



THE INDEX

HENRY HOTZE

SOUTHERN PROPAGANDIST

By Serge Noirsain

Adapted into English by Gerald Hawkins

Son of a Swiss captain serving in the French Army, Henry Hotze was born in 1833 in Zurich. Educated in German, he also acquired a perfect command of the French and English languages. He immigrated to the United States and settled down in Alabama. In 1855, he became a US citizen. He rose from obscurity after publishing his translation into English of the controversial work of Arthur de Gobineau, *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*. He worked for a year at the American legation in Brussels, Belgium, where his linguistic qualities and literary talents were put to good use. In 1858, he returned to Mobile where he founded the *Register*, a pro slavery newspaper. In November 1861, the Secretary of War sent him on a mission to Europe to investigate the reasons that slowed down the shipment of military supplies to the South. It was at that time that Hotze met the Confederate envoys in Great Britain and France. Upon his return to Richmond, in February 1862, he convinced President Davis to create a Confederate propaganda network on the European continent. And so, with 750 \$ in his pocket, Henry Hotze left the South to conquer the British press.¹

Arriving in London at the end of January 1862, Hotze at once perceived the Northern influence on the underprivileged working classes. On February 23, with the help of local connections, he gained the sympathy of A. Borthwick, the editor of the *Morning Post*, which was the press arm of British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston. His first article in this daily made such a sensation that Hotze already saw himself heading the biggest newspapers of London. He soon had to change his tune and go back to basics. Carefully weaving his propaganda web, he inserted articles in various newspapers, especially the *Times*, which contradicted the allegations made by his Northern counterparts. During the Victorian era, freelance journalists signed their articles with their initials and worked for several newspapers at the same time. Combining his talent with determination, Hotze construed the events in favor of the South. His efforts finally bore fruit. Lord George Campbell, the well-known advocate of the southern cause in the House of Lords, paid him a visit. During their conversation, he asked the journalist to provide him with arguments that were likely to show the inefficiency of the Northern blockade. On March 7, 1862, thanks to the information provided by Hotze, Campbell

¹ Cullop, Confederate Propaganda, p. 18-21, 27-29 ; Strode, Jefferson Davis, vol. II : p. 26.

proved so convincing in the House debates that Lord Russell, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was forced to finally admit that the “old American Union” no longer existed.²

In April 1862, Hotze made an assessment of his first three months of activities. Having started from scratch, the little known journalist had managed to make ties with important people and counter the northern propaganda. In spite of his successes, he realized that his current action was limited to criticizing the pro southern articles in various newspapers. Hotze’s next move was to curb the southern press, which too often published vexing remarks on the British government. If the voice of the Confederacy was to be heard in the British media, he must create a channel that Richmond would use to convey the information that he needed to offset the northern press. With the help of his relations in the South, Hotze managed to collect and centralize in various locations the information that would be useful to him in London. Moreover, he obtained the financial support of friends in Mobile and Savannah to embark on the most outstanding phase of his career: the creation of the *Index*, a pro southern propaganda newspaper. On May 1, 1862, he introduced his baby to the British media.³

Determined to have the *Index* support his anti-unionist propaganda, Hotze hired young reporters, instructing them to exploit his own sources only. Hotze encouraged his freelance journalists to write for various newspapers. By doing so, those who penned for the *Index* corroborated their own writing in other publications. This method contributed to generate a Confederate “voice” in Great Britain, which never existed before. The *Index* had sixteen pages and appeared every Thursday. It cost six pence, and thirty shillings for an annual subscription

Though conceived to indoctrinate the British public, the *Index* could not ignore the tastes and habits of its customers. Hotze and his hired hands took care of every detail such as advertisements, formatting and presentation. The initial success of the *Index* was modest. In spite of the very low price of the issue, sales did not compensate for costs and the deficit reached 120 £ at the end of the first six months of the launching of the newspaper. While waiting for the release of his \$ 2,000 annual budget from Richmond, Hotze used his personal funds and borrowed some money from friends to continue the publication of his weekly. The gifts of English sympathizers and the loans authorized by the Confederated envoy in Europe barely managed to stabilize his financial situation. When the \$ 2,000 finally arrived from Richmond, these resources only relieved his current debts and thus, the cycle started again with Hotze requesting additional funds. Because of slow communications, his mail took one or two months to reach the Confederate capital and the same amount of time for the government’s reply. In March 1863, a favorable message from Richmond finally rewarded him and the worst seemed over. The increase of his annual budget and the financial support of McRae, the superintendent of Confederate finances abroad, relieved Hotze of his distress. In July 1864, the sales revenues of the *Index* became sufficient to amortize the running costs of his paper.⁴

Published for the British, the *Index* tried to reflect a facet of their public opinion. In addition to the articles written by his staff, Hotze reserved some pages for political personalities who commented on the world events. He incorporated their reports in information flashes that supposedly came from across the Atlantic Ocean but that were in reality re-worked or the fruit of his imagination. The symbiosis between his writing

² ORN S.2, vol. III : p. 346-47, 352-53, 361.

³ ORN S.2, vol. III : p. 371, 400-401.

⁴ Owsley, King Cotton, p. 320 ; Cullop, Confederate Propaganda, p. 37-43.

and that of prominent Londoners reinforced the pro southern point of view of the *Index*. To avoid possible contradictions between the columns of his weekly and those of a favorable but awkward press, Hotze constantly consulted all the big European newspapers.

In addition to his British correspondents, Hotze called upon the assistance of professional journalists on the European continent. Manetta was a long-standing Italian friend of a member of the Confederate diplomatic mission in London, who had lived for a while in Virginia. Using the same methods as Hotze in England, Manetta managed to successfully infiltrate the Italian media, in particular the Turin press. This complicity produced a profitable exchange of information between the *Index* and the best newspapers on the European market. When sources were available, Hotze developed topics that influenced or helped the Confederate envoys in their official missions. As a result, his columns in the *Index* and their echoes in other well-known newspapers helped consolidate the logic behind the policies of the South.⁵

When France announced its support to Maximilian of Austria if he became emperor of Mexico, the South anticipated that this prospect would lead to a formal recognition of its independence. France wished to maintain a buffer state between Mexico and the United States. The *Index* thus endorsed the policy of Napoleon III, thereby rejecting Maximilian's insistence to subordinate his accession to the throne to a plebiscite of the Mexican population. Moreover, Hotze did not hesitate to write: "*Maximilian would reign in Mexico City by the grace of God and Napoleon III, not by the will of the multitude*".

Noticing an increasingly hostile attitude of the French government to Napoleon's project, Hotze accused the monarchists and republicans alike of taking advantage of the ignorance of the people when trying to minimize the economical potential that lay in Mexico. Moreover, he qualified as absurd the rumor of a conflict between France and the United States since the latter were engaged in a civil conflict. When Maximilian did not fulfill his alleged promise of recognizing the Confederacy, the *Index* ceased to report on the French operations in Mexico. At the same time, the achievements of Edwin DeLeon in France proved worthless. The Confederate government had sent him to Paris on a propaganda mission, but when he failed to collaborate with John Slidell, the commissioner fired the arrogant South Carolinian and replaced him by Hotze.⁶

Unlike the British press, French newspapers were not distributed in all districts of the country's capital. Moreover, Hotze became conscious that the French media was by far more corrupt than its Anglo-Saxon counterpart. This particularity benefited the North since John Bigelow, the consul general of the United States in Paris, held the upper hand with regards to financial power. Combining the abundant availability of Federal funds with his perfect command of the French language, Bigelow's influence on the French press was second to none, in particular on the newspaper *La Patrie* of Felix Aucegne.⁷ Hotze realized that it was impossible to deal with so many French papers at the same time. Rather than running in all directions, he took time to analyze the routing of information in France. He learned that it was the Havas Agency that spread the world news to the French press. By way of intrigues, he managed to make friends with

⁵ Cullop, Confederate Propaganda, p. 46-63 ; ORN S.2, vol. III : p. 866, 878, 1027.

⁶ Willson, Confederates in Paris, p. 204-31 ; ORN S.2, vol. III : p. 1060-61 ; Cullop, Confederate Propaganda, p. 66-84, 119-22.

⁷ ORN S.2, vol. III : p. 1025-26, Cullop, Confederate Propaganda, p. 119 ; Case & Spencer, United States and France, p. 38-44, 458-60, 557-58 ; Bigelow, Retrospections, Vol. II : p. 161.

Auguste Havas and convince him to exploit his exclusive information coming supposedly directly from the New World. Of course he took care not to reveal his true sources.

Though more complex, southern propaganda in France was a big success that cost very little. In June 1864, three years after Hotze had replaced DeLeon, the French papers were printing news and articles coming straight from Richmond. To reassure Havas on the authenticity of his scoops, Hotze took the habit of publishing them first in his *Index* or in other British newspapers. In addition to France and Great Britain, Hotze was soon put in charge of Confederate propaganda in Ireland and in the German kingdoms. However, those nations had gradually passed under the control of Union agents who were provided with considerable funds. In spite of some local successes, Richmond advised Hotze not to focus on those areas because of the enormous amount of energy that this operation would require.⁸

The Confederate surrender at Appomattox put an end to the *Index*. Little is known of what happened to Hotze after the Civil War. He married the daughter of a former Confederate officer detached in France in 1863 and worked for various European newspapers. He died in 1887 in Zug, Switzerland.⁹ Necessitating little investment, the propaganda techniques of Henry Hotze would remain a model for the European press prior to World War I. Although Hotze's accomplishments were indeed remarkable, they should however not give the impression that the majority of the French and British press readers adhered to the Confederate cause.

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⁸ Cullop, *Confederate Propaganda*, p. 120, 123-27.

⁹ Cullop, *Confederate Propaganda*, p. 128-35.