

Spurce: J. McPherson, "Lincoln and Strategy of Unconditional Surrender."

History 214

Re: Notes on Lincoln and Emancipation doctrine

Notes on toward a total war.

From the beginning Lincoln directed the war against the Government of the Confederacy w/ the aim of bringing the Rebel states back into the Union. Lincoln regarded the Con. Govt. as illegal govt. since, he insisted, secession was unconstitutional. In other words this was a domestic rebellion; an insurrection by certain lawless citizens not a war between nations. For the duration of the war Lincoln maintained this legal fiction referring to the southern states as rebel states or rebels.

Thus the Union opened the war on the theory not of overthrowing an enemy state or even conquering enemy territory, but of suppressing insurrection and restoring authority in its own territory.

Reasoning based on Lincoln's/North's belief that the majority of southerners were loyal unionists and in a short time they would regain control over the politics of the South and throw out the rebellious fire-eaters. In order to avoid alienating this "loyal majority," Lincoln intended to show restraint in his war plans by repressing the insurrection without any devastation or destruction or interference with property, etc. while he fought to bring about the overthrow of the secessionists. This was a national strategy for a limited war.

Phase II of the war. The turning toward total war. National strategy in the North shifts from conquering Rebel territory and toward the destruction of the political and economic foundations of the Confederacy.
social

Recognition by 1862 that the limited war strategy of conquering Southern territory would not end the war as long as Confederate armies remained intact.

First steps in changing of the war began w/ confiscation of enemy property. This began in the summer of 1862. Now crops and livestock, any materials that could be used to feed and sustain the Confederate armies was being systematically destroyed or confiscated by Union armies. The struggle was taking on the character of a violent and remorseless war. The thing that Lincoln had hoped to avoid in the beginning of hostilities.

Lincoln was still reluctant to turn the war into a revolutionary struggle. See his reversal of Fremont and David Hunter's initiative on freeing slaves. Lincoln's concern w/ the border states, etc. Other factors was the recognition that nearly half of the Northern people had voted the Democratic ticket in 1860. While they might support a Republican president for a war to preserve the Union they were not likely to support that same war if it entailed freeing the slaves. Then there was the anticipated reaction within the army itself.

*History's
Teacher and
D. J. Johnson
I was in class
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Re: Notes on Lincoln and the Emancipation

Adaoption of the emancipation proclamation:

The rationale for emancipation of the slaves was central to the new total war doctrine as national strategy in 1862. Nothing could more weaken the South's war effort than disrupting her labor force and turning that former asset into a Union asset. Emancipation became a crucial part of the Northern military strategy, important in the winning of the war. For Lincoln he recognized that this strategy was now tied to the ultimate war strategy of restoring the Union with the new added war aim of emancipating the slaves. The EP was as Lincoln defined it, "an act of justice," as well as a military necessity.

Once the EP came into effect on January 1, 1863, Lincoln may have wavered but he did not break w/ the expanded war aims of the Union. Despite pressure by a war-weary North to offer as terms to Richmond restoration of the Union without a word on slavery, etc. . . Lincoln insisted that the die was cast even though he was certain he would lose the 1865 election.

Summary: When the war began and the North looked for an easy triumph, Lincoln pursued a war strategy of limited war for restoration of the status quo ante bellum. But when the chances of an easy triumph disappeared, Lincoln grasped the necessity of adopting a strategy of total war to overthrow the enemies' social and political system.