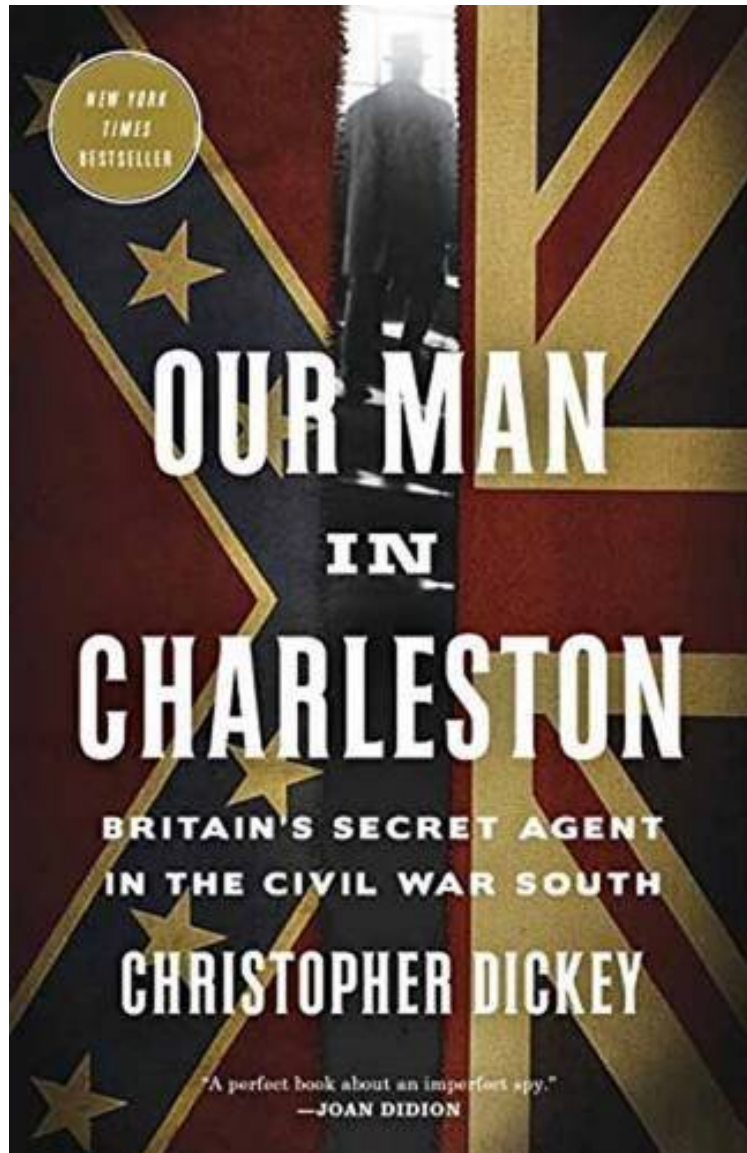


(Download) Our Man in Charleston: Britain's Secret Agent in the Civil War South

Our Man in Charleston: Britain's Secret Agent in the Civil War South

Christopher Dickey

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Christopher Dickey : Our Man in Charleston: Britain's Secret Agent in the Civil War South before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Our Man in Charleston: Britain's Secret Agent in the Civil War South:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Charleston As A Big Insane Asylum?By DiotimaReads like a great

novel from first paragraph through the last page. To understand the Civil War[1861-1865] one must "see" into Charleston and South Carolina where the nation's previous most potent threat of secession had been attempted in 1832. This book is emotionally so engaging that I wished the state had been allowed to secede, the sooner the better. Herein a former state attorney general is quoted: "South Carolina is too small to be a republic and too large for an insane asylum." The star of this biography/history of Charleston was the British Consul there from 1853 to February 1863. I have 100 "flagged" passages in my copy: One of the last is on page 292: "...Bunch's long record of dispatches about the Southerners, their politics, their key personalities and especially their craving for new slaves from Africa had slowed London's march toward recognition of the Confederacy."---To which I almost say "Amen", but, then, I also realize that some USA-Abolitionists were as fanatical as the most fanatic of Charleston's "Fire-Eaters". Which leads me to wonder if--The war was a "close thing"--A Southern victory at, say, Antietam/Sharpsburg, probably bringing in British and French arbitration and Southern independence might have been a lesser evil by saving 100,000s[4000,000?] of lives since the war would have been shortened by 2.5 years. Note that before Jefferson Davis died the last vestige of slavery had been declared ended[in Brazil]. I believe that slavery in the CSA would have ended by that time too. The lesson: Be careful what stories you try to make true. Br true to. at least, a lesser, or better, the least evil if you wish to avoid greater evils. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Great Read on an Obscure Slice of ACW History By Emil L. Posey President of the Confederacy Jefferson F. Davis was convinced that the British people supported the Confederate cause, and securing formal recognition was his top foreign policy objective early in the war. Most of the Southern landed class believed, and were loudly expressive, that withholding cotton exports to England and the economic dislocation that would result would suffice to pressure any recalcitrants in London to support recognition. Recognition would put the Confederacy on the same level diplomatically – that of a sovereign nation – as the United States and would greatly increase its chances for a successful secession. The South came close, and the hotheaded, obstinate, confrontational style of US Secretary of State William Seward vis-à-vis England almost sealed the deal. It eventuated, however, that even Seward's "first folly", so to speak, was not enough to push London, Parliament and Crown alike, past their visceral distaste for slavery in any form. Formal diplomatic recognition by Britain (or by France or any other European state) was never obtained. Nothing new is this summary. What is new and a real treat is the story Christopher Dickey unspools to describe this. He starts with the appointment of one Robert Bunch, a relatively minor official in the British Foreign Office, as a replacement British consul in Charleston, South Carolina in 1853, and follows Bunch's tenure until his eventual reassignment in February 1863. There were 14 British consuls in the United States, including 7 in slave states, all answerable to the British Minister (ambassador, as it were) in Washington, DC. They had a variety of tasks to perform. First and foremost was to facilitate the movement of British goods and people – to keep the lines of commerce open and flowing. A close second was to act as London's eyes and ears in the US hinterland, monitoring and reporting back on commercial, cultural, political, military, and economic events that might prove important to British interests. Most of these consuls were part-timers who mixed their private business with their unpaid official duties, but Bunch was one of the few that was a full-time salaried professional. He would also prove himself to be one of the best and most prolific. His reports were comprehensive, detailed, and perceptive. He is an excellent vehicle through which to tell this story. Three things I like about this book: First, it sheds light on a slice of Civil War history that hasn't seen a lot of play in popular histories – the underlying Royal and Parliamentary anti-slavery sentiment, how the British Foreign Office worked, the source network that Bunch (and by interpolation the other consuls) developed, and how Bunch personally had to operate in the Deep South so as to do his job without revealing his personal hatred of the South's "peculiar institution". Second, Christopher Dickey's style. He is a trained and experienced journalist, and already an accomplished author prior to this book. Thus, he knows how to write. This is an easy, smooth read that flows linearly through time with seamless transitions between events, locales, and personalities – not only informative, but a joy to read. One downside is that Mr. Dickey's abhorrence of slavery comes through the text. It doesn't get in the way of the narrative, but it's visible. And then, third, there is the description of the diplomatic motives and strategies initiated and played out within and between Britain, the Confederacy, and the United States. In what too often can be a dry topic, the maneuverings are not only described with pulse and pace, but their intricacies and backgrounds are well explained. Take, for example, the Negro Seamen Act of 1822 – a South Carolina law that was a thorn in Britain's side. The law required free seamen of African descent working aboard domestic and foreign ships (including British ships) to be jailed while the ship was in any South Carolinian port for fear that if they were allowed free access to local slaves, riots and other unrest might ensue. Moreover, when it was time to leave, the ship's captain had to pay a fine for the release of seaman held captive. You can imagine Britain's reaction. This book is a great read, and I recommend it highly. If you need more convincing, you might check out <http://www.c-span.org/video/?327546-1/christopher-dickey-man-charleston>. Enjoy! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Thrilling Read By Kwan I really enjoyed reading this book but before I really get into the review I have to say the title is somewhat misleading. Robert Bunch the protagonist in this book wasn't necessarily a spy or a "secret agent". Based on the contents of this book I felt like that sort of description was misleading. Bunch was a consul that hated slavery but acted like he was fine with it in conversations with South Carolina's citizens and would send very negative critiques about the institution to the foreign secretary in London. I

wouldn't count him as a "secret agent" for that. Bunch's letters however are appealing and gives the reader a good insight into the thinking of South Carolina's coastal elite in the years preceding the civil war. The book is written in a fluid style that keeps the reader engaged and immersed in the story. Dickey does a great job of bringing the elites of South Carolina to life. Their thoughts, their fears and rampant paranoia are presented in a way that helps the reader understand why South Carolina was so quick to secede. The reader is also presented with a unique look of the role of the British consuls, their personal thoughts, lines of communications, and the way they handled delicate matters. This book is very informative for those looking to get the perspective of the British side when it came to whether or not they would recognize the confederate states.

Between the Confederacy and recognition by Great Britain stood one unlikely Englishman who hated the slave trade. His actions helped determine the fate of a nation. When Robert Bunch arrived in Charleston to take up the post of British consul in 1853, he was young and full of ambition, but even he couldn't have imagined the incredible role he would play in the history-making events to unfold. In an age when diplomats often were spies, Bunch's job included sending intelligence back to the British government in London. Yet as the United States threatened to erupt into Civil War, Bunch found himself plunged into a double life, settling into an amiable routine with his slavery-loving neighbors on the one hand, while working furiously to thwart their plans to achieve a new Confederacy. As secession and war approached, the Southern states found themselves in an impossible position. They knew that recognition from Great Britain would be essential to the survival of the Confederacy, and also that such recognition was likely to be withheld if the South reopened the Atlantic slave trade. But as Bunch meticulously noted from his perch in Charleston, secession's red-hot epicenter, that trade was growing. And as Southern leaders continued to dissemble publicly about their intentions, Bunch sent dispatch after secret dispatch back to the Foreign Office warning of the truth—that economic survival would force the South to import slaves from Africa in massive numbers. When the gears of war finally began to turn, and Bunch was pressed into service on an actual spy mission to make contact with the Confederate government, he found himself in the middle of a fight between the Union and Britain that threatened, in the boast of Secretary of State William Seward, to "wrap the world in flames." In this masterfully told story, Christopher Dickey introduces Consul Bunch as a key figure in the pitched battle between those who wished to reopen the floodgates of bondage and misery, and those who wished to dam the tide forever. Featuring a remarkable cast of diplomats, journalists, senators, and spies, *Our Man in Charleston* captures the intricate, intense relationship between great powers on the brink of war. From the Hardcover edition.

New York Times Bestseller
New York Times Book Editors' Choice
"Our Man in Charleston is a joy to discover. It is a perfect book about an imperfect spy."—Joan Didion
"Thoroughly researched and deftly crafted. [Our Man in Charleston will] introduce people to a man who should be better known, one who cannily fought the good fight at a fateful moment in history."—Wall Street Journal
"Dickey tells Bunch's story with aplomb and a good deal of fine wit. On one level, Dickey has written a spicy historical beach read, chock-full of memorable characters and intrigue. But into this page-turning entertainment, Dickey has smuggled a thoughtful examination of the geopolitical issues of the day...splendid."—Boston Globe
"A fascinating page-turner that takes on special relevance as South Carolina fills our thoughts in the summer of 2015...[Dickey] brings to life a feverish Southern city, an un-united nation of states, and the 'lively and indiscreet, indefatigable and thoroughly British' man in the middle. Dickey...clearly understands the dance of diplomacy that evolves day by day as personalities and priorities change."—Christian Science Monitor
"A dynamite tale of international gamesmanship...Dickey's prose is lively and entertaining. He writes with care for the reader — identifying and characterizing the major players in the political drama that unfolded."—Dallas Morning News
"One heck of a good read."—The Charlotte Observer
"Dickey tells the story of this unsung hero with dash, clarity and a feel for fine detail. ... Our Man in Charleston blows the dust off this forgotten chapter in history and, remarkably, turns it into a thriller."—Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
"A good historical primer on the buildup to the Civil War and a behind-the-scenes look at England's concern for its own future as the conflict unfolded."—Minneapolis Star Tribune
"A unique history of the War Between the States from the perspective of Bunch and his important, and little-known, role in the outcome of the conflict."—Fort Worth Star Telegram
"[Bunch is] a brilliant find...Dickey, the foreign editor of The Daily Beast and a former longtime Newsweek correspondent, uses his research well: in a story like this one, point of view is everything, and Bunch's is razor sharp."—American Scholar
"Dickey has written a book that is as much suspense and spy adventure as it is a history book... A story as compelling as this one does not come around very often. With so much already written about the Civil War, and more coming every year, originality is a rare thing these days. The story of Robert Bunch is that and more."—The Carolina Chronicles
"A fascinating tale of compromise, political maneuvering, and espionage."—Publishers Weekly
"Dickey's comprehension of the mindset of the area, coupled with the enlightening missives from Bunch, provides a rich background to understanding the time period....A great book explaining the workings of what Dickey calls an erratic, cobbled-together coalition of ferociously independent states. It should be in the library of any student of diplomacy, as well as Civil War buffs." —Kirkus (starred)
"A fine examination of a superbly skilled diplomat."—Booklist
"Britain's consul in Charleston before and

during the first two years of the Civil War was outwardly pro-Southern and earned notoriety in the North. But in secret correspondence with the British Foreign Office he made clear his hostility to slavery and the Confederacy. His dispatches helped prevent British recognition of the Confederacy. Christopher Dickey has skillfully unraveled the threads of this story in an engrossing account of diplomatic derring-do." —James M. McPherson, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Battle Cry of Freedom*"Did Robert Bunch, Her Majesty's consul in Charleston, keep Britain out of the Confederacy's war? Drawing on Bunch's clandestine correspondence, Christopher Dickey makes a compelling case that this dazzlingly duplicitous, ardent anti-slaver played a key role. A fascinating, little-known shard of vital Civil War history, brought glitteringly alive with all the verve and panache of a master story teller." —Geraldine Brooks, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *March*"In his extraordinary new history *Our Man in Charleston*, Christopher Dickey has written a book you can't put down. This is a well-researched history with the immense power and sheer element of surprise we find in the finest spy novels. It's like reading a book by Graham Greene, written while he was staying at the house of John le Carré, discussing the fate of nations over drinks. With Charleston consul Robert Bunch, Dickey has introduced a new great man in the great war that haunts America still. I adored this book."—Pat Conroy, author of *The Great Santini* and *South of Broad*"Our Man in Charleston is a superlative and entertaining history of the grey area where diplomacy ends and spy craft begins. British Consul Robert Bunch played a secret role in the anti-slavery fight in Charleston, which would remain secret to this day were it not for Christopher Dickey's extraordinary detective skills."—Amanda Foreman, author of *A World on Fire* and *Georgiana*"Wonderfully written and researched, *Our Man in Charleston* is the best espionage book I've read. I couldn't put it down." —Robert Baer, former CIA case officer and author of *See No Evil*"Robert Bunch is an unlikely spy, but his bravery and moral sensibility make him an intriguing hero for Christopher Dickey's Civil War history. Dickey knows his stuff, from spying to the slave trade, and he's a master at telling a fast-paced, gripping yarn." —Evan Thomas, author of *John Paul Jones* and *The Very Best Men*"Christopher Dickey has accomplished the near-impossible—exhuming a forgotten but irresistible character from the dustbin of Civil War history, and bringing him back to life with painstaking research and bravura literary flair. This irresistible book opens new windows onto the complicated worlds of wartime diplomacy, intelligence-gathering and outright intrigue, and the result is fresh history and page-turning excitement." —Harold Holzer, author of *Lincoln and the Power of the Press* and winner of the 2015 Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize "A long-needed study of Robert Bunch, British consul in Charleston—a secret agent for the Crown in the Civil War era who outwardly praised the city and its people while privately loathing both, and who discouraged diplomatic recognition of the Confederacy by keeping his superiors abreast of its determination to continue importing slaves. Elegantly written, well researched, an engrossing story."—Howard Jones, author of *Blue and Grey Diplomacy*From the Hardcover edition.About the AuthorAward-winning author CHRISTOPHER DICKEY, the foreign editor of *The Daily Beast*, is based in France. Previously he was the Paris bureau chief and Middle East editor for *Newsweek*. He served as Cairo bureau chief for the *Washington Post* and, before that, as the paper's Central America bureau chief. His books include the acclaimed memoir *Summer of Deliverance* as well as *Securing the City*, *Expats*, *With the Contras*, and two novels about espionage and terrorism.From the Hardcover edition.