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BR, Stamp, Essays Lincoln and Sumter Crisis

Begins w/ fact that Lincoln was a "tight-lipped" man; he was not very open about what was going on in his mind. Suggests that this might where the characterization of "devious" arises

Lincoln's reasons for "holding like steel" against the Crittenden Compromise. S notes that in this he was reflecting popular Republican views as well.

Lincoln opposed peaceful secession. For him the Union was perpetual. He also rejected any compromise at the last minute. His main goal in the crisis was to preserve the national interest as he saw it: that was the preservation of the Union.

His options were to encourage a peaceful reunification if that were possible. In short, if the majority of Southerners were really loyalists as he expected. Or to use force to maintain the Union by asserting its authority over Sumter.

Stamp notes that all during the interim while Lincoln was President-elect and waiting to come to Washington for his inauguration in March, in his private correspondence he was laying out what was in his mind. He was going to do his duty as he saw and that meant to retake the forts already under CSA control and prevent any further loss of federal property. He seemed to be of the opinion that in order to carry out these duties that force would be necessary. S is taking care of the "devious" charge./

Long before the Sumter crisis broke Lincoln had formulated his strategy. This is the strategy of defense. During his public appearances and letter writing during the interim period of president-elect he made clear that he would do nothing to aggress against the CSA. But he would do what duty required in attempting to hold all the remainder of federal property in the South by collecting revenues (tariffs), re-provisioning those federal forts still under federal command, or even possibly recovering those that have been seized. If these actions produced hostilities it would have to come from the South.

S. gives a pretty good idea of the pressures that were on Lincoln after he occupied the White House. He learned the evening of his inauguration of Anderson's plans to evacuate Ft. Sumter because the fort was running low on provisions. The early mood in the North that secession was just another one of the South's empty threats--that they would be back in the Union soon as the loyalists took over, etc. That there was no need for coercion and war, etc., By March this mood had evaporated. The North in general, Republican party, business sector, even pro-Union Democrats were calling for some kind of action. They voiced a fear that any more of the Buchanan-like policy of passivity and inaction would ruin the Union. Lincoln shared this view as he was the focus of this pressure.

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Re: BR, Stamp, Essays---Lincoln and the Sumter Crisis---

When Lincoln gave orders for the expedition to resupply Ft. Sumter he was certain that the South would respond by opening the hostilities. So did all of his Cabinet. He followed the scenario he constructed to the letter--he notified the Governor of So. Carolina that the expedition was on its way. That if allowed to proceed peacefully he would not supply the fort with men or ammunition just provisions. But all the while he was preparing for the defense of Washington and writing Northern governors to prepare for hostilities.

The South had two choices(1)to allow the expedition to resupply the fort and thereby lose its standing with the southern population(2)or fire on the fort or the expedition and thereby earn the onus for starting the conflict. Lincoln rightly expected the latter course to happen. But southern aggression would unify the North and this was critical to begin this struggle with a unified North behind the war effort. (Esp. when the North would have to invade the South, etc).

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Re, BR, Stamp, Essays-- "The Concept of a Perpetual Union"

*Look at
the
question
F. G. 2011*

S argues that the Constitution is ambiguous about this central question.

Whether the states have a right to dissolve their bonds with the Union or whether the Union was perpetual and any secession movement was unconstitutional and therefore treasonous, etc.

Whether the Constitution was clear on this would it have prevented the secession of the South in 1861? That is problematical. But it would have eliminated all of the polemics about this question that have raged since then.

Stamp notes that Under the Articles the Union was regarded as perpetual. Their title was "Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union. And Article XIII states clearly that their provisions "shall be inviolably observed by every state, and the Union shall be perpetual . . ."

S makes the point that the dissolution of the Articles at Philadelphia nullifies the argument of continuity. With the Constitution it was a new political arrangement. The language in the Constitutional Preamble about creating "a more perfect Union" does not inescapably evoke the idea of a perpetual Union.

Basic outline of S's essay from here is to look at all those national events in which the issue of sovereignty and the right of a state to exit the Union were discussed and debated:

Kentucky/Virginia Resolutions

Hartford Convention and Federalists during the War of 1812

Justice Marshall decisions McCullough/Fletcher v. Peck and other cases.

Webster/ Hayne debate and the nullification crisis.

His main point is that for the first forty years of the Union all the above events spirring on the argument about ultimate sovereignty, etc. produced discourse that spoke more authoritatively for states' rights or state sovereignty. It was not until the Nullification Crisis that Jackson came forward with the strongest rebuttal to these arguments. And his willingness to use federal power to enforce the laws even if it meant that the "nullifiers" resorted to forceful opposition. If they did they would be responsible for what was to come. (Jackson anticipated Lincoln's tactics during the Sumter crisis).

But S says because the case for perpetual Union came too late; and because the logic behind it was far from perfect, because the Constitution and the debates over ratification were fraught with ambiguity, the final resolver was as John Quincy Adams prophesied: "It is the odious nature of the question that it can be settled only at the cannon's mouth."