

Perfidy

Perfidy marked a pivotal moment on April 9, when Governor Pickens, General Beauregard, and former federal judge Andrew G. Magrath gathered in Pickens's office at the Charleston Hotel to discuss a sensitive matter. The delivery of mail addressed to Fort Sumter had been halted by Beauregard's order, sparking a tense conversation among the three men. They were acutely aware of the gravity of the situation, with the looming conflict with the Union putting them in a difficult moral position. While the integrity of mail was typically sacrosanct, Pickens reasoned that, given the extraordinary circumstances of war, they needed to gather any information that might be pertinent to their cause. The stakes were high, and as the tension mounted, they were forced to weigh their actions carefully against the backdrop of an impending war.

Initially, both Beauregard and Magrath hesitated, reluctant to violate the privacy of the mail. However, under the pressure of the moment, Pickens took charge and nervously tore into the letters himself. The group decided to limit their inspection to official communications, intending to send personal letters forward without reading them. But in doing so, they inadvertently uncovered a letter from Major Anderson to Colonel Lorenzo Thomas in Washington. This letter detailed a planned supply expedition for Fort Sumter, implicating Captain Fox as the mastermind behind this operation. The discovery deepened their suspicions about the Lincoln administration and raised questions about its trustworthiness, as it suggested that the Union was preparing to reinforce the fort, making a confrontation almost inevitable.

As the mail examination continued, more letters revealed the complex emotions of Major Anderson, who had recently become a hero to the Confederacy. Despite his elevated status, the letters exposed Anderson's conflicted loyalties. In one of his letters, Anderson openly admitted that his heart was not in the war, which presented a moral dilemma for the Confederacy. On one hand, his reluctance to engage fully in the

conflict could serve as a rallying point for the South, offering a chance to question his commitment. On the other hand, this discovery could also be used by those who admired Anderson's bravery to criticize the Confederate war effort. His internal conflict mirrored the larger struggle within the country, with divided loyalties playing a significant role in the course of the Civil War.

In response to these revelations, Governor Pickens wasted no time in communicating his concerns about the Northern expedition to Confederate President Jefferson Davis. He asserted that preparations were already underway in Charleston, where thousands of troops had been deployed to prepare for what was believed to be an imminent Union assault. Reinforcements were on their way, and Pickens expressed confidence that Charleston's defenses were ready to face whatever might come. His assessment underscored the tension that was building, as both sides braced for the inevitable clash. The chapter reflects the strategic maneuvering taking place within Charleston, as its leaders navigated the murky waters of war preparations. In the process, they found themselves making difficult decisions about what information could be trusted, all while gearing up for a conflict that was rapidly escalating.

The episode also illustrates the broader challenges faced by both the Confederacy and the Union in the lead-up to the Civil War. As information flowed in from multiple sources, the issue of trust became increasingly central. The Confederacy's leadership had to balance the need for intelligence with the risk of misinformation, especially in the case of Major Anderson's letters. They were not only facing an external threat from the Union but also dealing with the complexities of internal dissent and divided loyalties within their own ranks. These tensions, compounded by the uncertainty of what would come next, played a crucial role in shaping the Confederate response to the looming war. The actions taken during this period, from reading intercepted letters to organizing military defenses, were steps toward a conflict that would soon engulf the nation.

Governor Pickens's quick communication with President Davis further highlights the rapid pace of decision-making that defined this critical period. With Charleston's

defenses on high alert, the city was bracing for the moment when it would be forced to respond to the Union's actions. As reinforcements poured in, the Confederate leadership in Charleston solidified its position, ready to defend the city against any assault. The atmosphere was thick with anticipation, as both sides prepared for what they knew could soon become a full-scale war. The chapter underscores the complexity of the early days of the Civil War, where information, mistrust, and military strategy all played intertwined roles in shaping the trajectory of the conflict.