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Lincoln and Fort Sumter by Charles Ramsdell Study Guide

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Lincoln and Fort Sumter

Problem: Why did the Southern leaders place themselves at a disadvantage by attacking Ft. Sumter and initiating hostilities? →

1. Major Anderson abandoned Ft. Moultrie and occupied the northern end of Ft. Sumter in December, 1860, six days after secession.
2. Inconcilable views as to legal status of fort: a) North: a symbol of continuity and integrity of government, b) South: occupied by foreign government.
3. Anderson allowed free use of mails and permitted to purchase food, but no relief garrison was allowed.
4. Lincoln's inaugural: The union is unbroken. Central government will continue to hold property and collect duties, but there will be no invasion. There will be no conflict unless the South is the aggressor. (Was he addressing ^{reassuring} antislavery Northerners?)
5. Lincoln characterized by cautious reticence. He ~~revised~~ ^{gauged} his public statements according to desired response from each group he singled out for attention (265). Hesitant on Lincoln's reactivity.
6. March 15 - Cabinet advised against expedition to relieve fort. Questions whether he desired to evacuate.
7. Aggressive party insisted on passing the risk - Republican losses cited. Border states opposed to coercive action. Dilemma.
8. Business depression created irritation among Northern businessmen, who blamed secession.
9. Only way out of dilemma = Confederates must precipitate hostilities before Anderson compelled to a hasty fort for lack of supplies.
10. Could South be induced to attack? ^(March 21)
11. Capt. Fox's investigation showed that fort could not hold out past March/April.
12. Woodhull (Charleston March 23) warned that any attempt to reinforce fort would lead to war.

13. March 29: Cabinet again polled — support for relief grows
14. April 4: Meeting with republican governors — was there an agreement? ^{on relief}
15. Lincoln-Baldwin interview, April 4 = Lincoln assumed that Virginia would secede if a fight started. Lincoln: "You have come too late."
16. Lincoln-Botts interview, April 7: "The fleet has sailed" — no way of communicating. Lincoln said Baldwin had refused to take proposition to Richmond Botts offered but Lincoln replied "it is too late" but fleet did not sail until next night.
17. April 4: Lincoln sees Capt. Fox, sends him to New York to prepare expedition, sends letter to Anderson that relief is on the way.
18. Letter from Capt Adams, stationed at Ft. Pickens via Canada, received April 6.
19. Promise to notify Gov. Pickens (April 1) if relief expedition should be sent
Letter at April 6.
- 2a. Wording of the message, p. 280
- 2b. Simultaneous by movement of the fleet under Fox