result, President Lincoln's decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation and place abolition at the heart of the conflict compelled pro-Confederates in Britain to reappraise the way they presented southern independence.

While emancipation damaged Confederate diplomatic prospects in the long term, organized pro-southernism remained a vibrant force in Britain for well over a year after the preliminary proclamation. The purpose of this article is to explore this period and in doing so to probe our understanding of both Confederate foreign relations and British responses to the end of slavery. Much of the existing historiography posits a decline in the popularity of the South in response to emancipation. Despite being broadly accurate, such a narrative downplays the complexity which characterized the era. Confederate diplomats and their allies proceeded to push for international recognition during 1863 and there is little sense that they saw their activities as futile. They also continued to fund the production of propaganda and journalism as well as advocating recognition in parliament. Furthermore, they actually expanded the scope of their activities with the formation of a new national organization (the Southern Independence Association) as well as making an effort to offer financial support and popularize the work of a group of British racial scientists (the Anthropological Society of London) whose work southern sympathizers hoped might help to redirect popular opinion.

Ultimately, it was only during the summer of 1863 that the Confederate government began to wind down their large-scale diplomatic efforts in Britain. Even this process was gradual, and it was not until the winter of 1863-1864 that recognition by the French government became the primary aim for southern politicians. The decision by Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation (which had appeared in its preliminary form over a year earlier) was certainly a turning point in Confederate foreign relations but the continuing

commitment of the Davis administration to operations in Britain is illustrative of the fact that contemporaries did not interpret the announcement as a death knell to the southern cause.

From the very beginning of the war, the Confederate government had placed recognition by major European powers at the heart of its political strategy. It was for this reason that they dispatched the aforementioned Rost, Yancey and Mann to Europe in March 1861. The combination of a lack of diplomatic experience and Yancey's reputation as a defender of slavery rendered their activities counterproductive leading to their withdrawal by November of the same year. The groups' replacements were chosen with more care. John Slidell (who was dispatched to Paris) had been a senator of some repute before secession. He also had pre-existing relationships with French ministers. Slidell's London based colleague, James M. Mason, had a similar political profile. Mason's efforts to secure the formal recognition of the Confederacy in Britain were aided by a network of southern journalists and purchasing agents. Prominent members of this group included Caleb Huse, James D. Bulloch, James North, Edward C. Anderson, Edwin de Leon, Henry Hotze and Matthew Maury.[3] The group as a whole worked to secure the material needs of the Confederacy while simultaneously advocating for international recognition both within circles of power and among the general public.

While the official Confederate lobby was a relatively coherent group working towards the goal of securing international recognition, their British born counterparts came from more diverse backgrounds and often had idiosyncratic motivations. Working class activists including William Aitken, T. Bentley Kershaw and T.J Dunning all expressed antipathy to

[3] Gordon H. Warren, *Fountain of Discontent: The Trent Affair and the Freedom of the Seas* (Boston: Northeastern University, 1981), 2: Brian Jenkins, *Britain and the War for the Union Volume One* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974), 15-16, 144; Campbell, *English Public Opinion*, 46.

the North based on the conditions of white male industrial labourers in the region. Their support for Confederate recognition was secured by reports of the plight of British workers forced out of employment by the blockade of southern ports that prevented cotton reaching the mill towns of Lancashire and West Yorkshire. These concerns over the cotton supply were shared by the peer (and future prime minister) Lord Robert Cecil. Yet Cecil also had personal and political reasons for supporting the South. Most notably his animosity towards two of the Union's most vocal British supporters--Richard Cobden and John Bright. Cecil's fellow conservative party members Arthur Forwood and John Laird seem to have been primarily concerned about protecting their business interests. Other members of the party, however, evinced a strong ideological predilection for the Confederacy. Particularly prominent in this regard was A.J.B Beresford-Hope who viewed the South as an outpost of the Episcopalian Church and a bulwark against the international threat of democracy. Such an attitude towards democracy was echoed by the most significant British-born Confederate propagandist--the Liverpool merchant James Spence. Interestingly however, another prominent opponent of democracy in Britain (Lord Donoughmore) explicitly rejected the connection between the conflict and the expansion of the franchise. Political reformers including the radical MP John Arthur Roebuck, the liberal MP William Scholefield and the liberal-conservative William Gregory all interpreted the conflict as a struggle for national self-determination akin to recent European independence movements. In this sense their support was rooted in a decision to subscribe to the notion of southern nationalism. The liberal shipping magnate William Schaw Lindsay was similarly impressed by the existence of

a distinctive national identity within the South although, more often than not, he used the different economic systems favoured in each section as an explanation for the conflict.[4]

In organizational terms, the Confederate lobby centred on a small cabal of Britons including Beresford-Hope, Lindsay, Roebuck, Gregory, Spence, Cecil and Lord Wharncliffe most of whom worked closely with Confederate representatives. Gregory (who brought the first parliamentary motion calling for Confederate recognition in 1861) had met several southern leaders including Yancey and Mason while travelling in the region before the war. He proved to be a key figure in the development of a pro-Confederate lobby and introduced Yancey to Lindsay and Laird. Gregory also corresponded with the Confederate Secretary of State R.M.T Hunter (1861-62) and secured a meeting for Mason with Lord John Russell in February 1862. Mason would go on to develop a strong political and personal relationship with other British pro-Confederates including Lindsay and Beresford-Hope. Mason also spent time in the London home of the pro-Confederate shipping magnate Alexander Collie who

[4] The political designations for these British figures draw primarily on Peter O'Connor *American Sectionalism in the British Mind, 1832-1863* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017) as well as the work of Blackett and Campbell. Blackett provides one of the best overviews of the makeup of the pro-Confederate and pro-Union movements in Britain see Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, 63, 14, 61-62, 23, 149, 115-116. See also Campbell, *English Public Opinion*, 188, 56-57, 146-147, 171. Campbell identifies a relative indifference to the war among Britons. Conversely, Hugh Dubrulle claims that that popular mobilization was relatively widespread see Hugh Dubrulle,'"We Are Threatened with…Anarchy and Ruin": Fear of Americanization and the emergence of an Anglo-Saxon Confederacy in Britain during the American Civil War,' *Albion*, 33 no.4 (Winter 2001): 590. Campbell's claims certainly seem to hold true when it comes to consistent and overt displays of support. Nevertheless, the general public paid attention to conflict even if they didn't necessarily get involved in activism.

was himself an associate of Wharncliffe.[5] Given the nature of these relationships it is unsurprising that southern sympathisers initially focused their efforts on the homes and clubs of elite Britons. Nevertheless, as the conflict went on attempts were made to popularise the southern cause among the British public through speeches and pamphlets. Groups such as the Confederate States Aid Association (formed in August 1862), the Liverpool Southern Club (autumn 1862) and the Manchester Southern Club (March 1863) made the effort to reach out and fund labour leaders who had been advocating the cause of the South since the start of the war including Aitken and Mortimer Grimshaw.[6]

While their American counterparts drew on a relatively limited palate of ideas (defined by what was acceptable to the Confederate government), the Britons who supported the South did not have the same constraints. Instead they could present the war in terms which reflected their own personal concerns and their understanding of what would make effective propaganda. For this reason, it is useful to differentiate between British and American supporters of the Confederacy. In a sense, the two groups were advocates of distinctive yet closely related causes. While both hoped for the recognition of Confederate nationhood by the Palmerston administration, Britons were motivated by an array of distinctive concerns which reflected a (usually misguided) idea of southerness and/or the Confederacy combined with domestic political priorities. Typically, these concerns were

[5] Brian Jenkins, 'William Gregory: Champion of the Confederacy,' *History Today* 28 (1978): 323-325; Amanda Foreman, *World on Fire: An Epic History of Two Nations Divided* (London: Penguin, 2011), 95; Sebrell, *Persuading John Bull*, 52, 132; Howard Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy: A History of Union and Confederate Foreign Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 114-115; Campbell, *English Public Opinion*, 161; Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, 93, 100;

[6] Blackett, *Divided Hearts,* 61-67, 154, 126, 170: Howard Jones, *The Union in Peril: The Crisis over British Intervention in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 22.

buttressed by antipathy to the North. The stance of American pro-southerners in Britain was more coherent. This is not to imply that all Confederates were united in their understanding of the newly formed nation. Rather a recognition that American advocates adopted a more consistent tone. For the first two years of the war, the lack of consensus among Britons regarding the role of slavery allowed the groups to collaborate with minimal tension. This was because the Confederates could accept their British colleagues highlighting the lack of Union action against slavery and making vague claims about the eventual end of the system in the South on the basis that the Lincoln administration had done nothing to place the issue at the centre of diplomatic discourse. Ultimately, emancipation would change this, but the process was complex and the outcome was not predetermined.

A brief examination of the history of pro-Confederate activism in Britain before 1863 is a necessary precursor to an analysis of post-emancipation developments. President Lincoln's refusal to immediately tie the Union war effort to abolition, combined with his repudiation of John C. Frémont's 1861 Missouri Proclamation, seemed to confirm British preconceptions that the North had little interest in ending slavery. Consequently, the British population came to view abolition as one issue among many during the first two years of the conflict. Those at the heart of the British political and intellectual establishment typically understood the war as the culmination of an array of sectional disputes bound up with the political, economic, social, and cultural differences between North and South.[7]

[7] For Frémont's order see Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge, Mass & London: Harvard University Press, 2011), 94; James Oakes, 'Reluctant to Emancipate?: Another Look at the First Confiscation Act,' *Journal of the Civil War Era* 3, no.4 (December 2013): 458-66. O'Connor, *American Sectionalism in the British Mind*; Dubrulle, *Ambivalent Nation*.

The idea that issues beyond slavery divided the sections seemed to be confirmed with the adoption of the Morrill Tariff in March 1861. Many Britons saw this economically protective measure as proof of the longstanding disconnect between southern free-traders and northern protectionists. The trade division was of interest to a significant number of influential British politicians and public thinkers. After the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, free trade became almost as important a feature of British political identity as abolition. For this reason, while slavery was a vital factor in British reactions to the Civil War, the distinction between northern protectionists and southern free traders attracted considerable attention as well. The apparent commitment of the Union to economic protectionism stimulated parliamentary debate, comment from ministers and even an article from the novelist Charles Dickens.[8] In terms of accounting for British reactions to the war, the discussion about free trade is indicative of the fact that the Union's decision to resist secession was rarely understood as the result of a commitment to end slavery.

The first two years of the conflict saw several diplomatic incidents that further alienated the British populace from the North. The most explosive of these was the *Trent*

[8] Jenkins, 'William Gregory,' 325; Lord Lyons to Earl Russell, 1st April 1861 in *The Civil War Through British Eyes: Dispatches from British Diplomats Volume One: November 1860-April 1862* eds. James J. Barnes & Patience P. Barnes (London: Caliban, 2003). Simon Morgan, 'The Anti-Corn Law League and British Anti-Slavery in Transatlantic Perspective 1838-1846,' *The Historical Journal* 52, no.1 (March 2009): 87-107; Simon Morgan, 'America, Protectionism, and Democracy in British Free Trade Debates, 1815-1861,' in *The American Experiment and the Idea of Democracy in British Culture, 1776-1914*, eds. Ella Dzelzainis & Ruth Livesey (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013); Marc-William Palen, 'The Civil War's Forgotten Transatlantic Tariff Debate and the Confederacy's Free Trade Diplomacy,' *Journal of the Civil War Era* 3, no.1 (March 2013): 35-61; Marc-William Palen, 'Free-Trade Ideology and Transatlantic Abolitionism: A Historiography,' *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 37, no.2 (June 2015): 291-304. Arthur A. Adrian, 'Dickens on American Slavery: A Carlylean Slant,' *PMLA* 67, no.4 (June 1952): 324.

affair, during which the British cabinet formed a war committee for only the fourth time in history. The controversy began with the seizure of the mail packet *Trent* by the Union naval Captain Charles Wilkes of the *San Jacinto* on 8th November 1861. Wilkes correctly believed that the *Trent* was carrying Mason and Slidell, who were en-route to Europe to act as official commissioners for the Confederacy. Unsurprisingly, the British took Wilkes' action as a slight on their honour and Prime Minister Palmerston angrily announced that Britain would "read a lesson to the United States which will not soon be forgotten." Palmerston's attitude was echoed by the country at large. Newspapers were full of criticism for Wilkes, while in the city of Liverpool a public "indignation" meeting was held. Even the Adelphi Theatre in London (which had been associated with abolition for the previous decade) raised a Confederate flag on the 12th December. Cooler diplomatic heads eventually prevailed in Britain and the Union government agreed to release Mason and Slidell (although it refused to accept that Wilkes had acted illegally). This slightly messy solution was sufficient to resolve the controversy in diplomatic terms, although public discontent rumbled on.[9]

[9] Duncan Andrew Campbell, *Unlikely Allies: Britain, America and the Victorian Origins of the Special Relationship* (London & New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), 149-52, 168-70; Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America 1815-1908* (London: Longman's, 1967), 218-47; Foreman, *World on Fire*, 170; Jones, *Blue and Grey Diplomacy*, 83-111; Entry for 27th November 1861 in *The Journal of Benjamin Moran 1857-1865 Volume Two*, eds. S.A Walllace & F.E Gillespie (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), entry for 27th Nov 1861. Donaldson Jordan & Edwin J. Pratt, *Europe and the American Civil War* (Cambridge, Mass: Riverside Press, 1931), 28-47. For more on the *Trent* and possible conflict between Britain and the Union see Jay Sexton, *Debtor Diplomacy*: *Finance and American Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era, 1837-1873* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 95-104; Dean B. Mahin, *One War at a Time: The International Dimensions of the American Civil War* (Washington DC: Brassey's, 1999), 66-73. According to Sarah Meer the management of the Adelphi had been in favour of abolition during the 1850s see Sarah Meer,

Diplomatic disputes such as the *Trent* (in conjunction with the prevailing view within Britain that slavery was not the primary cause of the conflict) offered potentially fertile ground for those advocating southern independence. James Spence's 1861 pamphlet *The American Union*; *its Effect on National Character and Policy, with an Enquiry into Secession as a Constitutional Right, and the Causes of the Disruption* offers the most influential example of Confederate propaganda from the period and provides insights into partisan attempts to exploit the situation. Within this text, Spence downplayed the importance of slavery in favour of an explanation for the war based on the ethnic, political, and economic divisions between the sections. As Doyle has noted, Spence knew his audience and wanted to isolate Southern independence from the defence of slavery as a way to appeal to a public who typically defined themselves as abolitionists. Crucially, prominent southerners within Britain were prepared to go along with Spence's analysis on the basis that his handling of slavery placed the Confederate cause in the most flattering light possible without requiring any action on the part of the government in Richmond. Similar arguments characterized the work of other propagandists including the Scottish educationalist Hugo Reid and the MPs Beresford-Hope and Roebuck.[10]

Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 156-158. Palmerston quoted in Foreman, *World on Fire*, 172.

[10] James Spence, *The American Union; its Effect on National Character and Policy, with an Enquiry into Secession as a Constitutional Right, and the Causes of the Disruption* (London: Richard Bentley, 1861). Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations*, 121. Blackett contends that Spence's pamphlet had a singularly powerful influence see Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, 142. It certainly received considerable publicity see *The Times*, 6th Jan 1862; *Morning Post*, 7th Jan 1862; *Examiner*, 12th April 1862; James M. Mason to Judah P. Benjamin, 2nd May 1862 in Richardson, eds., *The Messages and Papers of Jefferson Davis*. Duncan Andrew Campbell contradicts Blackett on this point claiming that Spence's influence is overstated in *Divided Hearts*, see Campbell, *English Public Opinion*, 123-24. Hugo Reid, *Sketches in North America, with Some Account of Congress and of the Slavery*

Claims that slavery was the main issue at stake in the Civil War would have seemed outlandish to much of the British population who were accustomed to viewing the United States as a nation made up of distinctive sections with different interests. Even passionate pro-northerners, such as the liberal MP John Bright, conceded ground on the issue of slavery during the early stages of the conflict. As part of a speech in Rochdale (Lancashire) in August 1861 Bright noted that "they [the Union army] are not going to liberate slaves. No; the object of the Washington government is to maintain their own Constitution." The fact that even Bright described the relationship between slavery and the Union war effort in such terms is indicative of the widespread belief that northerners were not fighting for abolition. The view that northerners had no interest in ending slavery provided crucial grounds for co-operation between British and American Confederate sympathizers. British pro-southerners, however, often moved beyond simply asserting that the Union had no interest in ending slavery. Some went so far as to suggest that the Confederacy would pursue gradual abolition once they had secured independence. For their part, southerners in Britain shied away from publicly contradicting their allies, regardless of their private views.[11] The apparent Confederate acquiescence to vague British promises of future emancipation was intended to reinforce a

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Question (London: Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1861); Hugo Reid, *The American Question in a Nut-Shell: or, Why we should Recognize the Confederates* (London: Robert Hardwicke, 1862); A. J. B. Beresford-Hope, *England, the North, and the South: being a Popular View of the American Civil War* (London: James Ridgway, 1862); A. J. B. Beresford-Hope, *The Results of the American Disruption: The Substance of a Lecture Delivered by request before the Maidstone Literary and Mechanics Institution, in Continuation of a Popular View of the American Civil War, and England, the North and the South* (London: James Ridgway, 1862).

[11] For Bright's views see *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 15th Aug 1862; 'Extract from a Speech delivered at a meeting at Rochdale, to promote the election of John Cheetham, Esq. for the Southern Division of the County of Lancaster, August 1, 1861' in *Speeches of John Bright on the American Question* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1865). Turner, *Liberty and Liberticide*, 24. Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, 27-28.

sense that the Civil War was not a contest resting on stark moral choices but a complex conflict that required a nuanced response. This way of presenting the conflict, however, came under attack following the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on 22nd September 1862.

Although emancipation altered the terms of the debate and affected the chances for Confederate recognition, we should not assume that failure became inevitable as soon as the announcement was made. If anything, the proclamation saw the beginning of the most intellectually and organizationally dynamic period of the conflict for southern sympathizers. Not only did British and American pro-southerners plough time and money into forming new groups and publications to lobby for recognition, they also attempted to refine their justifications for secession. While these endeavours proved unsuccessful, the fact that they were undertaken suggests that Confederate sympathizers did not see the military or diplomatic outcome of the Civil War as inevitable simply because Lincoln had put forward a plan to tackle slavery.

The immediate reaction to the Emancipation Proclamation among both Union sympathizers and the British public was relatively reserved. In terms of the specific provisions of the new plan there was a tendency to highlight the fact that the four slave states which had not seceded (Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland and Delaware) were exempt. The implication was that this was a wartime measure designed to undermine the Confederacy rather than an assertion of the abolitionist credentials of the Union. Similarly, those sympathetic to the South questioned the constitutional status of the proclamation, while also suggesting that it had been stimulated by northern military necessity and the desire to stir up a servile rebellion. Most criticism, however, centred on the possibility that the proclamation might cause an uprising of enslaved people in the South. In presenting this argument *The Times* actually invoked the spectre of the Haitian revolution. An article in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* was more broadly critical, characterizing the proclamation as

"monstrous, reckless and devilish." Even publications that were sympathetic to the Union, such as the *Daily News* and the *Morning Star,* were unimpressed by what they saw as Lincoln's attempt to incite a race war. One of the most prominent pro-Union voices in Britain (Richard Cobden) expressed the same concerns while even the veteran British abolitionists Charles Buxton and Lord Brougham were publicly critical of Lincoln's plan.[12]

Within government circles, the reaction was similarly unenthusiastic. On the same day that British newspapers first reported the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation (7th October) the Chancellor of the Exchequer (William Gladstone) gave in speech in Newcastle-Upon- Tyne in which he announced that the Confederate government had 'made a nation.' Although Gladstone failed to acknowledge the proclamation (both publicly and in his diary), it seems fair to assume that he was aware of the announcement and felt comfortable disregarding it. Furthermore, Lincoln's decision did nothing to discourage meetings between Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell about the possibility of British intervention in the American conflict. Russell in particular expressed concerns about the legal and constitutional status of the proclamation and speculated that it might stimulate rebellion.[13]

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[12] Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy*, 232-234; Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, 29-30, 107; Stephen B. Oates, "Henry Hotze: Confederate Agent Abroad," *Historian* 27 (1965): 131-154, 145; *Leeds Intelligencer*, 11th Oct 1862, 13th Dec 1862, 10th Jan 1863, 7th Feb 1863, 14th Feb 1863. Kevin J. Logan, 'The *Bee-Hive* Newspaper and British Working Class Attitudes Toward the American Civil War,' *Civil War History* 22, no.4 (1976): 344; Douglas A. Lorimer, 'The Role of Anti-Slavery Sentiment in English Reactions to the American Civil War,' *The Historical Journal* 19, no.2 (1976): 413-414. The Union government was well aware that the proclamation might be seen as an invitation to revolt by Europeans. Seward warned Lincoln of this fact in July 1862. See Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations*, 217.

[13] *Morning Post*, 9th October 1862. M. R. D. Foot ed. *The Gladstone Diaries* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974). For more on Gladstone's speech see Sebrell, *Persuading John Bull*, 100; Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy*, 235, 241.

Given the ubiquity of such responses it is unsurprising that pro-Confederates began to martial these critiques of emancipation into a defence of the South. One of the more valuable examples of this process can be seen in Henry Hotze's weekly *Index*. Both the publication and its author played a central role in the pro-southern cause and therefore require a brief introduction. Hotze had arrived in Britain at the beginning of 1862 with the intention of propagandizing for the Confederacy. Through a combination of personal diplomacy and an engaging writing style, he was soon producing material for national newspapers including the *London Post, Standard*, and the *London Herald*. Following these successes, Hotze established his own newspaper (the *Index)*, which he hoped would be a "worthy representative in journalism of the highest ideal of the Southern civilization which is as yet only in its infancy." Hotze had no delusions about securing a large circulation. Instead, he explained that he wished to influence those "by whom public opinion is formed." His approach to propaganda was essentially the same as other pro-Confederate activists working in Britain--to pressure the government by influencing policymakers (either directly or by whipping up public opinion). It was with this end in mind that Hotze wrote and published the first edition of the *Index* in May 1862. [14]

More so than any of his fellow southerners, Hotze evinced a willingness to tailor his descriptions of slavery to appeal to a British audience. We see this clearly in his response to the Emancipation Proclamation in which he attempted to channel British disappointment with the Union into support for the Confederacy. Much of the focus was placed on the apparent

[14] Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy*, 169; Foreman, *World on Fire*, 214-15, 273; Michael J. Turner, 'Perceptions of America and British Reform during the 1860s,' *Civil War History* 59, no.3 (September 2013): 338. Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, 145; Oates 'Henry Hotze' 140; Henry Hotze to George Witt, 11th Aug 1864, in *Henry Hotze: Confederate Propagandist*, ed. Lonnie Burnett (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008). *Index*, 21st Aug 1862.

lack of morality underpinning the measure. This was especially clear in his January 1863 editorial 'the English View of Federal Abolitionism.' In this article Hotze evoked the sort of British descriptions of the act discussed above and contended that emancipation was an exercise in political point scoring intended to gain international sympathy for the Union.[15] In doing so he also attempted to outline a post emancipation proclamation discourse which would be acceptable to both British and American pro-Confederates.

Such claims became standard fare in *Index* editorials and echoed the language used by some of the most effective British pro-Confederates including Spence and Beresford-Hope. The latter called the act a "gibbering outburst of spite" and Spence, even as he continued to claim an aversion to slavery, attacked Lincoln's sincerity on the basis that "the negroes and coloured men sent a deputation to Mr. Lincoln some months ago. He told them to their faces that they were an inferior race…that the country was required for white men, and as they could not live together the black must go." Spence also highlighted Lincoln's assertion that emancipation "was not directed against slavery on moral or social grounds, but was purely a measure of war."[16] By criticizing emancipation in these terms Spence, Beresford-Hope and Hotze were repeating the ideas of many mainstream commentators (including a number of

[15] Oates, 'Henry Hotze,' 137; Robert, E. Bonner, 'Slavery, Confederate Diplomacy and the Racialist Mission of Henry Hotze,' *Civil War History* 51, no.3 (September 2005): 389, Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations*, 193. *Index*, 22nd Jan 1863; 12th Feb 1863.

[16] A. J. B. Beresford-Hope, *The Social and Political Bearing of the American Disruption* (London: William Ridgway, 1863), 13; C.K Prioleau to G.A Trenholm, 21st Oct 1863 B.FT.8, Fraser Trenholm and Co. Business Records, Merseyside Maritime Museum [Hereafter FTC]; James Spence, *Southern Independence: An Address Delivered at a Public Meeting, in the City Hall, Glasgow, 26th Jan 1863* (London: Richard Bentley, 1863), 24-26. Spence made a similar assertion in a letter to *The Times*. See *The Times*, 6th Jan 1863. Other pro-Confederate speakers often made the same point see Mark Bennett, ,Confederate Supporters in the West Riding, 1861-1865: "Cranks of the Worst English Species",' *Northern History* 51, no.2 (September 2014): 311-30.

pro-Unionists) who had expressed disappointment at the proclamation. In doing so, they attempted to discourage the popularization of a wartime discourse which pitted the pro-slavery South against the anti-slavery North.

Viewed in this context, the refusal of the pro-Confederate lobby to accept their failure as inevitable after emancipation seems logical. Thus, they redoubled their efforts and refined their arguments in line with alternative political and ideological trends. Propagandists increasingly put forward an argument for southern independence which balanced British cynicism about the Emancipation Proclamation with the need to avoid coming out as unequivocally pro-slavery. Ideas of race and/or civilization provided the vehicle for this and it required very little leg work on the part of pro-Confederates to develop an argument which was consistent with their pre-emancipation claims. While they had consistently rejected the idea that slavery was a positive good which the South should commit to in the long term, southern sympathiser's had also emphasised the need for a gradual emancipation scheme during which enslaved people would be 'civilised' by white southerners. The fact that the Emancipation Proclamation rejected a gradual model provided scope for criticism in line with these earlier ideas. Beresford-Hope, for example, raised the spectre of a violent servile uprising in racial terms in his 1863 pamphlet *The Social and Political Bearings of the American Disruption* claiming that emancipation was an attempt by the Union to "set free a gang of howling savages, spreading murder and desolation." The pro-Confederate peer Lord Campbell echoed Beresford-Hope when speaking to the House of Commons in March 1863 by claiming that the Union government was "ready to let lose 4,000,000 negroes on their compulsory owners, and to renew from sea to sea the horrors and crimes of St. Domingo." Similar criticisms were offered by Lord Wharncliffe during the first meeting of the Southern Independence Association when he presented the Emancipation Proclamation as an invitation

to an uprising even as he endorsed abolition as an abstract concept.[17] The consistent focus here was on finessing the issue by criticizing the Emancipation Proclamation while also asserting individual or collective anti-slavery credentials. The intension for southern partisans was to direct widely held existing concerns in a way that would increase popular support for secession.

Not only did the period after emancipation see the development of new (or at least refined) arguments in favour of recognition, it also saw an attempt to form a coherent organizational structure for the movement. Several small groups emerged during the summer and autumn of 1862 with the Confederate States Aid Association appearing in the lead up the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation and the Liverpool Southern Club some weeks later. In 1863, however, a move was made to create a national body to coordinate the activities of Confederate sympathizers. James Spence and Alexander Collie were at the heart of these efforts which culminated in the formation of the Southern Independence Association (SIA). The group's first meeting at the Clarence Hotel in Manchester provides a useful overview of the sort of arguments that members relied on in their attempts to further the cause of Confederate recognition. Predictably, representatives of the group treated the Emancipation Proclamation as little more than a cynical political ploy. The SIA President, Lord Wharncliffe, claimed that "he had it on very good authority that the measure was really originated in this country [Great Britain], and [was] sent out as one that must be adopted to ensure the support of a certain party in England."[18] Wharncliffe's claim is telling regardless

[17] Beresford-Hope, *The Social and Political Bearing*, 23. Lord Campbell, *Speech of Lord Campbell in the House of Lords, on the Right of the Neutral Powers to Acknowledge the Southern Confederacy, March 23rd 1863* (London: James Ridgway, 1863), 19; *Morning Post*, 7th Oct 1863.

[18] Blackett, *Divided* Hearts, 67. Leeds *Mercury*, 6th Oct 1863. The avowed purpose of the SIA was to keep "before the mind of the British public the policy of injustice" being pursued by the Union government see *Leeds*

of its accuracy. The SIA were meeting the challenge presented by emancipation head-on by tapping into British concerns about the lack of morality underpinning American abolition while avoiding an open endorsement of slavery.

As part of their attempts to secure mainstream support, the SIA and its local allies combined interpretations of emancipation with the sort of wide-ranging justifications for southern independence which had been used during the opening years of the conflict. A handbill written by the SIA President Thomas Staley is illustrative of this approach. Not only did Staley include a list of the reasons that the South had seceded, which included "the belief that their country was drained by Northern tariffs," concern over "the influx of foreign races into the North," and "the natural desire of a powerful people to possess a government of their own," he asserted the legal right of secession. When it came to slavery, Staley echoed Wharncliffe by claiming that the SIA "desire[d] its [slavery's] removal, not in passion or vindictiveness, but with calm and discreet provisions." Staley went as far as to suggest that "those who desire the success of the North are really working for the perpetuation of slavery." This image of the South as the best hope for abolition was even integrated in more mainstream anti-northern publications such as the *Leeds Intelligencer*.[19] The use of this litany of justifications for secession by the SIA (and the fact that they were not necessarily

Mercury, 6th Oct 1863. For their formation see Blackett, *Divided Hearts,* 66-73. Campbell is broadly correct in his contention that the SIA were a small group although it is worth noting that he does not consult the Wharncliffe Muniments at Sheffield Archives which contain the most complete store of SIA papers. As a result, he understates the geographical range of group. See Campbell, *English Public Opinion,* 182-183.

[19] Handbill of the SIA, 1864-1865, W.h.m, Wharncliffe Muniments, Sheffield Archives, Sheffield [Hereafter WHM]; *Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmorland, Yorkshire Etc.,* 17th Oct 1863. Such claims were not the sole preserve of pro-Confederates. Newspaper editorials continued to suggest alternative explanations for the war see *Leeds Intelligencer*, 7th February 1863, 7th March 1863, 2nd May 1863, 30th May 1863. For the South as the best hope for abolition see *Leeds Intelligencer,* 6th February 1864.

antithetical to the British public discourse of the conflict at this juncture) is illustrative of the ideological vitality of the movement. The SIA retained a similar appeal to the groups that came before it an employed a comparable strategy as they attempted to direct Confederate activism in response to emancipation in way which would appeal to both existing converts and the public at large. The lack of long-term success is irrelevant--the period was characterized by dynamism rather than resignation.

The early months of 1863 also saw the floatation of the Confederacy's most ambitious European finance initiative--the Erlanger loan. A scheme to raise funds against cotton securities had been under discussion since autumn 1862 with the ratification of the plan by the Confederate Congress in January 1863. Soon after, coverage of the investment opportunity appeared in the British press. The consequence was that, despite being advertised in various financial centres across the continent, most of the subscriptions came from London. For some British journalists and (more importantly) James M. Mason, the apparent success of the loan suggested continuing European confidence in the prospect of southern independence. Mason went so far as to include the claim that 'very large sums were subscribed from a single desire to serve the Confederate cause' in a diplomatic dispatch on the 19th March. While Mason may have misinterpreted the motivation for investors, his claims tallied with an existing belief within Richmond that the health of the scheme was a measure of diplomatic prospects abroad.[20]

[20] Judith Fenner Gentry, 'A Confederate Success in Europe: The Erlanger Loan,' *Journal of Southern History* 36, no.2 (May 1970): 157-188. *Liverpool Mercury*, 10th Feb 1863, 19th March 1863; *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 11th Feb 1863; *Leeds Mercury*, 11th Feb 1863; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 13th Feb 1863; *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, 17th Feb 1863; *Leicester Chronicle or Commercial and Agricultural Advertiser*, 21st Feb 1863; *Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmorland, Yorkshire etc*, 21st Feb 1863; *Morning Post*, 19th March 1863; *Belfast News-Letter*, 19th March 1863; *Standard*,

As Judith Fenner Gentry points out, the fluctuating price of the loan in Britain was at least partly dictated by the military situation in North America. In this sense, the loan reflected the levels of confidence in Confederate independence--even if many people treated their subscriptions as a high risk/ high reward investment rather than a political statement. In a military sense, the timing of the initial offering could not have been more appropriate. The Confederate victory at Fredericksburg in December 1862 not only buoyed pro-Southern spirits in Britain, it also cast a shadow over the Emancipation Proclamation making the early months of 1863 a promising moment in which to raise funds. While the military and market situations may have tracked each other quite neatly, diplomatic developments tended to be more complex. Despite the victory at Fredericksburg, the British government did not seem particularly inclined to change their stance on the war. The fact that this continued to be the case through the start of the year is evidenced by the total failure of Lord Campbell's attempt to pass a motion to recognize the South on 23rd March 1863. As the year went on, Confederate reverses at Vicksburg and Gettysburg seemed to undermine the confidence which pro-southerners had taken from Fredericksburg and the initial success of the Erlanger loan while also convincing the Palmerston administration that the Confederacy was moving towards defeat.[21]

19th March 1863; *Daily News*, 20th March 1863; *Era*, 22nd March 1863; James M. Mason to Judah P. Benjamin, 19th March 1863 in *The Public Life and Diplomatic Correspondence of James M. Mason with Some Personal History*, ed. Virginia Mason (New York & Washington: The Neale Publishing Company, 1906), 397. Campbell makes the point that many investors saw the loan as a potentially lucrative risk which it was worth their while to take. *English Public Opinion*, 237-238. For Confederate finance more broadly see Sexton, *Debtor Diplomacy.*

[21] Gentry, 'A Confederate Success in Europe'; Jenkins, *Britain and the War For the Union Volume Two*, 219, 221, 316; Jones¸ *Union in Peril* 227; Sebrell, *Persuading John Bull*, 124-125, 170; Phillip E. Myers, *Caution and Cooperation: The American Civil War and British-American Relations* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2008), 128, 145.

Against this backdrop, it seems counterintuitive that British pro-Confederates would attempt to rally support in parliament for recognition and yet they did. The culmination of these activities came with Roebuck's attempt to introduce a measure in the Commons on 30th June 1863. The fact that Roebuck and Lindsay had visited Paris to liaise with Napoleon III about recognition, and the former's indiscreet discussion of this fact, rendered it politically impossible to secure widespread support within the House. The upshot was embarrassment for southern sympathizers. The circumstances surrounding the motion, however, meant that its failure was not necessarily understood as an indictment of the southern cause within Britain. According to *Berrow's Worcester Journal* 'there can be no doubt that had the debate proceeded to a vote, the verdict would have been against a recognition of the South, although the very members who would have voted against it, would have been ready to utter their heartiest wishes for the establishment of Southern independence. The question is one of time and opportunity.' Mason presented a similar version of events in his diplomatic dispatches on 2nd and 10th of July explaining in the latter 'I am assured from every quarter, and such is the result of my own observation, that four-fifths of the House of Commons is with us; but as parties stand…if Roebuck's motion should go to a vote, it would be rejected.' Some scholars have suggested the military backdrop of the motion played a role in its rejection. As Duncan Campbell notes, however, news of the defeat at Gettysburg had not reached Britain by the time of the vote while the Confederate success at Chancellorsville was still fresh in the public memory. The failure of the motion was therefore not necessarily seen by contemporaries as evidence of the futility of Confederate diplomacy or even the defeat of the army. Instead, it reflected the lack of diplomatic skills of those who had brought it.[22]

[22] Jenkins, *Britain and the War For the Union Volume Two*, 308-313; Sebrell, *Persuading John Bull*, 124-127; Myers, *Caution and Cooperation*, 144-145; Campbell, *English Public Opinion*, 168-177. For the text of Roebuck's motion see https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1863-06-30/debates/bcb203a3-688f-4527-bb5e-

The continued Confederate commitment to multiple forms advocacy in Britain is also demonstrated by their efforts to align the southern cause with particular strands of thinking among racial scientists. While the field itself was not new, the connection between a subset of British ethnographers and the Confederate cause became explicit with the formation of the Anthropological Society of London (ASL) in 1863. Robert Bonner rightly notes that the ASL was not simply a southern propaganda outfit. Its roots are actually to be found in an internal dispute among members of the Ethnological Society of London over polygenesis which culminated in Dr James Hunt and Richard Burton resolving to establish their own organization. Even if its early history had little direct connection to the American South, the ideas expounded by the ASL were of considerable value for pro-Confederates. Furthermore, the group's membership included several prominent southerners including George McHenry and Albert Taylor Bledsoe. Henry Hotze proved to be particularly interested in their work which re-affirmed ideas he had developed years earlier when translating the French racial theorist Arthur de Gobineau's *Essai sur I'Inegalite des Races Humaines* into English at the request of the South Carolinian Josiah C. Nott. For this reason, Hotze provided coverage of the ASL in the *Index* as well as financial support for the group's activities.[23]

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a52794ac9f56/UnitedStates%E2%80%94RecognitionOfTheSouthernConfederacy. *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 18th July 1863; Mason to Benjamin, 2nd July 1863 & 10th July 1863 in *The Public Life and Diplomatic Correspondence*, ed. Mason, 426-429, 431-432.

[23] Bonner, 'Slavery, Confederate Diplomacy,' 290-291, 294- 295, 297. For more on the ASL see Douglas A. Lorimer, 'Race, Science and Culture: Historical Continuities and Discontinuities, 1850-1914' in *The Victorians and Race*, ed. Shearer West (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1996); Ronald Rainger, 'Race, Politics and Science: The Anthropological Society of London in the 1860s,' *Victorian Studies*, 22.1(Autumn 1978): 51-70; Douglas Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance: Britain 1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013). For the changing perceptions of race in Britain see Andrew S. Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness:*

The connection between the ASL and the Confederate lobby was of value to both sides. While Hunt and Burton secured a funding source and the endorsement of political figures, southern sympathizers saw the work of the group as a way to boost the Confederate cause and confer scientific legitimacy on southern racial policies and attitudes. Furthermore, the potential value of the relationship to Confederate activists may have been magnified by recent developments in British parliamentary culture. Lawrence Goldman has noted the emergence of policy communities in Britain during the mid-19th century which attempted to draw on the knowledge of specialists to direct government action. While the connection can only be inferred, it is worth noting that one of most active British pro-southerners (Roebuck) had been a disciple of John Stuart Mill who was himself a leading light in the formation of the Social Science Association, an archetype for the policy communities of the period.[24]

Even if its policy impact was limited, the activities of the ASL were integrated into attempts to refine the packaging of the southern cause following emancipation. This is made especially clear by the publication of one of Hunt's lectures across two issues of the *Index*. Within this lecture Hunt proposed to "discuss the physical and mental characteristics of the Negro, with a view to determining not only his position in animated nature, but also the station he should occupy in the genus Homo." To conclude, Hunt confidently yoked together ideas of racially determined intelligence and the opportunity for advancement on the scale of

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Science & Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2011); Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960* (London: MacMillan, 1982).

[24] Bonner, 'Slavery, Confederate Diplomacy,' 300-301. George W. Stocking Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 247-249. Lawrence Goldman, *Science, Reform and Politics in Victorian Britain: The Social Science Association 1857-1886* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Lawrence Goldman, 'Social Reform and the Pressure of "Progress" on Parliament, 1660-1914,' *Parliamentary History* 37 no.1 (July 2018): 72-88.

civilization in his claim that "the Negro is inferior intellectually to the European," and "that the Negro is more humanized when in his natural subordination to the European than under any other circumstances." In addition to a full text of Hunt's lecture, Hotze also provided readers of the *Index* with his own editorial commentary which included specific references to how Hunt's insights applied to slavery and the Civil War.[25]

This racial discourse (not to mention the Emancipation Proclamation itself) needs to be understood in relation to ongoing British discussions of Caribbean abolition. The decision to abolish slavery in 1833 and the apprenticeship system in 1838 had been celebrated as evidence of British moral superiority and led to anti-slavery becoming a defining feature of national identity. While the discourse connecting Britishness with anti-slavery endured well into the 1860s (as evidenced by the reports of Confederate diplomats), attitudes towards the results of freedom in the Caribbean were becoming increasingly critical by the 1840s. The narrative that abolition had been a failure started to take hold during this decade when a depression in a sugar trade reduced the profitability of the colonies. Some suggested that the economic dislocation was a result of the labour regime which had replaced slavery. In the subsequent decades, this discourse became more widely accepted. It was also increasingly racialized through the image of the 'lazy African' and explicitly connected by some with ideas of scientific racism.[26] While the idea of abolition continued to be invoked across

[25] *Index*, 26th Nov 1863, 3rd Dec 1863, 10th Dec 1863, 12th Feb 1863.

[26] Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor and Politics in Jamaica and Great Britain 1832-1938* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); R.J.M Blackett, 'Cracks in the Anti-Slavery Wall: Frederick Douglass's Second Visit to England (1859-1860) and the Coming of the Civil War' in *Liberating Sojourn: Frederick Douglass and Transatlantic Reform*, eds. Alan J. Rice & Martin Crawford (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), 187-206 Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), 349-353; George F. Rehin, 'Blackface Street

Britain, disillusion and the increasing popularity of the concept of racial hierarchy offered the opportunity to develop additional caveats when criticizing slavery.

While Hunt and a small group of his fellow anthropologists attempted to justify slavery on the grounds of racial necessity, the British pro-southern lobby continued to avoid endorsing the system in abstract terms. Rather than challenging the existing framework popular British anti-slavery they attempted to work within it. Often, these lobbyists endeavoured to soften the edges of the institution by suggesting that slaveholders acted as a civilizing force on those held in slavery. Even Hotze (who had little in the way of sympathy for abolition) presented the system in these terms to increase the appeal of the Confederacy in Britain. He claimed that southern slaveholders engaged in a process of civilization making "the fierce sanguinary African" a "Christian labourer contented with his lot." British pro-Confederates echoed these claims. Lord Wharncliffe identified a similarity between the treatment of enslaved people in the South and the idealized paternal system "which prevailed largely in England between the owners of an estate and those resident on them who were treated kindly, justly and generously." Spence offered a comparable description when addressing an audience in Stockport (Cheshire) in November 1863, asserting that "nothing could exceed the kindness of the treatment received by the slaves at the hands of their masters." Often the image of the benevolent slaveholder was juxtaposed to descriptions of the violence and social exclusion that free blacks suffered in the North. Wharncliffe, for example, drew attention to the treatment of northern blacks during anti-draft riots in New York City and described "the hatred [of] the negro" in the region. A similar point was made by the Tory newspaper the *Leeds Intelligencer*, which noted the "savage outrages which they [the mob]

Minstrels in Victorian London and Its Resorts: Popular Culture and Its Racial Connotations as Revealed in Polite Opinion,' *Journal of Popular Culture* 15 no.1 (Summer 1981): 19-38.

committed upon the unhappy negroes who fell into their hands." The same publication made a more general point about the hypocrisy of northerners and their treatment of free African Americans in a later edition in August 1863.[27]

When levelled by British pro-southerners, these criticisms of Union emancipation and/or justifications of Confederate slavery were typically paired with assertions that the institution was morally wrong in an abstract sense and would eventually need to be abolished. Wharncliffe, for instance, described the horror of all Englishmen at the continued existence of the institution and celebrated British abolition as "one of the most noble things ever done by any nation." To reconcile his apparent opposition to slavery with his continued support for the South after 1863, Wharncliffe claimed that the Confederate government would eventually abolish the system. This would, however, be done in a gradual "controlled" way. William Fernley, another SIA speaker who addressed a meeting in Stockport during the following month, made a similar point. He claimed that all Britons "hated slavery and desired to see it abolished" to achieve this, however, it was necessary to "look to the South, and not to the North." Neither of these sentiments should be surprising given the fact that the SIA described itself as being committed to the abolition of slavery.[28] While such an argument was not new, the context had changed drastically. The adoption of the Emancipation Proclamation meant that the fate of slavery in the war had become something that required action on the part of the South.

[27] *Index*, 26th Nov 1863, 3rd Dec 1863, 10th Dec 1863, 12th Feb 1863; *Morning Post*, 7th Oct 1863; *Standard*, 6th Nov 1863. *Leeds Intelligencer*, 1st Aug 1863, 22nd Aug 1863.

[28] *Leeds Mercury*, 6th Oct 1863; *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 9th Oct 1863; *Morning Post*, 7th Oct 1863; *Standard*, 6th Nov 1863 see also *York Herald*, 19th Dec 1863. Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, 68.

Clearly, pro-southerners responded to the Emancipation Proclamation with an energy that has received little scholarly attention. Those examining the international fallout from emancipation have correctly noted the lukewarm reaction amongst the generally anti-northern (but not pro-southern) British populace. Yet American and British Confederate sympathizers were not passive at this time. Public ambivalence opened a discursive space which they used to refine their representation of the South. This representation reflected the popular British response to abolition which can best be characterized as simultaneously anti-slavery and anti-Emancipation Proclamation. The continued investment of time in these activities by southern partisans suggests a level of confidence in the potential they had for success. Yet the intellectual developments which occurred within the movement also revealed an incoherence among Confederate supporters which (when combined with diplomatic and military developments reverses later in 1863) caused the Davis administration to abandon their official activities in Britain. This incoherence was rooted in emancipation only insofar as it rested on the distinctive attitudes towards slavery evinced by American pro-southerners and their British collaborators. Specifically, a Britishness preparedness to accept the institution with a range of provisos in contrast to a wholehearted Confederate endorsement of it.

Even if the initial British reaction to the Emancipation Proclamation was unenthusiastic, the announcement brought a renewed focus on the role of slavery in the conflict. The result was growing sensitivity among Confederate diplomats, ministers and propagandists about the need to "keep this unfortunate question as much in the background as possible." In the most basic sense, the previous strategy of doubting northern claims that the war was being fought between an anti-slavery Union and pro-slavery Confederacy became less effective. These changes became especially evident during the final months of 1863 since the direst predictions about the outcome of Union abolition had proved to be false. This necessitated Confederate sympathizers attempting to justify secession to a public who were

increasingly enthusiastic about the Emancipation Proclamation. From the point of view of British activists, the vague pre-1863 claims that the South would eventually abolish slavery seemed less convincing now that the Union had set out a timetable to end the institution. Balancing this transitional period was particularly difficult for southerners in Britain since promising any action against slavery would fly in the face of everything the Confederacy stood for. The tension is made manifest by Henry Hotze's decision to publicly abstain from the resolution of a group in Manchester who called for gradual abolition in the South.[29] In doing so, he showed a sensitivity to British attitudes towards slavery without taking a public position which would be antithetical to Richmond. Such a position would prove difficult to maintain meaning that even as money was being pumped into the cause of Confederate recognition in Britain the lobby itself was beginning to unravel at an ideological level.

The most significant organizational rift came in the summer of 1863 as the relationship between James Spence and his American backers turned increasingly sour. Regardless of his personal views of slavery, Spence was aware that the Confederate government needed to avoid wholeheartedly endorsing the system to maintain its credibility with a British public who were increasingly positive about Union emancipation. Many prominent British pro-Confederates (including Spence, Wharncliffe and Beresford-Hope) focused on the need for gradualism as an explanation for the lack of action by the South. The latter two invoked a hybrid theory which fused earlier ideas of the need to 'civilize' the population with the discourse of racial science. While Spence was not averse to such arguments, he also publicly expressed his revulsion of slavery in no uncertain terms and suggested that abolition was inevitable. At points he seemed to shift towards veiled criticism

[29] John Slidell to Judah P. Benjamin, 29th Sept 1862 in *The Messages and Papers of Jefferson Davis*. Turner, *Liberty and Liberticide*, ed. Richardson, 156; *Leeds Intelligencer*, 20th December 1862; Charles K. Prioleau to Henry Grimball? [Surname Illeg.], 31st March 1863, B.FT.8, [FTC]. Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, 27-28.

of the South noting in *The Times* that even though "Southerners believe slavery to be right, as we used to," they could be educated on the topic and would abolish the system in due course. Spence accompanied this public effort with private diplomacy which including lobbying Mason to announce abolition as a long-term aim for the Confederacy. Mason, Hotze and the Davis administration were predictably hostile to such suggestions and grew uncomfortable with Spence's insistence on the need to present the South as sympathetic to abolition. The upshot was Spence's removal from his official role as a Confederate agent.[30]

Spence consistently proved himself to be aware of the theoretical British antipathy to slavery while remaining conscious of how contingent it could be in practice. In the immediate aftermath of emancipation, Confederate sympathizers from all backgrounds attempted to exploit this ambivalence to wrestle control of the war narrative from Union supporters who believed they had been handed a trump card by Lincoln. As 1863 went on, however, Spence (more so than his pro-southern peers) seems to have become aware that this rearguard action on the part of the Confederate diplomatic mission was failing. As a result, he believed southern sympathizers needed to condemn slavery more aggressively than they had done previously. For American pro-southerners Spence's stance was unacceptable.

While American activists may have believed removing him was necessary, the loss of Spence's skill as a propagandist caused considerable damage to the movement. From the perspective of pro-Unionists in Britain the public split between Spence and his allies offered the chance to reinforce the idea that the conflict had morphed into one about the fate of

[30] Mason to Benjamin, 4th Nov 1862 & 29th Sept 1864 in Mason *The Public Life and Diplomatic Correspondence,* ed. Mason; Blackett, *Divided Hearts,* 27-28. *The Times,* 11th Sept 1863; E.D Adams, *Britain and the American Civil War Vol Two,* 220. *The Times,* 27th Oct 1863, Oates, 'Henry Hotze,' 151-152; Bonner, 'Slavery, Confederate Diplomacy,' 303; Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations,* 251.

American slavery just at the point that the public were becoming more confident in Lincoln's emancipation plan. A *Leeds Mercury* editorial written in response to the formation of a branch of the SIA in London drew attention to the divisions between Spence and southern pro-Confederates. The writer highlighted the fact that when the "able advocate of Southern interests [Spence], knowing that it was absolutely necessary to quiet John Bull's conscience on the question of slavery, suggested that a promise of gradual abolition of the system might be obtained," the Confederate government rejected the plan with "outbursts of uncontrollable rage," and demanded that the southern lobby "dismiss from its service an agent who had dared to commit such sacrilege." The Spence split therefore seemed to represent the public rejection of any form of abolition by the Confederate government just at the point at which Britons shifted towards support for the Emancipation Proclamation.[31] Given Spence's central position in the pro-Southern movement in Britain, the decision of Confederate diplomats to ease him out of his official role in the final months of 1863 indicates that it was at this point (rather than in the immediate aftermath of emancipation) that southerners started to abandon their hopes for recognition.

The breakdown in the relationship between Spence and the Confederate government can be understood not only in terms of the fallout from emancipation but also in relation to long-standing ideological differences within the movement. Spence's advocacy of abolition (however insincere) had never been consistent with the version of Confederate nationalism embraced by men like Mason and Benjamin. These southerners, however, accepted his public pronouncements during the first two years of the war, knowing they had been developed to appeal to British tastes. The prevailing popular ambiguity about the meaning of the conflict had allowed activists to present a unified front that had fused the lack of Union commitment

[31] *Leeds Mercury*, 25th Jan 1864.

to abolition with vague promises of future action against slavery by the Confederacy and justifications for secession rooted in trade policy, ethnicity, political culture and national self-determination. Not only did the Emancipation Proclamation damage pro-Confederate activism (at least in the medium term) it also exposed divisions between the activists themselves to the public gaze. This basic disconnect between the two branches of pro-southernism is shown clearly by the fact that Spence continued to be a vocal advocate for southern independence as both a speaker and a journalist despite the end of his official relationship with the government in Richmond.[32]

Changing British attitudes towards the war, combined with military and diplomatic setbacks for the South and the public divorce from Spence, account for a dawning sense of futility about the chances of Confederate recognition in Britain. As a result, in August 1863 Judah P. Benjamin wrote despondently to John Slidell to confess that southern appeals for British support were in vain and that it was "rather prejudicial than conductive to our interests or our honor to attempt any further correspondence with the British Government." Benjamin also instructed Mason (the most senior representative of the Confederacy working in Britain) to abandon his role and decamp to Paris while also expelling the remaining British Consuls from southern cities. The move was part of a shift by the Davis administration to focus their diplomatic efforts on securing French recognition. The fact that Mason would remain in Paris until the commencement of the ill-fated Kenner mission in February 1865 is suggestive of the extent to which the Confederate government considered the work being undertaken in Britain in the final months of 1863 and through 1864 as futile.[33]

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[32] *Leeds Mercury*, 20th Jan 1864, 13th Feb 1864. *The Times*, 1st April 1864.

[33] Blackett, *Divided* Hearts, 160; Doyle, *The Cause of All* Nations, 253. Benjamin to Slidell, 17th Aug 1863 in Richardson, (eds.), *The Messages and Papers of Jefferson Davis*. Jordan and Pratt, *Europe and the American*

A telling coda relating to the incoherence of the pro-Confederate lobby within Britain is offered by the rump of supporters who remained active after the withdrawal of Mason. Hotze continued to print the *Index* and would attempt to transition it into a viable publication following the collapse of the Confederacy. More interesting, however, are the activities of James Spence and the SIA. Despite the less than amicable end of his official relationship with the Confederacy, Spence continued to put forward his own interpretation of the war in various forums. Similarly, the SIA and individual members affiliated with the group printed pamphlets and organized meetings in which they explained the war in ways intended to problematize the freedom versus slavery narrative of the conflict.[34] These activities are suggestive of the fact that the official pro-Confederate lobby and British pro-southerners had always had distinct understandings of the nature of southern nationalism. Therefore, even when the Confederate government had all but abandoned their hopes that the Palmerston

Civil War, 187. Charles M. Hubbard, *The Burden of Confederate Diplomacy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 149-50; Robert E. May, 'The Irony of Confederate Diplomacy: Visions of Empire, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Quest for Nationhood,' *Journal of Southern History* 83, no.1 (February 2017): 69-105, 95-102; Jenkins, *Britain and the War for the Union Volume Two*, 313-314. The final push was made for British recognition came with the Kenner mission in the early months of 1865. The state of the Confederate military at this time meant that despite offering emancipation, Kenner secured also no popular or political support in Europe see Craig A. Bauer, 'The Last Effort: The Secret Mission of the Confederate Diplomat, Duncan F. Kenner,' *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 22, no.1 (Winter 1981): 67-95; Jones, *Blue and Grey Diplomacy*, 318; Foreman, *World on Fire*, 731-49; Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations*, 275.

[34] 1864-1865 Handbill of the SIA, W.h.m 460, [WHM]; Marquess of Lothian, *The Confederate Secession* (Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1864); *Index* 14th Jan 1864. *Leeds Mercury*, 7th Oct 1863. A. J. B. Beresford-Hope to Lord Wharncliffe, 7th Nov 1863 W.h.m 418, [WHM]. *Leeds Mercury*, 30th Jan 1864. *Index*, 14th Jan 1864. See also *Index* 21st Feb 1864, 9th June 1864, 14th July 1864, 20th Oct 1864.

administration might offer recognition the unofficial British lobby continued to propound a view of the conflict that was increasingly divorced from Confederate diplomacy.

In *Caution and Cooperation*, Philip E. Myers correctly suggests that the Emancipation Proclamation was a transformative moment in Confederate diplomatic prospects. He also, however, claims that 'Confederate foreign policy lacked propaganda value after the Emancipation Proclamation.'[35] While the latter may ultimately have proved to be true, propagandists themselves (not to mention the Confederate government) didn't see it this way. For the nine to twelve months after emancipation was announced, the pro-Confederate lobby within Britain was arguably at its most intellectually and organizational vibrant. By examining this period, we see the reformulation of Confederate discourse and the contingent role which emancipation played in diplomatic relations. Furthermore, the period throws the internal dynamics of the pro-Confederate lobby into sharp relief. As the Emancipation Proclamation altered the moral discourse around the war, the distinctions between British and American pro-southerners were made clear. The upshot of this was the continued existence of a pro-Confederate lobby within Britain, making their own idiosyncratic claims about southern independence months after the Davis administration had acknowledged the futility of continued diplomatic operations in Britain.

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[35] Myers, *Caution and Cooperation*, 140, 195.

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