EFFORTS TO NEGOTIATE PEACE

DURING THE CIVIL WAR

By

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INTRODUCTION

The War between the States commenced on April 12, 1861, with the firing on Fort Sumter by Confederate forces. Four years elapsed before hostilities were terminated by General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appamattox on April 9, 1865. After this date, effective military resistance to the North was ended. The war actually ended with military victory on the one side and complete surrender on the other. However, regardless of the result, both sides suffered staggering manpower and economic losses, and for these reasons, among others, men of both camps sought to end the conflict by peaceful means.

This study, dealing with efforts to end the Civil War, must, of necessity, be clearly delineated. The war years are marked with as many endeavors to stop the hostilities as there were attempts to prosecute them to their fullest extent. Of foremost importance in the field would seem to be those ventures which involved the actual meeting of agents accredited by the opposing governments. This study will deal with a two-fold aspect of such peace efforts: those missions which fell short of actual arbitration and those missions which culminated in negotiation. Peace negotiations, on the other hand, would not have been undertaken without the strong impetus of peace sentiment in both sections, but this study does not treat this vast subject. Also excluded are those endeavors by leading European nations to mediate the differences of the belligerents.

Much attention has been paid to the ceaseless efforts to reconcile the differences of the North and South during the twenty-year period preceding the outbreak of hostilities. The winter of 1860-1861, a period of considerable compromise activity, has also received adequate treatment. Yet comparatively little has been written concerning those efforts to negotiate peace during the course of the war years. The story of those attempts appears in numerous memoirs, biographies, and articles, but these accounts are of a very subjective nature and survey only the portion of the field with which the writer was concerned. One thorough study has been made of peace activities during the final year of the war. Although the author includes those efforts which preceded the year 1864, they are given confused and inadequate treatment. Therefore, another attempt to assemble and appraise those negotiations would seem to be justified.

The most important considerations throughout the course of peace efforts were the differing bases of peace in the North and South. The Republican party itself was badly split over the question of slavery. The Radicals, the abolitionist segment of the party, made emancipation the primary objective. Regular Republicans, the Conservatives, were first and foremost Unionists. Their opposition to slavery might be either mild or strong, but it was subordinated to saving the Union. Lincoln was typical of the latter group. His victory in the election of 1864 clearly demonstrated that a majority of the North was committed to a continuation of the war until the Union could be restored. The Confederacy, based on the theory of state sovereignty, was fighting for separation from that Union. The war, begun ostensibly over the question of federal control of the institution of slavery, resolved itself into

a struggle to throw off the yoke of all Federal control. The dispute over slavery was submerged in the larger issue of Southern independence.

General unpreparedness had prevented either the United States or the Confederacy from winning a decisive victory in the early years of the war. Recognizing the seriousness of the conflict, both sides settled down to a long struggle. Throughout the first two years the war in the East was a stalemate along the Virginia border. However, by the summer of 1863, Union armies were achieving success in the West. The year 1862 ended with all of Kentucky and western and central Tennessee in Union hands. The entire Mississippi except the stretch between Fort Hudson and Vicksburg had been secured. General U. S. Grant, in a brilliant maneuver, had reached Vicksburg and was laying siege to the fort at the end of May, 1863. Appropriately, the first peace overture was made in the summer of 1863 and evolved from the Confederacy.

CHAPTER I

MISSIONS WHICH FELL SHORT OF NEGOTIATION

Confederate Vice-President Alexander H. Stephens wrote to Jefferson Davis from his home in Georgia on June 12, 1863, suggesting that he would like to undertake a mission to Washington on the subject of the exchange of prisoners of war.[1] Numerous difficulties had been present in the exchange and treatment of prisoners during the early war years, and Stephens felt he would be a qualified agent for the conduct of negotiations to ameliorate the situation. However, the subject of prisoner exchange was meant to be only an opening wedge in the discussion of the larger issue of peace. Stephens wrote that:

> . . . at this time, I think possibly I might be able to do some good—not only on the immediate subject in hand; exchange of certain classes of prisoners of war but were I in conference with the authorities at Washington on any point in relation to the conduct of the war, I am not without hopes, that indirectly, I could now turn attention to a general adjustment, upon such basis as might ultimately be acceptable to both parties, and stop the further effusion of blood in a contest so irrational, unchristian, and so inconsistent with all recognized American principles.[2]

He then set down his basis for negotiation:

> Of course, I entertain but one idea of the basis of final settlement or adjustment; that is, the recognition of the Sovereignty of the States, and the right of each in its Sovereign capacity to determine its own destiny. The

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[1] Alexander H. Stephens, A Constitutional View of the Late War Between the States (2 vols., Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, 1870), II, 558. Hereafter cited as Stephens, Constitutional View.

[2] Ibid., 559.

> full recognition of this principle covers all that is really involved in the present issue. That the Federal Government is yet ripe for such acknowledgment, I, by no means, believe; but that the time has come for a proper presentation of the question to the authorities at Washington, I believe. My object is, solely, to inform you, that I am ready and willing to undertake such a mission.[3]

Davis replied to the letter by a telegram on June 19, advising Stephens that he should proceed to Richmond immediately. Stephens reached the Confederate capital on June 22 or 23 and was dismayed to find that the military situation had changed considerably since the dispatch of his letter to Davis. He stated that he knew nothing of the contemplated movement into Pennsylvania and that the line of policy he planned to pursue was inconsistent with a military invasion of the North.[4]

In an interview with the President, Stephens explained that the change in the military aspect had entirely changed his views as to the propriety of undertaking peace negotiations at that time. He felt the movement of a Confederate army into Pennsylvania would greatly excite the war spirit of the North and strengthen the war party—effects directly opposite to those which he had hoped to produce. Stephens felt certain

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[3] Ibid., 559-560. Stephens, writing in later years, denied that he intended a peace mission. "It did not contemplate any overture or direct offer of terms of any sort on that subject. But if Mr. Lincoln could be prevailed on to agree to such a conference, then the object proposed, besides effecting, if possible, the general amelioration of prisoners. . ., was to use the occasion for effecting also, if possible, other ulterior results which might open the way for future negotiations that might eventually lead to an amicable adjustment. In the accomplishment of these ulterior ends the idea was not so much to act upon Mr. Lincoln and the then ruling authorities at Washington, as through them, when the correspondence should be published, upon the great mass of people in the United States. . . ." Ibid., 561.

[4] Ibid., 563. This military movement was climaxed in the Battle of Gettysburg, July 1-3.

that any peace application would be rejected under such circumstances.[5]

Davis, on the other hand, had high hopes that General Lee would administer a blow which would make it opportune to have a negotiator in Washington at that moment. He concurred in the doubts expressed by Stephens as to his reception by the Washington authorities, but was of the very decided opinion that the chances of a favorable reception would be increased rather than lessened by the position of Lee's army. Stephens did not agree and suggested that the proposed mission be postponed. Davis then suggested a cabinet consultation on the subject and requested that Stephens attend.

Every member of the cabinet, while doubtful of Stephens' reception in Washington, was of the same opinion as the Confederate President, that the prospect of success was increased by the movement of Lee's army.[6] As a credential for his mission, Davis gave Stephens two letters addressed to Lincoln. They were identical except as to form of address, and here every care was taken to put the letter into a form which would be acceptable to the Union President. One was addressed to President Lincoln from President Davis, and, in the event this was refused as involving a recognition of the Confederacy, the other was drawn up to Commander-in-Chief Lincoln from Commander-in-Chief Davis.[7] Since the letters merely state that Stephens was to establish a cartel for the exchange of prisoners, Davis evidently placed the entire responsibility

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[5] Ibid., 564.

[6] Ibid., 565. Stephens noted that John A. Seddon, Confederate Secretary of War, was particularly anxious that something be done about prisoner status before the fall of Vicksburg.

[7] Ibid., 779-780, Appendix P.

for seeking peace terms upon Stephens' shoulders. Any probing of Northern terms that Stephens might attempt would be without official authorization.[8]

Stephens, accompanied by Robert Ould, Confederate Commissioner of Prisoners, proceeded down the James River to Newport News on the Torpedo, a Confederate flag-of-truce boat. There Stephens applied to Admiral S. P. Lee for permission to proceed to Washington to deliver a letter from Davis to Lincoln. Great confusion was occasioned at Washington by the unexpected request, for Stephens did not state the object of his mission.

Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, after receiving the dispatch from Admiral Lee on July 4, showed it to Montgomery Blair, Postmaster General, who made no comment, and Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War, who "swore and growled indignantly."[9] Lincoln was not available for an hour or two that evening, and so Welles consulted Secretary of State William H. Seward first. Seward definitely opposed having anything to do with either Stephens or Davis. Before Welles saw the President late that night, Blair, Stanton, and Seward had seen him and made their feelings known. Although Welles regarded the proposition as somewhat sinister, Lincoln treated the subject lightly and postponed action until the following day.

At 11:00 A.M. on Sunday, July 5, the Cabinet assembled to discuss the Stephens question. The President read a letter from Colonel

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Gideon Welles, Diary of Gideon Welles (3 vols., Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911), I, 358. Hereafter cited as Welles, Diary.

W. A. Ludlow, United States agent for the exchange of prisoners, to Secretary Stanton, stating that Stephens had made a communication to Admiral Lee, which the Admiral had forwarded to the Secretary of the Navy.

> After reading ..., the President said he was at first disposed to put this matter aside without many words, or much thought, but a night's reflection and some remarks yesterday had modified his views. While he was opposed to having Stephens and his vessel come here, he thought it would be well to send someone--perhaps go himself--to Fortress Monroe.[10]

The latter remark startled both Seward and Stanton. Seward felt that Stephens was a dangerous man and thought it would be inadvisable for anyone to go. The only concession he would make would be to allow Stephens to forward any communication through General John A. Dix, thereby ignoring the Navy Department, through which the communication had originally come. Stanton protested earnestly against having anything to do with Stephens or Davis or their communication. Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, concurred in this view. A somewhat different view of the affair was taken by Blair. He would not permit Stephens to come to Washington but would receive any communication he carried, regardless of its form of address. While the discussion was going on, Welles protested to Lincoln against Colonel Ludlow or General Dix being used as the medium of communication, since they were not logically connected with the transaction. Admiral Lee, as commander of the blockading force, had received the original communication from Stephens and was now awaiting an answer. At this stage of the proceeding, Seward proposed that Admiral Lee should be ignored and the subject

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[10] Ibid., 359.

transferred from the Navy Department to a military officer or a member of the State Department.[11] Welles was determined that he make a definite reply to Lee's application and suggested the following answer:

> The object of the communication borne by Mr. Stephens is not stated or intimated. It is not expedient from this indefinite information that you should permit that gentleman to pass the blockade with the Torpedo.[12]

After lengthy discussion and considerable disagreement, the Cabinet members were still not united on a policy. Seward had reconsidered his proposition that the communication should be received, and, like Stanton, thought it would be best to have nothing to do with the mission. Lincoln was fearful that Welles' letter had that tendency. Blair and Stanton thought the letter the most practical suggestion that had been submitted, while Seward was of the opinion that both Stanton and Welles should write separate answers, Stanton to Ludlow and Welles to Lee, but to the same effect.

Lincoln objected that the letter would not dispose of the communication which Stephens bore, but Welles told him the dispatch would not exclude it. The matter would be left open so that if Stephens chose he could state his object. Welles continued that he would prefer to add "I am directed by the President to say that any communication which Mr. Stephens may have can be forwarded," but, as Welles expected, this suggestion did not meet with general approval.[13] The President preferred to send a special messenger to Stephens, but no one favored that plan. Welles stated that the President was reluctant to give Rebel

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[11] Ibid., 360.

[12] Ibid., 360-361.

[13] Ibid., 361.

sympathizers an opportunity to make friends by rudely refusing to communicate with them.[14] It was finally decided that no reply should be made until the next day, and Welles was advised not to communicate with Lee until a final answer should be dispatched.

At the Cabinet meeting the next morning, Seward came with a brief telegram, prepared by Lincoln, which stated that Stephens' request to come to Washington could not be granted, but that he might make any military communication through the prescribed military channel. A copy of this answer was to be sent to the military officer in command of Fortress Monroe by the Secretary of War, and another copy to Admiral Lee by the Secretary of the Navy. Seward was to see that the messages were correctly forwarded. Welles attributed the final arrangement of the matter to Seward.[15]

Current military events undoubtedly influenced the Union refusal to admit the Confederate Vice-President. When Stephens reached Newport News, the battle of Gettysburg had already been fought; and during the two days he remained with Admiral Lee, Vicksburg was surrendered. Stephens returned to the Confederacy, thoroughly discouraged, his mission a failure.

The second peace mission which fell short of arbitration was of Northern origin and occurred in the late summer of 1863. The chief figure in this mission was a chiropodist, Dr. Issachar Zacharie, who had acted as a personal correspondent for Lincoln and a spy for General

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[14] Ibid., 362.

[15] Ibid., 363.

Nathaniel P. Banks in New Orleans.[16] Zacharie's background is obscure. Apparently he spent most of his life in New York City and was evidently a man of many talents. He was running a grocery store as late as 1851 and in the following year had established himself as a chiropodist. He embarked upon his career as a spy in the South late in 1862. What little is known of the Zacharie mission to Richmond has been pieced together from letters that Zacharie wrote to Banks.[17]

Zacharie returned to New York from New Orleans early in July of 1863 and called on Seward, suggesting a peace overture. Seward refused his request for a pass into the Confederacy, giving as his reason the fear that Zacharie might be held as a hostage after the Union refusal to meet with Stephens. The recent Union victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg also precluded negotiations at that time. Zacharie was convinced he had been refused because any success the mission might have would attach credit to Banks and help the latter secure the Republican nomination in 1864.[18]

In September, Lincoln sent for Zacharie to come to Washington and see him. He assured Zacharie he would help him carry out his plans. Lincoln gave him letters to General John Gray Foster at Fortress Monroe to enable him to get a pass on a flag-of-truce boat to Richmond. After

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[16]George S. Denison to Chase, February 1, 1863, Salmon P. Chase, Diary and Correspondence of Salmon P. Chase (Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1902, Vol. II, Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1903), 353. Denison was Chase's official and personal representative in New Orleans from June, 1862, until March, 1865.

[17]Fred Harrington, "A Peace Mission of 1863," American Historical Review, XLVI (October, 1940), 76-77.

[18]Zacharie to Banks, July 30, 1863, ibid., 79-80.

his mission in Richmond was completed, he was to proceed to Charleston and Mobile and rejoin Banks at New Orleans.[19]

Zacharie left for Richmond from Fortress Monroe on September 21 and was met at City Point, Virginia, by J. P. Benjamin (Secretary of State), S. R. Mallory (Secretary of the Navy), John Seddon (Secretary of War), and Brig. General John H. Winder (provost marshal and commander of Northern prisoners in Richmond). Benjamin informed him it would not be safe for him to pass through the South, and so Zacharie returned to Washington.[20]

When Zacharie returned to the Northern capital, Lincoln apparently did not know what course to pursue in the situation. The President had evidently sent Zacharie without consulting Seward; and when the subject was brought before the Cabinet, Chase earnestly opposed it. Zacharie suggested that Banks be sent to negotiate and that he would go immediately to inform Benjamin of Banks' impending arrival, but this suggestion was ignored.[21]

Zacharie had two subsequent interviews with Seward. At the last interview he told Zacharie to return to New York, for Lincoln would clinch the matter when he was ready. Zacharie objected, saying that since the Department of the Gulf had begun the project, he and Banks should be allowed to conclude the matter. He felt the administration was not prepared to do anything in the matter and returned to New York

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[19]Zacharie to Banks, September 8, 1863, ibid., 81. Zacharie wrote that he would leave about September 16 and expected to be in New Orleans about the middle of October.

[20]Zacharie to Banks, October 9, 1863, ibid., 83.

[21]Zacharie to Banks, October 9, 1863, ibid., 84.

thoroughly disgruntled.[22] Two months passed and no action was taken. Zacharie wrote Banks that Lincoln and Seward did not really want to make peace because their party would not approve. He stated that Lincoln had told him he would not have been sent to Richmond if there had been any chance of a favorable reception for the mission.[23] Zacharie was convinced that jealousy of Banks and administrative reluctance to make peace overtures after the military victories of the summer had doomed his mission to failure.

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[22]Zacharie to Banks, October 24, 1863, ibid., 85-86.

[23]Zacharie to Banks, December 28, 1863, ibid., 86.

CHAPTER II

THE JAQUESS-GILMORE MISSION

The summer of 1863 was notable for the origin of another peace mission to the Confederacy. Initiated by a Methodist minister, it held, at first, a purely religious connotation. James F. Jaquess had been president of a small Methodist college in Quincy, Illinois. When the war broke out, he was commissioned to raise a "three-year regiment," the Seventy-Third Illinois.[1] His regiment had served in many of the western campaigns with distinction, and by the spring of 1863, was encamped at Murfreesboro, Tennessee.[2]

On May 19 of that year, Colonel Jaquess wrote to General James A. Garfield to request a furlough from military duty.[3] He stated that from communications with ministers and members of the Southern Methodist Church he had learned that peace sentiment was so prevalent in the South that its constituents would return to the Union fold whenever they could be assured of amnesty. Jaquess was shocked at the thought of fellow Christians in the North and South killing one another and felt he should

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[1] At the beginning of the war, regiments were commonly raised on a volunteer basis for a stated period of time.

[2] Edward Chase Kirkland, The Peacemakers of 1864 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), 87. Hereafter cited as Kirkland, Peacemakers.

[3] Jaquess to Garfield, May 19, 1863, John G. Nicolay and John Hay, Abraham Lincoln, A History (10 vols., New York: The Century Company, 1917), IX, 202. Hereafter cited as Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln. Garfield was then chief-of-staff to General William S. Rosecrans, commander of the Army of the Ohio.

endeavor to stop the hostilities. He wrote:

> I would submit to the proper authorities the following propositions, viz: To go into the Southern Confederacy, and return within ninety days with a proposal of peace that will be acceptable to our government.[4]

This letter was relayed to General William S. Rosecrans and he, perplexed by Jaquess' unusual request, asked James R. Gilmore, who was visiting the camp at that time, for advice.

Gilmore, under the pen name of Edmund Kirke, had written several books on Southern conditions and was an essayist and editorial writer for the New York Tribune. This activity brought him into contact with Horace Greeley; by 1863 the relationship resulted in a similarity of distrust for the Lincoln administration and its policy. At any rate, Gilmore was engaged in one of Greeley's political maneuvers that spring. Greeley was searching for an acceptable presidential candidate and Rosecrans had apparently seemed satisfactory. Gilmore had been dispatched to Tennessee to sound out the General's position on slavery. The political purpose of his mission to Tennessee was never consumated, but it did serve to bring Gilmore and Jaquess together.[5]

Jaquess, meeting Gilmore at Rosecrans' headquarters, explained his request for a furlough. A man of great religious fervor, Jaquess felt he had been given divine direction to offer peace to the Confederates. He requested an interview with Lincoln to learn the terms on which he would grant amnesty to the Rebels. After discussion of the plan, Gilmore declined to recommend it because he was convinced it could not

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[4]Jaquess to Garfield, May 19, 1863, James R. Gilmore, Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War (Boston: L. C. Page and Company, 1890), 138. Hereafter cited as Gilmore, Recollections.

[5]Kirkland, Peacemakers, 86-87.

be successful. Jaquess would be jeopardizing his life for nothing, Gilmore contended.[6]

Rosecrans declined Jaquess' application for a furlough, but decided to transmit the request to Lincoln. The letter was to be delivered by Gilmore, who could then explain the plan in greater detail. The Colonel's religious ardor is clearly shown in his letter to Lincoln:

> It is a fact well known to me and others. . . that much sympathy exists in the minds of many good people, both in this country and England, on the ground of their /the Confederates/ professed piety. . . Now you will admit that, if they hear me, I have gained the point. On the other hand, if Mr. Davis and his associates in rebellion refuse me, coming to them in the name of the Lord on a mission of peace, the question of their piety is settled at once and forever. Should I be treated with violence and cast into prison, shot, or hanged. . . then the doom of the Southern Confederacy is sealed on earth and heaven forever. . . I am ready for either emergency, and though not Samson, I should, like him, slay more at my death than in all my life at the head of my regiment. No, the mission cannot fail. God's hand is in it. . . .[7]

Rosecrans, in an accompanying letter, endorsed the Colonel's request:

> After maturely weighing his plan, and considering well his character, I am decidedly of opinion that the public interest will be promoted by permitting him to go as he proposes.
>
> I do not anticipate the results that he seems to expect, but I believe that a moral force will be generated by his mission that will more than compensate for his temporary absence from his regiment.[8]

Although Lincoln was dubious of any chance for success, he wrote to recommend that a furlough be granted:

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[6]Gilmore, Recollections, 138-139.

[7]Jaquess to Lincoln, May 23, 1863, James R. Gilmore, "A Suppressed Chapter of History," Atlantic Monthly, LIX (April, 1887), 436.

[8]Rosecrans to Lincoln, May 21, 1863, Gilmore, Recollections, 141.

> I have but a slight personal acquaintance with Colonel Jaquess, though I know him very well by character. Such a mission as he proposes I think promises good, if it were free from difficulties, which I fear it cannot be. First, he can not go with any Government authority whatsoever. This is absolute and imperative. Secondly, if he goes without authority he takes a great deal of personal risk--he may be condemned and executed as a spy. If, for any reason, you think fit to give Colonel Jaquess a furlough, and authority from me is necessary, you hereby have it for any length of time you see fit.[9]

General Rosecrans issued the furlough and Jaquess immediately contacted the ordinary military channels for communicating with the South. He traveled to Baltimore and there asked permission of General Robert C. Schenck, in command of Baltimore, to go by way of Fortress Monroe to Richmond. Schenck telegraphed Lincoln on July 13 for instructions and the President replied: "Mr. Jaquess is a very worthy gentleman, but I can have nothing to do, directly or indirectly, with the matter he has in view."[10] Although Lincoln would not invest the mission with an official character, Jaquess persuaded Schenck to send him to Fortress Monroe.

There he explained his purpose in going into the Confederacy to General John A. Dix, recently transferred from the command of the Department of Baltimore to command at Fortress Monroe. After some delay, Jaquess was allowed to board a flag-of-truce boat for the Confederate lines. He bore a message for General James Longstreet, Robert E. Lee's most distinguished lieutenant, which was immediately conveyed to that officer. Longstreet came to the boat and invited Jaquess back to his quarters across the Potomac. There the Colonel

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[9]Lincoln to Rosecrans, May 28, 1863, Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln, IX, 203.

[10]Lincoln to Schenck, July 14, 1863, ibid.

met many Confederate leaders and discussed the situation with them quite freely. In general, he told them to cease resistance to the national authority and they would be treated generously. Their answer was that although they were tired of the war and recognized the doom of slavery, they would have to stand by their government as long as it held out. They could not betray it.

Jaquess failed to obtain an interview with Davis and was told it would be useless to approach him without having definite proposals from Lincoln. However, the Confederate leaders with whom he talked assured him that if such proposals were brought and were on a liberal basis they would no doubt be accepted.[11] Jaquess, encouraged by such a favorable reception, hastened back to Baltimore to obtain more definite proposals from Lincoln. Despite Gilmore's instructions to address all communications to Rosecrans, he wrote to the President reporting the results of his journey:

> I have obtained valuable information and proposals for peace through the channel I proposed. Unofficial, but from men of character and great influence in the South, residents there. Would it be consistent for me to communicate them to you? If so, how? By telegraph, mail, or in person? Latter greatly preferred, if thought proper. I am moving strictly private. I await your answer. . . .[12]

He waited two weeks for an answer, but no reply came. General Schenck, who understood his mission, was absent, and Jaquess felt there was no one else to whom he could report. At that time he learned that a crucial battle near Chattanooga was approaching, and feeling he was needed with his regiment, returned to the Army.[13]

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[11]Gilmore, Recollections, 165-166. Gilmore wrote the report of the Colonel's mission from a conversation he held with Jaquess many months after the journey took place.

[12]Jaquess to Lincoln, July 22, 1863, Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln, IX, 203-204.

[13]Gilmore, Recollections, 233.

Gilmore heard nothing of Jaquess until the following November. Jaquess then wrote to him from Chattanooga reporting the results of his mission to Richmond. He felt he had been cordially received and that peace efforts should be further prosecuted. He was greatly disturbed by President Lincoln's failure to answer his letter from Baltimore, as he felt he had valuable information to communicate. Again seeking Gilmore's aid, he wrote:

> General Rosecrans and Garfield are gone, and there are no others with whom I feel free to communicate. I would be most thankful for the privilege of prosecuting this work further,—feel that I ought to do it, that great good would result from it. I find my way perfectly clear on the other side of the line. My only trouble is on this side. I can do our cause more good in one month, in my own way, than I can here in twelve.[14]

Gilmore was scheduled to leave on a lecture tour soon and would not be free until the following April. Since Lincoln had not answered Jaquess, Gilmore felt it would be useless to write to him again on the subject. He was also of the opinion he should not approach Lincoln until he had talked to Jaquess, and this he wrote to the Colonel. He suggested that Jaquess invoke the aid of General George H. Thomas, then commander of the Army of the Cumberland, who knew of his first visit, for a new furlough. In any case he should not contact the President again until he had definite proposals of surrender from Confederate leaders. Jaquess replied that he would wait until Gilmore could go to Washington again, as it was necessary he know definitely Lincoln's views before he attempted another mission.[15]

Gilmore did not visit Washington until the first part of April,

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[14]Jaquess to Gilmore, November 4, 1863, ibid., 234.

[15]Ibid., 234-235.

1864, and in an interview with Lincoln at that time, inquired why the President had not replied to Jaquess. Lincoln protested that he had never seen the letter.[16] Lincoln, after reading the letter which Jaquess had written Gilmore in November, felt the plan had further possibilities and issued a furlough for Jaquess. A brief discussion of terms to be offered the Confederacy followed. Lincoln stated that Confederate leaders would not be molested and he would try to compensate the owners of five or more slaves. Jaquess was not to construe the offer of such terms into an investment of authority, but he could be satisfied the Union would grant these terms.

Gilmore heard from Jaquess on June 13. He was anxious to go again and would meet Gilmore about July 1. Gilmore reported this at once to the President and added that he felt Jaquess should have fuller and more concrete instructions:

> I suppose he /Jaquess/ comes to see me to know what terms he can offer those people. Of course we have none to offer; only to say: "Lay down your arms, and go back to peaceful pursuits." The Emancipation Proclamation tells what we will do for the blacks; the amnesty proclamation, what we will do for the mass of whites. We can make no terms with rebels. This is, I know, all that you can say; but Jaquess will have to deal with the leaders, and, of course, they have some affection for their own necks.[17]

He also hoped that Lincoln would grant Jaquess a personal interview and was informed by Garfield in a letter several days later that the President would do so.

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[16] Ibid., 235. Gilmore stated that the person to whom the letter had come had not thought it of sufficient importance to bring it to the attention of the President, but Nicolay and Hay imply that Lincoln deliberately ignored the letter. See Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln, IX, 205.

[17] Gilmore to Lincoln, June 15, 1864, Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln, IX, 207. All such correspondence was carried on through General Garfield for purposes of discretion.

Meanwhile Jaquess had reached Baltimore and telegraphed Gilmore to join him there. At their meeting Jaquess informed Gilmore he had recently talked with a clergyman of the Southern Methodist Church, who, on June 16, had an interview with President Davis in Richmond. Davis had then stated that his government would make peace on no other terms than recognition of independence. It occurred at once to Gilmore that if this declaration could be obtained in a manner which could be publicized, it would destroy the peace party in the North and re-elect Lincoln to the Presidency. It was most important to secure a declaration of the terms on which the Confederacy would make peace. They would, no doubt, dispel the delusions of many Northerners.

Gilmore advised Jaquess to see the clergyman again and induce him to return to Richmond and pave the way for the Colonel's second visit. This the clergyman agreed to do and Jaquess and Gilmore then set out for Washington. However, when Gilmore called on Lincoln, it seemed the venture was doomed. The President had learned that General Schenck had spoken freely about the subject everywhere, and Lincoln felt he would have to drop the matter and send Jaquess back to his regiment.[18]

Gilmore then tried to persuade Lincoln to allow Jaquess to go so that a repudiation of liberal peace terms could be obtained and the peace party weakened in the coming election. The President agreed the mission had political value but felt that Jaquess was too inundated with religious ardor to exercise much political finesse. He therefore determined to send Gilmore with the Colonel.[19]

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[18]Gilmore, Recollections, 237-239.

[19]Ibid., 239-240.

Gilmore discussed this proposition with Chase, who heartily approved of the plan. Chase accompanied Gilmore to his next meeting with Lincoln despite the fact that he had been asked to resign from the Treasury only a few days before. He even assisted in the drawing-up of terms to offer the Confederacy. As finally modified, the terms were:

1. The immediate restoration of Federal control and the disbandment of Confederate armies.
2. Abolition of slavery throughout the Union.
3. Full amnesty to all engaged in the rebellion.
4. The acts of secession to be nullified and representation in the House to be based on the voting population of the Southern states.
5. Compensation of four hundred million dollars to owners of fifty or more slaves.
6. A national convention to ratify such a settlement.
7. The Union to be restored as it was before the rebellion with the exception that all slaves would henceforth be freemen.[20]

Although both Chase and Gilmore were confident that no terms would be accepted by Confederate authorities, Lincoln was reluctant to make any offers which were not in good faith, as peace might possibly come out of the mission. Lincoln then informed Gilmore that he could not protect them in any way and wrote two passes for the gentlemen on July 6, 1864. Jaquess' name was omitted on both because of the talk about his previous journey.[21]

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[20] Ibid., 243-245.

[21] Ibid., 247. This account of Gilmore's interviews with Lincoln is reported in conversational form in his Recollections, 235-247. It is doubtful whether Lincoln relied on Gilmore or took him into his confidence in the familiar manner that Gilmore reports. His vanity seems to have magnified the role that he played.

Gilmore related the plans to Jaquess late that night; they left by boat for General Grant's headquarters at City Point, Virginia, the next day and arrived during the late afternoon of July 8. After handing Grant their pass, Gilmore briefly explained what they wished to do. Grant was doubtful that the Confederates would allow them to pass the lines, but promised to contact General Lee. In this letter, Grant requested that Colonel Robert Ould, commissioner for the exchange of prisoners, meet Jaquess and Gilmore. The object of the meeting was stated as legitimate with Ould's duties as commissioner. Lee immediately referred the letter to Davis, who authorized Ould to meet with the Northern gentlemen.[22]

In the meantime, General B. F. Butler had met Gilmore and Jaquess and invited them to his camp. They stayed with him for nearly three days. While there, Butler wrote Grant that he would attempt to get the two gentlemen through the Confederate lines, and Butler received permission from Grant to do so, but before this plan could be put into effect, official word came from the Confederacy.[23] The dispatch announced that Ould would meet the emissaries across the Confederate lines on July 13. Grant had forwarded this dispatch with a request that they report to his headquarters as soon as possible. They reached Grant's

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[22]Benjamin to Mason, August 25, 1864, James D. Richardson, comp., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Confederacy, Including the Diplomatic Correspondence, 1861-1865 (2 vols., Nashville: United States Publishing Company, 1905), II, 665. Hereafter cited as Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Confederacy. See also American Annual Cyclopedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1864 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1865), 779. Hereafter cited as Annual Cyclopedia.

[23]Jessie Ames Marshall, ed., Private and Official Correspondence of Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, During the Period of the Civil War (5 vols., Norwood, Massachusetts: The Plimpton Press, 1917), IV, 486-487. Hereafter cited as Butler, Correspondence.

headquarters that same day, July 12.[24] He questioned them regarding their reason for going to Richmond, but on all questions, Gilmore referred him to Lincoln. Grant went on to tell them they would be taken to their appointment the following morning and instructed them to return to General Butler and request a military escort. Gilmore protested, but was informed that such was the President's instruction. Since he could give them no credentials, he meant for them to have as much protection as possible. This plan was carried out and at one o'clock on the afternoon of July 13, they met with Colonel Ould for the first time. He, however, had received no authority to escort them to Richmond and so they returned to the Union lines.[25]

Ould went back to Richmond and reported to Davis that Jaquess and Gilmore had no business to transpire with him as exchange commissioner, but instead desired to meet with Davis in Richmond. They had informed Ould that they came with the knowledge and approval of President Lincoln as informal agents to pave the way for a meeting of formal commissioners authorized to negotiate peace. They understood Lincoln's views and wished to obtain the views of Davis in return.[26] Davis gave permission for Jaquess and Gilmore to come to Richmond, and Ould conducted them to the Confederate capital two days later. Ould suggested that they contact Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin to request an interview with Davis. At ten o'clock the following morning, Ould delivered this note, which read in part:

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[24]Gilmore, Recollections, 250-251.

[25]Ibid., 252-253.

[26]Benjamin to Mason, August 25, 1864, Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Confederacy, II, 665-666. Benjamin, in a diplomatic circular, informed Confederate agents abroad of the Jaquess-Gilmore visit to Richmond.

> They visit Richmond only as private citizens, and have no official character or authority; but they are acquainted with the views of the United States Government, . . . and earnestly hope that a free interchange of views between President Davis and themselves may open the way to such official negotiations as will result in restoring Peace to the two sections of our distracted country.[27]

Soon after, they met with Benjamin. After repeating the statement that they were not invested with an official character, Jaquess requested a mutual promise that their visit would be kept secret if it failed to result in peace, and to this request Benjamin agreed.[28] He said that he would ask Davis to see them that evening. At nine o'clock that night the four men met in the State Department offices.[29]

Colonel Jaquess opened the conversation by inquiring if there were any way in which the war could be stopped. Davis countered with the observation that if the North would let the South alone, peace would come at once. The answer was that the people of the North would never surrender the Union. This, Davis said, was denying them something the North expected for itself--the right of self-government. Some talk of the bitterness between the two sections followed, and

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[27]James R. Gilmore, "Our Visit to Richmond," Atlantic Monthly, XIV (September, 1864), 376. There are two variations of this note. Although no underscoring is present in Gilmore's version, Benjamin claimed in a letter sent to James Mason, Confederate commissioner to England, on August 25, 1864, that the word "official" was underscored and the word "peace" doubly underscored in the original. United States Naval War Records Office, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion (26 vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894-1922), Ser. II, Vol. III, 1191. Hereafter cited as Official Records: Navies. This led to a charge of bad faith on Gilmore's part which Gilmore denied in the New York Tribune, September 5, 1864. See Kirkland, Peacemakers, 94, n. 101.

[28]Benjamin to Mason, August 25, 1864, Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Confederacy, II, 667.

[29]Gilmore, "Our Visit to Richmond," Atlantic Monthly, XIV, 377.

then Jaquess broached the thought that they, being Christian men, should endeavor to terminate the frightful struggle as quickly as possible. Davis replied that none of the blood shed in the war was on his hands; he had done everything in his power to avert war:

> . . . the war came, and now it must go on until the last man of this generation falls in his tracks, and his children sieze his musket and fight his battle, unless you acknowledge our right to self-government. We are not fighting for slavery. We are fighting for Independence,—and that, or extermination, we will have.[30]

This was the statement Gilmore had been waiting for, and although it precluded any successful negotiations for peace, the discussion continued.

In a discussion of the military situation, Davis protested that the Confederacy was not in a desperate situation, but stated vehemently that, even if they were, they would die rather than give up the right to govern themselves. Gilmore and Jaquess then tried to convince Davis that those elements friendly to the South were a very small segment of the Northern population and that the longer the war progressed, the harsher the terms the North would mete out to the South. Davis again asserted that extermination would be preferable to subjugation. When Gilmore inquired as to slavery's position in the conflict, Davis replied:

> . . . it [slavery] never was an essential element. It was only a means of bringing other conflicting elements to an earlier culmination. It fired the musket which was already capped and loaded. . . .[31]

Gilmore, at this point in the conversation, made the proposal that peace might be negotiated on the basis of a reconstruction of the

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[30] Ibid., 379.

[31] Ibid., 381.

Union, emancipation, and universal amnesty. The abolition of slavery and all other disputed matters would be decided by a general vote of both sections. When questioned by Benjamin if these were the terms that Lincoln had authorized, Gilmore said the President had not authorized any terms, but that he would probably assent to these. Davis answered that since the North was a majority, this submission to majority will would in effect be surrender. Furthermore, he said that Lincoln should have known that the Confederate government had no power to regulate the domestic institutions of the States. He concluded by saying that whenever Lincoln would make peace proposals on the basis of Southern independence, he would be glad to receive them, but that it would be useless to approach him with any other. Davis was reluctant to continue the discussion with men who bore no credentials and so terminated the interview.[32]

On the next day, Ould conducted Jaquess and Gilmore on a tour of the prisons in Richmond. They also visited various hospitals for wounded Union personnel before leaving Richmond at sundown.[33] By ten o'clock on the evening of July 19 they were again within Union lines. Jaquess remained with Grant at City Point for several days, but Gilmore

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[32]The report of this interview with Davis is taken from Gilmore, "Our Visit to Richmond," Atlantic Monthly, XIV, 378-382. Gilmore stated that he recorded the conversation in as exact language as possible shortly after re-entering Union lines. His report is probably slanted for propaganda purposes, but the substance of the discussion is verified by Davis in his The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government (2 vols., New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1881), II, 610-611. Hereafter cited as Davis, Rise and Fall. See also Jefferson Davis, A Short History of the Confederate States of America (New York: Belford Company, Publishers, 1890), 455. Hereafter cited as Davis, Confederate States.

[33]James R. Gilmore, "Our Last Day in Dixie," Atlantic Monthly, XIV (December, 1864), 721-724.

left immediately for Washington. Arriving at the White House, he found Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, a staunch abolitionist, with the President. After informing Lincoln that the mission had produced the results they had anticipated, Gilmore read a written account of the interview to the two gentlemen. Then the important question for discussion became the publication of the results of the mission. They decided on the Atlantic Monthly as the vehicle of publication since the report would have less of a partisan appearance there than in the New York Tribune. Because they did want Davis' position known immediately, Sumner suggested that an announcement of the separation declaration be put at once into one of the Boston newspapers and the fuller report into the Monthly.[34]

The announcement appeared in the form of a card in the Boston Evening Transcript of July 22, 1864. After giving a brief report of the mission to Richmond, it quoted Davis as follows:

> This war must go on till the last of the generation falls in his tracks and his children sieze his musket and fight our battle unless you acknowledge our right to self-government. We are not fighting for slavery. We are fighting for INDEPENDENCE, and that, or extermination, we will have.[35]

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[34]Gilmore, Recollections, 288-289.

[35]Kirkland, Peacemakers, 96, citing the Boston Evening Transcript, July 22, 1864. The Confederates were bitter about the publication of news of the mission. Benjamin wrote an account of the affair to James Mason on August 25, 1864, saying it had been "rendered necessary by publication made by one or both of them since their return to the United States, notwithstanding the agreement that their visit was to be kept secret. They have perhaps concluded that as the promise of secrecy was made at their request, it was permissible to disregard it. . . . We had no reason for desiring to conceal what had occurred, and have therefore no complaint to make of the publicity given to the fact of the visit. The extreme inaccuracy of Mr. Gilmore's narrative will be apparent to you from the foregoing statement." Official Records: Navies, Ser. II, Vol. III, 1194. See also Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Confederacy, II, 669-670.

Lincoln had asked for the proof of the Atlantic Monthly article before it appeared. When he received the proof, he struck out the terms he had offered to grant the Confederacy and any reference that had been made to compensation for the slaves. Gilmore stated that Lincoln feared the publication of his terms would sow dissension in the South and he was unwilling for his words to have this effect.[36]

It is difficult to determine the sincerity of this peace mission. Although Jaquess was undoubtedly sincere in his undertaking, Gilmore has obscured the motives of the mission in his various narratives. The accounts written during the war smack of political propaganda, while the later ones have all the defects of recollections. In his first full report of the mission, Gilmore, after a lengthy discussion of the reasons for undertaking the mission, concluded by saying: "We went to Richmond because we hoped to pave the way for negotiations that would result in peace."[37] In a later account he stated the true reason for the peace mission was to verify the rumor that Davis would negotiate only on the basis of Southern independence, thereby dispelling the illusions of the peace party in the North.[38] This would seem to be the more fundamental motive and probably the one which influenced Lincoln's support. Although the President would not give official sanction to the mission, he could see its political value and to this end he was willing to experiment. The results of this peace effort added to the abortive negotiations in Niagara Falls carried on at the same time

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[36]Gilmore, Recollections, 290.

[37]Gilmore, "Our Visit to Richmond," Atlantic Monthly, XIV, 372-373.

[38]Gilmore, "Our Last Day in Dixie," Atlantic Monthly, XIV, 725.

stilled the clamor of the Northern peace party and contributed to Lincoln's re-election. Thus the Richmond mission was of service to Lincoln and the Union cause because it failed.

CHAPTER III

THE NIAGARA FALLS CONFERENCE

While Jaquess and Gilmore were carrying on negotiations in the South, other peace volunteers were attempting a similar accomplishment in the North. By the summer of 1864 several prominent Southerners were sojourning in the area about Niagara Falls and Saint Catharines in Canada. Ostensibly on a summer vacation from the turmoil of the war, in reality they were engaged in a secret mission for the Confederate government. This mission seems to have originated in the mind of President Davis, who first contacted Jacob Thompson of Mississippi on April 7, 1864, for service on the commission.[1] When Thompson had agreed to service in this capacity, Davis added two others to the commission in an advisory capacity, Clement C. Clay of Alabama and James P. Holcombe of Virginia. Davis evidently relied chiefly on Thompson, as the original grant of authority was issued in his name and all subsequent correspondence was addressed to him. The commission was purposefully vague:

> Confiding special trust in your zeal, discretion, and patriotism, I hereby direct you to proceed at once to Canada, there to carry out such instructions as you have received from me verbally, in such manner as shall seem most to

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[1] Davis to Thompson, April 7, 1864, David H. Bates, Lincoln in the Telegraph Office; Recollections of the United States Military Telegraph Corps During the Civil War (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1907), 290. Hereafter cited as Bates, Lincoln in the Telegraph Office.

conduce to the furtherance of the interests of the Confederate States of America, which have been entrusted to you.[2]

It is difficult to determine the exact purpose of the Confederates from this document, but subsequent activities demonstrated that their main function was to nurture the peace faction of the North, thus weakening the will to continue the war. Sometimes involving actual sabotage of Union war efforts, the mission took various forms according to circumstance.

Thompson, originally a North Carolinian, had served as Secretary of the Interior in President James Buchanan's cabinet. Resigning in January, 1861, he moved to Mississippi, becoming Governor of that state one year later. He held that office until 1864 when he became attached to the staff of General G. T. Beauregard, then in command of the Confederate army below Richmond. Thompson remained in military service until commissioned by Davis for service in Canada.[3] A more conspicuous individual was Clay of Alabama. Clay had been a United States Senator, but withdrew from that body when his state seceded. He was elected to the Confederate Congress in the spring of 1861 as Senator from Alabama and served in that capacity until commissioned as a secret agent.[4]

Holcombe, the third member of the commission, had been professor of law for several years at the University of Virginia. After serving

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[2]Davis to Thompson, April 27, 1864, ibid., 290-291. See also John B. Castleman, Active Service (Louisville: Courier-Journal Job Printing Company, Publishers, 1917), 734. Bates claims that George N. Sanders was also appointed by Davis, but Castleman, on active service with the commission, disclaims this fact.

[3]F. H. Severance, "The Peace Conference at Niagara Falls in 1864," Buffalo Historical Society Publications, XVIII (1914), 81.

[4]Ibid., 80-81.

in the Virginia Secession Convention in 1861, he became a member of the Confederate Congress and served there until the summer of 1864.[5]

The three agents, together with W. W. Cleary, secretary of the commission, sailed on May 6, 1864, from Wilmington, North Carolina, for Bermuda in the Thistle, a blockade-runner. From this point, they sailed to Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the Alpha, a British mail steamer, arriving there on May 19.[6] Traveling across Canada, Thompson remained at Toronto, while Clay and Holcombe continued to Niagara Falls where they set up residence at the Clifton House.[7] This separation of residential locations was fairly indicative of the lack of unity in the commissioners' actions through the course of their stay in Canada. Holcombe had always been independent, and temperamental differences existing between Clay and Thompson were intensified by the former's ill health. Clay sought out the more healthful environment of Niagara, while Thompson made his headquarters around Toronto and Windsor, directing his efforts in the more violent aspects of their program.[8]

In the course of their movements in Niagara Falls, the commissioners came in contact with George N. Sanders of Kentucky. Sanders was a notorious individual with many visionary schemes who began to exercise a persistent influence over Clay and Holcombe. Sanders had contacts with the peace element in the North and in the course of time had formed an acquaintance with William Cornell "Colorado" Jewett,

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[5]Ibid., 82.

[6]Castleman, Active Service, 132.

[7]Severance, "The Peace Conference at Niagara Falls in 1864," Buffalo Historical Society Publications, XVIII, 82.

[8]Kirkland, Peacemakers, 74.

an equally unusual adventurer. Jewett, descended from a prominent family in Portland, Maine, had developed mining interests in Colorado Territory. After unsuccessfully applying to the Peace Convention in 1861 as a delegate from Pike's Peak, he left for Europe on a peace mission in 1862. Subsequently, he flitted back and forth between the United States and Europe trying to obtain foreign mediation on the basis of slavery and the Union. In the interest of peace he had carried on some correspondence with Horace Greeley during the winter of 1862-1863. To Sanders' mind, Jewett seemed a likely agent to institute negotiations with Greeley.[9]

By the early summer of 1864, it was evident that Greeley's mind had turned in the direction of peace. As evidenced in an editorial of the following spring, his sentiments were as follows:

> If genuine offers were forthcoming worthy of consideration, they should be welcomed as heralds of returning tranquility; if unacceptable, they should be set forth in their true light, and capitalized in the approaching campaign to the advantage of the Union party.[10]

Greeley had heard reports of the commissioners' activities in Canada and his interest in the possibilities for peace negotiations was aroused. How Greeley was first approached by the commissioners in Canada is not altogether clear. He speaks of a private letter from Sanders, but all other indications are that Jewett instigated the

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[9]Ibid., 68-71. See also Castleman, Active Service, 134-135, and Ralph R. Fahrney, Horace Greeley and the Tribune in the Civil War (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1936), 157. Hereafter cited as Fahrney, Greeley and the Tribune.

[10]Fahrney, Greeley and the Tribune, 159, citing the New York Tribune, April 3, 1865. See also Horace Greeley, Recollections of a Busy Life (New York: J. D. Ford and Company, 1868), 407.

negotiations.[11] However, sometime during June, Sanders told Clay and Holcombe that Greeley would confer with them and on July 5 a letter appeared for Greeley from Jewett. Jewett wrote that Sanders had authorized him to say: ". . .the ambassadors of Davis & Co. are now in Canada with full and complete powers for a peace."[12] He requested that Greeley come immediately for an interview, or, if the President's protection would be sent to Sanders and his two friends, they would come to meet him. He went on to say: ". . .the whole matter can be consummated by me, you, then, and President Lincoln."[13]

Feeling this was an excellent opportunity for reconciliation, Greeley forwarded the letter to Lincoln with an accompanying letter urging that it be replied to and suggesting certain terms of peace:

> I venture to enclose to you a letter. . . that I received yesterday from our irrepressible friend, Colorado Jewett, at Niagara Falls. . . Of course, I do not indorse Jewett's positive averment that his friends at the Falls have 'full powers' from J. D. /Jefferson Davis/, though I do not doubt that he thinks they have. I let that statement stand as simply evidencing the anxiety of the Confederates everywhere for peace. So much is beyond doubt.
>
> And, therefore, I venture to remind you that our bleeding, bankrupt, almost dying country also longs for peace, — shudders at the prospect of fresh conscriptions, of further wholesale devastations, and of new rivers of human blood; and a widespread conviction that the government and its prominent supporters are not anxious for peace, and do not improve proffered opportunities to achieve it is doing

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[11]Horace Greeley, The American Conflict: A History of the Great Rebellion (2 vols., Hartford: O. D. Case and Company, 1864), II, 664. Hereafter cited as Greeley, American Conflict. See also Thurlow Weed Barnes, Memoir of Thurlow Weed (2 vols., Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1884), II, 492, and Fahrney, Greeley and the Tribune, 159.

[12]Jewett to Greeley, July 5, 1864, Barnes, Memoir of Thurlow Weed, II, 492.

[13]Jewett to Greeley, July 5, 1864, ibid.

> great here now, and is morally certain, unless removed, to do far greater in the approaching elections.[14]

The plan of adjustment suggested by Greeley included restoration of the Union, complete abolition of slavery, unqualified amnesty for all political offenders, and payment of four hundred million dollars to slave owners as compensation for losses incurred through emancipation.[15] He added:

> I do not say that a just peace is now attainable, though I believe it to be so. But I do say that a frank offer by you to the insurgents, of terms which the impartial world say ought to be accepted, will, at the worst, prove an immense and sorely needed advantage to the national cause. . . .[16]

Then, in a postscript, Greeley urged:

> Even though it should be deemed unadvisable to make an offer of terms to the Rebels, I insist that, in any possible case, it is desirable that any offer they may be disposed to make should be received, and either accepted or rejected. I beg you to invite those now at Niagara to exhibit their credentials and submit their ultimatum.[17]

Lincoln had little confidence in Jewett's story and was therefore unwilling to assume the initiative in any peace overtures. However, he intended to convince Greeley and others of his way of thinking that the administration was not guilty of indifference to propositions for peace. To pacify Greeley, Lincoln wrote to him on July 9 as follows:

> If you can find any person anywhere professing to have any proposition of Jefferson Davis in writing, for peace,

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[14]Greeley to Lincoln, July 7, 1864, James Parton, The Life of Horace Greeley, Editor of "The New-York Tribune," from his Birth to the Present Time (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1882), 470. Hereafter cited as Parton, Greeley. The "proffered opportunities" Greeley mentioned refer to Stephens' unsuccessful attempt to visit Washington.

[15]Ibid., 471-472. See also Greeley, American Conflict, II, 664.

[16]Parton, Greeley, 472.

[17]Ibid. See also Greeley, American Conflict, II, 664-665.

> embracing the restoration of the Union and abandonment of slavery, whatever else it embraces, say to him he may come to me with you. . . .[18]

Greeley was evidently embarrassed at being deputized to meet the peace emissaries, for he wrote Lincoln on July 13:

> Whether there be persons at Niagara (or elsewhere) who are empowered to commit the rebels by negotiation, is a question; but if there be such, there is no question at all that they would decline to exhibit their credentials to me, much more to open their budget and give me their best terms. . . I have neither purpose nor desire to be made a confidant, far less an agent, in such negotiations.[19]

In the meantime Sanders had again written Greeley divulging the names of the Confederate agents and this information Greeley forwarded to the President. By this time Greeley was convinced that Clay and Holcombe were fully accredited to negotiate peace and urged that Lincoln take immediate action.[20] Lincoln, having understood that Greeley would bring the commissioners to Washington on the basis of his previous letter, was disappointed in the delay and wrote Greeley on July 15 as follows:

> I am disappointed that you have not already reached here with those commissioners, if they would consent to come on being shown my letter to you of the 9th instant. Show that and this to them, and if they will come on the terms stated in the former, bring them. I not only intend a sincere effort for peace, but I intend that you shall be a personal witness that it is made.[21]

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[18]Lincoln to Greeley, July 9, 1864, United States War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (128 vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Ser. III, Vol. IV, 486. Hereafter cited as Official Records: Armies.

[19]Greeley to Lincoln, July 13, 1864, Severance, "The Peace Conference at Niagara Falls in 1864," Buffalo Historical Society Publications, XVIII, 86.

[20]Greeley to Lincoln, July 19, 1864, Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln, IX, 188-189.

[21]Lincoln to Greeley, July 15, 1864, Official Records: Armies, Ser. III, Vol. IV, 496.

Lincoln dispatched this letter with John Hay, his private secretary. Hay was evidently sent to New York to clarify any misunderstanding that might exist and to force the obviously reluctant Greeley to take an active part in the negotiations. The editor told Hay that a safe-conduct permit for the Confederates would be necessary to further the project, and the secretary was immediately authorized by Lincoln to issue one.[22] Evidently Greeley considered the President's conditions of restoration of the Union and abolition of slavery as barriers to negotiation, for they were left unmentioned in the safe-conduct authorization. Actually, it seems probable that Greeley never informed Jewett or Sanders of the conditions for negotiations as laid down by Lincoln in his letters of July 9 and July 15. He probably feared that the Confederates were not authorized to comply with such conditions and he wished to escort them to Washington before negotiations could bog down. There, the administration could reject their terms, if completely unreasonable, or Lincoln could offer a peace involving the aforementioned conditions, thus proving that he was prepared to negotiate peace on a just basis.[23]

When the safe-conduct permit had been prepared, Greeley left for Canada. Upon arriving at Niagara he established residence on the American side at the International Hotel and immediately contacted Jewett. The letter was sent across the border with a message from

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[22] Hay to Lincoln, July 16, 1864, ibid., 500; Lincoln to Hay, July 16, 1864, ibid., 501. The safe-conduct permit was issued for Clay, Thompson, Holcombe and Sanders.

[23] Greeley had suggested these very terms in his letter to Lincoln of July 7. However, Hay maintained that Greeley was opposed to the offer of any terms by Lincoln. He felt that Greeley preferred that the Confederate commissioners make unreasonable and unacceptable proposals, which could be turned to the advantage of the Union party. See Fahrney, Greeley and the Tribune, 162-163.

Greeley which informed the commissioners that if they were duly accredited by their government as the bearers of peace propositions, he was authorized by Lincoln, and provided with the necessary safe-conduct permit, to escort them safely to Washington.[24] Clay and Holcombe immediately telegraphed Thompson to meet them at Saint Catharines for discussion of the proper procedure to follow. At this meeting the three decided that negotiations must somehow be continued in order to discover the real terms of the United States government.[25]

Clay and Holcombe were surprised that the Lincoln government, which had heretofore refused to negotiate with the Confederacy, would suddenly offer peace negotiations without even the mention of restoration of the Union as a condition. But greater than their surprise was their dismay at this new danger to the object of their mission in Canada. Even though they were not duly accredited to discuss peace, they could not afford to terminate the affair. That would demonstrate a sincere effort on the part of Lincoln to end the war, thus undermining the strength of the Northern peace party. This was an effect quite opposite to that expected of their mission by Jefferson Davis. They had to continue negotiations in some manner and so the commissioners informed Greeley that the safe-conduct permit had been extended to them under some misapprehension of facts. They went on to explain that while they were not duly accredited by their government, they were in its "confidential employment," were "entirely familiar with its wishes and opinions" on peace, and if allowed to proceed to Washington, undoubtedly could

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[24]Greeley to Clay, July 17, 1864, Parton, Greeley, 472-473.

[25]Fahrney, Greeley and the Tribune, 164. See also Kirkland, Peacemakers, 81.

procure the required credentials from Richmond.[26]

This reply destroyed the plans of Greeley to escort the emissaries to Washington; he could only dispatch the disappointing information to the President. Greeley informed the commissioners that he had telegraphed Lincoln for further instructions; Clay and Holcombe acknowledged this note.[27] On the following day Greeley wrote that instructions had left Washington and he hoped the Confederates would await their arrival. Clay and Holcombe reassured the editor that they would be in Niagara to receive this communication.[28]

Meanwhile Lincoln had dispatched John Hay to Niagara with an answer to Greeley's request for further instructions. Hay bore a note addressed "To Whom It May Concern." It read:

> Any proposition which embraces the restoration of peace, the integrity of the whole Union, and the abandonment of slavery, and which comes by and with an authority that can control the armies now at war against the United States, will be received and considered by the Executive Government of the United States, and will be met by liberal terms on other substantial and collateral points, and the bearer or bearers thereof shall have safe-conduct both ways.[29]

After his arrival at Niagara, Hay, accompanied by Greeley, crossed to the Canadian side to present the President's message to the Confederates. They were met at the Clifton House by George Sanders, who conversed with them for a short time in the lobby. However, Greeley's well-known

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[26]Clay and Holcombe to Greeley, July 18, 1864, Parton, Greeley, 473. The letter stated that Thompson was not at Niagara and had not been with them since their arrival in Canada.

[27]Greeley to Clay and Holcombe, July 18, 1864, ibid., 474; Clay and Holcombe to Greeley, July 18, 1864, ibid., 474.

[28]Greeley to Clay and Holcombe, July 19, 1864, ibid.; Clay and Holcombe to Greeley, July 19, 1864, ibid., 475.

[29]Official Records: Armies, Ser. III, Vol. IV, 503-504.

figure attracted such a crowd that they soon adjourned to Holcombe's room.[30]

Greeley said that Hay had come to deliver a written message from President Lincoln, whereupon Hay handed Holcombe the note. Hay then added that he would take back a reply or that it could be sent by mail. Holcombe promised a reply after he had telegraphed Clay who had gone to Saint Catharines. The conference ended after a few moments of conversation.[31] Hay remained in Niagara to receive the commissioners' reply and Greeley returned immediately to New York. Apparently Greeley realized that this new communication would render further efforts at Niagara futile, for Jewett wrote the commissioners that Greeley had authorized him to say:

> He regrets the sad termination of the steps taken for peace from the change made by the President in his instructions given him to convey commissioners to Washington unconditionally.[32]

The ultimatum that Lincoln had given in his letter of July 18 was all that the Confederates had desired and they proceeded to make the most of it. Instead of replying to Hay, who was waiting in Niagara for their answer, the commissioners handed their reply to Jewett, who was then to forward it to Greeley in New York. Jewett immediately

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[30]David G. McIntosh, "The Life and Letters of John Hay," Southern Historical Society Papers, XLI (September, 1916), 208. See also Severance, "The Peace Conference at Niagara Falls in 1864," Buffalo Historical Society Publications, XVIII, 88, and Kirkland, Peacemakers, 82. Clay was not present at the meeting.

[31]McIntosh, "The Life and Letters of John Hay," Southern Historical Society Papers, XLI, 209.

[32]Jewett to Clay, July 20, 1864, Edward McPherson, The Political History of the United States of America During the Great Rebellion (Washington: Philip and Solomons, 1864), 302. Hereafter cited as McPherson, Political History. Enclosed in the letter was a note from Greeley to Jewett justifying the latter's part in the negotiations.

sent a duplicate of the letter to the Associated Press in New York.[33]

The letter was not merely a reply to Greeley or the last in a series of diplomatic correspondence, but was primarily a propaganda document addressed to all dissatisfied elements in the North. It was a long statement to the effect that the commissioners could not accept Lincoln's propositions. The following extract illustrates the campaign tone of the document:

> Had the representatives of the two Governments met to consider this question, the most momentous ever submitted to human statesmanship, in a temper of becoming moderation and equity, followed as their deliberations would have been by the prayers and benedictions of every patriot and Christian on the habitable globe, who is there so bold as to pronounce that the frightful waste of individual happiness and public prosperity, which is daily saddening the universal heart, might not have been terminated, or if the desolation and carnage of war must still be endured through weary years of blood and suffering, that there might not at least have been infused into its conduct something more of the spirit which softens and partially redeems its brutalities.[34]

The letter continued in the same vein, charging Lincoln with a breach of faith, stating that the conditions imposed by him precluded any negotiation, and alleging that the President of the United States would only accept the complete subjugation of the South.[35] In the meantime, Hay had inquired whether the commissioners wished to send a reply to

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[33]Clay and Holcombe to Greeley, July 20, 1864, Parton, Greeley, 475. See also Frank Moore, ed., The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events, with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, Etc. (12 vols., New York: G. P. Putnam, 1861-63; New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1864-68), XI, 534. Hereafter cited as Moore, Rebellion Record.

[34]Clay and Holcombe to Greeley, July 21, 1864, Parton, Greeley, 475-477. See also Severance, "The Peace Conference at Niagara Falls in 1864," Buffalo Historical Society Publications, XVIII, 89-90, and Moore, Rebellion Record, XI, 534.

[35]Clay and Holcombe to Greeley, July 21, 1864, Parton, Greeley, 475-477.

Washington with him and was informed by Holcombe that the Confederate reply had been sent to Greeley as the originator of negotiations.[36]

The initial reactions to the publication of the negotiations were official denials from both governments.[37] Lincoln had apparently taken only Secretary of State Seward into his confidence early in the negotiations. The Cabinet was not informed of the initial correspondence until July 22 and later was acquainted with the full details of what had been done.[38]

Confederate authorities were adamant in their denial of knowledge of the negotiations. Secretary of State Benjamin published a letter in which he stated that it was without the knowledge of the Richmond government that Clay, Holcombe, and Sanders had opened correspondence with Greeley: "They were without any authority from this government to treat with that of the United States on any subject whatsoever."[39]

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[36] Hay to Holcombe, July 21, 1864, Moore, Rebellion Record, XI, 534; Holcombe to Hay, July 21, 1864, ibid.; Hay to Holcombe, July 21, 1864, McPherson, Political History, 302-303.

[37] Severance, "The Peace Conference at Niagara Falls in 1864," Buffalo Historical Society Publications, XVIII, 90.

[38] Welles, Diary, II, 83-84. Welles blamed Lincoln for imposing restrictions that would preclude any negotiations instead of holding the door open for propositions.

[39] Benjamin to Mason, August 25, 1864, Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Confederacy, II, 670. This letter was printed in the New York Tribune, August 30, 1864. Benjamin wrote to James Mason in England that the commissioners, although enjoying the confidence of the President to a high degree, were without any authority to treat with the United States government on any subject and that the Richmond government had no knowledge of their conference with Greeley until the newspaper accounts appeared. In opposition to this statement is Davis' recollection of the affair. He claimed that the commissioners were sent to Canada with a view of negotiation with persons in the North who might be relied upon to aid in the attainment of peace. See Davis, Confederate States, 455.

Not until August 11 did the commissioners of the Confederacy in Canada report to their government. Then in a long letter addressed to Benjamin, Clay and Holcombe reviewed the course of the negotiations, and attempted to justify their part in the affair. They expressed their surprise that Greeley had believed them to be the bearers of peace propositions:

> How or by whom that character was imputed to us we do not know. We suspect, however, that we are indebted for the attribution of the high and responsible office to Mr. Jewett, or to that yet more credulous and inventive personage, Dame Rumour.[40]

They denied having intimated any terms of peace and concluded with the feeling that they had made a valuable contribution by revealing Lincoln's conditions of peace, while proposing none of their own.[41]

The conference provoked a vast amount of country-wide newspaper comment which varied according to locality and political sentiment. Nowhere did the affair stir up more violent feeling than in the South. The Richmond Examiner of July 26 contained a caustic article expressing a feeling of shame and regret that the Confederate commissioners had placed themselves in such a position:

> When officious individuals go creeping around by back doors asking interviews with Lincoln for a full interchange of sentiments, it gives us sincere gratification to see them spurned, yes, kicked from the said back door. . . .[42]

The editor concluded that the conference, originally planned to aid

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[40]Clay to Benjamin, August 11, 1864, Official Records: Armies, Ser. IV, Vol. III, 584-586.

[41]Clay to Benjamin, August 11, 1864, ibid.

[42]Severance, "The Peace Conference at Niagara Falls in 1864," Buffalo Historical Society Publications, XVIII, 90-91, citing the Richmond Examiner, July 26, 1864.

the Peace Democrats in the North, had defeated its purpose.[43]

Northern reaction to the conference was equally lively. Greeley published the correspondence connected with the negotiations on July 22 and for days thereafter attempted to justify the conference and his part in it. He was most vehement in his denial of having discussed any conditions of peace with the Confederates, but maintained his only purpose had been to bring the commissioners to Washington so that peace negotiations might be initiated.[44] Since the Confederate commissioners were obviously not authorized to negotiate peace, to many in the North the mission seemed a trick to influence the elections and place Lincoln's administration in an unfavorable light.[45] Greeley, completely alienated by the affair, maintained that the administration's conduct of the matter had considerably weakened the Union cause.[46] Even a prominent Union general regretted the terms imposed by Lincoln's "To Whom It May Concern" letter. General George Gordon Meade, writing to his wife on July 26, expressed regret that Lincoln had employed the term "abandonment of slavery" as a condition. Since this implied immediate abolition, it would be a bar to any Southern willingness to negotiate.[47] To people

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[43] Ibid. The newspapers of the time are united in attributing the major part in the affair to George N. Sanders.

[44] New York Daily Tribune, July 22, July 25, July 30, 1864.

[45] Francis Fessenden, Life and Public Services of William Pitt Fessenden (2 vols., Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1907), II, 327. See also William A. Crofts, The Southern Rebellion: Being a History of the United States from the Commencement of President Buchanan's Administration Through the War for the Suppression of the Rebellion (2 vols., Boston: S. Walker, 1864-67), II, 608, and Fahrney, Greeley and the Tribune, 166.

[46] Greeley, American Conflict, II, 664.

[47] George G. Meade, The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade, Major General United States Army (2 vols., New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1913), II, 215-216. Hereafter cited as Meade, Life and Letters.

of loyal sentiment in the North as well as to those elements of disaffection, the affair seemed a complete fiasco.

Despite the failure of the Niagara Conference to bring a settlement of differences, it demonstrated two important facts. Both sections were made to see clearly that Lincoln would not make peace without freedom and Davis would not make peace without independence.

CHAPTER IV

THE HAMPTON ROADS CONFERENCE

The final and most significant endeavor to stop hostilities during the course of the war was initiated by prominent individuals in the North. Horace Greeley by December of 1864 had recovered from the peace fiasco of the previous July and felt the time was ripe for the renewal of peace offers. On December 15 he wrote Francis Preston Blair, senior, begging him to mediate the differences of the two hostile sections as "the counselor and trusted adviser of men high in authority."[1] Greeley contended that the government had misused several excellent opportunities for peace. His letter to Blair continued:

> I would at all times invite--not merely receive--envoys or agents from the Rebel chiefs, or any of them, and waiving all formalities, urge them to submit their terms. And I would keep them constantly refusing terms of fair and honorable reconciliation and adjustment and betraying to the World that the real bone of contention is slavery. . .[2]

This appeal aroused a sentiment that Blair had long held, for he replied to Greeley:

> To me it seems that the madmen are those who made this war--the wise men, those who would end it. . .I think that events are at hand which will probably make successful new attempts

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[1]Greeley to Blair, December 15, 1864, William Ernest Smith, The Francis Preston Blair Family in Politics (2 vols., New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), II, 301. Hereafter cited as Smith, Blair Family. Blair, a prominent journalist and politician, had been editor of the Washington Globe from 1830 to 1845. As a result of his strong anti-slavery sentiments he became one of the founders of the Republican party.

[2]Greeley to Blair, December 15, 1864, ibid.

> to bring about peace. The suggestions of your letter tempt me to tender to the President a plan for this purpose to which my thoughts have been drawn for some time—a plan to deliver our country from the course of the war, the war itself, and the men and means essential to carrying it out against us. . . I think I will hint it to Mr. Lincoln on Thursday. . . .[3]

Greeley then was responsible for precipitating a volunteer peace project in which Blair became the active negotiator.

Blair gave various hints of his plan to Lincoln, but received no encouragement. The President, reluctant to make peace overtures before an important military engagement, told him to come back after Savannah had been taken; when the surrender of that city was announced on December 22, Blair hurried to execute his program.[4] Lincoln acceded to Blair's request for a safe-conduct permit through the lines to see President Davis, although his knowledge of the project which the peace emissary planned to offer the Confederacy was very slight. The pass, dated December 28, 1864, simply allowed the bearer to go south and return.[5]

Blair, accompanied by his son Montgomery, then traveled to City Point, Virginia.[6] There they remained at General Grant's headquarters long enough to write to Davis and make arrangements for the trip to Richmond. In a letter meant for the public eye, they offered as an

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[3]Blair to Greeley, December 20, 1864, ibid., 302.

[4]Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln, X, 94.

[5]Lincoln stated in his report to the House of Representatives of February 10, 1865, that Blair "was given no authority to speak or act for the Government nor was I informed of anything he would say or do on his own account or otherwise." Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. II, 505-506.

[6]Montgomery Blair had been Postmaster-General in Lincoln's original cabinet. Radical opposition to his political views had virtually forced Lincoln to request his resignation in September of 1864.

excuse for the visit to Richmond a search for lost papers supposedly taken from their home in Silver Spring, Maryland, when Confederate forces penetrated to the outskirts of Washington, D.C., earlier in 1864. Another letter stated the real purpose of the mission. Both letters were dated December 30.[7]

Although permission to visit the Confederate capital was extended to the Blairs, this news failed to reach them before they became impatient and returned to Washington. However, the elder Blair determined to make a second attempt. Traveling on the naval vessel Don from City Point, Virginia, he reached Richmond on January 11.[8] Although secretly registered at the Spottswood Hotel, Blair spent most of his time in Richmond with an old friend, Colonel Ould, the Confederate commissioner for the exchange of prisoners.[9] What Blair observed of the conditions in Richmond convinced him that the Confederacy was exhausted and would be ready to make peace. In the few days he spent in the Confederate capital he found many prominent Southerners convinced that the rebellion was hopeless and eager to seize any method to prevent the disaster which defeat on the battle field would bring.[10]

Arrangements were made for a confidential interview with Davis; on January 12 Blair met with the Confederate President. Blair opened the interview by expressing the feeling that, being a man of Southern blood,

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[7]Blair to Davis, December 30, 1864, Official Records: Armies, Ser. III, Vol. IV, 1032; Blair to Davis, December 30, 1864, ibid.

[8]Fox to Grant, January 4, 1865, Butler, Correspondence, V, 465-466. Gustavus V. Fox was Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

[9]Smith, Blair Family, II, 304.

[10]Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln, X, 107. See also Smith, Blair Family, II, 306, and Davis, Confederate States, 458.

he longingly wished to see the war terminated and hoped by an interview with Davis to accomplish that end. He added that President Lincoln had no knowledge of his objects in going to Richmond so that he was without official authority. Blair then asked Davis if he had commitments with European powers which would interfere with negotiations with the government of the United States. Davis replied that he had no such commitments.

Satisfied by this statement, Blair proceeded to read a letter which he had prepared in the event that he was unable to meet with Davis. In the letter Blair first expressed the thought that Lincoln's Amnesty Proclamation had established a basis upon which permanent peace might be made.[11] He then added that slavery, the cause of the war to his mind, was admitted by both sections to be doomed. This issue being thrust in the background, the war had become a war for independence, but that very independence being fought for by the Confederacy was endangered by the presence of European soldiers on the North American continent. Here Blair was referring to Louis Napoleon's support of his puppet emperor Maximilian in Mexico. Blair attributed to Napoleon a plan to conquer all of the Southern section of the United States by instigating slave insurrections in that area.[12] Then he appealed to the Confederate President in these words:

> Jefferson Davis is the fortunate man who now holds the commanding position to encounter this formidable scheme of

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[11] In a proclamation dated December 8, 1863, Lincoln offered pardon, with some exceptions, to all in the Confederacy who would take an oath to support the Constitution of the United States and the Union. For the text of the proclamation, see John G. Nicolay and John Hay, eds., Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln (12 vols., Cumberland Gap, Tennessee: Lincoln Memorial University, 1894), IX, 218-223. Hereafter cited as Nicolay and Hay, Works.

[12] Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln, X, 97-99.

> conquest, and whose fiat can at the same time deliver his country from the bloody agony now covering it in mourning. He can drive Maximilian from his American throne, and baffle the designs of Napoleon to subject our Southern people to the "Latin race."[13]

The manner in which this object was to be accomplished constituted the significant portion of Blair's appeal. It involved a secret cessation of hostilities to be followed by a unified effort of both Northern and Southern armies to drive the foreign invaders from Mexico and thus maintain the Monroe Doctrine.[14]

When Blair had finished reading the letter, Davis stated that he thought it possible the problem could be solved, but that the vindictiveness produced by outrages committed in invaded portions of the Confederacy would render it difficult. However, he added that he thought the sight of the two armies united in war against a common enemy might have a great effect upon such sentiment. Davis then stated he would be willing to adopt Blair's project and appoint commissioners to negotiate a peaceful solution of the issues. The interview ended with the agreement that Blair would return to Washington and learn Lincoln's views on the project.[15] Davis gave Blair a letter to take to Lincoln which stated:

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[13] Ibid., 99-100.

[14] Ibid., 100-102.

[15] Blair's memorandum appears in Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln, X, 96-106 in somewhat deleted form. John G. Nicolay and John Hay, "Blair's Mexican Project--The Hampton Roads Conference," The Century Magazine, XXXVIII (October, 1889), 838-852 quotes the manuscript in full. See also George Parsons Lothrop, "The Bailing of Jefferson Davis," The Century Magazine, XXXIII (February, 1887), 640, and Smith, Blair Family, II, 310-312. The accuracy of Blair's report of the interview is substantiated by Davis' accounts. See Davis, Confederate States, 455-457, and Davis, Rise and Fall, II, 614-615.

> I have no disposition to find obstacles in forms, and am willing now, as heretofore, to enter into negotiations for the restoration of peace and ready to send a commission whenever I have reason to suppose it will be received, or to receive a commission if the United States Government shall choose to send one. That, notwithstanding the rejection of our former offers, I would, if you could promise that a commissioner, minister, or other agent would be received, appoint one immediately and renew the effort to enter into conference with a view to secure peace to the two countries.[16]

Blair returned to Washington on January 16 and reported the results of this visit to Lincoln. The President determined to open the door of negotiation a little wider. He was particularly interested in the discouragement of Confederate leaders that Blair reported, feeling it demonstrated a real possibility for peace. Blair was dispatched to Richmond again, this time to ascertain the steps Davis would take for peace. The President had rejected Blair's Mexican project, for the letter he gave Blair specifically mentions union as an object of peace:[17]

> You having shown me Mr. Davis's letter to you of the 12th instant, you may say to him that I have constantly been, am now, and shall continue ready to receive any agent whom he or any other influential person now resisting the national

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[16] Davis to Blair, January 12, 1865, Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. II, 506. See also Davis, Confederate States, 457.

[17] Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln, X, 108. On the same day that Blair reported to the President, he wrote Greeley: "I would have written you before I left Grant's Headqutrs. but could form no judgment of what result could be hoped for until I heard how I was received here as well as Richmond—and now I have to content myself & you with the saying of the old Sage that 'All that is Known is that nothing is Known'—Still I say to you my faith is strong that we shall have a happy deliverance and that soon. There is good will for it on both sides." Blair to Greeley, January 18, 1865, Smith, Blair Family, II, 311.

authority may informally send to me with the view of securing peace to the people of our one common country.[18]

Bearing this note, Blair returned to Richmond on January 20 for a second interview with Davis. Blair was undoubtedly embarrassed by Lincoln's refusal to enter into the proposed Mexican project. He attempted to explain the President's rejection of this plan by the fact that extremists in Congress were driving him into harsher measures than he cared to adopt. Blair then proposed an arrangement between General Grant and General Lee for a suspension of hostilities, but later retreated from this position, saying that a military convention would not be favorably received at Washington.[19] Blair gave the President's note to Davis and remarked that the part about "our one common country" referred to Davis' mention of "the two countries." Davis replied that he so understood it.[20] Davis was caught in an impossible situation. He had either to accept Lincoln's ultimatum, recognizing re-union as the basis of peace, or repeat his own ultimatum, a position which had been steadily refused by the United States government. No definite answer was given Blair, but the Northern envoy understood that the door

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[18]Lincoln to Blair, January 18, 1865, Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. II, 506. See also Davis, Confederate States, 457, and Nicolay and Hay, Works, X, 347. The significance of Lincoln's note is the allusion to "our one common country," made in reply to Davis' reference to "the two countries." Edwin Stanton's biographer stated that Stanton was responsible for calling this distinction to Lincoln's attention. It certainly was incorporated in the note to inform Davis that negotiation for peace on any other basis would be impossible. See Bates, Lincoln in the Telegraph Office, 325, and Frank A. Flower, Edwin McMasters Stanton, the Autocrat of Rebellion, Emancipation, and Reconstruction (New York: The Saalfield Publishing Company, 1905), 257.

[19]Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln, X, 108-109. See also Davis, Rise and Fall, II, 616-617, Davis, Confederate States, 457-458, and Smith, Blair Family, II, 312.

[20]Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. II, 506.

of negotiation was still open. Blair returned to Washington, and on January 28 reported the results of his mission to Lincoln.

On the day after Blair left Richmond, Davis asked Vice-President Stephens to meet him for a private interview. The message came through Robert M. T. Hunter, president pro tempore of the Confederate Senate and one of its most prominent members. At this meeting Davis informed the Confederate Vice-President that the business to be discussed was highly confidential; he had mentioned it to no one except Hunter, but had called for a Cabinet consultation on the subject that afternoon. Davis then unfolded the Blair project to Stephens. The Confederate President evidently clung to that plan, although Blair had denied having any authority from Lincoln to propose such an arrangement. He repeated Blair's statement that the Confederacy was doomed to fail in its war for independence. Davis wished to know whether they should enter into such a conference as Blair had proposed, particularly as the outcome predicted would be a restoration of the Union. Stephens inquired if Blair were really in the confidence of the Washington government, and Davis replied that he felt assured Lincoln was in accord with Blair's actions.

Stephens advised that they undertake a convention on the basis of Blair's proposal, but cautioned that such a conference would have to be conducted with the utmost secrecy. He suggested that Davis and Lincoln meet secretly at City Point, Virginia, but Davis preferred that a commission of three be appointed. Stephens then suggested that commissioners be appointed whose absence from the Confederacy would not be noted. He submitted the names of Judge John A. Campbell, Assistant Secretary of War, General Henry L. Benning, then commanding a brigade

near City Point, and Thomas S. Flournoy, a distinguished gentleman from Virginia. Davis agreed that these men would form an able commission. Stephens left satisfied that such would be the arrangement.

The next day Stephens was informed that the Cabinet had approved the conference and had determined to send Stephens, Campbell, and Hunter as commissioners. Stephens was considerably disturbed at this selection since the absence of Hunter and himself from the Senate would be extremely conspicuous. He attempted to have the arrangement changed, but was unsuccessful.[21] The other two commissioners chosen were well qualified to participate in peace negotiations. Hunter was known to be sick of war and favorably inclined to negotiations which would bring the best possible terms for the South. However, he did cherish the hope of gaining Southern independence.[22] Campbell, like many other Southerners, had become convinced by the winter of 1864 that the Confederacy could not hope to be successful. He had written Justice Samuel Nelson, a personal friend in the North, proposing an interchange of opinions leading to formal peace negotiations. Nelson had replied that a scheme leading to peace initiated

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[21]Stephens, Constitutional View, II, 590-595. See also Smith, Blair Family, II, 315-317. Stephens should not have been surprised at his appointment. Undoubtedly one of Davis' motives in entering the conference was to silence the clamor of the peace elements in the South; Stephens was certainly one of the outstanding proponents of peace.

[22]Charles H. Ambler, ed., Correspondence of Robert M. T. Hunter, 1827-1876 (Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1916, Vol. II, Washington, 1918), 9-10. Hunter had been a representative, then a senator in the United States Congress before the war. He was secretary of state in Davis' cabinet until 1862, when he left this office to become a Confederate senator from Virginia.

by Blair was then underway.[23]

On January 28 Davis met with the commissioners and informed them of the project which Blair had proposed. They were not informed of the exact method in which such an arrangement was to be carried out, but were given the power to make any treaty except one which involved reconstruction of the Union.[24] A problem arose in the drafting of instructions for the commissioners since Lincoln had stated he would only receive agents appointed to seek peace on the basis of "our one common country." Secretary of State Benjamin proposed to solve this dilemma by making the appointment to confer "upon the subject to which it relates," but Davis refused the suggestion.[25] The commission, dated January 28, stated:

> In conformity with the letter of Mr. Lincoln, of which the foregoing is a copy, you are requested to proceed to Washington City for an informal conference with him upon the issues involved in the existing war, and for the purpose of securing peace to the two countries.[26]

The commissioners left on January 29 and proceeded as far as Petersburg, Virginia, where they requested permission to cross the Union lines in accordance with an understanding claimed to exist with General Grant. Grant was temporarily absent and so General E. O. C. Ord, commander

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[23]Campbell to Nelson, December 1, 1864, N. G. Connor, John Archibald Campbell, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, 1853-1861 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920), 161-163. Hereafter cited as Connor, Campbell. Campbell had been a justice of the Supreme Court from 1853 until the outbreak of the war. In 1862 he was appointed assistant secretary of war for the Confederacy and placed largely in control of that department's relations with civilians.

[24]John A. Campbell, Reminiscences and Documents Relating to the Civil War During the Year 1865 (Baltimore: John Murphy and Company, 1887), 4. Hereafter cited as Campbell, Reminiscences. See also Smith, Blair Family, II, 317, and Kirkland, Peacemakers, 231.

[25]Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln, X, 110-111.

[26]Davis, Rise and Fall, II, 617.

of the Army of the James, referred the request to Secretary Stanton.[27] Stanton replied to Ord that the War Department had no knowledge of any such understanding and that no one was to cross the lines until instructions from the President were received.[28] On January 30 Stanton again telegraphed Ord that a messenger from the President would be dispatched immediately to interview the commissioners.[29]

Lincoln selected for this duty Major Thomas T. Eckert, chief of the War Department telegraph staff. Eckert was dispatched to Ord's headquarters with instructions to interview the Confederates and ascertain upon what conditions they desired to cross the lines as peace commissioners. Lincoln made the acceptance of his letter to Blair referring to "our one common country" a specific condition for negotiation.[30]

Meanwhile Grant had returned to his headquarters at City Point and had received a further communication from the Confederates. This time they requested an interview with Grant and a safe-conduct permit to Washington.[31] Unaware of the previous correspondence, Grant informed the commissioners that they would be passed across the lines and admitted to his headquarters. At the same time he notified Lincoln of the action he had taken.[32] The commissioners were met by Grant in the evening of that same day, January 31, at his headquarters. He conducted them to a

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[27]Ord to Stanton, January 29, 1865, Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. II, 506-507.

[28]Stanton to Ord, January 28, 1865, ibid., 507.

[29]Stanton to Ord, January 30, 1865, ibid.

[30]Lincoln to Eckert, January 30, 1865, ibid., 507-508. See also Bates, Lincoln in the Telegraph Office, 327-329.

[31]Stephens, Campbell and Hunter to Grant, January 30, 1865, Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. II, 508.

[32]Grant to Stephens, Campbell and Hunter, January 31, 1865, ibid., 312; Grant to Lincoln, January 31, 1865, ibid., 508. See also Stephens, Constitutional View, II, 595-596.

steamer, the Mary Martin, and then telegraphed Stanton of their arrival.[33]

Eckert had not yet left Washington, and although Grant's action had changed Lincoln's arrangements, the President still determined to send him to City Point. The President informed Grant of Eckert's impending arrival.[34] Since he was fairly certain the commissioners intended to negotiate on the basis of his letter to Blair, the President also decided to send Secretary of State Seward to Fortress Monroe to confer with the Confederates. Seward left Washington shortly after Eckert, bearing a letter from Lincoln stating the conditions that would be indispensable to any negotiation of peace. These were the restoration of national authority, the abolition of slavery, and the disbandment of Confederate forces.[35]

At City Point the Confederate commissioners spent a pleasant day on one of Grant's dispatch boats. They had conversations with many Union officers, among whom were Grant and General Meade. Meade wrote his wife on February 1 that, from the conversations, there seemed little chance for peace. However, he hoped that Lincoln would receive the commissioners and listen to the terms they had to offer.[36] Eckert

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[33]Grant to Stanton, January 31, 1865, Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. II, 311-312. See also Stephens, Constitutional View, II, 596, and Ulysses S. Grant, Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant (2 vols., New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1886), II, 420-421. Hereafter cited as Grant, Memoirs.

[34]Lincoln to Grant, January 31, 1865, Official Records: Armies Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. II, 509. Eckert bore a letter from Stanton instructing Grant to procure an interview for Eckert with the commissioners and to let none of the present activities have any effect upon his military plans. Stanton to Grant, January 30, 1865, ibid.

[35]Lincoln to Seward, January 31, 1865, ibid. See also Bates, Lincoln in the Telegraph Office, 329-330.

[36]Meade to Mrs. Meade, February 1, 1865, Meade, Life and Letters, II, 258-259.

arrived on the afternoon of February 1 and delivered the President's message to the commissioners. Shortly afterward he received their reply. Since it did not state compliance with Lincoln's letter of January 18, Eckert considered the reply unsatisfactory and notified the commissioners that they could not proceed to Washington. Eckert immediately advised Lincoln and Stanton of his action.[37] Lincoln received this communication from Eckert and one from Seward announcing his arrival at Fortress Monroe on the morning of February 2. He felt further action was useless and had decided to recall both Eckert and Seward when Stanton received a dispatch from Grant which altered the President's decision.[38] Grant wrote:

> I am convinced, upon conversation with Messrs. Stephens and Hunter, that their intentions are good and their desire sincere to restore peace and union. . . I fear now their going back without any expression from any one in authority will have a bad influence. At the same time, I recognize the difficulties in the way of receiving these informal commissioners at this time, and do not know what to recommend. I am sorry, however, that Mr. Lincoln cannot have an interview with the two named in this dispatch, if not all three now within our lines. Their letter to me was all that the President's instructions contemplated to secure their safe-conduct, if they had used the same language to Major Eckert.[39]

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[37] Eckert to Lincoln, February 1, 1865, Official Records: Armies Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. II, 510; Eckert to Stanton, February 1, 1865, ibid., 341-342. See also Bates, Lincoln in the Telegraph Office, 330-331. An account of Eckert's interview with the commissioners is given in Bates, Lincoln in the Telegraph Office, 334-338.

[38] Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. II, 511. See also Bates, Lincoln in the Telegraph Office, 331.

[39] Grant to Stanton, February 1, 1865, Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. II, 511. See also Bates, Lincoln in the Telegraph Office, 331-332. Although Grant denied having held any conversation with the Confederates on the subject of their mission, it seems fairly certain that he was anxious to arrange negotiations. See Grant, Memoirs, II, 421, Flower, Stanton, 257, and Kirkland, Peacemakers, 240.

Despite Stanton's advice, Lincoln decided to go in person to confer with the Confederate commissioners. He informed Seward of his intentions and directed Grant to send the commissioners to Hampton Roads, where he would meet them.[40] Before Lincoln left at noon on February 2, he received a further dispatch from Grant stating that the commissioners had accepted the terms and were ready to leave for Fortress Monroe.[41]

Lincoln reached Hampton Roads that evening and there, on board the steamer River Queen, met both Eckert and Seward; Eckert had come there in response to Seward's command of the previous evening.[42] The President learned that Eckert had complied with his instructions and for the first time saw the reply of the Confederates which Eckert had considered unsatisfactory.[43] He also learned that Grant had sent the Confederates on the steamer Mary Martin that afternoon and that they were then anchored in Hampton Roads.[44] Arrangements for a conference the next day were completed that night.

On the morning of February 3, the three Confederate commissioners were brought aboard the River Queen for the conference. After the

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[40]Lincoln to Grant, February 2, 1865, Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. II, 511; Lincoln to Seward, February 2, 1865, ibid. See also Grant, Memoirs, II, 422, and Bates, Lincoln in the Telegraph Office, 332. Secretary of the Navy Welles noted that Lincoln and Seward left for the conference without advising any of the cabinet, a matter of which the majority of the members much disapproved. See Welles, Diary, II, 235.

[41]Grant to Stanton, February 2, 1865, Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. II, 511. Grant had decided to send the commissioners without waiting to hear from Washington.

[42]Seward to Grant, February 1, 1865, ibid., 342.

[43]Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. II, 511-512. See also Bates, Lincoln in the Telegraph Office, 332-334.

[44]Stephens, Constitutional View, II, 598. See also Kirkland, Peacemakers, 243.

necessary introductions had been performed, Lincoln and Stephens exchanged some remarks about mutual acquaintances.[45] Seward then suggested that the interview was to be confidential and that no record of the conversation should be made. All agreed to this suggestion.[46]

Stephens then opened the discussion by inquiring of Lincoln if there were any way of bringing an end to the present difficulties and restoring good feeling between the two sections. When Lincoln replied that the only way he knew was for those now resisting the national authority to cease their resistance, Stephens asked if there were any Continental question which might divert their attentions until tempers on both sides had cooled. Lincoln immediately understood this question as an allusion to the Blair project and promptly stated that Blair had been without authority in his proposal of the plan. Stephens asked again if a mutual action in Mexico would not lead to ultimate harmony between the two sections. Lincoln answered that he could never consent to a military armistice unless the national authority were re-established over the Union.[47]

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[45] Stephens, Constitutional View, II, 599.

[46] Ibid., 600. Davis stated afterward that since the Confederate commissioners considered this agreement binding, it enabled Seward to give his own version of the conference to William A. Dayton, United States minister in France, thus influencing Louis Napoleon's attitude toward the Confederacy. See Davis, Rise and Fall, II, 618, and J. William Jones, "The Peace Conference of 1865," The Century Magazine, LXXVII (November, 1908), 68.

[47] Stephens, Constitutional View, II, 600-602. See also John A. Campbell, "Papers of John A. Campbell, 1861-1865," Southern Historical Society Papers, XLII (October, 1917), 45-46. Campbell stated that Stephens was the only Confederate commissioner who believed that a settlement on the basis of the Mexican project could be made. See Campbell, Reminiscences, 69, and John Goode, "Hampton Roads Conference," Forum, XXIX (March, 1900), 99.

Campbell asked how reconstruction of the Union would be effected provided Confederate authorities would agree to it.[48] Seward suggested that this question be deferred until Stephens could develop the ideas he had expressed in relation to the Mexican venture. Stephens then talked at some length about the Monroe Doctrine, saying that a joint conquest of Mexico would promote fraternal feelings. Seward inquired how two hostile governments would operate in a joint military project. Stephens replied that a military convention might be entered into to solve any difficulties presented. This portion of the discussion was closed by President Lincoln, who said that no treaty could be made with the Confederate States that would involve their recognition. Re-union was the first question to be settled.[49]

Campbell then repeated his previous question about reconstruction. Lincoln replied that the two necessary conditions would be the disbandment of troops and the restoration of the national authority. All other questions would be settled by Congress and the courts. When reference was made to the emancipation of slaves, Seward presented the proposed amendment to the Constitution which the commissioners had not yet seen.[50] Campbell asked what significance Seward attached to the amendment. Seward replied that it had been passed as a war measure and would

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[48]The commissioners had previously agreed that if they failed to obtain an armistice, they would attempt to learn the terms upon which the Union administration would be willing to end the war. See Stephens, Constitutional View, II, 603, and Goode, "Hampton Roads Conference," Forum, XXIX, 97-99.

[49]Stephens, Constitutional View, II, 603-609. See also Campbell, "Papers of John A. Campbell, 1861-1865," Southern Historical Society Papers, XLII, 46-47.

[50]Stephens, Constitutional View, II, 609-612. The Thirteenth Amendment had been adopted by Congress on February 1 and ratified by seven states during the time the commissioners were at City Point. See Campbell, Reminiscences, 6-7.

probably be abandoned after the war. Hunter then spoke of the helpless situation the slaves would occupy if emancipated. Lincoln replied with an anecdote about a farmer who had planted potatoes in the ground and left them in the ground to be rooted for; the ground had frozen, but, nevertheless, the farmer said the hogs must root.[51]

After some further discussion of the Emancipation Proclamation and the status of West Virginia, Hunter summed up the subjects of the interview by saying that there could evidently be no arrangement by treaty between the two governments. All that was left to the Confederacy was unconditional submission. Seward promptly protested that no such terms had been used or implied. All that the United States government demanded was obedience to the laws; the rights of the Southern states would be protected under those laws. Lincoln added that the enforcement of the confiscation and other penal acts had been left to him; he would guarantee liberality in their execution. He expressed the feeling that he and many other individuals in the North would even be willing to be taxed to compensate the South for the loss of their slaves.[52] Finally, Stephens asked if Lincoln would not reconsider the subject of an armistice on the basis of the Mexican project. Lincoln answered that he would reconsider but that he did not think his mind would change. Discussion was concluded at this point; the conference had been in progress about four hours. Lincoln and Seward left and the Confederates were escorted back to

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[51]Stephens, Constitutional View, II, 615. See also Campbell, "Papers of John A. Campbell, 1861-1865," Southern Historical Society Papers, XLII, 48-49.

[52]Stephens, Constitutional View, II, 610-618. See also Campbell, "Papers of John A. Campbell, 1861-1865," Southern Historical Society Papers, XLII, 50-52.

their steamer.[53]

Lincoln and Seward arrived in Washington the following morning and reported on the details of the conference to the Cabinet. Although no tangible results were obtained, they felt the discussion indicated an increasing desire for peace in the Confederacy.[54]

The Confederate commissioners returned to Richmond and made a written report to Davis. He was informed that only unconditional submission to the government of the United States would be accepted and that a constitutional amendment for emancipation had disposed of the slave question.[55] On February 6, Davis transmitted this report to the Confederate Congress.[56]

Since the commissioners were holding to the agreement made of keeping the interview confidential, the majority of the report made to Davis was oral. The Confederate President urged that a fuller report be made as it would be more effective in arousing the South.[57] Because

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[53]Stephens, Constitutional View, II, 618-619. See also Campbell, "Papers of John A. Campbell, 1861-1865," Southern Historical Society Papers, XLII, 51-52. Since neither Lincoln nor Seward made any report of the interview in detail, the only records of the conversation are contained in the accounts which Stephens and Campbell wrote from memory after the conference had taken place. See Campbell, Reminiscences, 11-17, and Stephens, Constitutional View, II, 599-619 for the complete memoranda.

[54]Welles, Diary, II, 235-236. See Bates, Lincoln in the Telegraph Office, 339-342 for an account of Lincoln's return journey to Washington.

[55]Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Confederacy, I, 250. See also Campbell, Reminiscences, 16-19, and Dunbar Rowland, ed., Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalist: his Letters, Papers, and Speeches (10 vols., Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1923), VII, 542-543. Hereafter cited as Rowland, Davis.

[56]Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Confederacy, I, 519.

[57]Davis to Mason, June 11, 1870, Fitzhugh Lee, "The Failure of the Hampton Roads Conference," The Century Magazine, LII (July, 1896), 477.

of the imminent collapse of the Confederacy, imprisonment and the pressure of financial difficulties, full reports were not written by the commissioners until several years after the conference. Their interpretations of the cause of failure of the conference provoked a long-standing controversy with Davis. Hunter felt Davis' insistence upon the terms of instruction (to treat on the basis of two countries) had effectively precluded any negotiation. Davis bitterly denied that the instructions had provided any embarrassment to the commissioners, convinced as he was that Lincoln would not have treated on any terms less than Confederate surrender.[58]

Also made evident in the writings of the commissioners are the different expectations they entertained of the conference. Apparently Stephens was the only commissioner who firmly believed that Blair's Mexican project was capable of execution. He entered the conference, not with the expectation of obtaining peace, but only desirous of obtaining an armistice.[59] Campbell hoped that an armistice might be formed by General Grant and General Lee, if other arrangements failed.[60] Hunter was definitely opposed to the Mexican scheme, believing it was impossible to make a settlement with the Union government upon this basis. He, together with Stephens and Campbell, believed that the conditions Lincoln

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[58]Davis to Jones, August 16, 1877, Rowland, Davis, VII, 566-568; ibid., VIII, 128-130. Secretary of State Benjamin agreed with Davis that any other instructions would have seemed a betrayal of his trust as President of the Confederate States. Benjamin to Davis, May 17, 1877, ibid., VII, 540-541.

[59]Stephens to Seward, July 25, 1865, Alexander H. Stephens, Recollections of Alexander H. Stephens, in Public and Private, with Letters and Speeches, Before, During, and Since the War (Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, 1867), 198.

[60]Rowland, Davis, VIII, 133.

proposed at the conference should have been made the basis of further negotiations, but Davis did not agree.[61]

The report of the conference that Davis made to the Confederate Congress aroused large-scale defiance and indignation about the Union terms. Public feelings were greatly aroused and resulted in renewed pledges to continue the war to the finish. Fundamentally, however, the failure of the conference was a severe disappointment to the South, not only to Confederate authorities, but to the people in general. By the winter of 1864, the Confederacy was in critical circumstances and a wide-spread hope had existed that the conference might at least result in an armistice.[62]

On February 10 a full report of the conference and its preliminaries was made to the House of Representatives by Lincoln. Seward made a simultaneous report to the Senate.[63] The result of the conference definitely strengthened extremist elements in the North. The Radicals in Congress rejoiced. All talk of negotiation was pushed aside by a determination to obtain military victory. The Hampton Roads Conference was the last significant effort to end the hostilities by negotiation. It ended in failure as had every other peace project. Davis, despite the obvious decline of the Confederacy, could not bring himself to negotiate on the only basis Lincoln would accept--restoration of the Union.

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[61]Hunter to Mason, September 19, 1870, Lee, "The Failure of the Hampton Roads Conference," The Century Magazine, LII, 488. See also Connor, Campbell, 171-172, and Rowland, Davis, VII, 133.

[62]Campbell, Reminiscences, 19. See also Goode, "Hampton Roads Conference," The Century Magazine, LII, 102-103.

[63]Official Records: Armies, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. II, 505-512; ibid., Ser. III, Vol. IV, 1162-1165.

CONCLUSION

In the course of the final two years of the Civil War there were five distinct attempts to adjust the difficulties of the divided sections and restore peace to the country. An analysis of these peace efforts leads to two conclusions. First, the peace missions were not, in every instance, a failure. Here must be considered the sincerity of the motives of the individuals who undertook the peace projects. Second, the same principles which split the Union asunder rendered a peace without military victory impossible. Here must be considered the differing bases of peace in the North and South.

Stephens undertook his mission in 1863, ostensibly to ameliorate the problem of prisoner exchange, but actually to sound out United States authorities on the subject of peace. He stated in later years that, even if the peace overture were unsuccessful, an important object would have been promoted by his mission. The South could publish a United States refusal of Confederate willingness to negotiate their differences and so affect public opinion on this continent and in Europe. To this extent Stephens' mission was a success.

Zacharie was, no doubt, seeking peace between the two sections, but underlying his volunteer project was a strong personal motive. He hoped for success in his endeavor so that credit for it might come to General Banks, his superior for whom Zacharie was acting as a spy. Banks was at that time aspiring to the Republican nomination in 1864. Zacharie failed in this object.

In the Jaquess-Gilmore Mission there appears the curious situation of a double motive. Jaquess was undoubtedly sincere in his undertaking, but Gilmore supported the project solely from a sense of political opportunism. Both he and Lincoln could see the value of obtaining a statement that the Confederacy would negotiate only on the basis of Southern independence. Jaquess failed in his mission, but Gilmore succeeded in obtaining the desired statement, which contributed to Lincoln's re-election.

Greeley, always a prominent peace advocate in the North, was open to the idea of peace negotiations. If the overtures culminating in the Niagara Falls Conference were sincere, then the Union should improve the opportunity for peace, Greeley maintained. If they were not, he believed the terms offered by the South should be published so as to demonstrate that the Confederacy was responsible for the continuation of the war. The Confederate commissioners at Niagara held a similar opinion in that the offer of terms by the North might be twisted to affect public opinion. However, in their case, the object was to influence disaffected elements in the North and strengthen the war spirit of the South. Greeley's maneuvering of the correspondence involved in the Niagara Falls meeting precluded the failure of negotiations, but, in other respects, the episode was not a failure. In the Union Lincoln's administration was strengthened; in the South war sentiment was solidified.

The Hampton Roads Conference was precipitated by Blair's sincere desire to bring an end to hostilities. However, his plan for facilitating peace was converted by the Confederate authorities into a method for obtaining a much desired armistice. The Confederate commissioners

who attended the conference were not of a single mind on Blair's Mexican project; they were united, however, in the opinion that the conference itself could have been made a basis for further negotiation. In this object they were obstructed by President Davis. The Confederacy failed in its attempt to secure an armistice; the Union, on the other hand, was successful in demonstrating that negotiations were useless and that the war must be prosecuted until complete military victory could be obtained.

The conclusion that sincere attempts to secure peace during the Civil War were not always the motives which precipitated peace missions is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the fact that most of the projects were clearly doomed to failure before they were begun. Discounting the missions of 1863, because they did not result in negotiation, it was clearly evident after the Jaquess-Gilmore mission that the differing bases of peace in the North and South rendered any negotiation impossible. Davis had sworn to uphold the Confederate States and Lincoln was dedicated to the restoration of the Union. Clearly, each attempt to negotiate peace failed because Lincoln would not make peace with independence and Davis would not make peace without independence. These poles were compromised by neither Lincoln nor Davis.

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THESIS TITLE: EFFORTS TO NEGOTIATE PEACE DURING THE CIVIL WAR

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