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Master of Arts in History

IRVIN MCDOWELL, STORM CENTER
OF UNION COMMAND, 1861-1862

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IRVIN MCDOWELL, STORM CENTER
OF UNION COMMAND, 1861-1862

BY
RONALD FRANCIS LOCHER
B.A., The University of New Mexico, 1964

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in History
in the Graduate School of
The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico
June, 1968

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Irvin McDowell is an important figure of the Civil War era because the role he played made him a storm center within the Union command structure. His career, therefore, is indicative of certain problems encountered by the North which ultimately prolonged the war.

Those command problems, which affected overall federal strategy in the early years of the war, largely centered around four areas: unpreparedness, political intrigue, undefined civil/military functions, and cautious generals.

Unpreparedness, the bane of the North's military existence during the early stages of the war, was also a hindrance to McDowell for his talents had previously been restricted almost exclusively to paperwork. The result of this lack of preparedness was McDowell's violation of many of the principles of warfare at the disastrous battle of Bull Run.

Political intrigue, another block to cohesive federal strategy, reared its ugly head through constant efforts on the part of the radical Republicans to control the conduct of the war. McDowell, identified with the Radicals through his friendship with their cohort, Secretary of the Treasury

Chase, became embroiled in certain of their political maneuverings and, thus, added to the problems inherent within the Union command structure.

With regard to undefined civil/military functions, also, McDowell's role as a field commander is indicative of the North's failure to end the war sooner than it did. The most glaring example of this breach of etiquette is Lincoln's policy of formulating strategy and dabbling in tactics in connection with McDowell's campaign in the Shenandoah Valley against Stonewall Jackson. The President not only infringed upon the realm of the military due to his lack of confidence in their ability but he also hampered the effectiveness of McDowell's effort against a cagy rebel commander.

As a cautious general, too, McDowell was an indicator of command inadequacies, for his indecision, inaction, excuses, and delay at Second Manassas typified the Union policy of fighting a limited war for limited ends with limited means.

The balance sheet of McDowell's career as a field commander suggests that unskilled mediocrity, augmented by the pressures of time and circumstance, fused with conditions beyond his control to bring about disastrous results both for him and for the Union cause. Further, by taking advantage of political opportunities when they arose he allowed himself to be willingly thrust forward

as a pawn on the Radicals' political chessboard. The result was that, although by no means a political lackey, he was not always the master of his own destiny.

Thrust into the midst of the conflict almost from its inception, he emerged as a puppet-like figure of controversy around whom many of the Union command problems revolved. His meagre ability as a field commander and his involvement with politics---both of which are indicative of factors which prolonged the war because they are not unique to McDowell---could not overcome the fate which the wheel of fortune seems to have spun for him. The siren call of destiny had summoned him into obscurity.

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I. IRVIN MCDOWELL

Webster's college edition of the New World Dictionary defines a "storm center" as, "a center or focus of trouble, turmoil or disturbance."¹ This definition certainly applies to Irvin McDowell, a veritable storm center of Union command problems during the first two years of the Civil War. Among the factors in his career which made him a controversial field commander were the following: his rapid rise in the officerial ranks, his connection with the radicals in Congress and the Cabinet, his seeming ineptness as a field commander, his relationship with George B. McClellan, his court of inquiry as a result of severe accusations made against him, the hostility of his troops and a segment of the populace, his personality in general, and his position with regard to overall federal strategy in the first two years of the war. Those factors eventually combined to bring about his dismissal from active command of an army in the field, and he was relegated to desk jobs for the duration of the war. What was the background of Irvin McDowell, sometimes referred to as the "White Plume of Navarre,"² before his involvement in the "irrepressible conflict"?

McDowell was born in Ohio on 15 October, 1818, of Scotch-Irish parents.³ He spent his formative years in

Ohio and then left for France, where he received his formal education at the College de Troyes. Upon returning to the United States he entered the Military Academy, graduating twenty-third in a class of forty-five in 1838. He was then assigned to the First Artillery as a brevet Second Lieutenant and served on the Canadian frontier. In 1841 he became a tactical officer at the Military Academy and was promoted to First Lieutenant the following year. In 1845 he served as an aide-de-camp to General Wool, most of the time as an adjutant-general; that is, as the officer in charge of the department that handles all staff work. While serving with Wool from October, 1845 to May 1847 he took part in the Mexican War, being made captain by brevet for services rendered at Buena Vista.⁴ In May, 1847 he was transferred to the Adjutant-General's Department and was made Assistant Adjutant-General with the rank of captain.⁵ He returned to the United States in 1848 and served at the headquarters of the army. The following year he married Helen Burden of Troy, New York who bore him four children before 1861.⁶ In February, 1851 he relinquished his rank in line.⁷ It is interesting to note that while on General Winfield Scott's staff at Army headquarters in New York, Assistant Adjutant-General McDowell signed Ulysses S. Grant's resignation from the army on 26 May, 1854.⁸ That stroke of the pen becomes quite ironical when one thinks that Grant, a failure before the war, became a highly successful general while McDowell, a

success before the war, became a failure as a general.

In March, 1856 McDowell was promoted to the rank of brevet major while still in the Adjutant-General's Department;⁹ three years later he was granted a one-year leave of absence in France.¹⁰ At the beginning of hostilities at Fort Sumter on 12 April, 1861 McDowell was stationed in Washington as Assistant Adjutant-General with his old rank of brevet major;¹¹ he had not risen in rank in five years nor had he improved his position in the army in the last fourteen.

At the outbreak of the war McDowell was thus serving in Washington where he had become friendly with the Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon Portland Chase, from his own native state of Ohio. When Lincoln, with Secretary of War Cameron's consent, detailed to Chase the enrollment and organization of the three-months volunteers pouring into Washington as a result of his call for volunteers of 15 April,¹² the Secretary of the Treasury delegated the implementation of that plan to McDowell and Captain W. B. Franklin. The result of their labors was approved by the War Department and issued on 4 May as Orders Number 15 and 16. Congress subsequently adopted the plan as the basis of organization for all of the federal forces.¹³ Chase later remarked that McDowell had contributed by far the largest amount of aid, information, and invaluable suggestions.¹⁴ On 14 May, 1861, through the intercession of

his friend, Chase, McDowell was given a rapid promotion from the rank of brevet major to the rank of brigadier-general and assigned to General Mansfield's command.¹⁵ This command was soon subdivided and McDowell, through Chase's intercession with Lincoln on his behalf, was appointed to the command of the Department of Northeastern Virginia on 28 May;¹⁶ this department was composed mainly of the fledgling army of volunteers that had recently invaded Washington.

Although the relationship between McDowell and Chase had seemingly been cultivated most assiduously by the pair, McDowell was chosen to command the forces of the Union for reasons other than Chase's intercession on his behalf with President Lincoln. There were few regular officers at the beginning of the war, and of these, only a handful understood anything about the complexities of staff work so vital to military operations for there was no staff school for the training of officers in the problems of logistics and command. McDowell, however, was an exception to the rule for his previous military service had been almost exclusively in staff work. Further, American literature on the subject of logistics and command was not impressive and foreign writings were generally not available to most officers due to their language deficiencies; thus, military pamphlets were out of reach of most career officers in 1861. Again, McDowell was an exception for he had been educated

in France and had spent a year on leave of absence in that country in 1859, thus allowing him to read foreign literature of a military nature. Also, there was little professional growth because the army in 1861 was too small to provide much experience.¹⁷ This did not work to McDowell's advantage, but neither did it work to his disadvantage for although his growth in rank and position had been rather dilatory, prior to 14 May, the growth of his fellow officers had paralleled his own. Regardless of these facts however, McDowell's previous training for the past sixteen years had not been as a field commander and, unfortunately, this was where his future lay. If the same criteria for success had applied to both staff officers and field commanders McDowell might have been triumphant; as it was, his generalship was barren of victories.

McDowell in 1861 was forty-two years of age. He had a square and powerfully-built figure, was six feet tall, and tended to be somewhat clumsy. He had close-cut, thick, dark hair, small light-blue eyes, a short nose, large cheeks and jaws, and a ruddy complexion. His beard, which had a tuft of iron-grey in it, was worn in the French style.¹⁸ He drank neither coffee, tea, nor alcohol, nor did he smoke.¹⁹ He was a gargantuan eater who on one occasion gobbled up "the larger part of every dish within reach," and concluded the meal by eating an entire watermelon, which he said was "monstrous fine."²⁰ He was generally

"so absorbed in the dishes before him that he had but little time for conversation."²¹ His hobbies included architecture, landscape gardening, and listening to good music. He was patriotic, intensely pro-Union, a moderate anti-slavery man, and a close student of, and well-informed about, matters both inside and outside of his profession. He had a poor memory for names and faces and often lost himself in his own thoughts while speaking with others. He was serious, earnest, humorless, had a rather violent temper, and was outspoken in his opinions.²² In official relations he was strictly military, seemed to disregard individuals, and was not on warm personal terms with either his officers or his men.²³ He once almost "knocked off the head of a Wisconsin private 'because he straggled.'"²⁴ Needless to say, this type of behavior did not set well with the troops, with whom he had no personal magnetism. After he was promoted to Major-General of Volunteers in 1862 McDowell became increasingly ambitious,²⁵ so that yet another facet was added to his personality. McDowell lacked confidence in himself and his ability to win; this manifested itself in feelings of subordination to General Scott and deference to the ideas of his officerial aides in the early stages of the war. Further, in the early stages he lacked a certain resolute determination which resulted in remarks about the difficulties which confronted him and his doubts of overcoming them.²⁶

Thus, the picture of McDowell in May, 1861, is one of an unconfident and moderately ambitious man of above-average intelligence, bored with the humdrum life of a staff officer, but inexperienced and possessed of certain personal characteristics which did not lend themselves easily to friendship or respect from either officers or men. Further, he had formulated a friendship with a member of Lincoln's Cabinet, Chase, who was both influential with and influenced by certain radical politicians in Washington. The Radicals were extremely important in McDowell's life for their names were directly or indirectly linked with his throughout his career as a field commander, and thus they must be given special attention in any analysis and evaluation of McDowell.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I.

¹Webster's New World Dictionary, eds. Joseph H. Friend and David B. Guralnik (college edition; Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1960), p. 1724.

²George Congdon Gorham, Life and Public Services of Edwin M. Stanton (2 vols; Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1899), I, p. 222.

³Warren W. Hassler Jr., Commanders of the Army of the Potomac (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), p. 3.

⁴Oliver L. Spaulding Jr., "McDowell, Irvin," Dictionary of American Biography, Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.), (22 vols; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), XII, p. 29. Cited hereafter as DAB.

⁵"Brig.-Gen. M'Dowell /sic/ U.S.A.," Harper's Weekly, V, (17 August, 1861), p. 516.

⁶Hassler, p. 4.

⁷Alfred H. Guernsey and Henry M. Alden, Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War (2 vols.; Chicago: McDonnell Brothers, 1866-1868), I, p. 146.

⁸Lloyd Lewis, "Captain Sam Grant: The Dissolution of a Soldier," True West, Pat Wagner (ed.), XIV, (May-June, 1967), p. 47.

⁹Harper's Weekly, V, p. 516.

¹⁰Hassler, p. 4.

¹¹McDowell to Governor Andrews, 15 April, 1861, U.S. War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies

(129 vols; Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series III, Vol. I, p. 71. Cited hereafter as O.R.

¹²Albert Bushnell Hart, Salmon Portland Chase (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899), pp. 211-212.

¹³A. Howard Meneely, The War Department, 1861 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), pp. 138-139.

¹⁴J. W. Schuckers, The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874), p. 419.

¹⁵Spaulding, DAB, XII, pp. 29-30.

¹⁶O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 2.

¹⁷Kenneth Powers Williams, Lincoln Finds A General (5 vols; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949-1959), I, p. 67.

¹⁸Hassler, p. 3.

¹⁹Hassler, p. 4.

²⁰Bruce Catton, Mr. Lincoln's Army (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1951), p. 42.

²¹Hassler, p. 4.

²²Hassler, p. 5.

²³Spaulding, DAB, XII, p. 30.

²⁴Hassler, p. 5.

²⁵Inside Lincoln's Army, ed. David S. Sparks (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1964), p. 53.

²⁶Hassler, p. 6.

II. JACOBIN INTRIGUES

The second session of the Thirty-sixth Congress opened on 2 December, 1860, in an atmosphere tense with the size of the problem confronting it and strained due to the lateness of the hour.¹ Further, the Republican conglomeration of "Free-Soilers, Old Whigs and former Democrats, radicals and conservatives, conciliators and 'stiff-backed' Republicans, was...sadly lacking in organic unity;"² therefore, the party decided on a policy of "masterly inactivity," that is, a watch and see attitude.³ The Republican party had originally absorbed much of the political wing of a great crusade---the anti-slavery radicals who had fused the remnants of the Liberty and Free Soil parties with the new political organization. "Their hostility to slavery and the Southern way of life was a partial expression of the broader Nineteenth Century middle-class liberalism which they espoused. They put their faith in individual freedom and the right of each man to the fruits of his enterprise."⁴

Thus, by the time of Lincoln's ascendancy to the presidency the Republicans were split into two factions; the radicals, called Jacobins by Lincoln's secretary, John Hay, and the moderates, led by moderates, led by

Lincoln.⁵ In a very real sense it was the radical group that gave the Republicans their driving force and their only common principle---opposition to the expansion of slavery. "Without these men it is doubtful that the party could have survived."⁶ At the same time however, the dissent which accompanied the Republican schism wracked Lincoln's cabinet, made war a pawn of the politicians, and generally hampered the North's attempt at unity and cohesive action.⁷ This lack of unity reached its apogee in the character and objectives of the two Republican factions.

The moderate Republicans wanted a gradual extinction of slavery, compensated emancipation, and the colonization of Negroes; they opposed the wartime abolition of slavery unless it was justified militarily, and they feared and distrusted the radical segment of the party. They were negative, vacillating, and lacked a cohesive program of consistent action.⁸

The Radicals, on the other hand, were aggressive, vindictive, and sectional in their outlook; they hated slavery personally and as a political expediency, for they also hated the Southern political representatives who had dominated Congress for so long.⁹ An example of their hatred is found in the agreement among three Radical leaders to carry their quarrel with the southernners "into a coffin."¹⁰ Perhaps their thoughts were best encompassed

by James Russell Lowell when he wrote, "...It is time that the South should learn...that the difficulty of the Slavery question is slavery itself---nothing more, nothing less. It is time that the North should learn that it has nothing left to compromise but the rest of its self-respect."¹¹ The policy of using the war as a lever for dislodging slavery was only a part of a complex Radical program involving sectional supremacy, social revolution, capitalistic exploitation, and future party ascendancy---all aimed at Radical control of the governmental process.¹² More specifically, the objectives of the Jacobins were: instant emancipation, confiscation of rebel property, the use of Negro soldiers, and civil equality for the Negro.¹³ They allied themselves with the Abolitionists and welcomed war as an excuse to destroy slavery and the hated Southern politicians.¹⁴

The Congressional leaders of the radical policy were "Bluff Ben" Wade and "Zack" Chandler, joined by less vigorous men of the Radical faith such as Charles Sumner, Lyman Trumbull, George Washington Julian, and Thaddeus Stevens. They felt that the management of the war should be in Congress' hands, specifically, theirs.¹⁵ Other less prominent Radicals were: John Covode, Andrew Johnson, Daniel Gooch, and Moses O'Dell.

Benjamin Wade was an Ohio senator with a lawyer's background. He had been elected to the United States Senate

as a Whig in 1851 and had been twice re-elected as a Republican. Though "rough in manner, coarse and vituperative in speech..." he was intensely patriotic.¹⁶ He had proposed to transform the Negro, on a political and civic level, into a white man, and had demanded the removal of all legal distinctions in Ohio between the free colored man and his fellow white citizens.¹⁷ He supported the protective tariff, votes for women, greenback currency, and the redistribution of wealth,¹⁸ as well as repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law and the denunciation of the Kansas-Nebraska Act.¹⁹ His scruples and realistic attitude were shown by his statement that no party could ever succeed on moral principles.²⁰ In the secession crisis of 1860-1861 he vowed to not compromise with the South. He was "temperamentally incapable of understanding Lincoln and deplored his cautious and conservative policies...."²¹ He favored confiscation of the property of Confederate leaders and the emancipation of their slaves. He later resisted Lincoln's reconstruction policy of moderation and almost became President when President Johnson was being put on trial; this would have been possible because Wade was then "President pro tempore" of the Senate, and a statute regarding presidential succession was applicable to him.²²

Zachariah Chandler was a former mayor of Detroit, Michigan who had built up a machine to control the Republican

party, which he had helped launch, in his state; that machine depended much on federal patronage and straight cash.²³ Chandler, who sought power via pressure, intimidation, spoils, wealth, and the blunter instruments of politics, was first elected to the Senate in 1857 and had stayed for three terms.²⁴ He approved of, but criticized, the Reconstruction Acts as being too lax. He became Secretary of the Interior in 1875 and reorganized that department to root out alleged dishonesty and incompetence.²⁵ He and Wade, cohorts throughout the war years, had written a compact pledging themselves to resist Southern verbal offensives by a challenge of duels.²⁶

Charles Sumner was a Massachusetts senator who had been elected to the Senate of the United States in 1851 on his first attempt at winning an elective public office. He was involved in the infamous Brooks-Sumner quarrel due to his harsh verbal treatment of the South; the beating which he received in that quarrel kept him out of the Senate for over three years.²⁷ His primary belief was in "absolute human equality, secured, assured, and invulnerable."²⁸ He judged all men and measures by that goal, and was very intolerant of opposition to his views on that subject. He felt that the South had abdicated all of her rights under the constitution when the Southern states seceded from the Union.²⁹ He had prominence, rather than leadership, in the Senate and felt that the real war was not on the

battlefield but in the Senate chamber. Some of his colleagues considered him to be cowardly, mean, malignant, hypocritical, toadyish, pompous, and a pedant.³⁰ Nevertheless, he was considered window-dressing to the Jacobin movement, giving it a certain respectability and elegance which Wade and Chandler could not provide.³¹ A hint as to why Sumner joined forces with the Jacobins can be gleaned from the following statement. When asked if he had ever looked at the other side of the slavery question, Sumner replied, "There is no other side."³²

Lyman Trumbull, a former teacher, lawyer, and Illinois state legislator, was sent to the Senate as a Free-Soiler in 1855 with Abraham Lincoln's support. He later became a Democrat, a Republican, and then a supporter of the ill-starred liberal Republican movement. His attitude was determined by Lincoln's attitude toward the constitution while President; that is, by Trumbull's interpretation of Lincoln's support of the constitution, or lack of it. He introduced the confiscation bill into Congress in December, 1861. Trumbull was a "lawful radical" during the Civil War, but when the Radicals got to the point where they "... would rather be Radical than right,"³³ in Trumbull's words, he quit the movement. He was a stickler for a correct interpretation of the constitution, was more careful of civil rights than the Jacobins, to whom he lent much dignity, and was an able critic of the Lincoln administration.³⁴

George Washington Julian had been a Whig and a Free-Soiler, on which ticket he had been nominated as the vice-presidential candidate in 1852. He was elected to the House in 1860 and promptly urged the emancipation of slaves as a war measure. He favored the punishment of Confederate leaders, confiscation of their lands, and the granting of suffrage to the freedmen.³⁵ He was an idealistic devotee of the Radical faith who, in early life, had vowed never to vote for anyone even slightly tainted with the evils of slavery. When Lincoln proclaimed the war was to preserve the Union, not destroy slavery, Julian became a fervent Radical.³⁶ After the war he stood by the Jacobins in their efforts to impeach President Johnson, and was appointed by the House to prepare impeachment articles against him.³⁷ He was a trusted friend of the Abolitionists and one of the most radical of the Jacobins.³⁸

"Foremost among the Radicals in the House was Thaddeus Stevens, whose dour countenance, protruding lower lip, limping clubfoot, and sarcastic invective made him the perfect type of vindictive ugliness.... Proscriptive measures against Southerners were a veritable obsession with him."³⁹ He had a blunt forthrightness which included a terrible honesty. His stinging tongue can be judged by the following remark flung at an opponent: "Mr. Speaker, it will not be expected of me to notice the thing which has crawled into this House and adheres to one of the

seats by its own slime."⁴⁰ Stevens' instinctive hatred of slavery grew into a fierce hatred which resulted in his urging of confiscation, emancipation, and the "extermination" of the rebels, the South, and Southern state lines. He was Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee; this position gave him wide authority over all revenue bills and most other congressional measures which dealt with the prosecution of the war.⁴¹ "His radical and bitter policy...aroused fierce resentment, accentuated racial antagonism, cemented the Solid South, and postponed...any true solution of the race problem."⁴²

John Covode was a Radical who had an undeserved reputation as a sleuth due to an investigation of the Buchanan administration printing-contract scandals.⁴³ He introduced the House resolution calling for the impeachment of President Johnson.⁴⁴ Andrew Johnson, although a radical War Democrat, enjoyed the confidence of the Jacobins and had been accepted into their circle because of his record as an opponent of secession and a supporter of the war.⁴⁵ He was later to become the military governor of Tennessee and President of the United States.⁴⁶ It was this same Andrew Johnson that the Jacobins tried to impeach when he resisted their demands for harsher treatment for the post-war South. Daniel Gooch was a Radical in conservative garb who did the inquisition work for the Jacobins due to his skill as a cross-examiner.⁴⁷ Gooch

supported the use of Negro soldiers, emancipation, and the use of radical reconstruction. He was against any compromise with the seceding states and had won the favor of the Jacobins with a vigorous speech against that policy; so highly did the Jacobins regard that speech that they later circulated it as a pamphlet.⁴⁸ Moses O'Dell was a bitter Brooklyn radical of the Democratic stripe. His radicalism became so intense that the Brooklyn Democrats read him out of the party.⁴⁹ Next to the acknowledged Jacobin leaders, Wade and Chandler, he was the most diligent worker for the Radicals' beliefs.⁵⁰ These then were the leading Radicals in Congress; together with the exponents of radicalism in the cabinet they formed a formidable obstacle to the more moderate policies of the President and his followers.

The cabinet leaders of the radical policy were Secretary of the Treasury Chase and Secretary of War Stanton who represented a small but effective and persistent bloc within Lincoln's cabinet which insisted on the future of the Negro as the great question at issue, rather than the future of the Union;⁵¹ Stanton, however, was all things to all people, changing his political color when it best suited his purposes and, as did Talleyrand, bending with the wind in order to preserve his position and his strength.

Edwin Stanton was a lawyer who had "...made a deep

impression upon one of his associates, Abraham Lincoln..." due to his success in the case of McCormick v. Manny before the Supreme Court.⁵² He also had saved the government much money in California land cases involving fraudulent claims alleged to have been deeded to individuals, prior to the Mexican War, by Mexico; those two cases helped him get the post of Attorney-General under President Buchanan. He had been a rather consistent Democrat for over twenty years prior to his becoming Lincoln's Secretary of War in 1862, but above all he was a "thorough-going Unionist."⁵³ Stanton, in private life during the early months of Lincoln's tenure in office, distrusted Lincoln and criticized "...the imbecility of this administration."⁵⁴ He was a legal advisor to General McClellan and Lincoln's first Secretary of War, Cameron. Upon entering the position of Secretary of War, he reorganized the War Department, increased its personnel, and systematized the work to be done. He put himself into close touch with generals in the field, governors, and the radical politicians. His outstanding characteristic as War Secretary was his ability to make quick judgments, master details, and execute with vigor his decisions.⁵⁵ Stanton meddled somewhat in military operations, censored the press, and used the power of "extraordinary arrest." He was often "arrogant, irascible, ...brutal and unjust."⁵⁶

Salmon Chase, a good friend of Irvin McDowell, was

a former Ohio senator with a well-known anti-slavery background and great personal ambitions. He had been a candidate for the Republican nomination for the presidency in 1860, and had been backed by the Radicals for a cabinet post in Lincoln's administration. In the 1864 election he was again a potential candidate for the presidency, but was again sidelined by Lincoln. He later became Chief Justice of the United States; he owed this post to both his own credentials and to Lincoln's forgiving nature."⁵⁷

Due to the lack of an effective regular army and the "not so...critical" question of finances, Chase felt as much responsibility for the army as he did for the treasury in the early months of the war; this occurred because of his own eagerness and as a result of Lincoln's suggestions, for he seemed to lack confidence in Secretary of War Simon Cameron. This was why the President had called upon Chase, rather than Cameron, to frame the war orders organizing the volunteer troops coming to Washington.⁵⁸ Another reason for Chase's responsibility to the War Department was his status as a representative of the West; he felt he had a right to influence the destiny of some states, at least on a semi-military basis.⁵⁹ Chase kept up a correspondence with various army commanders, among them McDowell, throughout the war. During the year 1861 he used surmised authority to accept troops raised by state officials, promised arms, and stated that he wanted

"...to support everybody who has tried to do something."⁶⁰

One of the most reprehensible workings resulting from Chase's system was that he gave various officers advice which did not come from the consent of other cabinet members or from an understanding with the President.⁶¹

When George B. McClellan, to whom Chase had once written, "The army and the treasury must stand or fall together,"⁶²

took command of and reorganized the Army of the Potomac in the autumn of 1861, Chase found that he had lost his stature as a military consultant. The break became even more prominent when Stanton became the head of the War Department in January, 1862,⁶³ for the new secretary was not content to share his duties with another cabinet-member, especially one of Chase's ambitions. As Chase's influence in the War Department waned his avidity for a forward movement by McDowell increased. That same eagerness for a forward movement by McDowell, or any other Radical favorite, characterized the crux of the Jacobins polemics from the very day the war began; it did not cease until the war had ended.

When Lincoln ascended to the presidency he had shown no qualities that convinced men that he would be President in the full sense of the word; it was assumed that either Chase or Secretary of State Seward, a former radical chieftan, would have a large hand in directing affairs.⁶⁴ Outside of the cabinet the leaders were

discordant and distrustful of Lincoln, and the Radicals gave him little support. Wade called Lincoln's cabinet, "A sorry, rotten cabinet, blundering, cowardly and inefficient."⁶⁵ Wade also had a word for Lincoln himself--- "...a man sprung from poor white trash...."⁶⁶

Wade and the other Jacobins, knowing little of the act of war and having only contempt for West Point training, hurt to some extent the North's war cause due to their promotion of premature battles and their pressure for changes of commanders. They were narrow, biased, and unjust, but always full of will, spirit, courage, and fervor that helped prosecute the war in the face of flagging spirits.⁶⁷ They demanded aggressive action against the Confederacy, and throughout mid-1861 echoed Horace Greeley's cry of "forward to Richmond." When the battle of Bull Run was lost on 21 July the Jacobins felt that it was not a complete loss since the public had also demanded action and, "The idea of waiting until frost had set in, and merely defending our capitol was a preposterous one in a political point of view, and our struggle is not a purely militarily one...."⁶⁸

McClellan, meanwhile, had arrived in Washington, from a successful sojourn as head of a small force in western Virginia, to take over command of the Army of the Potomac. When August, September, and most of October had passed without any action on the part of McClellan's

army, the Jacobins spoke to "little Mac" about an advance, telling him that a defeat could be repaired by the "swarming recruits."⁶⁹ The next day Trumbull, Chandler, and Wade spoke to Lincoln about coercing McClellan into battle, saying that defeat was preferable to delay. Lincoln defended McClellan's deliberateness, but deprecated the Radicals' impatience.⁷⁰ On 28 October Wade and Chandler spoke with Lincoln and Seward about the absolute necessity for energetic measures to drive the enemy from in front of Washington.⁷¹ After that discouraging meeting Trumbull wrote that, "Action, action is what we want and must have."⁷² Through the month of November the Jacobins were made even more disgusted due to McClellan's continued inactivity; the disaster at Ball's Bluff, in which the former radical senator, Edward D. Baker, was killed; and the removal of John Charles Fremont from command in the West.⁷³ Fremont, who had become a Radical favorite when he issued his proclamation freeing the slaves,⁷⁴ from this point on became the focal point, along with General Benjamin Butler, for attacks on the Lincoln administration by the emancipation-oriented Jacobins.⁷⁵ Thus, by the end of November the Radicals were in a savage mood; the armies had failed to advance, Democratic officers---Henry Halleck in the West and George McClellan in the East---filled the important commands, and the administration had failed to sanction the use of the war powers to abolish

slavery.⁷⁶

When the congressional session opened on 2 December a resolution to renew the Johnson-Crittenden resolution, which stated that the war was being fought to preserve the Union as it was and the constitution as it is, was put forth; it was tabled by a vote of 71-65 on 4 December, plain evidence that the Radicals were up in arms anew.⁷⁷ On that same date, 2 December, Roscoe Conkling introduced a resolution in the House calling for an investigation of the recent disaster at Ball's Bluff.⁷⁸ Senator Chandler followed this up on 5 December with a resolution calling for a committee on the conduct of the war composed of three men to investigate both Ball's Bluff and Bull Run; Congressman Grimes later substituted seven men in place of Chandler's three.⁷⁹ The power of the Jacobins was then displayed on 9 December when, by a vote of 33-3, the decision was made to establish a committee of three senators and four representatives with spacious powers to investigate, not only the recent disasters, but the conduct of the war in general.⁸⁰ On 17 December the three senators---Wade, Chandler, and Johnson---were chosen, and on 19 December the four representatives---Gooch, Covode, Julian, and O'Dell---were picked.⁸¹ These men then set about wielding the political club of hatred at all who were suspected of being soft on the slavery issue.

The Jacobins had thus found a way to investigate

the war and to check Lincoln's residual federal power at the same time, for the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, as it was called, did not need the signature of the President and thus their decisions could not be vetoed.⁸² On 20 December Wade was elected chairman of the committee and by unanimous consent, "It was agreed that, as a matter of honor, none of its members should reveal anything that transpired in committee until such time as the injunction of secrecy should be removed."⁸³ The committee further stated that, "Not upon those whose duty it was to provide the means necessary to put down the rebellion, but upon those whose duty it was to rightfully apply those means and the agents they employed for that purpose, rested the blame, if any, that the hopes of the nation have not been realized and its expectations have been so long disappointed."⁸⁴ The committee would "... keep an anxious watchful eye over all the executive agents who are carrying on the war at the direction of the people.... We are not under the command of the military of this country. They are under ours as a Congress."⁸⁵ The committee decided that they could best perform their duties by obtaining information in respect to the conduct of the war which would enable them to advise as to past mistakes and the course to be pursued in the future, obtain information which the duties of the President and the cabinet prevented them from acquiring, and to lay before

them such recommendations and suggestions as seemed to be imperatively demanded.⁸⁶ The members of the committee, Jacobins all, felt that a study of the Army of the Potomac would enable them to find all that was necessary to report on the conduct of the war. "Had that army fulfilled all that a generous and confiding people were justified in expecting from it, this rebellion had long since been crushed, and the blessings of peace restored to this nation."⁸⁷ The committee felt that the Army of the Potomac's failures had prolonged the war and had "...neutralized, if not destroyed, the...fruits which would otherwise have been reaped from our glorious victories in the west."⁸⁸

The main duty of the committee was to see that the right officers were appointed, that their campaigns were soundly planned and executed, and that due punishments and rewards were parceled out to those deserving of them.⁸⁹ The committee undertook the undermining of Democratic and conservative officers, for one of their many hatreds was reserved for the Democratic domination of the army. They suspected that Democratic commanders in the army nourished a sympathy for slavery bordering on treason, and that the hold-back, pro-slavery philosophy of those officers prevented a vigorous prosecution of the war.⁹⁰ Control of army patronage thus was of vital importance to the Jacobins; the success of their program of wartime emancipation

depended upon commanding officers who held the same views on slavery as they did,⁹¹ and hopefully of the radical Republican type. Thus, the committee conducted inquisitions, took generals away from their proper duties, stirred the country with misplaced publicity, ruined the reputations of able generals, worried Lincoln, bandied unproved charges of treason, and created distrust and dissension in their efforts to purge the war effort of generals unsympathetic to their aims.⁹²

Their chief target in the attempted purges was George Brinton McClellan, whose views on slavery, objectives of the war, and the South itself, seemed little less than a betrayal of his country to the Radicals. Furthermore, he was a Democrat, despised Abolitionists, returned runaways, ridiculed the idea that freedom for the Negro was a war aim, and had friends regarded by many as allies of the South.⁹³ As December 1861, melted into January, 1862, it became apparent that the committee would become the most effective weapon to be used by the Jacobins in their campaign to make radicalism the political faith of the nation.⁹⁴

As January arrived the Jacobins were active in censuring McClellan for his lack of a forward movement against the Confederacy. McDowell, meanwhile, had been active also. "He constantly flitted around the War Department and the Capitol picking up gossip...."⁹⁵ On 1 January his wife had

attended a small party at the Chase household, and on 2 January McDowell dined on turkey with the Chase family.⁹⁶ On 9 January he visited Chase at his home and showed him several maps, pointing out the relative positions of the Union and Confederate forces near Washington.⁹⁷ It is highly probable that in their discussions Chase and McDowell referred to a possible successor to McClellan since that was the central topic of the day in Jacobin conversations. Meanwhile, the Radicals were preparing a verbal offensive against McClellan. On 5 January Chandler conversed with Chase about the possibility of McDowell being put in command of the Army of the Potomac, and of military affairs generally, replacing McClellan.⁹⁸ The next evening the committee held a conference with Lincoln's cabinet; the members of the committee, especially Chandler, Wade, Johnson, O'Dell, and Covode, "...were very earnest...in recommending the appointment of General McDowell as Major-General to command the Army of the Potomac."⁹⁹ On 11 January Chase recommended to McClellan that he insist on McDowell being appointed a Major-General at once.¹⁰⁰ In early January Lincoln held several councils of war to decide on what could be done with the Army of the Potomac. At those meetings McDowell was the principal spokesman for the military since McClellan was in bed with typhoid.¹⁰¹ McDowell took the opportunity to present his own plan for

an overland campaign in the near future to the council; that plan would have undoubtedly been endorsed by the Radicals had not McClellan made a rapid recovery, boldly asserted his status as general-in-chief, and divulged a small part of his own thoughts on the matter, which called for more inactivity. Then, in mid-January, an event occurred which warmed the hearts of the Radicals.

On 13 January Simon Cameron was replaced as Secretary of War by Edwin Stanton. McClellan, a close friend of Stanton for some time, did not know about the appointment until 15 January because Lincoln did not want the word to get out that McClellan had indirectly exercised undue influence in the new secretary's appointment to his position; specifically, it was felt that Stanton could persuade or coerce his friend McClellan to make a forward movement.¹⁰² Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles stated that it was a surprise to "...every member of the administration, but the Secretary of State, that Stanton was selected," and that Lincoln was reluctant to remove Cameron; only a "...conviction of its absolute necessity ..." led to it.¹⁰³

Stanton, who felt that the effort to blame McDowell for the loss at Bull Run was "a ridiculous failure,"¹⁰⁴ was a godsend to the Radicals. After interviewing him Senator Fessenden stated that, "He is just the man we want. We agree on every point: the duties of the Secretary of

War, the conduct of the war, the negro /sic/ question, and everything else."¹⁰⁵ Wade and Chandler thought him to be "...fully up to all they could ask...."¹⁰⁶ Stanton soon placed himself in touch with the Joint Committee wherein he found significant allies that could elicit valuable information through their powers of subpoena. He met with the whole committee in his first day in office and stated that they must unite their strength with his to double governmental power and suppress the enemy; after this heartwarming message he was welcome to come to any and all committee meetings. Thus, prompted by the needs of his position to work with the Jacobins who formed the Joint Committee, Stanton found himself more and more influenced by their fiercely partisan attitude.¹⁰⁷

Shortly after he took office Stanton found evidence, partly supplied by the Radicals, that the Army of the Potomac had been ready to fight for some time; the Secretary of War's relationship with McClellan soon began to worsen. About 24 January Lincoln and Stanton agreed that the North must soon mount an offensive; shortly afterwards, on 27 January, Lincoln decreed that the eastern army must make an advance by 22 February.¹⁰⁸ The committee prepared for another drive on McClellan on 18 February when O'Dell told the members that McClellan had not stopped the rebels from erecting batteries on the Potomac River, thus blockading it to Union forces. The next day Wade and

Johnson called on Stanton to present their grievance.¹⁰⁹ Stanton declared that he, too, was upset about it, and "...that he did not go to his bed at night without his cheek burning with shame at this disgrace upon the nation."¹¹⁰ McClellan was invited into the room to answer their questions, and when his reply was the familiar one of incomplete preparation and inadequate lines of retreat, Wade lost his temper and stated that McClellan should move his soldiers across the Potomac anyway; if they could not win a victory, Wade said, "Let them come back in their coffins."¹¹¹

While McClellan went about preparing for his peninsular campaign against Richmond the Radicals perpetrated intrigues against him consisting of private interviews with generals, falsehoods, fomenting officerial jealousy, and criticism of his hated inactivity. To replace him they wished to have Fremont, Pope, Banks, or McDowell.¹¹² One of the methods used by the Jacobins to try and replace McClellan was the plan to organize the army into corps, thus taking away his authority and putting the army under friendly corps commanders more akin to orders from Stanton, whom the Jacobins felt they could depend upon.¹¹³ On 25 February the Radicals told Lincoln that they regarded the corps organization essential. The result of this and other conferences between the Radicals, the White House, and the War Department was Lincoln's order of 8 March embodying

the organization of the army into corps, McDowell being one of the corps commanders. This was followed on 11 March by a Special War Order relieving McClellan of his position as general-in-chief of the armies and requiring the various corps commanders to report "severally and directly" to Stanton.¹¹⁴ Thus, the Jacobins had won a minor victory in their war within a war against "little Mac."

In late March the Jacobins began working on Lincoln's fear of leaving Washington insecure. They stated that McClellan's plan of advancing on Richmond by water would leave Washington exposed. "Lincoln was genuinely alarmed at the figures presented to prove McClellan's disregard of his instructions" as to the security of the capital.¹¹⁵ The figures were presented by the commander of the capital defenses, General Wadsworth, due to impetus from the Radicals. Lincoln thereupon took Blenker's Division from McClellan, and in early April removed McDowell's corps from him also, thus taking away a vital part of McClellan's peninsular force;¹¹⁶ McDowell was then given command of the Department of the Rappahannock. Those Radical manipulations prompted Attorney-General Bates to state that "scheming ultras" were working to deprive McClellan of all command.¹¹⁷

After McDowell was separated from McClellan the Radicals wanted him to march on Richmond. Stanton said

that he "...thought the whole force of McDowell should be kept together and sent forward by land, on the shortest route to Richmond."¹¹⁸ Chase wrote to McDowell that, "It has been one of my prime objects of desire that you should advance toward and to Richmond."¹¹⁹ He stated in a later letter to McDowell that, "I feel sure you can get to Richmond, if you are allowed to move and do actually move. There are disadvantages...but they are not insuperable."¹²⁰ General Rosecrans, a Radical favorite, stated that Stanton had told him that, "I wish you and McDowell could get to Richmond before that d---d little cuss McClellan."¹²¹

By late May McClellan was still on the peninsula before Richmond. Chase embodied the Radical's thoughts about him when he wrote, "McClellan is a dear luxury---fifty days-fifty miles-fifty millions of dollars---easy arithmetic, but not satisfactory. If one could have some faith in his competency in battle, should his army ever fight one, if not in his competency for movement, it would be a comfort."¹²² Lincoln, who had planned to send McDowell to McClellan's aid in late May, again suspended him from making that movement; this happened once more in early June.¹²³ All three suspensions were a result of supposed threats to Washington by the rebels, and all added to the controversy that surrounded McDowell. By then it was too late; McClellan failed to take Richmond in the Battle of the Seven Days, and with this failure the chance

to end the war in the near future. With the lack of success on the peninsula the Radicals felt that they were in a position to depose McClellan. Stanton told Secretary of the Navy Welles that McClellan should be removed, behind the President's back if necessary.¹²⁴ Wade urged Lincoln to supplant McClellan, and said that "anybody" could be put in command to replace him. Lincoln replied wearily, "Wade, anybody will do for you, but not for me. I must have somebody."¹²⁵ The Jacobins, of course, had somebody in mind.

The months of July and August, 1862, brought no cessation in Jacobin demands or activities. One demand was met when John Pope, a Radical favorite, was brought in from the West to command the newly-created Army of Virginia. In mid-July another onslaught was begun to remove McClellan from command of the Army of the Potomac. Senator Chandler opened the tirade by relating the history of that army from the day McClellan became its commander. When the committee finished telling of the inactivity and defeats suffered by the Army of the Potomac under McClellan, "No one, least of all Lincoln, could doubt...where the Jacobins machine stood and what it demanded of the administration."¹²⁶ July ended with the adoption of a new Confiscation Act which was a substantial Radical victory and a long step toward the emancipation which they so earnestly desired. The Act declared free the slaves of every person found

guilty of treason after its passage; provided that the slaves of active rebels or abettors should be free upon reaching Union lines; forbade the military authorities from returning those slaves; allowed the seizure of the estates of high Confederate officials; and authorized the President to use Negroes to suppress the rebellion. To the Radicals this meant the use of Negro soldiers;¹²⁷ for on 15 July they had addressed the people and had demanded that slaves be employed in a military capacity.¹²⁸ It was over the subject of confiscation that the Jacobins and McDowell began a parting of the ways, for rumors had been circulating in New York and Washington since late June that McDowell was "soft" in his treatment of rebel citizens. The Radicals could afford to eliminate McDowell from their list of favorites for they had a new hero in the person of John Pope, a subscriber to their radical war aims.

With the coming of August came the Radical's ceaseless efforts to remove McClellan and censure the President for his moderation. They charged that Lincoln was not enforcing the provisions of the recently-enacted Confiscation Act, and further stated that a large proportion of the officers "...evince far more solicitude to uphold slavery than to put down rebellion."¹²⁹ Lincoln was in a bind, for he only awaited a victory from Pope before he would release his proposed emancipation edict,¹³⁰ and thereby

temporarily quiet the Radicals. Pope's victory never came, however, for in the last days of August the Army of Virginia was defeated at the battle of Second Manassas; Pope, and along with him McDowell, was pulled down in disgrace. McDowell, abandoned by the Jacobins, never again held a field command.

Pope's failure was promptly attributed by the Radicals to McClellan's delay in rushing troops to his aid.¹³¹ Stanton ordered Halleck, general-in-chief of the army, to determine whether McClellan had withheld men from Pope; Halleck's answer was in the affirmative.¹³² A petition to remove McClellan was then drawn up and signed by Stanton and Chase; it was soon signed by Attorney-General Bates and Secretary of the Interior Smith, and only awaited the signatures of Secretary of the Navy Welles, Postmaster-General Blair, and Secretary of State Seward, who was out of town in order to avoid the move against McClellan. Stanton was now determined to destroy "little Mac."¹³³

Lincoln, however, needed someone who was readily available to reorganize the scattered remnants of the Army of Virginia, for Robert E. Lee was threatening to invade the North. Thus, on 2 September, Lincoln announced to his cabinet that McClellan now led Pope's army.¹³⁴ Lincoln told Welles that, "I must have McClellan to organize the army and bring it out of chaos, but there has been a

design, a purpose in breaking down Pope, without regard of consequences to the country. It is shocking to see and know this; but there is no remedy at present, McClellan has the army with him."¹³⁵ The Radicals soon besieged the White House, accusing McClellan of military incapacity and saying that he was more interested in the presidency than the army.¹³⁶ On 10 September Chandler stated that the only hope for the North to avoid a military dictatorship was a demand by loyal governors backed by a threat to change men and policies promptly.¹³⁷ It was the general feeling among the radical element that Lincoln had yielded much to border-state and Negrophobic counsels and could not arrest his descent toward concessions. They felt that he had separated himself from the radical spirit, "... and waits---For What /sic/"?¹³⁸

Meanwhile, McClellan had let the rebel army under Lee escape his grasp at Antietam on 17 September.¹³⁹ It was, however, a triumph for the Union because the first Confederate thrust into northern territory had been turned back. Lincoln had the "victory" he wanted; on 22 September he issued his preliminary emancipation proclamation which announced a renewal of the plan of compensated abolition, a continuance of the effort toward voluntary colonization, a promise to recommend ultimate compensation to loyal owners, and the emancipation of all slaves in rebellion states at the beginning of 1863.¹⁴⁰ This proclamation

was met by a chilly approval from the Jacobins, who wanted a stiffer stand but recognized that it was a step in the right direction.¹⁴¹ October came and went with no cessation in the Radical's demands to have McClellan removed, although Don Carlos Buell, considered by the Jacobins to be a pro-slave McClellanite, was relieved of his command of the Department of the Ohio on 24 October.¹⁴² Then, on 5 November, after a Democratic sweep of the congressional elections and continued inactivity on the part of McClellan, Lincoln removed that general from command of the eastern army. The President stated that, "I said I would remove him if he let Lee's army get away from him, and I must do so. He has got the 'slows'...."¹⁴³ The Radicals had at last achieved their objective. Lincoln replaced McClellan with General Ambrose Burnside, a member of the McClellanite clique.¹⁴⁴ On 13 December Burnside met the Confederate army at Fredericksburg and was reeled back with terrific slaughter. The disaster stunned the country for it was only one of a succession of disasters in the East that had begun with Bull Run in the summer of 1861; the war-weary people were ready to concede the hopelessness of conquering the South. The Jacobins recognized in the hopelessness of the people a threat to the Radical cause, for they feared that the Democrats would manipulate the defeatist psychology into a movement for peace that would sweep the Republicans from power and end the war on terms dictated by

Jefferson Davis and his Confederate cohorts. Thus, they cast about for a scapegoat.¹⁴⁵

The following days of December were bleak and gloomy as constituents grumbled, party caucuses were held, and committeemen called on Lincoln incessantly. Wade was reported to have told Lincoln, "You are on the road to Hell with this government and you are not a mile off this minute." The President supposedly replied, "A mile from Hell, Senator? That is just about the distance from here to the Capital, is it not?"¹⁴⁶ The Jacobins' dissatisfaction now focused on the question of secretarial change. If the cabinet were reorganized, they reasoned, perhaps something could be done to quiet the public mind.¹⁴⁷ It was felt by many Radicals that Secretary of State Seward exercised an undue influence in the cabinet, and thus they determined to force his resignation and make the President more amenable to their demands and more subordinate to their control.¹⁴⁸ Thus, the tragedy at Fredericksburg, the restlessness of the people, Lincoln's war aims, and criticism of Seward, led to an attempt to transfer the executive control from the White House to the Capital.¹⁴⁹

On 16 December the Republican senators met in secret caucus. A motion was made expressing lack of confidence in Seward, the object being to try and get Republican unanimity. Senator Fessenden of Maine told the assembled members that Chase had told him that Seward controlled the conclusions of the cabinet. Fessenden then

said that there should be cabinet unity; "Measures should be taken...to make the cabinet a unity and to remove from it anyone who does not coincide heartily with our views in relation to the war."¹⁵⁰ Wade then censured Lincoln "...for placing our armies under the command of officers who did not believe in the policy of the government and had no sympathy with its purposes."¹⁵¹

On 17 December, at another secret caucus, thirty-two of the thirty-three Republican senators present voted to state that the public confidence in the present administration would be increased by "...a change in and partial reconstruction of the cabinet."¹⁵² A committee of nine men was then selected to present that resolution to the President. The committee was composed of senators Collamer, Wade, Trumbull, Sumner, Grimes, Fessenden, Harris, Pomeroy, and Howard.¹⁵³ Senator Preston King, the lone holdout in the resolution vote, quietly excused himself from the meeting and warned Secretary of State Seward of the resolution. Seward and his son Frederick, the Assistant Secretary of State, promptly wrote out their resignations.¹⁵⁴

On 18 December the committee of nine met the President for an interview and he told them to come back that evening to air their grievances. When they returned the senators told Lincoln that he should "...get rid of Democratic generals and put the armies...under the command

of those who adhered to the Jacobin creed." Fessenden said that the war should be "...in the hands of its friends...." They then asked Lincoln to remove Seward.¹⁵⁵ They also stated that Lincoln should be aided by a cabinet council that agreed with him generally, and that all important measures should be a product of their combined wisdom.¹⁵⁶

On 19 December Lincoln got word to the senatorial committee that he wished to see them that evening. When they arrived the President informed them that he had also invited the cabinet, the very group of men that they had been censuring and condemning. All of the cabinet was present except Seward, all of the committee except Wade.¹⁵⁷ Fessenden reiterated the committee's demands for united counsels, combined wisdom, and energetic action. The President then asked for a committee vote on whether Seward should go or stay. Grimes, Trumbull, Sumner, and Pomeroy wanted Seward to be dismissed while Collamer, Fessenden, and Howard would not commit themselves. Harris contented himself with the remark that Seward's removal would be calamitous in New York, the secretary's home state.¹⁵⁸ Lincoln then defended Seward and said that the cabinet had always acted as, and was, a unit. When he asked his cabinet whether they thought that they acted as a unit, Chase hedged and qualified his answers. The result was that he lost the confidence of the Radicals

because he did not uphold what he had said privately about the cabinet. He also lost prestige with the cabinet for he had said that there could be more unity than there was.¹⁵⁹ By the end of the session Chase was thoroughly chastened.

On 20 December Chase handed in his resignation, for he had been painfully affected by the events of the evening before. To his surprise Lincoln became excited and grabbed the resignation saying, "This cuts the Gordian knot...I can see my way clear." Stanton, who was present at the time, said he wanted the President to consider his resignation also, but Lincoln said, "I don't want yours."¹⁶⁰ Lincoln now had, as he put it happily, "a pump-kin in each end of my bag."¹⁶¹ He could now refuse both Seward's and Chase's resignations without hurting the moderates or the radicals one more than the other. On 22 December Lincoln requested both Stanton and Chase to withdraw their resignations.¹⁶² As 1862 drew to a close the administration was more harmonious; Chase, Stanton, and Seward, good men in their fields, had been retained; Lincoln controlled the cabinet and ruled the executive department; and the Jacobins had suffered a major setback.¹⁶³

The Radicals fought incessantly for their beliefs for the next two years until that morning of 15 April, 1865, when an assassin's bullet brought them their final victory over Lincoln and his moderate views. "As the fury of the

people blazed higher, the Jacobin leaders...raised their cry for vengeance upon the South."¹⁶⁴ They claimed that they had inherited the nation that Lincoln had "made," and there were none to oppose them.¹⁶⁵ The vindictive spirit of the Jacobins became the faith and the rallying cry of the nation, and the conflict over reconstruction began.

During the years that the Radicals had fought a political war in the chambers of the capitol, another war had taken place on the battlefields of our nation. Irvin McDowell, typical of the Union generals whose incompetence prolonged the war, had been a vital factor in the outcome of that war during the first two years of its existence.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter II

¹Kenneth M. Stampp, And The War Came (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), p. 63.

²Stampp, p. 64.

³Stampp, p. 65.

⁴Stampp, p. 148.

⁵Thomas Harry Williams, Lincoln and the Radicals (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1941), p. 4.

⁶Stampp, p. 148.

⁷Williams, p. 4.

⁸Williams, p. 5.

⁹Williams, pp. 5-6.

¹⁰Wilmer Carlyle Harris, Public Life of Zachariah Chandler, 1851-1875 (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1917), p. 48.

¹¹Stampp, p. 149.

¹²James Garfield Randall, Lincoln the President (2 vols.; New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1945), II, p. 205.

¹³Williams, p. 6.

¹⁴Williams, p. 6.

¹⁵Burton Jesse Hendrick, Lincoln's War Cabinet (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1946), p. 280.

¹⁶A. Howard Meneely, "Wade, Benjamin Franklin," Dictionary of American Biography, Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.), (22 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), XIX, p. 304. Cited hereafter as DAB.

¹⁷Hendrick, pp. 269-270.

¹⁸George Fort Milton, Abraham Lincoln and the Fifth Column (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1942), p. 43.

¹⁹A. Howard Meneely, DAB, XIX, p. 304.

²⁰Randall, II, p. 209.

²¹Meneely, DAB, XIX, p. 304.

²²Meneely, DAB, XIX, p. 305.

²³Milton, p. 43.

²⁴Randall, II, p. 210.

²⁵William McDonald, "Chandler, Zachariah," Dictionary of American Biography, Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.), (22 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), III, p. 618.

²⁶Hendrick, p. 274.

²⁷George H. Haynes, "Sumner, Charles," Dictionary of American Biography, Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.), (22 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), XVIII, pp. 208-211.

²⁸Haynes, DAB, XVIII, pp. 212-213.

²⁹Haynes, DAB, XVIII, pp. 211-213.

³⁰Randall, II, p. 208.

³¹Hendrick, p. 275.

³²Hendrick, pp. 275-276.

³³L. Ethan Ellis, "Trumbull, Lyman," Dictionary of American Biography, Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.), (22 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), XIX, pp. 19-20.

³⁴Randall, II, p. 210.

³⁵Paul L. Haworth, "Julian, George Washington," Dictionary of American Biography, Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.), (22 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), X, pp. 245-246.

³⁶Hendrick, p. 276.

³⁷Haworth, DAB, X, pp. 245-246.

³⁸Williams, p. 70.

³⁹Randall, II, p. 207.

⁴⁰Randall, II, p. 207.

⁴¹Allen Nevins, "Stevens, Thaddeus," Dictionary of American Biography, Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.), (22 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), pp. 622-624.

⁴²Nevins, DAB, XVII, p. 625.

⁴³Milton, p. 45.

⁴⁴R. S. Cotterill, "Covode, John," Dictionary of American Biography, Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.), (22 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), IV, p. 470.

⁴⁵Williams, pp. 68-69.

⁴⁶Milton, pp. 43-44.

⁴⁷Milton, p. 44.

⁴⁸Williams, p. 69.

⁴⁹Milton, pp. 44-45.

⁵⁰Williams, p. 70.

⁵¹Hendrick, p. 267.

⁵²A. Howard Meneely, "Stanton, Edwin McMasters," Dictionary of American Biography, Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (eds.), (22 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), XVII, p. 517.

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⁵⁴Meneely, DAB, XVII, p. 518.

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III. "ON TO RICHMOND"

On 27 May, 1861, Brigadier General Irvin McDowell was chosen to command the newly-created Department of Northeastern Virginia.¹ McDowell arrived in Arlington, Virginia too late on 27 May to formally take command of the Department so he encamped with a New Jersey brigade that evening. The next day he formally took command of the fledgling army and then visited the men in the field, taking special note of their condition and defensive positions. For the next several days he spent most of his time examining the needs of his department; he wrote Washington that there was a definite lack of tools, forage, supplies, means of transportation and communication, and experienced commanders.² He soon requested an officer from the quartermaster department, funds to compensate civilians whose homes and fuel were being used, and Military Academy graduates to act as instructors for the volunteers massing near Washington. Due to the complaints and rumors coming from Alexandria, he further asked if a military commission to try cases of volunteer deprivations could not be established.³ In relation to deprivations committed by volunteers he wrote to Mrs. R. E. Lee, telling her that her home would be respected as he had had a

guard stationed near there to watch over it.⁴ In regard to a possible forward movement in the future he directed that an investigation be made of the rolling stock of the Alexandria and Manassas Gap Railroad to determine whether the roadbed was in need of repairs.⁵ His necessarily short examination of his department stood McDowell in good stead when General-in-Chief Scott approached him in early June in regards to a forward movement by a portion of his army.

On 3 June McDowell was told that General Scott wanted him to submit an estimate of the number and composition of a column to be pushed toward Manassas Junction in the near future to favor General Patterson's proposed attack on Harper's Ferry, which was northwest of Washington on the Potomac River. McDowell replied that he felt the force should comprise 12,000 infantry, two battallions of regular artillery, six to eight companies of cavalry, and a reserve force of 5,000 infantry and one rifled heavy field battery.⁶ McDowell took the occasion to appeal to Scott to concentrate the troops coming into Washington into field brigades under regular officers in order to avoid troop depra-dations which had occurred in the past. He stated that the volunteers must be "... restrained as well as led."⁷ On 15 June McDowell was told that Patterson could not cross the river to Harper's Ferry before 19 June.⁸

On 21 June McDowell was told to propose a column to operate from Alexandria in cooperation with Patterson at Harper's Ferry in order to catch the enemy in a pincers movement. Three days later McDowell stated his objections to such a cooperative operation. He stated that the enemy had approximately 25,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry in the vicinity of Manassas Junction; those troops, along with probable reinforcements from the direction of Manassas Gap, could seriously hamper his operations. Further, reinforcements could come up from the south of Manassas relatively unopposed to augment the rebels already there. He then pointed out that he had only about half the infantry force which the rebels possessed, and few artillery pieces. He concluded by saying that the distance between Patterson and himself, and the fact that each would expose a flank in marching, would suggest that they should march without reference to material support from the other. He felt that he should move no farther than Vienna,⁹ a small hamlet where recent skirmishes had taken place between the rebels and reconnoitering Union cavalry.¹⁰

On 24 June, in reply to verbal instructions from Scott, McDowell submitted his plan of operations for a proposed move on the enemy near Manassas which was not in conjunction with Patterson, but which hinged on his support. He estimated the number of Confederate soldiers

at Manassas to be about 25,000; he then said that the enemy would soon know of the plan and would bring in reinforcements, but that no more than 10,000 would arrive if General Patterson at Harpers Ferry and General Butler at Fortress Monroe were effective in containing and harassing them. He proposed to move with a force of 30,000 men, organized into three columns, with a reserve of 10,000. One column was to move from Fall's Church or Vienna in conjunction with another column on the Little River Turnpike in order to cut off or drive in the enemy's advanced posts. The third column was to move via the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, leaving a force to rebuild it, and eventually joining the other columns. After marching through the thick woods and over the narrow roads with the fewest carriages possible the columns would unite on the northeast side of Bull Run, turn the enemy batteries, and attack the main position by turning the enemy so as to cut off rail communications, thus forcing the rebels to leave their entrenchments to guard their supply lines. McDowell stated that the men should travel relatively free of baggage, using only haversacks to carry provisions, and that wagons be used only to transport tools and ammunition, and to act as ambulances; further, subsistence trains should be made ready to use whenever they might be needed.¹¹ McDowell thought that a battle definitely would ensue and that it would be of

great importance to the prestige of the Union; this fact, plus the knowledge that the volunteer regiments were "exceedingly raw" and "not over steady in line," dictated that they should be organized into small brigades to be commanded by regular colonels assisted by as many regular officers as could be collected "...so that the men may have as fair a chance as the nature of things and the comparative inexperience of most will allow."¹² He stated that more batteries were needed but that he realized that "...the nature of the country did...make it embarrassing ..." to have more than what was already at his disposal.¹³ He concluded his plan of operations by saying that every arrangement should be made to make no step in retreat, but to press on steadily and determinedly. "If they are well led I think they will do so, and with every chance of success."¹⁴

On 25 June a council of war was held with Lincoln, the cabinet, General-in-Chief Scott, General Mansfield, and Quartermaster Meigs in attendance; McDowell, however, was not present at that meeting.¹⁵ Soon thereafter, McDowell's plan was approved by Scott and on 29 June the two men went to the White House for another council of war. After McDowell related his plan to the council, Scott stated his reluctance to commit the raw troops to an offensive movement, and instead urged the adoption of his Anaconda Plan to strangle the South by a naval

blockade. The council overruled him, however, and resumed talk of an offensive operation.¹⁶ General Scott, seeing that his plan would not be adopted, then assured Lincoln that the Confederates in the Shenandoah Valley would not be allowed to join the army at Manassas, as the battle plan hinged on that factor.¹⁷ McDowell, who had been reluctant about advancing so soon, said that it was wrong to make him organize, discipline, march, and fight at the same time; he wanted more time to train his volunteer army for the task ahead.¹⁸ Lincoln replied, "You are green, it is true; but they are green, also; you are all green alike."¹⁹ The council then decided to undertake a movement as soon as the army, and the needed transportation, could be readied. Meigs said that he could have the necessary transportation ready as soon as the council set a time for the movement, although he later realized that he had miscalculated the time it would take for the transportation to arrive on the one-track, jammed, rail lines.²⁰ Thus it was that a commander unaccustomed to commanding and raw volunteers unaccustomed to fighting were sent out to do battle for a nation unaccustomed to war.

McDowell had not wanted to fight in the summer of 1861, but Lincoln, for reasons both military and political, wanted the army to undertake an immediate offensive. Militarily, the President knew that if the Confederate forces

in the Shenandoah Valley could be neutralized, the numerically superior Union army had a good chance of smashing the rebels at Manassas, advancing to Richmond, and thereby ending the war.²¹ Politically, the politicians, the press, and the public all clamored for an advance. The administration needed no urging for they shared the eagerness of the country and wished to sustain the popular enthusiasm which was in abundance all around them.²² On 11 July Trumbull, echoing Horace Greeley, tried to pass a resolution in a senate caucus which would have directed the army to make an immediate advance so as to occupy Richmond before 20 July.²³ Greeley's New York Tribune cried, "On to Richmond! On to Richmond! The rebel Congress must not be allowed to meet there on the twentieth of July. By that date the place must be held by the national army."²⁴ Thus, "...in the heat of patriotic ardor and popular craving for action which prevailed at that time, days seemed months and weeks seemed years; and public impatience could not endure the thought of allowing the whole summer to pass by in seeming idleness and waste, before sending the great armies of the Union on what they fondly hoped would be a short march and an easy victory"²⁵

McDowell had many problems in putting a trained, effective, army in the field. Some of his officers were what he termed "political generals," and were suspected

by him of selling army rations.²⁶ He did not care for volunteers as a result of his service in Mexico and, unfortunately, Lincoln's request of 15 April for 75,000 militia for three months service had brought many individualistic young men rushing to Washington to beat the rebels. On 3 May Lincoln had requested additional volunteers to serve for three years, but many of those men had not yet arrived. Thus, McDowell's ill-disciplined men were largely volunteers of the three-months stripe who were due to go home in the near future.²⁷

McDowell did not have a decent map of Virginia, and knew little or nothing about the country through which he was soon to advance. Further, he could not obtain much information due to the fact that the enemy was in front of him and he did not have a "...cavalry officer capable of conducting a reconnaissance."²⁸ As for the soon-to-be-named Army of the Potomac:

In one word...they are grossly and utterly ignorant of what an army should be.... In the next place, their artillery is miserably deficient; they have not, I should think, more than five complete batteries, or six batteries, including scratch guns, and these of different calibres, badly horsed, miserably equipped, and provided with the worst set of gunners and drivers which I...ever beheld. They have no cavalry, only a few scarecrowmen...mounted in high saddles, on wretched mouthless screws, and some few regulars from the frontiers.... Their transportation is tolerably good, but inadequate; they have no carriage for reserve ammunition; the commissariat drivers are civilians, under little or no control; the officers are unsoldierly-looking men; the camps are dirty to excess; the men are dressed in all sorts of uniforms; and from what I hear, I doubt

if any of these regiments have ever performed a brigade evolution together, as if any of the officers know what it is to deploy a brigade from column into line. They are mostly three months men, whose time is nearly up. They were rejoicing to-day over the fact that it was so, and that they had kept the enemy from Washington 'without a fight.' and it is with this rabblement that the North propose...to subdue the South....²⁹

This report by a foreign correspondent, although exaggerated to be sure, was a fairly accurate observation of the strength and composition of the Union Army.

Another example of the raggedness of the army was the fact that McDowell on one occasion actually had to search the carriages of a railroad train for two batteries of artillery which he had ordered because his staff was engaged in duties at headquarters.³⁰ He virtually put the artillery together with his own hands because brigade commanders did not know their commands and soldiers did not yet know their generals.³¹ Due to the press of time many regiments actually were never seen by McDowell, had not yet been brigaded by the time the army advanced, and had not had a chance to get the feel of working together as a unit; when McDowell did review eight regiments together, he was censured for trying to make a show.³² Further, there was no general staff to aid McDowell in planning and conducting a battle. McDowell had four aides-de-camp who were basically valueless, but he had no chief of staff to formulate orders or serve as a second in command.³³ There was the added problem of McDowell's lack of experience in directing

a large battle as he had never even directed a small one. Pervading over all was the time factor. He simply was not given enough time to train an army that would meet his own standards; he had had only ten weeks in which to build the army that was expected to defeat the secessionist rebels within a month.

Manassas, the objective of the Union army, controlled the center of the northern Virginia railroad system linking Washington with Richmond, and Manassas with the Shenandoah Valley. Due to those staunch Confederate interior lines, McDowell was apprehensive about attacking Manassas, but he was assured by General Scott that General Butler at Fortress Monroe would guard the peninsula and General Patterson in the Valley would keep on the rebels heels to insure against any help reaching General Beauregard at Manassas from that point.³⁴ Although McDowell, in his plan of operations, stated that he expected the Confederates to bring up an additional 10,000 reinforcements, he was careful to stipulate that they must not be from Johnston's army in the Valley.³⁵

McDowell's army consisted of fifty infantry regiments, two regular infantry battalions, ten batteries which included twenty-nine rifled pieces and twenty-six smoothbore pieces, and eight companies of cavalry. The men and guns were divided into five divisions: Tyler's First Division consisting of the brigades of Keyes,

Schenck, Richardson, and W. T. Sherman; Hunter's Second Division consisting of the brigades of Porter and Burnside; Heintzelman's Third Division consisting of the brigades of Franklin, Willcox, and Howard; Miles' Fifth Division consisting of the brigades of Blenker and Davies; and Runyon's Fourth Division consisting of nine regiments not brigaded. This force comprised approximately 35,000 men; McDowell proposed to move with 30,000 of them and hold Runyon's Division in reserve south of the Potomac River near Washington.³⁶ Since McDowell's force approximately matched Beauregard's, including reinforcements, he did not have a balance sufficient to carry the battle even by his own reckoning; it must be concluded, therefore, that his chances for victory were little better than fifty percent based on his own calculations of the number of men likely to participate in battle.

According to plans discussed previously with Scott, McDowell was to have moved on 8 July, about two weeks before the expiration date of the enlistments of most of his men.³⁷ However, due to delays caused by the addition of new regiments, some brigades being formed just a few hours before the advance began,³⁸ and the lack of transportation, fifty wagons arriving on the morning of the advance,³⁹ McDowell did not move until 16 July. Even then, at that late hour, there were delays. McDowell himself was detained from marching with his troops because

the guides which he had procured were late in arriving at Alexandria due to a lack of available horses; thus, McDowell had to return to Washington to wait while his army marched on towards Bull Run.⁴⁰

On 16 July McDowell issued General Orders, Number 17, from his headquarters of the Department of Northeastern Virginia; this order announced to the men that they would march to the front that afternoon. The order further stated that: a two-day supply of cooked rations should be kept on hand by each man; Runyon would guard the Orange and Alexandria Railroad as far as it could be repaired; they should reach Fairfax Court House by 8:00 A.M.; troops would march lightly equipped; subsistence trains would follow the march, bringing with them herds of beef cattle; the men must avoid shooting each other because in many cases, due to the color of their uniforms, there was nothing to distinguish them from the enemy; and since it was believed that the enemy had thrown up breastworks and planted cannon, it was probable that an engagement would ensue. The brigade commanders were cautioned to turn batteries, not make a frontal assault on them, and to keep their men well closed up on the march at all times. McDowell then cautioned the commanders that three things would be unpardonable: to come upon a masked battery without a knowledge of its position, to be surprised, and to fall back; they might be checked, but they

should not be overthrown.⁴¹ Needless to say, the march was slowed considerably as the men painstakingly searched every nook and cranny for the enemy.

In the late afternoon of 16 July while members of Washington society, some accompanied by ladies with picnic lunches, harried the columns with buggies and gigs, the troops left Alexandria moving in four columns; one via the turnpike, one by the lateral country road on the right of the turnpike, one on the left of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, and one between the turnpike and the railroad on a path called Braddock's Road.⁴² The troops went along with the lark, lending the march the holiday air of an outing. They broke ranks to pick berries, discarded their packs and spare equipment, including their cumbersome cartridge boxes, and ate up their two-day cooked rations.⁴³ It was behavior such as this which induced McDowell to say, "This is not any army; it will take a long time to make an army."⁴⁴

The first day's march was short due to the delays and the late start. By 3:30 P.M. on 17 July the army had entered Fairfax Court House which had been very recently abandoned by a South Carolina brigade after a short skirmish with McDowell's advance; they were now thirteen miles from Washington but could go no farther because "...the men were too much exhausted to do so" after the long march.⁴⁵ They were not too exhausted, however, to commit

certain excesses; McDowell reported that, "The excitement of the men found vent in burning and pillaging which... distressed us all greatly."⁴⁶

Those depredations caused McDowell to issue General Orders, Number 18, on 18 July with regard to the preservation of secessionist property. Commanders of regiments were to choose a commissioned officer as regimental provost-marshal, and appoint ten men as a permanent police force whose special and sole duty was to preserve secessionist property from depredations and arrest violaters. The least punishment that would be handed out would be a term in the Alexandria jail.⁴⁷ Also on 18 July McDowell issued General Orders Number 19, regarding troop movements for the day. All four divisions were ordered to take the road for the vicinity of Centreville, seven miles from Fairfax Court House and twenty miles from their starting point. The division commanders were told to procure supplies from the inhabitants if the supply trains had not arrived by the time they were ready to march; the troops were again ordered to have two days cooked rations in their haversacks.⁴⁸

On 18 July at 8:15 A.M. McDowell sent word to Tyler that he believed there would be no resistance from the enemy in the Centreville area. He then added, "Observe well the roads to Bull Run and Warrenton. Do not bring on an engagement, but keep up the

impression that we are moving on Manassas...."⁴⁹ A brigade from Tyler's Division promptly went to Blackburn's Ford on Bull Run and silenced a Confederate battery with two twenty-pounder rifle guns in direct disobedience of their orders. The brigade then opened fire with small arms at the rebels on the opposite bank of the stream. The rebels soon outflanked Tyler's left and caused him to withdraw, leaving the raw Union troops with a badly shaken morale,⁵⁰ for the impression was given to non-participants that a big battle had been fought, with disastrous results.⁵¹ The action by Tyler not only contradicted McDowell's orders, hurt the morale of the troops, and left three killed and twenty-nine wounded,⁵² but it also caused another of the rapidly mounting delays.

Later that day, after directing Tyler to take possession of Centreville, McDowell examined the country on the enemy's right flank with a view to eventually turning it and interrupting communications with the South. He found, however, that the roads were too narrow and crooked for a large body of troops to move over, and that the distance around the Confederate right flank was too great to move safely. McDowell, therefore, had to abandon the previous plan of turning the enemy right flank, and instead concentrate on the enemy left flank where the country was more open and the roads broad.⁵³ By the night of 18 July the army was near Centreville, twenty miles from their

point of departure. They had been marching for two and one-half days.

McDowell's army was again delayed on 19 July as the soldiers waited for ration trains to supply them with the food they needed after they had eaten theirs prematurely.⁵⁴ McDowell confessed that he was "...somewhat embarrassed by the inability of the troops to take care enough of their rations to make them last the time they should...."⁵⁵ Two trains arrived that morning and one in the afternoon so a large part of the day was spent in cooking the rations.⁵⁶ The rest of the day was occupied mainly by the engineers in reconnoitering the defenses of the enemy on Bull Run above Stone Bridge. The object of the reconnaissance was to find a point which might be bridged or forded. Five of those reconnaissance efforts on 18 and 19 July had been unsuccessful due to the enemy forces operating on the east, McDowell's, side of Bull Run. McDowell stated that he had wished to make the reconnaissances in force but had "...deferred to the better judgment of others---to try and get it by observation and stealth."⁵⁷ He proposed, therefore, to drive in the enemy with force on the twentieth in order to get the necessary information.⁵⁸

On 20 July McDowell told his commanders to issue orders to equally distribute the subsistence stores on hand immediately, to have the men cook them and put them

in their haversacks, and to warn the men that the rations must last until 23 July.⁵⁹ Later that day McDowell issued General Orders, Number 37, requesting that the Fourth Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers continue in service even though their term of service was about to expire. He did not hope for much success, however, and thought that he would lose many thousands of his men in the next few days due to the fact that their expiration date would soon arrive.⁶⁰ He later that day issued the Fourth Pennsylvania Volunteers and the Eighth New York Militia Volunteers an honorable discharge, ordering them to leave on 21 July.⁶¹ Thus, on the eve of the first large battle of the Civil War, men were being discharged from the service to go to Alexandria and be mustered out.

While McDowell was discharging men a cavalry unit reconnoitered the area above Stone Bridge searching out passable fords; they had to withdraw when enemy patrols were encountered in the vicinity of Sudley Springs.⁶² They reported to McDowell that there were probable good crossings of Bull Run at Sudley Springs and Poplar Ford; those two points were deemed suitable for a crossing by wheeled artillery.⁶³ Their early withdrawal, however, caused a delay of sorts because it prevented a thorough reconnaissance of the area and this led to several miscalculations on the part of the Union command as to time and physical obstacles; these factors became apparent on

the morning of the federal attack.

After all the numerous delays it was decided at an evening council of war held on 20 July that the attack of the bluecoats would begin the next day. The council, which had been in session from midafternoon on, decided on the final plan of attack shortly before midnight.⁶⁴

A congressman at McDowell's headquarters on the eve of the twentieth said that McDowell and his officers had little hope of winning the battle, but that McDowell had said that the victory was so important that the risk must be taken.⁶⁵ Part of McDowell's fears may have been a

result of the rumors that he had heard that day regarding his worst fear; General Joseph Johnston and Bee's brigade were rumored to have arrived from the Shenandoah Valley where they had left Patterson holding the bag.⁶⁶

McDowell stated on the twentieth, "I learn from a person who represents himself as having just come from General Patterson that he has fallen back. There are rumors that Johnston has joined Beauregard...."⁶⁷ As yet those were just rumors however; it would not be until the afternoon of the following day that the horrible truth would be seen as a bloody reality.

During the three weeks preceding the battle at Bull Run, Generals Johnston and Patterson had been playing a deadly game of cat and mouse, each hoping to catch the other in a trap. General Patterson, with 12,000 men, had

originally been sent to the Shenandoah Valley to defend that access to Washington; with the advent of McDowell's plan to defeat the Confederate forces at Manassas, General Scott had given him the double task of preventing Johnston's army from moving on the capital, while at the same time detaining him from joining forces with General Beauregard, McDowell's opponent. This task was possible only through constant harassment of the enemy.⁶⁸

On 1 July Patterson had been notified that McDowell would make a movement on Manassas in the near future, but he had not been informed of his participation in that movement.⁶⁹ The following day he fought Jackson's brigade of Johnston's army at Falling Waters, forcing Jackson to retreat.⁷⁰ On 3 July Patterson passed through Martinsburg in pursuit of Jackson.⁷¹ Two days later Scott instructed Patterson to advance on Jackson at Winchester, but this order was ignored by Patterson as Scott had proposed the move thinking that Johnston had moved toward Manassas, which he had not done.⁷² Between 5 and 9 July Patterson wrote to Washington to the effect that he felt it was imprudent to move unless McDowell attacked the rebels at Manassas, in which case he would offer battle to Johnston; however, "If the enemy retires I shall not pursue."⁷³ On 11 July Scott told Patterson that he had received information that Johnston would try and defeat him and then work in conjunction with Beauregard to defeat McDowell.⁷⁴ The next

day, in reply to a request by Patterson for permission to move his force to Charles Town in order to be near a railroad, Scott wired that this would be satisfactory and added, "Should that movement cause the enemy to retreat upon Manassas...to follow him would seem at this distance hazardous...."⁷⁵ On 13 July Scott wired to Patterson that he should make demonstrations near Winchester so as to detain Johnston if he was not strong enough to defeat him. He then added, "If he retreats in force towards Manassas, and it be to hazardous to follow him, then consider the route via Key's Ferry, Leesburg, etc..." to Alexandria and then on to Manassas.⁷⁶ Patterson replied that although his position was a strong one he had to be cautious while preparing to strike; however, "...I would rather lose the chance of accomplishing something brilliant than, by hazarding this column, ...destroy the fruits of the campaign to the country by defeat...."⁷⁷

Thus, Scott did not tell Patterson definitely to hold Johnston at Winchester; conversely, if Johnston had gone to Manassas, the route through Leesburg suggested by Scott to Patterson would have been futile since it took three or four days longer to reach Manassas than the Manassas Gap route, which was serviced by a railroad.⁷⁸ The Leesburg access would have been doubly hard to use in order to bolster McDowell since its railroad line "...had been torn up and its rolling stock burned."⁷⁹

On 14 July Patterson told Scott that the three-months volunteers were very restless at the prospect of being retained over the period of their enlistments. He repeated that report on 16 and 17 July and added that he would move to Charles Town since the feelings of the men precluded any active operations in the vicinity of Winchester, where Johnston was staying.⁸⁰ On 16 July Patterson, under the impression that McDowell was to have attacked the rebels at Manassas on that day as a result of previous correspondence from Scott, wrote to the general-in-chief and told him that he would advance via Leesburg if Johnston left Winchester for the Valley following McDowell's anticipated victory.⁸¹ On 17 July Scott wired Patterson that he was not to let Johnston "amuse and delay" him with a small force in front while he reinforced Beauregard with his main body. The next day Patterson asked if he should attack Johnston, but Scott's reply was evasive. "I have certainly been expecting you to beat the enemy. If not, to hear that you had felt him strongly, or, at least, had occupied him by threats and demonstrations...."⁸² Patterson replied that he had only been told to retain Johnston at Winchester, which he certainly had done.⁸³

It would not have mattered anyway for on midnight of 17 July Johnston had received a telegram requesting him to reinforce Beauregard if that was feasible.⁸⁴ The next morning the advance forces of Johnston's army left

Winchester to join their comrades at Manassas, leaving J.E.B. Stuart's cavalry to mask their movement. Patterson did not suspect the Confederate move until 20 July, and by then it was far too late. On that date he obediently wired Scott in Washington that the bird had flown.⁸⁵

Patterson could not follow the Confederate army because he had the task of defending Washington; more than this however, both Scott and Patterson now began to realistically see that the safety-valve route through Leesburg and Washington was too long and time-consuming. McDowell was on his own.

Scott and Patterson had both completely overestimated the size of Johnston's force, which numbered about 9,000 effective fighting men,⁸⁶ and this led them to be overly cautious. Further, Scott's ambiguous orders to Patterson failed to let that general know exactly what his function was---to delay, harass, or do battle with the enemy. In short, though Patterson, who had been operating with the handicap of grumbling three-months men, may be criticized for lack of a true fighting spirit and on the grounds of pure military expediency, the blame must also be shared by General-in-Chief Scott, who never let Patterson know beyond a reasonable doubt that he was to specifically prevent a juncture between the two Confederate armies. Meanwhile, as the rumors of Johnston's movement began to spread, on the banks of Bull Run McDowell's battle plan was being

set in motion.

On 20 July McDowell issued General Orders, Number 22, to his division and brigade commanders. The order stated that the enemy had planted a battery on the Warrenton Turnpike to defend the passage of Bull Run, had mined Stone Bridge, and had made a heavy abatis, or barricade, on the right bank of Bull Run to oppose the Union advance. The order then stated that the ford above the bridge was well guarded and that the enemy gave every indication of defending the passage of the stream. The order concluded with the warning that the army's movements might lead to the "gravest results," and that the commanders of divisions and brigades should bear in mind the immense consequences to the nation involved in the battle. "There must be no failure...."⁸⁷

The revised plan of attack, since the Confederate right flank could not be turned due to terrain and distance, involved a crossing at Sudley Springs, occupation of the Warrenton Pike, and destruction of the communications between Manassas Junction and the Shenandoah Valley;⁸⁸ this was to be followed by a movement on the Confederate capital of Richmond if feasible. Involved in the movement were four divisions totaling approximately 30,000 men. Tyler's First Division was to move toward Stone Bridge and feint the main attack upon that point. Miles Fifth Division was to be held in reserve at Centreville, with one brigade

making a false attack on Blackburn's Ford on the rebels right flank. The Second and Third Divisions of Hunter and Heintzelman respectively, were to execute a turning movement on the Confederate left flank, crossing at Sudley Springs, attacking down the left bank of the stream, and uncovering the fords and Stone Bridge; this would allow Tyler's Division to cross relatively unmolested in a fresh attack.⁸⁹

McDowell's plan was a sound one, but it was also very complicated for troops never tested in battle. It involved two feints by half of the army and a flank attack by the other half, with the main effort to be made at right angles to the line of advance. It also left Washington, only twenty-seven miles away, open to a counter-attack. It depended much on soldierly obedience and luck,⁹⁰ and those two factors were sorely lacking, as McDowell soon found out.

To forestall any more delays McDowell ordered a reasonably early start. Tyler's holding division was to leave camp and march down the turnpike at 2:30 A.M. of 21 July to open the demonstrations at Stone Bridge and Blackburn's Ford. Hunter's and Heintzelman's turning divisions were to leave earlier, at approximately 2:00 A.M., in order to clear Sudley Springs by 7:00 A.M. at the latest. However, Schenck's and Sherman's brigades of Tyler's Division, which was ahead of Hunter and Heintzelman on the

turnpike, caused a two and one-half hour delay due to a late start and a slow advance that created confusion in the darkened environment. This delay came prior to the turn-off to Sudley Springs and thus caused Hunter and Heintzelman to stall on the road. When they finally began their march they found that the distance, and thus the time involved, was longer than anticipated.⁹¹ After a confusion of darkness, weariness, stumbling over logs, being stabbed at by branches, and breathing thick dust, the divisions finally reached Sudley Springs at 9:30 A.M., two and one-half hours behind their preconceived schedule. Downstream the guns of Tyler had been booming since 6:30 A.M. in a false aggressiveness.⁹²

Hunter and Heintzelman got over the stream by doubling their columns,⁹³ and emerged from the woods about a mile south of the ford at 10:30 A.M., fanning out to the west and, thus, going farther and farther away from Tyler at Stone Bridge. McDowell, who had arrived on the battlefield at about 10:45 A.M. from his headquarters at Centreville, tried to get the troops regrouped nearer to Bull Run but his presence was of little avail.⁹⁴ The blue-coats promptly encountered some regiments under Evans, who had earlier observed their bayonets flashing in the sun and the clouds of dust made by their tramping feet, and had marched on his own initiative to attack them.⁹⁵ The Union troops, by the force of their numbers, pushed Evans back

about 11:30 A.M., moved across the plain, and scrambled on toward Henry House Hill where they were joined by Sherman's brigade, which had crossed Bull Run at Poplar Ford. In the engagements encountered during this drive, Hunter used very bad troop dispositions by throwing his men into battle in clusters, rather than en masse,⁹⁶ a practice which was followed by the Union commanders throughout the day. Meanwhile, Tyler received McDowell's order to "press the attack" about 11:00 A.M. but didn't cross Bull Run at Stone Bridge until noon.⁹⁷ With the juncture of parts of his division with the divisions of Hunter and Heintzelman the Confederates were momentarily thrown back. By about 1:00 P.M. the federal forces had uncovered the Stone Bridge, cleared its front completely across the Warrenton Turnpike, and pushed the rebels back one and one-half miles where they halted and regrouped in the vicinity of Henry House Hill.⁹⁸

Meanwhile, McDowell arrived on the field of battle. As he moved from one spot to another he constantly transferred from his horse to a light carriage and then back again due to the hot weather and a choleric attack of the night before which he had contracted from a can of bad fruit he had eaten.⁹⁹ Rather than traveling over the field of battle, it would have been best for McDowell to have set up a command post in the center-rear of his army, as the Confederates eventually did, where he could have directed

the whole operation and put in reserves at the proper time whenever they were needed.¹⁰⁰ Due to the fact that McDowell, and the other commanders, traveled throughout the field of battle, thus being able to observe only one body of troops at a time, the Union army almost completely lacked a chain of command, thereby diffusing responsibility and unity of effort at critical moments in the battle.

By 2:00 P.M. there were no more than slightly over 18,500 Union troops on the field. They charged Henry House Hill, were repulsed, attacked by counter-charges, and charged again.¹⁰¹ They had grown tired due to long hours of marching the night before and by constant fighting since 10:30 A.M. that morning, and they began to lose their cohesion. McDowell stated that although the "... enemy was evidently disheartened and broken...", his own men had also begun to grow weary for they were "...unused to such things...."¹⁰² Disheartened by the scattering of the bright-jacketed Fire Zouaves and the capture of the Griffin-Ricketts batteries by a blue-coated Virginia brigade,¹⁰³ the fledgling army began to have doubts as to the qualities of their commanders, although McDowell "inspired by his presence" a New York regiment,¹⁰⁴ and wondered why they they also did not receive reinforcements.

For at that time, about 3:30 P.M., the main force of Johnston's army, eager for a fight, advanced to form

a solid line flanking both sides of Stonewall Jackson, extended their left westward, and overlapped the Federal right flank, which was badly exposed and disorganized.¹⁰⁵ The long gray line, reinforced by Early, Kirby-Smith, and J.E.B. Stuart, surged forward and slowly pushed the blue-coats back toward Cub Run. When an ambulance wagon on Cub Run was blown up by a direct hit a rout ensued which threw the whole Union line into confusion.

As riotous confusion prevailed, Colonel Miles' reserve Division, holding the ridge from Centreville to Blackburn's Ford, withdrew and exposed the whole retreating mass to the enemy.¹⁰⁶ McDowell, who had ridden by way of Sudley Springs to the turnpike after the rout had begun,¹⁰⁷ did what he could to save the day. Seeing that "... nothing remained...but to recognize what we could no longer prevent...",¹⁰⁸ he ordered the reserve divisions and some regiments just arrived from Alexandria to combine and form a rally line at Centreville in hopes that the retreating army would fall in there and challenge the probable Confederate counter-attack.¹⁰⁹ This attempt to induce order out of chaos was of little use, however, as anger gave way to panic and the proposed rally line fell in with the retreaters. The chaos became even more widespread when the retreating army mixed with the carriages of the junketing politicians and sightseers who had driven out to see the Union re-established.¹¹⁰

Senators Chandler and Wade were seen jumping out of their carriages with guns in hand trying to stop the flight of the panic-stricken soldiers.¹¹¹ The carefree lark had been turned into a nightmare as the soldiers fled down the road to Washington shouting, "turn back, turn back, we are whipped."¹¹² By sundown, therefore, McDowell decided that it was useless to try and regroup the men, for they were disorganized, demoralized, out of food and low on ammunition, and still susceptible to the rebels if they decided to counter-attack.¹¹³ The decision was made, therefore, to withdraw towards Fairfax Court House and comparative safety.

By 7:30 P.M. of 21 July McDowell reached Fairfax Court House. He was "...so tired...that while sitting on the ground writing a dispatch he fell asleep, pencil in hand, in the middle of a sentence, and had to be aroused by a staff officer."¹¹⁴ After wiring Washington of the defeat he left Fairfax, dismounting at Arlington in a pouring rain on the early morning of 22 July after approximately thirty-two hours in the saddle.¹¹⁵ He had lost 481 killed, 1011 wounded, and 1,216 missing. Added to the human toll were the material factors; he arrived in Arlington minus twenty-seven artillery pieces, 4,500 muskets, 500,000 cartridges, eleven flags, sixty-four horses, twenty-six wagons, and much clothing and camp equipment.¹¹⁶ To be sure, much of the expenditure of materials

was done in battle, but much of it was also expended by the volunteers as they fled from the battlefield. As late as mid-day of 22 July it was felt by some that the federal soldiers crossing the Potomac River "would create a panic" in Washington when the citizens saw the looks of horror, anger, and disbelief on their faces.¹¹⁷

Meanwhile, back in Washington, Lincoln had hurried to the War Department late in the evening of 21 July and had read a telegram which stated, "General McDowell's army in full retreat through Centreville. The day is lost."¹¹⁸ General Scott and others soon arrived. Scott said that he deserved removal because he had not stood and resisted when he knew his army had not been in condition for a battle. He did not have the heart to tell Lincoln that he felt that he too was responsible for McDowell's defeat.¹¹⁹

On 23 July McDowell was directed by Scott to have a suitable escort at Georgetown Ferry at 1:00 P.M. that day to meet President Lincoln, who would accompany him through the lines to visit the troops.¹²⁰ When the two men saw each other, the President supposedly said to McDowell, "I have not lost a particle of confidence in you," to which McDowell replied, "I don't see why you should, Mr. President."¹²¹ Lincoln, however, had decided that McDowell's job was too large for him and replaced him with a successful commander from the Department of the Ohio, George Brinton McClellan.

In assessing responsibility for the Union defeat at Bull Run the conditions which led to the final disastrous result can be grouped into two virtually all-inclusive spheres---those factors which were beyond the scope of McDowell's influence, and those factors which were within the scope of his influence. Included in the latter category are the principles of strategy and tactics; namely, the principles of objectives, simplicity, unity of command, offensive initiative, maneuver, mass, economy of force, surprise, and security.

The factor beyond McDowell's control which dominated and pervaded all other elements was the factor of time. Pressure from the press, politicians, and the populace all converged on the administration and coerced Lincoln to order an advance in the near future after McDowell had held his command less than a month; thus, McDowell had precious little time to organize, discipline, and train the three-months volunteers who composed the majority of his army. In the short space of three weeks, from 26 June to 16 July, the size of the army increased from 16,611 to 35,732 men,¹²² some of them not arriving until 14 and 16 July, the day the advance began; this certainly left little time for McDowell to teach the raw recruits the rudiments of warfare. Consequently, after the advance began, the troops treated the movement as a lark, and acted more like schoolboys and farmers' sons

than soldiers; in view of their short training period, perhaps this was justly so. Thus, inexperience led to many of the delays, and much of the slowness, encountered on the march.

Another factor beyond McDowell's control was the relative unpreparedness of the various departments of the army which are a vital part of any mass movement. The Quartermaster, Commissary, and Ordnance departments had neither the means of supply nor the requisite number of efficient subordinate officers to sufficiently supply McDowell's army; further, the ranking officers who could efficiently carry out their duties could not impart their knowledge to their subordinates in the short space of three weeks.¹²³ Thus, when McDowell began his movement to Manassas, he lacked sufficient rations, artillery, supplies, horses, baggage trains, and other means of transportation. In fact, Quartermaster Meigs implored McDowell to wait for more supplies and not move on the sixteenth,¹²⁴ but McDowell, already one week late in starting the advance, was under pressure from various sources and thus had to begin his march.

There were other factors beyond McDowell's sphere of influence in July of 1861. These included a lack of reliable maps, a lack of guides who knew well the Virginia countryside, the lack of a general staff to aid in planning, and the lack of efficient aides-de-camp to perform

the menial tasks which McDowell eventually tended to himself; these factors were part and parcel of the lack of time given to McDowell to organize and the general unpreparedness of the military as a result of inactivity since the Mexican War. This lack of activity had also showed itself in the form of inexperienced officers, resulting in incomprehension, disregard,¹²⁵ or disobedience of orders.

Another factor in the defeat at Bull Run which McDowell could not control was the appearance of Johnston on the field of battle on 21 July. The evidence indicates that Patterson's timidity, military inexpediency, and fear of a walk-out on the part of his three-months volunteers, which McDowell also experienced, plus Scott's ambiguity and hesitancy, combined with the Confederate advantage of interior lines to thrust Johnston into the battle of Bull Run at the most opportune time in terms of mass manpower and the psychological disadvantage that it caused among the raw Northern troops.

Thus, the factors which were beyond McDowell's sphere of influence were highly important in determining the outcome of the battle of Bull Run. Just as important, however, were those factors which he could control; therefore, his conduct in relation to the principles of strategy and tactics must be considered in evaluating the role he performed as the supreme commander of the Union forces

at Manassas.

The principles that McDowell did not violate were the principles of objectives and offensive initiative. His objectives were the destruction of the Confederate army, the tearing up of her communications with the Shenandoah Valley and Richmond, and an advance on Richmond if the situation warranted it; although it is true that he did not attain his objectives, it must be said that they were realistic. In regards to the second principle McDowell had taken the initiative from the first; he had marched on the Confederates, had made the necessary reconnaissances, and had carried the battle to them. The other principles, however, are not so easily dismissed.

The principle of simplicity - uncomplicated plans and concise orders that can be carried out - was violated because McDowell's battle plan, involving two feints and a flank thrust, was too complicated for green troops seeing battle for the first time. It required extremely good coordination between the forces at Stone Bridge and those at Sudley Springs, and this factor was missing during the battle; further, it presupposed an experience on the part of the field commanders that simply was not there.

The principle of unity of command - unity of effort responsible to and under the command of one responsible leader - was also violated by McDowell. Due to his previous lack of command he could not conceive of himself

as the ultimate authority on the field and often deferred to the views of his subordinate officers. This lack of authority was shown in regard to the reconnaissance of 18 and 19 July when he followed his officers' judgment concerning the use of observation and stealth, rather than force, in reconnoitering; it was also in evidence on the eve before the battle. McDowell, who wished to move the troops toward Sudley Springs that evening so that they would have a shorter march to make in the morning, let himself be overruled by his officers, who wanted the march to begin early on the morning of 21 July.¹²⁶ By allowing the officers to usurp his rights as commanding general the stage was set for a delayed advance and the consequent ineffectiveness of Tyler's feint attack. The principle of unity of command was further violated when McDowell traveled around the field of battle, thus being unable to form a chain of command, direct the whole operation, or put in reserves at the proper place and time.

The third principle violated by McDowell was that of maneuver - to move ones men meaningfully. This principle was contravened, not in the heat of battle, but in the advance towards Manassas. McDowell, who was intensely worried about coming upon a masked battery, had informed his officers that this was unpardonable and, thus, they had marched very slowly in order not to be surprised by

suddenly coming upon a battery. Had McDowell deployed his cavalry, rather than his infantry, in searching out the masked batteries then his march would have been much faster and,¹²⁷ hence, more meaningful in terms of the expected cooperation from Patterson.

Another principle trespassed upon by McDowell was that of mass - achieving superiority at a given place at a given time. Throughout the day McDowell's field commanders threw their brigades into battle in piecemeal fashion rather than concentrating to strike a telling blow; Beauregard felt that this was the most prominent reason for the Southern victory;¹²⁸ further, the assaults upon Henry House Hill were often frontal assaults, not flank assaults,¹²⁹ and the constant losses began to tell on the morale of the inexperienced troops by mid-afternoon. Added to the fragmented assaults is the fact that some of the assaulting brigades had artillery and some did not due to the poor organization conducted just before the troops marched from Alexandria; it would have been wiser, perhaps, if McDowell had grouped the artillery by divisions as a whole rather than by brigades in a hit-or-miss fashion.¹³⁰

Economy of force - allocating as many troops as possible to the primary effort and reserving the fewest troops for the secondary effort - was another principle broken by McDowell. The result of this infraction was that only 18,500 out of a potential 35,732 Union men were

ever on the field of battle at the same time.¹³¹ The divisions of Miles and Runyon and the brigades of Schenck and Richardson did not see any action, and one brigade from Heintzelman's division was pulled out of action and put in reserve at the last minute when McDowell began to fear a counter-attack via Blackburn's Ford.¹³² Thus, any numerical advantage held by McDowell was negated by his troop allocations.

The principle of surprise - accomplishing ones purpose before the enemy can effectively react - was also infringed upon by McDowell. The most notable example of this was the late arrival of the blue-coats at Sudley Springs; this tended to make the three-hour barrages at Stone Bridge and Blackburn's Ford look highly unrealistic and, combined with the clouds of dust and the glint of the sun on cold steel, induced Evans to march to meet the federal advance, thus minimizing the Union advantage.

The last principle broken by McDowell was that of security - not permitting the enemy to obtain a favorable advantage over one once he has been all but beaten. In this regard McDowell may be condemned for not planning for such a contingency as Johnston's arrival, even though he had no control over the actions taking place in the Shenandoah Valley. Although McDowell had been told by Tyler and others on the twentieth that Johnston had arrived at Manassas, for they had heard the trains

arriving on 19 and 20 July on the Manassas Gap line, he ignored their words.¹³³ It was not until some rebel prisoners told him of Johnston's arrival at 11:00 A.M. of 21 July,¹³⁴ mid-way through the battle, that he knew beyond a doubt what he had feared.

McDowell's role in the defeat thus indicates that he was caught up in the pressure of time and circumstance, and thrust into a situation for which neither he nor the country was prepared. He saw his duty and performed it to the best of his ability, but unskilled mediocrity was not enough. The wheel of fortune, as it was to do many times in the course of the next year, had not spun his way. Thus, it was that George Brinton McClellan, a seasoned master, was brought to Washington to finish the task which McDowell had begun.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter III

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⁴McDowell to Mrs. R. E. Lee, 30 May, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 655.

⁵McDowell to Townsend, 29 May, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 654.

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- ⁷¹Patterson to Townsend, 3 July, 1861, O.R.,
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- ⁷²K. P. Williams, I, pp. 80-81.
- ⁷³Patterson to Townsend, about 8 July, 1861, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. II, p. 163.
- ⁷⁴Scott to Patterson, 11 July, 1861, O.R.,
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- ⁷⁵Scott to Patterson, 12 July, 1861, O.R., Series
I, Vol. II, p. 165.
- ⁷⁶Scott to Patterson, 13 July, 1861, O.R., Series
I, Vol. II, p. 166.
- ⁷⁷Patterson to Townsend, 13 July, 1861, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. II, p. 165.
- ⁷⁸K. P. Williams, I, p. 82.
- ⁷⁹K. P. Williams, I, p. 82.

⁸⁰Patterson to Townsend, 14-17 July, 1861, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. II, pp. 166-167.

⁸¹Patterson to Townsend, 16 July, 1861, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. II, p. 167.

⁸²Scott to Patterson, 17-18 July, 1861, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. II, p. 168.

⁸³Patterson to Townsend, 18 July, 1861, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. II, p. 168.

⁸⁴Johnson and Buel, I, p. 229.

⁸⁵K. P. Williams, I, p. 85.

⁸⁶K. P. Williams, I, p. 87.

⁸⁷General Orders, Number 22, 20 July, 1861, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. II, p. 326.

⁸⁸McDowell to Townsend, 4 August, 1861, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. II, p. 318.

⁸⁹General Orders, Number 22, 20 July, 1861, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. II, p. 326.

⁹⁰Foote, p. 75.

⁹¹McDowell to Townsend, 4 August, 1861, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. II, p. 318.

⁹²McDowell to Townsend, 4 August, 1861, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. II, p. 318.

⁹³McDowell to Townsend, 4 August, 1861, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. II, p. 319.

⁹⁴Hassler, p. 21.

⁹⁵Foote, p. 78.

⁹⁶Johnson and Buel, I, p. 218.

⁹⁷Johnson and Buel, I, p. 187.

- ⁹⁸Hassler, pp. 20-21.
- ⁹⁹Hassler, p. 20.
- ¹⁰⁰Hassler, p. 21.
- ¹⁰¹McDowell to Townsend, 4 August, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 320.
- ¹⁰²McDowell to Townsend, 4 August, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 320.
- ¹⁰³McDowell to Townsend, 4 August, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 320.
- ¹⁰⁴Lieut. Col. Farnsworth to Col. Ward, 29 July, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 414.
- ¹⁰⁵McDowell to Townsend, 4 August, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 320.
- ¹⁰⁶Swinton, p. 87.
- ¹⁰⁷Hassler, p. 22.
- ¹⁰⁸McDowell to Townsend, 4 August, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 320.
- ¹⁰⁹McDowell to Townsend, 4 August, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, pp. 320-321.
- ¹¹⁰Foote, p. 82.
- ¹¹¹Wilmer Carlyle Harris, Public Life of Zachariah Chandler, 1851-1875 (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1917), p. 59.
- ¹¹²Harris, p. 59.
- ¹¹³McDowell to Townsend, 4 August, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 321.
- ¹¹⁴Hassler, p. 23.

- ¹¹⁵Hassler, p. 23.
- ¹¹⁶Hassler, p. 23.
- ¹¹⁷Thomas A. Scott to Mansfield, 22 July, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 755.
- ¹¹⁸Capt. Alexander to Scott, 21 July, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 747.
- ¹¹⁹Foote, p. 85.
- ¹²⁰Townsend to McDowell, 23 July, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 758.
- ¹²¹Russell, II, p. 307.
- ¹²²Abstract from Returns of the Department of Northeastern Virginia, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, pp. 309 and 726.
- ¹²³Hassler, pp. 13-14.
- ¹²⁴United States, House of Representatives, Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, Report No. 108, Vol. II, 37th Congress, 3rd Session, 1863, p. 38.
- ¹²⁵Capt. Clarke to Asst. Adjt.-Gen. Fry, 2 August, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 337.
- ¹²⁶McDowell to Townsend, 4 August, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 317.
- ¹²⁷Hassler, p. 15.
- ¹²⁸Johnson and Buel, I, p. 218.
- ¹²⁹Hassler, pp. 21-22.
- ¹³⁰Hassler, p. 13.
- ¹³¹McDowell to Townsend, 4 August, 1861, O.R., Series I, Vol. II, p. 324.

¹³²McDowell to Townsend, 4 August, 1861, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. II, pp. 318-319.

¹³³United States, House, Report Number 108, II,
p. 207.

¹³⁴United States, House, Report Number 108, II,
p. 40.

IV. THE "SLOWS"

The disaster at Bull Run had shown that crude experimentalism brought on by rash politicians, sanguine journalists, public clamor, and an acquiescing administration; fought by poorly organized, ill-equipped, and undisciplined three-months volunteers; and supported by an under-manned and under-supplied War Department which could not sustain an army in the field, could not bring a quick victory and an end to the war. It thus was decided that the inefficient status quo must be struck down and a reorganization of the military establishment begun.¹ The first step in that reorganization came on 17 July, six days after the disaster at Bull Run, when General George Brinton McClellan of the Department of the Ohio was appointed to command the forces of the eastern army;² his command, named the Department of the Potomac in mid-August, embraced the former departments of Washington and Northeastern Virginia, as well as the Shenandoah Valley, Maryland, and Delaware.³

McClellan, with the aid of congressional acts calling for an additional 500,000 men to serve for three years, and helped by the basis for reform which had been laid prior to his arrival in Washington,⁴ through personal inspection and diligent work set about reorganizing

the Department of the Potomac.

He promptly began by initiating changes in the Inspector-General, Quartermaster, Subsistence, Ordnance, and Telegraphic departments.⁵ With the aid of subordinate officers he instituted changes in the Topographical Corps, where the practice of collecting topographical maps was begun, as well as the Engineers Corps where necessary bridge equipment was collected, including "bateau with ...anchors and flooring materials, trestles, and engineers' tools...."⁶ McClellan created the position of Commandant of General Headquarters in order to secure "...order and regularity in the camp of headquarters..." and introduced such Signal Corps innovations as flags, torches, and portable insulated wire which could be laid from one position to another on the field.⁷ He also aided the Sanitary Commission in renovating the Medical Department so that by February, 1862, the number of sick had decreased from 7% to 6.18%. The improvements he desired included an ambulance corps, field hospitals,⁸ a corps of male and female nurses, and a medical director for the army; as a result of working together on the problem of medical reorganization, cooperation between the Army Medical Bureau and the Sanitary Commission became stronger.⁹

McClellan also reorganized the remnants of McDowell's army. He formed provisional brigades for the troops newly-arrived in Washington, organized the volunteer army into

brigades of four regiments each, and later formed the brigades into divisions.¹⁰ He also organized the cavalry into a division of fourteen regiments,¹¹ a practice which bogged down in combat since the cavalry unit was usually subdivided piecemeal and attached to various regiments under the theory that they were a reconnoitering force, not an attacking one. Further, McClellan proceeded to bring order out of the state of disciplinary chaos which abounded by issuing general orders which kept civilians out of military camps,¹² and forbade officers and troops from visiting and loafing in the brothels and saloons of Washington;¹³ the latter order was supplemented by a stringent military police system.¹⁴

McClellan not only reorganized the troops but he also revamped the officerial arm of the army, weeding out older officers and some political appointees and instituting qualifying examinations.¹⁵ He also increased the number of staff officers and appointed officers to regiments, much to the chagrin of General Scott, who had failed to appreciate the value of well-led and carefully-trained volunteers and had feared the depletion of the officers in the regular army by putting them with volunteer regiments.¹⁶ McClellan's reorganization was further helped by congressional acts which augmented the War Department and its bureaus with a civil force of clerks and messengers and an Assistant Secretary of War.¹⁷

McClellan also recognized the need to supplant and reorganize the artillery of the Army of the Potomac since there had been fewer than 650 artillerymen manning nine imperfect batteries of thirty pieces upon his arrival in Washington.¹⁸ Thus, on 23 August, McClellan's chief of artillery submitted a plan of artillery reorganization based upon a military establishment of 100,000 men. The plan called for a force of 300 guns per 100,000 men and was to be distributed so that the infantry got two pieces per 1,000 men, the cavalry two pieces per 1,000 men, and the reserve one piece per 1,000 men. The proposed artillery force required a total of 7,500 men and 5,000 horses and could be converted to eventually accomodate 200,000 men.¹⁹ McClellan explained to Lincoln, however, that he foresaw an artillery force which would eventually comprise 15,000 men and 100 batteries of 600 guns.²⁰ Meanwhile, as the army was being reorganized, the men drilled constantly by battalions, brigades, and divisions,²¹ for McClellan wanted them to achieve the look of a crack "spit and polish" army, not a ragtag assortment of volunteers.

While the army drilled incessantly, even engaging in that rarely reported activity, target practice,²² McClellan was busy submitting long memorandums on the general military situation; he continually overestimated the force of the enemy and, as a consequence, constantly

asked for more and more men. On 4 August he told Lincoln that he would need a force of 273,000 in order to re-establish governmental powers and bring peace to the nation. He stated that, "the question to be decided is simply this: Shall we crush the rebellion at one blow, terminate the war in one campaign, or shall we leave it as a legacy for our descendants"?²³ On 8 September, in a typical gesture, McClellan wrote to Secretary of War Cameron recommending that the whole of the regular army report to him and stating that no orders should be given in relation to his army unless he was first consulted; otherwise, "...it is evident that I cannot...be responsible for the success of our arms...."²⁴ On 30 October McClellan estimated to Cameron that he would need at least 150,000 effective men for an offensive and claimed to have only 76,285 available for an advance at that time.²⁵ Yet the returns for the Army of the Potomac show that by mid-October he had at least 152,051 troops at his disposal,²⁶ of which at least 85,000 were available for an advance. Further, McClellan estimated the number of Confederate troops in the Potomac area at about 150,000, whereas the actual number was about 41,000, three-fourths of which were massed at Centreville under Johnston.²⁷ Thus, in the month of October, McClellan's force was three times as large as that of Johnston, definitely better odds than those accorded to McDowell at Bull Run when the

opposing forces had approximately the same strength; still McClellan did not move.

On 1 November McClellan succeeded Scott, who had retired, as general-in-chief of the Army of the United States.²⁸ McClellan's triumph over his "most dangerous antagonist" gave him yet another reason to justify the inactivity of the Army of the Potomac,²⁹ for he now had the dual responsibility of supervising the armies of the Union as well as his own; thus, November continued as had the months before, with no advance of the eastern army forthcoming.

On 1 December Lincoln suggested to McClellan a plan of operations involving a movement of 50,000 men to menace the enemy at Centreville. On 10 December the general-in-chief rejected that plan,³⁰ and the next day word was received in Washington that the army was preparing to go into winter quarters.³¹ Nine days later, on 20 December, McClellan was struck down by typhoid fever and any advance against the rebels was definitely out of sight for the rest of 1861.³² McClellan later stated that the winter, with its effects upon the Virginia roads and soil, and the incomplete discipline and organization of the army accounted for the lack of an advance in late 1861;³³ to this may be added his new demand for 208,000 troops to insure success against the enemy. As 1861 drew to a close McClellan urged the War Department not to propose any program of action

which would expose the government to downfall through a premature movement.³⁴ Congress and the people, however, were tired of hearing about grand reviews and the danger of a premature movement; they wanted action.³⁵ Soon the reverberations against McClellan echoed through the streets of Washington and the halls of Congress and the cry was taken up for the installation of a new commander of the Army of the Potomac; McDowell, whose name was to become inextricably woven up with that of McClellan's in a tangled web of military and political crises, was among those mentioned as the successor to "little Mac."

McDowell, since his downfall following the Bull Run campaign, had been a field commander under McClellan. He spent much of the time during the first few weeks after the disaster in inspecting the demoralized and disorganized troops,³⁶ but on 24 August was given command of a division composed of the brigades of Keyes, Wadsworth and, eventually, King.³⁷ By late October his force of 11,471 men and eighteen pieces of artillery had occupied and fortified Munson's, Upton's, and Taylor's Hill near Arlington;³⁸ that occupation was a result of McDowell's role as part of a seven-division force that guarded Washington from defensive positions on the Virginia side of the Potomac River,³⁹ poised for an advance against the Confederates at Centreville and Manassas which never came. On 20 November McDowell was applauded as being responsible

for a well-maneuvered and well-organized grand review of over 50,000 troops of the Army of the Potomac held near Bailey's Cross-Roads outside of Washington.⁴⁰

McDowell was on relatively friendly terms with McClellan during the fall of 1861 for the latter had warned McDowell of imminent danger to his regiments from the rebels on 6 August,⁴¹ had concurred with him on sending a regiment of insubordinate Maine volunteers to the Dry Tortugas on 14 August,⁴² had confided to McDowell where he felt the responsibility for the Ball's Bluff disaster lay on 24 October,⁴³ and had several times ridden with McDowell over the countryside south of the Potomac; on one of those occasions he had confided to McDowell that, "we shall strike them there," while pointing towards the flanks of Manassas.⁴⁴ The relations between McDowell and the general-in-chief were to become extremely strained, however, for the Radicals, spurred on by McClellan's inactivity, the rebel blockade of the Potomac, the disaster at Ball's Bluff, the removal of Fremont from command in the West, and the prospect of more Democrats filling important commands, had begun to formulate plans for the removal of McClellan, and McDowell was included in those plans.

The Jacobins, during October and November, had tried to persuade McClellan to make an advance but the commander of the Army of the Potomac, openly contemptuous

of politicians, had put them off with excuses based on the unreadiness of his army. As November passed with no action forthcoming the Radicals, and the public also,⁴⁵ became aroused. Charles Ellet, Jr., a Virginia civil engineer, wrote pamphlets attacking McClellan,⁴⁶ while the press wrote that:

The policy of the Government is now open. We are to prosecute the war with vigor, with determination, and with our hands tied. We are to march boldly and swiftly forward, with clogs upon our feet. We are to crush out the rebellion in a twinkling,⁴⁷ and never strike a blow at its vital strength.

The Radicals, sensing the tenor of public opinion and themselves dissatisfied with the current of events, thereupon took action. In early December they created the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War to investigate the Army of the Potomac; as Christmas approached the Joint Committee ordered various of McClellan's field commanders to appear before it to relate what they knew of the reasons for the inactivity of the army.

On 24 December Generals Heintzelman and Richardson, appearing before the Joint Committee, testified that McClellan had not consulted with them nor had he held any councils of war; they further stated that this was quite unlike their experiences with General McDowell before Bull Run.⁴⁸ On 26 December General Wadsworth, testifying before the Joint Committee, stated that McDowell had told him that he could circumvent an order from McClellan

regarding parties coming in from enemy lines by examining the parties at division headquarters before sending them on to army headquarters, as McClellan had ordered. In answer to a question about the formation of the army into corps, which the Jacobins desired, Wadsworth stated that McDowell was the man to talk to because his opinion was "...a thousand times more valuable than mine...."⁴⁹

On 26 December McDowell was called upon by the Joint Committee to present his testimony. He stated that the Army of the Potomac was not organized for an advance, as he would have it organized, due to several factors. He said that the division commanders had poor organization, having only two aides-de-camp and an assistant adjutant-general each. Further, the rapid promotion of regular officers made it difficult to find experienced aides-de-camp for the position was considered to be too low in status by many of the officers.⁵⁰ McDowell then stated that the Army of the Potomac had too many division commanders---thirteen---and that the army should be organized into corps of four divisions each in order to operate efficiently. He said that the corps should be well-staffed for he considered them indispensable.⁵¹ He added that, "I am personally interested in this...because it will affect my position...."⁵² Thus, urged by considerations of personal ambition and military efficiency, McDowell promoted a plan which the Radicals also endorsed, and

thereby the two were brought closer together in their quest for separate goals.

In further testimony in regards to questions concerning a movement against the Confederates at Centreville McDowell stated that "in the month of December we could operate....I did not think to be here Christmas....We should have cracked this thing in front of us...." before New Years.⁵³ He did not feel that winter was an insuperable obstacle, as did McClellan, to operating across the Potomac River; he stated that the winter was actually a good time to move---militarily, morale-wise, diplomatically, financially, and due to the friends which could be won in the border states.⁵⁴ He did state, however, that the Confederacy had two advantages over the Union---intense public opinion and pressure which amounted to conscription, and paper currency which served as gold and silver because everyone was forced to accept it.⁵⁵ In relation to the condition of the Virginia roads McDowell said that a winter offensive might bog down but that he felt corduroy roads made of old field pines, with which he had been experimenting, would suffice. "It was not the most comfortable road to roll over, but it is about as good as Pennsylvania avenue...."⁵⁶ By thus advocating a winter offensive McDowell once again endorsed the Radicals' views and thereby helped cement their growing affinity for him, for he was also "right" on the slavery

question and, therefore, a logical candidate to carry the Jacobin banner forward to victory over the rebels.

In answer to a question asking whether a force operating by water up the James and York Rivers to Richmond would be successful, McDowell stated that it would require a large force and a large amount of siege material.⁵⁷ He felt that it was too late to go by river,⁵⁸ and instead urged that a land movement be made against the forces under Johnston at Manassas. To illustrate the relative positions of the water route and the land route he made analogies to the siege of Sebastopol and the British problem of transportation of supplies encountered in the march from Balaklava during the Crimean War.⁵⁹

When questioned by the Radicals about the matter of councils of war McDowell said that McClellan had not called any that he knew of, and that if any had been called he would have been aware of them for McClellan had "...always expressed himself...kindly towards me"⁶⁰ he stated that he personally liked intimate talks with McClellan, rather than councils, for he felt that they were useful whereas little was accomplished in council meetings.⁶¹ In defense of his views and his integrity McDowell, who must have known about some of the false rumors being spread about his supposed drunkenness and bad conduct at Bull Run,⁶² concluded his testimony

by saying that, "I have not the highest reputation in the world, but I have some character...."⁶³

The Joint Committee concluded their hearings by admitting that McClellan, upon his arrival in Washington, had infused hope into the public mind, but stated that the people had become more and more anxious as month after month passed with no advance on the part of the Army of the Potomac forthcoming. They concluded that the evidence presented in the testimonies corroborated the view that the army had been ready to fight by mid-October at the latest, and that the failure to move had kept peace from being restored to the nation.⁶⁴

The close of 1861 thus found McClellan in bed with typhoid fever, his army in winter quarters, and public rumors abounding that the general-in-chief's subordinates were ignorant of his plans and that the coast ports and the city of Washington were defenseless.⁶⁵ McDowell, in close proximity to Capitol Hill, was therefore able to observe the increasing Radical impatience with McClellan and his "...sickly policy of an inoffensive war...;"⁶⁶ their impatience, however, soon grew into action and McDowell was willingly thrust to the forefront of the military/political drama that unfolded as a result of their verbal barrage on McClellan.

The first two weeks of January were crowded with Radical demands that McDowell be made the commander of

the Army of the Potomac. Led mainly by Chase and Chandler they were adamant in their view that a change in command structure be made; even Ben Wade was mentioned as a possible successor to McClellan,⁶⁷ for the Jacobins left no stone unturned. The idea was also broached that Lincoln be given a staff to assist him in making plans for the war effort, but it was put aside when Lincoln pointed out that the generals would become angry, for they preferred to give orders not take them.⁶⁸ Finally, Lincoln, in a quandry over the situation, asked Quartermaster-General Meigs, "...what shall I do? The people are impatient; Chase has no money, and he tells me he can raise no more; the General of the Army has typhoid fever. The bottom is out of the tub. What shall I do"?⁶⁹ Meigs thereupon advised Lincoln to consult with some of McClellan's subordinate officers.

On 10 January McDowell was eating dinner in Arlington when he received a note from the Assistant Secretary of War stating that the President wished to see him at 8:00 P.M. that evening; shortly afterwards a note from Meigs arrived which also advised McDowell of the conference that evening.⁷⁰ When McDowell arrived at the White House he found Secretary of State Seward, Secretary of the Treasury Chase, the Assistant Secretary of War, Governor Seward, and Brigadier-General William B. Franklin, one of McClellan's division commanders and

close associates, in attendance. The President stated that he was disturbed over the exhausted treasury, the loss of public credit, the delicate foreign relations, the lack of cooperation between Halleck and Buell in the West, and McClellan's sickness. He said that he had been to McClellan's house but that the general had not asked to see him, and since he must talk to somebody he had sent for McDowell and Franklin to obtain their opinions as to the possibility of soon commencing offensive operations with the Army of the Potomac.⁷¹ The President then said, "If something was not soon done, the bottom would be out of the whole affair; and if General McClellan did not want to use the army, he would like to borrow it, provided he could see how it could be made to do something."⁷² He then asked McDowell what could be done with the army.

McDowell replied that the real questions were as to the "how" and "where" of the army, not the "what." He felt that the army should be divided into four corps, keeping one corps of 5 divisions on the Washington side of the Potomac River and placing the other three corps on the Virginia side at Vienna, Fairfax Station, and beyond Fairfax Court House; the latter position should be connected with the Orange and Alexandria Railroad by a railroad now practically thrown up.⁷³

McDowell stated that the railroads all led to

the enemy's position; thus, by acting upon them in force, and getting between them and pressing the enemy left, the enemy would coalesce their forces and mass them on the left, whereupon they could be drawn out of their works and a favorable engagement could be brought on. Another corps, in connection with a force of heavy guns afloat, could operate on the enemy right, get behind the rebel Potomac batteries, take Aquia, and supported by still another corps, could move on the railroad from Manassas to the Rappahannock River. McDowell then said that the road from Fairfax Court House to Centreville could be used to bring up siege-guns and the campaign, if needs be, could be one of position instead of maneuvers. He concluded by saying that a force of 130,000 men, using the railroads, could crush the enemy through repeated blows regardless of their numbers.⁷⁴

General Franklin was then asked by Lincoln to present his views. He stated that he felt that the army should operate on Richmond by going up the York River. When the subject of water transportation came up, however, the Assistant Secretary of War said that governmental means had been taxed to provide suitable water transportation for even 12,000 men, let alone a whole army. Lincoln then concluded the meeting by asking McDowell and Franklin to come by the next evening with more information on the Army of the Potomac.⁷⁵

On 11 January McDowell met with Franklin in the morning at the Treasury Building to discuss circumstances regarding the proposed operations. McDowell said that he felt the York River would be fortified and would require a naval force of heavy guns to clear it; he added that to take Richmond by water would only enhance the enemy by giving them more time to mass their forces. He felt that the army should not waste time moving on Richmond by water because the Union base of operations, transportation facilities, and number of men which could be involved in a movement, were all more conducive to operating near Washington first and then moving toward Richmond.⁷⁶ In more abstract terms he then stated that overcoming the Confederates before Washington would: help Northern morale and hurt Southern morale, prostrate the enemy physically, cut the rebel blockade of the capital, eliminate the public's impatience with the army's inactivity, and help the Union in the eyes of many foreign nations.⁷⁷

The two generals then went to see Secretary Chase who stated that McClellan, by direction of the President, had told him of his plan of operations; they consisted of a movement by water to Urbanna on the lower Chesapeake peninsula and thence on to Richmond. After taking leave of Chase Franklin asked McDowell whether, in deference to McClellan, they should not tell him of the duty which

the President had ordered them to perform. McDowell replied that since the order had come from the President, a common superior to them all, he felt that it was Lincoln's duty to tell McClellan about their participation in the evening councils of war; he did state, however, that he would ask Chase for the cabinet rule on that type of situation. McDowell and Franklin then proceeded to the offices of the chiefs of ordnance, subsistence, and the quartermaster corps to procure the needed information to present to the council that evening.⁷⁸

That evening McDowell read a paper to the council which stated his views on a land movement; Franklin now concurred with him as to the feasibility of a land movement due to the considerations of time involved. Postmaster-General Blair, present at the second meeting, opposed the plan offered by McDowell, cruelly saying that it was Bull Run all over again. He desired the army to move via Urbanna on the Rappahannock River or Fortress Monroe on the York River, and thence on to Richmond; this plan, too, encompassed a movement by water. Chase thereupon took the floor and said that a victory would be as great on the peninsula or near Washington, but that the factors of time and money made the land movement more feasible. With everyone at the council agreeing that victory was important, regardless of where it was, Lincoln told the two generals that he wanted them to consult with

Meigs on the subject of water transportation and report back to the council at 3:00 P.M. the next day; the meeting was thereupon adjourned.⁷⁹

On 12 January McDowell and Franklin called on Meigs to thrash out what would be said at the council the President had called for that afternoon. They decided to urge that a battle be fought at Manassas followed by an advance down the Virginia railroads to their ultimate goal, Richmond. This course was agreed upon because Meigs had stated that it would require from four to six weeks to assemble water transportation for just 30,000 men; since the prime consideration seemed to them to be the factor of time they agreed upon McDowell's plan.⁸⁰

At the meeting that afternoon Lincoln announced that McClellan felt better, would assume charge of the army, and would attend the next meeting of the council; he also told McDowell and Franklin that he would drop further proceedings with them on the subject of what to do with the inactive Army of the Potomac. Lincoln then called a council meeting for 11:00 A.M. of the next day.⁸¹

McClellan, who had been told by his friend Stanton, not yet Secretary of War, that "they are counting on your death...and are already dividing among themselves your military goods....,"⁸² had gotten out of bed to attend the meeting of 13 January through force of sheer anger for he was convinced that the council was trying to usurp his

role as general-in-chief.⁸³ Shortly after McClellan came, McDowell arrived at the councils with his ally, Secretary Chase. Lincoln briefly explained why he had asked the two generals to appear before the council, and then called on McDowell to relate his plan calling for a movement by land. McDowell then proceeded to state the investigations carried out and the conclusions arrived at by the two generals;⁸⁴ he then turned to McClellan and said something apologetic to him about his role in the affair.⁸⁵ McClellan cut him off coldly by saying, "you are entitled to have any opinion you please."⁸⁶ Franklin broke the long silence that followed by stating that he had proposed the plan calling for a movement by water up the York River knowing that they were McClellan's own plans; McDowell said that he had been operating in the dark for he had not known this.⁸⁷ Lincoln then asked McClellan exactly what his plans for the Army of the Potomac were and the general-in-chief replied that "the case was so clear a blind man could see it."⁸⁸ When Chase repeated the President's question McClellan stated that he did not want to divulge the plan because he felt that the fewer who knew, the better was the chance that it would not leak out. When Lincoln asked for the date set for the movement McClellan stated that he had a certain time set for carrying out his plan but that he would rather keep it to himself unless ordered otherwise. The President

accepted this answer and then adjourned the meeting.⁸⁹

By virtue of the January councils of war the unique command problem presented by the retention of McDowell as a division commander under McClellan came into sharp focus. McDowell was ambitious, friendly with Secretary Chase, and regarded highly by the Jacobins for the use, or misuse, that they could make of him. This portrait of McDowell contrasted sharply with McClellan who was self-centered, violently disliked by the Jacobins for a multitude of reasons, and who was contemptuous of the majority of the cabinet; he had called Seward an "incompetent little puppy," Cameron a "rascal," Welles an "old woman," and Bates a "fool."⁹⁰ Their relationship with Lincoln likewise was a study in contrast; McDowell respected the President and obeyed his summons while McClellan, who had termed the President a "baboon" and "the original gorilla,"⁹¹ was often disrespectful to him and clashed with him on matters of policy. The clash of views over military strategy which erupted in the councils was merely the first of a series of events which would drive the two men farther apart and perhaps that was inevitable, for McClellan, suspicious and distrustful of many of those around him, stated that, "McDowell, who was probably at the bottom of the whole affair, undertook it 'con amore,' hoping to succeed me in command."⁹² The Radicals, whose ideas, as espoused by Chase, influenced

McDowell to a certain extent, sensed the beginning of a rupture in the command structure and spent much of their energy during the next five months in trying to widen that split for their own ends. Meanwhile, preparations were underway for a spring offensive.

In late January McClellan presented his Urbanna Plan, comprising a movement down the Chesapeake Bay, up the Rappahannock River to Urbanna, and across land to the terminus of the railroad on the York River, to Lincoln. On 31 January Lincoln issued the President's Special War Order, No. 1, which was a substitute for McClellan's plan. The order provided that all the disposable force of the Army of the Potomac, after first providing for the defense of Washington, make a movement on Manassas; all details were to be left up to the general-in-chief and the expedition was to leave on or before 22 February.⁹³ McClellan promptly asked whether the order was final or whether he might prepare his objections and state his own plan; permission was at once accorded.⁹⁴

On 3 February Lincoln wrote to the general-in-chief and stated that he had certain questions to ask him and if they could be answered satisfactorily, he would yield his plan, which had been basically formulated by McDowell, to McClellan's plan of operations. Lincoln then proceeded to ask McClellan whether his plan didn't involve a greater expenditure of time and money, whether victory was more

certain or valuable, and whether a retreat would not be more difficult in case of disaster.⁹⁵ On that same date McClellan submitted his objections to the land movement in a letter to the recently appointed Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton. He stated that the roads in Virginia were passable, the country favorable for offensive operations, a retreat route was open down the peninsula, the town of Urbanna was suitable for heavy draught vessels, the force could make junctures with other Union forces operating in Tennessee and South Carolina, and there was no danger to Washington.⁹⁶ "My judgment as a general is in favor of this project. Nothing is certain in war, but all the chances are in favor of this movement...."⁹⁷ After hearing McClellan's objections to the plan calling for a movement on Manassas, Lincoln, although never formally revoking his order of 31 January, allowed the general-in-chief to proceed with his own plan with at least tacit approval.⁹⁸ On 27 February he instructed his agents to procure the water transportation necessary to carry the Army of the Potomac to its new field of operations.⁹⁹ As the month of March came into view the Army of the Potomac was at last preparing for an offensive.

While the army prepared for an advance, however, an unconfident Lincoln asked McClellan on 8 March to submit his Urbanna Plan to a council of his division commanders in order that the President might see whether they had

confidence in the plan proposed by the general-in-chief. The commanders thereupon voted eight to four in favor of McClellan's proposed movement by water.¹⁰⁰ Significantly perhaps, the four commanders opposing the Urbanna Plan were all suspected of being in league with the Radicals, either through action or sentiment; McDowell was one of them.¹⁰¹ The eight generals who had voted in favor of the Urbanna Plan were asked to come to the White House that very day to be questioned by Stanton and Lincoln.¹⁰² After that conference the President, with hearty approval from the Jacobins, issued General War Orders, Number 2, which directed the general-in-chief to organize the Army of the Potomac into corps, effective 13 March,¹⁰³ commanded by the senior division commanders Sumner, Heintzelman, Keyes, and McDowell, all associated with the Radicals.¹⁰⁴ The order regarding corps organization was followed the same day, 8 March, by General War Orders, Number 3, which stated that no change of base was to be effected by the Army of the Potomac until Washington had been made secure and any movement upon Chesapeake Bay in conjunction with the advance was to be made by 18 March.¹⁰⁵

The next day McClellan, who had opposed the organization of the army into corps on the grounds that he had not had an opportunity to see his division commanders tested in combat and thus did not know who was fit for

corps command,¹⁰⁶ wrote to Stanton asking for a suspension of the corps order until after the army had completed its movement against the enemy; he argued that the problems encountered in moving the newly-formed corps would keep him from embarking in the very near future.¹⁰⁷

Stanton informed him that he felt that it was the duty of every officer to obey the President; he added that he could not see why the order should be suspended.¹⁰⁸

McClellan promptly set out to show him why it should. On 10 March he told Stanton that he would have to temporarily suspend the movement altogether in order to comply with the President's order.¹⁰⁹ Stanton, knowing full well the impatience of the public and the politicians, replied that this must not happen and thereupon suspended the corps order and allowed McClellan to move his divisions without first regrouping them into the larger corps units.¹¹⁰ McClellan confidently replied that, "...you will be convinced that I have not asked too much of you."¹¹¹ That statement implied that now he could use his Urbanna Plan to whip the rebels, but it was not to be.

On 8 March Johnston pulled his rebel forces back from Manassas towards Richmond in order to be nearer his base of supplies.¹¹² The next day McClellan heard rumors about the withdrawal from four different sources,¹¹³ and by 11 March had visited Manassas and had consulted with McDowell about the occupation of that position with a

portion of Banks' command.¹¹⁴ On that day Lincoln, perhaps not a little disgusted with the continued inactivity and misfortune which had plagued the Army of the Potomac since McClellan's inception as general-in-chief, removed McClellan from command of the armies of the United States, but retained him as commander of the Army of the Potomac.¹¹⁵

McClellan, although surprised by the President's action, sent for the corps commanders on 12 March in order to consult with them about his new plan for the movement on Richmond,¹¹⁶ for the Urbanna Plan had been made untenable by Johnston's withdrawal from Manassas. In a council of war held on 13 March he presented the commanders with a plan which involved a Federal landing at Fortress Monroe on the peninsula between the James and York Rivers. The council agreed to the new plan only after being assured that the forts on the right bank would be occupied, and a covering force of 25,000 would be left to protect Washington. The figure of 25,000 was agreed upon by Keyes, Heintzelman, and McDowell, while Sumner wanted a force of 40,000 left to guard the city.¹¹⁷ McClellan had the corps commanders put their approval of his plan in writing and then sent McDowell to Washington to present it to Lincoln and Stanton.¹¹⁸ McClellan by that time must have felt that if anyone could win the ear of the President and the Secretary of War, it was McDowell, the current favorite of the Radicals. Stanton thereupon

wrote to McClellan that, "nothing you can ask of me... will be spared to aid you in every particular;"¹¹⁹ the President also agreed to the new plan, but with the stipulations that Manassas be secured, Washington be adequately defended, and that the Army of the Potomac make its movement at once.¹²⁰

While the Secretary of War was reading over the new plan of operations McClellan issued General Orders, Number 101, giving McDowell command of the I corps of the Army of the Potomac, a force of about 38,000 men comprising the divisions of Franklin, McCall, and King.¹²¹ The next day McDowell was made a Major-General of Volunteers, the vote of confirmation in the Senate being twenty-two for, thirteen against, and fourteen absent or not voting.¹²²

On 17 March the embarkation for the peninsula got underway as part of the force of 113 steamers, 188 schooners, and 88 barges collected as water transportation for the campaign began to take on troops at Alexandria.¹²³ McClellan's peninsular campaign called for the main force of the troops to land at Fortress Monroe on the peninsula between the York and James Rivers, and then move up the peninsula toward Richmond. At the same time McDowell, who was to head the movement, was to land at the Sandbox, south of Yorktown, and turn the enemy defenses, or else land at Gloucester Point on the north side of the York River, clear

the batteries, and turn the Confederate flank at Yorktown.¹²⁴ His maneuver was the key to the attack for it would enable the Army of the Potomac to concentrate in front of Richmond without going through the preliminaries of a siege on the lower peninsula.¹²⁵ In conjunction with his role in the campaign McDowell issued General Orders, Number 5, from the headquarters of the I Corps at Alexandria Seminary on 31 March. Those orders were very specific in regards to the amount of forage, rations, and ammunition to be carried by each division, and in regards to the procuring of transportation after the men disembarked from the vessels.¹²⁶ The orders are interesting for two reasons---they show that McDowell profited somewhat from the frustrating circumstances that preceded the battle of Bull Run, and they are a strong indication that he wanted the campaign to be a success, both for the country and for himself, for he had become somewhat ambitious following his recent promotion.¹²⁷ His apparent sincerity in preparing for the campaign stand him in good stead when an evaluation is made of the military/political turmoil that erupted in early April.

For on 23 March Shields' Division of Banks' Corps, covering the lines of approach to Washington through the Shenandoah Valley, had been attacked by Stonewall Jackson.¹²⁸ The Jacobins, ever quick to seize the initiative, had then devised a scheme whereby a portion of the Army of the

Potomac might possibly be held back from going to the peninsula, thereby lessening McClellan's chances for complete success as well as providing further forces for the defense of the capital. Chase, writing to McDowell in the last days of March, may have provided an insight into the Radicals' rationale for their extraordinary strategy when he stated that the outcome of delay and inactivity might be "...a means to surer and larger success...."¹²⁹ Thus, the month of March, which had come in like a lion on the heels of the Radicals' demands for army corps, went out like a lion also as the Radicals prepared to use McDowell as a pawn on their political chessboard.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter IV

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- ²⁵Meneely, p. 311.
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- ²⁷Williams, pp. 129-130.
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V. IMMOBILIZATION

With the advent of Stonewall Jackson's raid on Banks in the Shenandoah Valley the Radicals, eager to discredit McClellan, began working on Lincoln's fear of leaving Washington open to a Confederate attack. As a result of their persuasion General Wadsworth, in command of the capital defenses, on 1 April presented figures to Lincoln and Stanton which purported to show that Washington was not amply defended. Wadsworth stated that, contrary to McClellan's claim of having left 73,456 troops to guard the capital,¹ there were only 19,022 men present for duty, and that at least 25,000 were needed.² The next day Stanton directed Generals Hitchcock and Thomas to determine whether the President's instructions regarding the defense of Washington had been disregarded. They promptly reported that "...the requirement of the President that this city shall be left entirely secure has not been fully complied with."³ Jackson's raid and Wadsworth's figures threw a scare into Washington generally and alarmed Lincoln specifically and, thus, on 3 April the President ordered that either McDowell's or Sumner's corps should remain in front of Washington until further orders were received from the War Department.⁴ The next day, shortly after

McClellan had written to McDowell from Yorktown about the importance of his presence on the peninsula,⁵ the commander of the Army of the Potomac was telegraphed that McDowell's corps had been detached from his command due to the fact that insufficient forces had been left to guard Washington.⁶

McDowell, who had received word of the detachment of his corps on 3 April, on that date informed his chief of staff that the orders to go to the peninsula were countermanded.⁷ Earlier that day he was informed by Stanton that McClellan intended to work by strategy, not fighting; that McClellan would not receive another man from the War Department; that McClellan had disregarded Lincoln's orders regarding the defense of Washington; that all of the enemies of the administration centered around McClellan; and that the commander of the Army of the Potomac had high political aspirations.⁸ McDowell attempted to use a system of reverse psychology on Stanton by stating that if McClellan got to Richmond he would be at the top of the heap, and then the Jacobins' efforts to impair McClellan would recoil upon themselves; therefore, he argued, the detachment of his corps was a mistake,⁹ presumably because he would not be there to share in the victory.

That statement indicates that McDowell not only was aware of Stanton's alliance with the Radicals, but

that he also realized that they relied on him, however indirectly, to further their cause. Although it is possible that Stanton and the congressional Radicals specifically chose to detach McDowell, thus seriously hampering McClellan's chances for victory on the peninsula,¹⁰ it seems more likely that McDowell was detached because his corps, which was scheduled to embark at Alexandria last, was the only corps near Washington still intact, some of Sumner's having already left. That view was expressed by McDowell and,¹¹ at a later date, was corroborated by Stanton.¹² McDowell, therefore, was disturbed over his detachment from McClellan for a number of reasons, not the least of which was his belief that "...glory and fighting were all to be with the grand army..." on the peninsula.¹³

The press and the public, however, were of the opinion that McDowell had purposely gotten himself detached from McClellan.¹⁴ The editor of the Baltimore American stated that, "if we should be defeated through trickery of McDowell a terrible retribution will rest somewhere."¹⁵ The New York Tribune commented that "it looks...very much as though the two Macs had been pitted against each other...."¹⁶ McDowell, realizing that he was a storm center of public opinion, stated that he found himself "...strangely misunderstood both by the press and the people and a...not worthy motive ascribed

to me." He added that, "I trust they will give me more credit when they have more light...."¹⁷

On the same day that he had been detached from McClellan on the peninsula McDowell had been made commander of the newly-formed Department of the Rappahannock which covered all the lines of approach to Washington in the northeastern Virginia theatre of the war.¹⁸ McDowell, quickly grasping the new reins of command, soon ordered the divisions of King and Franklin forward to the vicinity of Manassas; that was the first step in his plan to advance to Fredericksburg on the Rappahannock River.¹⁹ Although he moved towards Fredericksburg McDowell realized that his primary duty was the defense of Washington; he tried, however, to combine both defensive and offensive operations in order to please both Lincoln and Stanton.²⁰

On 11 April McDowell was reminded by Stanton that Washington was the area especially under his protection and that he was to make no movement which would throw his force out of position to discharge the duties of that primary purpose.²¹ Three days later McDowell, none too optimistically perhaps, asked permission of Lincoln and Stanton to join McClellan.²² On 23 April Stanton verbally told McDowell, whose advance divisions had by now reached Falmouth, across the river from Fredericksburg,²³ that it was within the scope of defensive operations to

proceed to that point; he emphasized, however, that under no circumstances was McDowell to cross the Rappahannock River or try to effect a juncture with McClellan,²⁴ who had been rather frantically writing Washington for reinforcements ever since McDowell's contingent had been taken from him.²⁵

On 5 April McClellan had written Lincoln that his success would be imperiled by the detachment of McDowell's corps; he added that he would like to have Franklin's division of the I Corps since he could not have the whole force itself.²⁶ Permission was granted on 10 April and twelve days later Franklin's division arrived at Yorktown;²⁷ that troop displacement was but the first of several turnovers in the Army of the Rappahannock caused by McClellan's constant pleas for reinforcement; those turnovers eventually moved McDowell to complain that McClellan's manipulations hampered his army, for "they did not come to me" for very long.²⁸

On 9 April, in answer to McClellan's questions, Lincoln had written, "...do you really think I should permit the line from Richmond...to this city to be entirely open except what resistance could be presented by less than 20,000 unorganized troops? This is a question which the country will not allow me to evade."²⁹ Little more than a week later, on 18 April, McClellan wrote to Lincoln and told him that he would prefer that McDowell not again

be assigned to work with him for he had heard rumors emanating from Washington to the effect that McDowell had contrived to have himself detached from the Army of the Potomac.³⁰ Once again the unique command problem that existed between McDowell and McClellan had reared its ugly head and caused a widening of the split that had previously rent the Union command structure. Controversy, the bane of McDowell's military existence, had focused on him once more.

As April drew to a close McDowell requested permission to cross the Rappahannock to Fredericksburg by means of a boat bridge which was nearly completed; his objective was to drive off the rebel sympathizers and troops who had been harassing the Union-men in that once-peaceful river town.³¹ On 30 April Stanton replied that McDowell could cross the river to hold Fredericksburg for defensive purposes, but once again told him not to make a forward movement to disperse the enemy or help McClellan on the peninsula.³²

Thus, the month of April had found McDowell immobilized; he had dared not take the offensive due to orders received from Stanton, and yet he really was not needed as a defensive bulwark since Banks' force of 35,000 in the Shenandoah Valley and Wadsworth's force of 19,000 in Washington were more than enough to defend the capital against Jackson's diversionary tactics. Further,

his detachment from McClellan had frustrated that general's original plans of taking the peninsula without a siege while at the same time focusing McClellan's unconfessed anxieties,³³ as well as the public anger, on him and his army.

On 1 May Chase, echoing the Jacobins' sentiments, made a note in his diary, the essence of which was to haunt McDowell in the months to come as he prepared to make the offensive against Richmond which never came--- "...Strange that McClellan dallies and waits in eternal preparation. Strange that the President does not give McDowell all the disposable force in the region and send him on to Richmond...."³⁴ Those words, perhaps hastily scribbled down, became the unwitting keynote of the next two months.

The first two weeks of May were taken up by McDowell repairing the railroad from Alexandria to Fredericksburg,³⁵ and in building bridges across the Rappahannock River;³⁶ both of those endeavors, however, were prolonged due to the lack of supplies from Washington.³⁷ During that time McDowell awaited the arrival of Shields' Division of Banks' force which had been promised to him on 1 May;³⁸ Shields, who was to become an invaluable asset to McDowell in the month of June, did not arrive until fully three weeks later,³⁹ and this delay was to have a disastrous effect on McDowell's hopes of marching on Richmond. The

first two weeks of May were filled with apprehension for McDowell who feared a rebel advance on his position at Fredericksburg. On 4 May he told Stanton that the enemy would attack him if McClellan did not press them, and if he did press them that McClellan would need him to operate on the enemy left flank; as a consequence, he urged that all available battalions be sent to him to avert a disaster.⁴⁰ Five days later, however, he agreed with Stanton

that the Confederate movements had generally been of a defensive nature and were based on an apprehension of his advance southward from Fredericksburg.⁴¹ On 11 May the

Assistant Secretary of War, apparently not well informed, wrote McDowell that his chances for independent action appeared to be rapidly drawing to a close; he then urged the commander of the Army of the Rappahannock to make a spirited demonstration so as to cause the enemy south of Fredericksburg to retreat.⁴² McDowell replied that the

President had told him that he could make a forward advance only after his forces were all together, but that they all had not yet arrived. "This is not brilliant I know, but it is all that I can do as things now are...."⁴³

Three days later, on 14 May, Chase informed McDowell that Stanton would soon release him from the prohibition against advance. He added that, "It has been one of my prime objects of desire that you should advance toward and to Richmond...;"⁴⁴ indeed, that had been one of the

prime objects of all the Jacobins and undoubtedly the news was met by them with unconcealed joy. On 16 May Stanton telegraphed McDowell that the President desired to see him in Washington for a short conference. McDowell, anticipating what was to come, replied that he would leave for the capital at once.⁴⁵

On 17 May McDowell was told by Stanton that his whole army was to be sent toward Richmond in order to make a juncture with McClellan.⁴⁶ The plan that evolved from the conferences which followed called for McDowell to march due south from Fredericksburg in a position which would allow him to cover the capital.⁴⁷ He was to retain independent command of the Army of the Rappahannock subject to McClellan's orders for co-operation; McDowell, however, was to judge the extent of that co-operation.⁴⁸ For his part McClellan was to extend his right wing to meet McDowell's left so as to establish favorable communications and prevent the enemy from leaving Richmond and falling upon the approaching Union forces before a juncture could be effected.⁴⁹ He was instructed not to give McDowell any order which would put that general out of position to cover Washington,⁵⁰ still considered that commander's primary goal.⁵¹

In essence, then, McDowell was to move towards Richmond as a separate, independent, yet co-operating army; he was, however, authorized to disobey any order

from McClellan that was not consistent with his orders to defend Washington.⁵² The task thus set before McDowell was virtually an impossibility; he was neither to defend Washington so well that he could not operate offensively in McClellan's behalf, nor was he to help with the operations before Richmond to the extent that he could not cover the southern approaches to the capital in a sound defensive manner. To further complicate matters McClellan, in extending his right wing to meet McDowell, had to divide his army by placing it on either side of the Chickahominy River which was swollen by spring rains and amounted to a virtual swampland from a half-mile to a mile wide.⁵³

McClellan, on the peninsula before Richmond, was becoming restless. On 21 May he wrote to Lincoln saying that he had not heard when McDowell was to leave for the peninsula, what his means of transportation would be, or what the date of his expected arrival was. Then, in one of his acts of foolish pride, he invoked his superior rank and the Sixty-second Article of War, stating that unless directed otherwise by Lincoln himself McDowell would be under his command.⁵⁴ Lincoln replied on 24 May that McDowell would begin his movement two days hence; then, contradicting his earlier statement, he added that McClellan would have command of the Army of the Rappahannock when it arrived.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, on 22 May McDowell wrote to McClellan stating that he was to co-operate with him in a movement on Richmond. McDowell then asked McClellan, "...to what extent can I rely on co-operation from you in my present movements in the way of your cutting off the retreat of the enemy upon Richmond...."⁵⁶ On 23 May Lincoln and several cabinet members visited McDowell at Fredericksburg. McDowell met them and promptly showed them the new railroad bridge, four hundred feet long and one hundred feet high, which spanned a nearby ravine. After walking along the footway of the bridge, and seeing Stanton become dizzy as a consequence, they reviewed McDowell's troops, who cheered Lincoln wildly.⁵⁷ In reply to a remark made by McDowell that he had once been criticized for moving on the Sabbath, Lincoln told him to "take a good ready and start Monday morning;"⁵⁸ that is, 26 May. McDowell could not have gotten started much earlier anyway for Shields' division, which had arrived on 22 May, was badly in need of supplies and ammunition,⁵⁹ not to mention a few days rest.

McDowell was not to make the long-awaited advance, however, for on 24 May news was received that Stonewall Jackson had again attacked Banks in the Shenandoah Valley. Late that evening, after McClellan had already been assured that McDowell would soon depart for the peninsula,⁶⁰ Lincoln telegraphed McDowell:

You are instructed, laying aside for the present the movement on Richmond, to put 20,000 men in motion at once for the Shenandoah, moving on the line or in advance of the line of the Manassas Gap Railroad. Your object will be to capture the forces of Jackson and Ewell.⁶¹

McDowell, who had received warnings the previous day from both the Assistant Secretary of War and General Wadsworth to the effect that troops might be sent to the Shenandoah Valley as reinforcements,⁶² promptly protested to the President that Jackson's movement was a diversionary tactic calculated to draw his army away from McClellan.⁶³ He added that,

I am entirely beyond helping distance of General Banks; ...no celerity or vigor will avail so far as he is concerned.... I shall gain nothing for you there, and shall lose much for you here.... I feel that it throws us all back and from Richmond north we shall have our large masses paralyzed.⁶⁴

McDowell felt that the proper move was to the peninsula, but Lincoln decided that Jackson's tactics constituted a major offensive movement;⁶⁵ once more McDowell had been held back in his desire to march on Richmond. McDowell summed up his feelings when he said, "this is a crushing blow...."⁶⁶ Because he was dedicated, however, he did not allow personal feelings to interfere with his duty; thus, he was able to tell the President that the order to move to the Valley was already in the process of execution. Lincoln replied that the order had been painful to him also, but that he was highly gratified that the commander of the Army of the Rappahannock had obeyed his

order with such alacrity.⁶⁷

Due to the crisis and the consequent need for a harmony of minds, on 24 May Lincoln sent Chase, a friend and ally of both Stanton and McDowell, as a messenger to McDowell's headquarters at Fredericksburg with the message that McDowell was to "...put all possible energy and speed into the effort."⁶⁸ Upon arriving Chase found that McDowell had given all the necessary orders prerequisite for an advance to the Valley. The following day Chase took the precaution of sending Shields, familiar with the Valley due to his service there under Banks, to Washington for consultations with Lincoln and Stanton.⁶⁹ The stage was thus set for action; it came in the form of Union troop activity which was discernible in three widely-separated places---Fredericksburg, Washington, and the Shenandoah Valley.

On 25 May Banks was driven from the town of Winchester and retreated to the vicinity of Harper's Ferry. Stanton soon wired McDowell to move a brigade to Washington at once.⁷⁰ That day Shields' Division left on foot for the Valley followed by the infantry brigades of Ord's Division, made up of new arrivals from Washington as well as some of Banks' men, which went via water to Alexandria and thence on to the Valley.⁷¹ On 26 May Lincoln asked McDowell, still at Fredericksburg, if he should not be in the capital due to reports that Jackson was advancing eastward.⁷² McDowell replied that

he had not thought his presence was needed anywhere but at Fredericksburg but since the President was alarmed enough to ask the question he would leave for Washington immediately. He added that he didn't want to send any more troops to the Valley unless "...there is a greater necessity than I now see...."⁷³ He stated that much of the force of approximately 21,000 men was well on its way with Shields' advance already at Catlett's,⁷⁴ half-way to Manassas Gap.

On 27 May Shields informed Stanton and McDowell, now in Washington,⁷⁵ that the whole Shenandoah Valley affair was a "causeless panic" and that he was "ashamed of it."⁷⁶ He stated that the fear of an attack was largely unfounded, being primarily due to the panic-stricken cavalry command under General Geary, attached to Banks' command.⁷⁷ The next day Lincoln, thinking that Jackson was trapped in the Valley and influenced somewhat by Fitz John Porter's victory at Hanover Court House north of Richmond, suggested to McDowell that he might still effect a juncture with McClellan.⁷⁸ McDowell, rising to the challenge of his new objective, replied that the scattering of his forces precluded any move on his part towards Richmond although that movement was one which "no one desires more than I do."⁷⁹ On that date also, 28 May, Lincoln told McDowell that, "it is for you a question of legs;" he added that he had told John Charles Fremont,

with whom McDowell was coordinating his movements against Jackson, as much.⁸⁰ McDowell replied that he was "...doing everything which legs and steam are capable of."⁸¹ Stanton, who was worried about the safety of the capital, was then reassured by McDowell that Washington was under no danger of attack from the enemy,⁸² and thus he did not increase the cavalry force guarding the capitol as Stanton wished. On that same day McDowell contacted McCall, whose division had been left at Fredericksburg,⁸³ and told him to send King's Division forward to reinforce the movement in the Valley.⁸⁴

On 29 May the President told McDowell that he wanted Shields' force to reach Front Royal no later than noon of 30 May,⁸⁵ a time-limit which that division general, much to the pride of McDowell, outdid by an hour.⁸⁶ Ord, meanwhile, had slowed considerably in his march to the Valley and, pleading illness as an excuse, turned over his command to Ricketts, one of his brigade commanders.⁸⁷ Shields' division, arriving first, by the last day of May had driven the rebels back to a point about six miles from Front Royal,⁸⁸ but had not proceeded toward Strasburg to meet Fremont who was slowly advancing from Franklin in western Virginia. As the month of May ended in the Shenandoah Valley the forces of Stonewall Jackson still eluded the pincers movement set for him by the armies of Banks, Fremont, and McDowell. The commander of the Army

of the Rappahannock, arriving at Front Royal after sunset on the thirty-first of May,⁸⁹ was to experience more frustration in regards to Jackson in the month ahead.

Meanwhile, on 27 May the residue of McDowell's army at Fredericksburg moved southward and reached Guiney's Station on the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad, just forty miles from Richmond.⁹⁰ Having ventured as far as they could under Lincoln's previous orders to stay near the Rappahannock the troops marched back toward Fredericksburg,⁹¹ never knowing how close they had come to bringing about a potential Union victory. For Johnston, the commander of the Confederate forces at Richmond, had assumed that the bluecoats were about to reinforce McClellan and had decided to attack the latter before the juncture could be made;⁹² his plan, hastily arrived at, was later criticized as: "...no action in the war...with such slovenly thinking or prepared so carelessly,"⁹³ and could have resulted in a victory for McClellan. Johnston, however, changed his plans at the last minute when J.E.B. Stuart reported that the Federal forces had turned back at Guiney's Station.⁹⁴

Lincoln, meanwhile, on 24 May had had to tell McClellan that McDowell's reinforcements had been detached from him for the second time. The next day Lincoln explained that Washington would be helpless without McDowell in reach and added that McClellan should do the best he

could with the forces he had available.⁹⁵ The President explained, "...Apprehensions of something like this, and no unwillingness to sustain you, have always been my reason for withholding McDowell from you...."⁹⁶ McClellan could only take solace in the fact that McDowell's advance had been suspended, not completely revoked. He was, therefore, not at liberty to recall his scattered forces from the north side of the Chickahominy, as it was still possible that the Army of the Rappahannock would be allowed to join him;⁹⁷ if this happened the forces north of the river would be needed to effect the hoped-for juncture. For McClellan the month of May had ended exactly as April had, without McDowell's army.

In the Shenandoah Valley Jackson made his escape. Passing through the town of Strasburg he headed south on the eve of 31 May. Shields, who had driven the Confederates from Front Royal the day before, had not advanced to Strasburg on the thirty-first due to the condition of the roads, the heavy rainstorm which flooded the rivers, and the lack of a supporting division, which McDowell seems to have required.⁹⁸ McDowell, realizing that Jackson had made good his escape, on 1 June forwarded a message to Washington which stated that he had sent Shields on the road to Luray, paralleling the Strasburg road, to intercept Jackson;⁹⁹ Ricketts' Division and the segment of King's Division which had arrived were held at Front Royal.

On 2 June Shields, writing to Stanton, placed the blame for Jackson's escape on Fremont's slowness in arriving at Strasburg; he added that "No man could have done more than General McDowell did to achieve everything possible. With him we can accomplish a great deal down South...."¹⁰⁰ On that date, also, Lincoln and the Secretary of War cautioned McDowell to "...not let the enemy escape from you"¹⁰¹ It had become obvious by 3 June, however, that the plan to intercept Jackson had now turned into a pursuit mainly due to the recent heavy rainstorm. Shields soon reported that the bridges across the Shenandoah River were burned and the river swollen by floods;¹⁰² when Lincoln asked McDowell whether he could "head or flank" Jackson the Union general stated on 4 June that he wasn't even sure where the cagy rebel was, due to the relentless rains.¹⁰³ Then, reiterating the view that had obsessed him for the past two months, he told the President that he felt that the forces of the Department of the Rappahannock should be freed to act in conjunction with McClellan against Richmond.¹⁰⁴ The news that the last bridges over the Shenandoah River had been carried away on 5 June did not increase McDowell's enthusiasm for the task which had been set before him by the President;¹⁰⁵ it was now quite evident to McDowell that the enemy was almost out of reach.

On 8 June, however, the advance brigade of Shields' Division, under Colonel S. S. Carroll, came into contact

with Jackson at Port Republic and held the little town for almost an hour before being driven out; Carroll was soon joined by General Tyler's brigade and, together, they drove Jackson back on the ninth.¹⁰⁶ On 10 June Shields and Fremont, camped near Port Republic, discussed a joint attack on Jackson, only two miles away. They were restrained from any possible mutual action, however, when Shields received a message from McDowell telling him to halt all pursuit in order to bring his division to readiness for a return to Fredericksburg;¹⁰⁷ he was directed to fall on the rebels only if he had a "reasonable chance of success."¹⁰⁸

Why had this order been sent just when it appeared that Fremont and Shields, working in conjunction with each other at last, had finally come into contact with the wily Jackson? The answer lies in a message from Washington which McDowell's chief of staff had received on 8 June, but the contents of which were not forwarded to Shields until 9 and 10 June due to the fact that his advance was so far down the Valley. The message stated:

The Secretary of War directs that, having first provided adequately for the defense of the city of Washington and for holding the position at Fredericksburg, you operate with the residue of your force as speedily as possible in the direction of Richmond, to co-operate with Major-General McClellan....

McCall's division, which has been by previous order directed toward Richmond by water, will still form a part of the Army of the Rappahannock, and will come under your orders when you are in a position to co-operate with General McClellan....¹⁰⁹

McDowell, who had been recalled to Washington on 6 June and had been relaying messages to his chief of staff since that time,¹¹⁰ in referring to the recall of Shields' Division stated that it was,

...not considered expedient to continue the chase after Jackson up the valley, which could bring on nothing decisive for us, and it being greatly the desire of the President and myself that the forces under my command should as speedily as possible return to Fredericksburg to move on to Richmond. Both the condition of General Shields' division and that of the roads and rivers, as represented by him, indicated anything than the success he anticipated....¹¹¹

Although Jackson had escaped McDowell's fondest hopes were realized for at last he was to advance on the rebel capital.

There were numerous delays, however, as McDowell's scattered forces assembled preparatory to their departure for Fredericksburg.¹¹² McDowell, on 12 June, directed Ricketts to hold at Front Royal in order to assist Shields at Luray should he need help.¹¹³ Neither division could depart, however, until Banks' army arrived to hold the line from Luray to Winchester against the rebels.¹¹⁴ McDowell stated that Banks' "inability" to make a movement to hold the line had left his forces scattered at Luray, Front Royal, Catlett's, and Fredericksburg, unable to supplant each other and, hence, unable to "...give that protection to the capital which it is my duty to afford."¹¹⁵ He added that Banks' failure to cross from the west side of the Shenandoah River to Front Royal had delayed him

and exposed him to an attack not to mention rendering him powerless to send reinforcements to McClellan.¹¹⁶

On 15 June he wrote Chase and implored that Radical friend to use his influence to help him retain Hartsuff's brigade of Ricketts' Division, supposedly about to be transferred to Banks, so that he could carry out his duty of going to McClellan's aid.¹¹⁷ Writing to Lincoln McDowell said that, "so much has been said about my not going to aid McClellan and of his need for re-enforcements that I beg the President will now allow me to take every man that can be spared..." in order to march on Richmond.¹¹⁸ McClellan, too, was anxious for McDowell's arrival.

On 2 June Stanton had written to McClellan, then only four miles from Richmond,¹¹⁹ that Fremont or McDowell would fight Jackson that day and as soon as the Confederate army was disposed of McDowell's troops would go to him.¹²⁰ On 5 June the Secretary of War had again written to McClellan; he informed the general that part of McDowell's force would be sent to him as soon as the latter returned from Front Royal. He then promised McClellan "...probably as many /men/ as you want."¹²¹ On 8 June, as a consequence of Lincoln's orders to go to the aid of McClellan, McDowell wrote to the commander of the Army of the Potomac that, "for the third time I am ordered to join you, and this time I hope to get through.... I go with the greatest satisfaction, and hope to arrive with my main body in time

to be of service...."¹²² On 11 June Stanton informed McClellan that the residue of McDowell's force would join him as speedily as possible; he added, perhaps with some sarcasm, that,

...there never has been a moment when my desire has been otherwise than to aid you with my whole heart, mind, and strength since the hour we first met;...you have never had, and can never have, any one more truly your friend, or more anxious to support you, or more joyful than I shall be at the success which I have no doubt will soon be achieved by your arms.¹²³

McClellan, perhaps taking the Secretary of War at his word, then proceeded to make certain requests of Stanton which most certainly taxed the secretary's patience.

On 12 June, the same day on which McCall's Division of the Army of the Rappahannock arrived on the peninsula,¹²⁴ McClellan requested that McDowell be allowed to join him by water, rather than by land, due to the dangers involved in extending his right wing north of the Chickahominy River, the poor condition of the Virginia roads and bridges, and the derangement of his plan of operations.¹²⁵ Two days later McClellan told Stanton that he had received a telegram from McDowell requesting that McCall's Division be placed so as to join him immediately upon his arrival. In typical fashion McClellan then told the secretary that, "it ought to be distinctly understood that McDowell and his troops are completely under my control.... That request does not breathe the proper spirit.... I do not feel that General McDowell should wish the general

interests to be sacrificed for the purpose of increasing his command.... If I cannot fully control all his troops I want none of them...."¹²⁶ None of them is exactly how many he received for trouble, in the form of Stonewall Jackson, was simmering in the Shenandoah Valley.

Rumors of Jackson's whereabouts ran rampant throughout the Union high command. On 12 June Banks reported that Jackson had been reinforced to the number of 35,000 men,¹²⁷ a gross overestimation. The next day McDowell stated to Stanton that, "Jackson is either coming against Shields at Luray, or King at Catlett's, or Doubleday at Fredericksburg, or is going to Richmond."¹²⁸ Over a week later the Secretary of War wrote that Jackson's force was variously numbered at between 10,000 and 40,000 and that he was reported to be at "...Gordonsville,... Port Republic, Harrisonburg, and Luray....,"¹²⁹ all at the same time. The foregoing comments aptly describe the confusion caused by Jackson's presence, or lack of it, between 12 June and 17 June when he began his masked withdrawal from the Valley.¹³⁰ The confusion did not cease, however, when Jackson withdrew for his whereabouts was not definitely known until a week later; thus, he added to the psychological dilemma already engendered in the North simply by not causing any trouble at all. His brilliant marching, countermarching, and craftiness, plus the poor condition of McDowell's troops after their march

from the Valley---Shields' Division was "...out of shape, out at elbows, and out at toes..."¹³¹---forced McDowell to be content to remain in the vicinity of Manassas and Fredericksburg where he was unable to help McClellan in any way.

By 25 June thoughts in Washington, no longer concentrated on the supposed threat posed by Jackson, once again turned to McClellan on the upper peninsula before Richmond; on that day Stanton told McClellan that "...every effort has been made by the President and myself to strengthen you."¹³² McClellan, by now thoroughly disillusioned, stated that the "...responsibility cannot be thrown on my shoulders..." if a disaster should occur when he fought the Confederates before Richmond.¹³³ The next day, 26 June, the Secretary of War informed McClellan that the Department of the Shenandoah under Banks, the Mountain Department under Fremont, the Department of the Rappahannock under McDowell, and some troops in Washington under Sturgis, had been consolidated as the Army of Virginia under the command of Major-General John Pope, and would "...operate promptly in your aid by land."¹³⁴ It was too late to help McClellan, however, for on 25 June action at Oak Grove had begun the battle of the Seven Days;¹³⁵ early July would find the Army of the Potomac retreating towards Harrison's Landing on the banks of the James River.

It is interesting to note that McDowell, recovering from an injury incurred when his horse fell on him,¹³⁶ as late as 26 June, before the official formation of the Army of Virginia, told the Secretary of War that he still hoped to go to McClellan's aid.¹³⁷ That hope, nurtured by McDowell since his detachment from McClellan in early April, was never fulfilled.

McDowell's effectiveness while commander of the Army of the Rappahannock can be analyzed in terms of those factors which were beyond his control, and in terms of an evaluation of his generalship based upon the nine principles of strategy and tactics. Because both factors are interrelated his effectiveness is best analyzed by studying them simultaneously, rather than as separate entities.

The principle of objectives was perhaps the most flagrantly violated of the nine principles of warfare. That principle, however, was wholly beyond McDowell's sphere of control and was largely dictated by the President and the Secretary of War. Lincoln and Stanton were never quite sure just what McDowell's primary objective should be---the defense of Washington, the reinforcement of McClellan, or the defeat of Jackson; as a consequence McDowell, who felt that the defeat of the forces before Richmond should be the desired goal, was not able to accomplish any of the three objectives for the President

and his Secretary of War time and again snatched him from one mission only to engage him in another. Their rationale was put forth in a message from Lincoln to McClellan on 28 June amidst the action of the battle of the Seven Days: "If you have had a...repulse it is the price we pay for the enemy not being in Washington. We protected Washington and the enemy concentrated on you. Had we stripped Washington, he would have been upon us.... It is the nature of the case, and neither you nor the Government are to blame."¹³⁸

Another principle broken by McDowell was that of simplicity. Given the situation whereby he was expected to successfully accomplish, at various times, three different objectives it became almost an impossibility to formulate uncomplicated plans and concise orders that could be carried out to their logical conclusion. When he was given leeway to plan a campaign, as in the Shenandoah Valley, it was exercised with "...a good deal of boldness of decision...;"¹³⁹ here again, however, that effort was eventually halted by the powers that be in Washington.

The third principle that was trespassed upon by McDowell was that of unity of command. Once again, however, the factors involved were largely beyond McDowell's control. The violation of the principle of unity of command can be seen in a number of instances. One instance

involved McClellan and was composed of two different aspects. One aspect centered around the rumors which had filtered through to McClellan concerning McDowell's detachment from the Army of the Potomac; those rumors engendered suspicion in McClellan's mind and widened the rift already so prominent between the two Union generals. Another aspect involved the lack of unity of effort responsible to and under the command of one leader; the specific instances involved concerned Lincoln's contradictory remarks to McClellan on 24 May in regards to McDowell's request of McClellan to place McCall's Division under his command when he arrived on the peninsula in late June. McClellan, highly incensed by McDowell's supposed loftiness, on 23 June stated that McDowell "...had attached himself to Stanton."¹⁴⁰

Another instance of the lack of unity of command involved the absence of McDowell from the Shenandoah Valley from 6 June to the end of the Valley campaign; the chain of command which thus existed between the President and McDowell in Washington and his chief of staff in the Valley, although at times a precarious one due to an inoperative telegraph at Front Royal,¹⁴¹ has none-the-less been characterized as, "...at least as good as the Germans ...in the opening phases of World War I."¹⁴²

Yet another example of lack of unity of effort can be seen in the poor rapport established between McDowell

and Fremont, largely because the latter was to have arrived at Strasburg on 30 May,¹⁴³ but did not reach his destination until late on 2 June;¹⁴⁴ this, however, was a circumstance beyond McDowell's control.

The last violation of the principle of unity of command involved the delay of messages from McDowell in Washington to Shields at Luray and Port Republic; this delay, however, was partly due to the inoperative telegraph and the violent rainstorm which swept the Valley and, hence, cannot be attributed to McDowell's negligence.

The principle of offensive initiative was not at any time infringed upon by McDowell for he was eager to march upon Fredericksburg, although hindered by orders from the capital, and upon the Shenandoah Valley; the latter was accomplished quickly and expertly despite his personal convictions of the futility and uselessness of the move.

The principle of maneuver was broken by McDowell in at least two instances. Although he maneuvered well in marching upon Fredericksburg and the Shenandoah Valley he committed an error in not ordering Shields to advance to Strasburg on the thirty-first; that movement, which would possibly have cut off Jackson's retreat southward through the Valley, was not made due to a sincere effort on the part of McDowell to have Shields' Division well-in-hand and supported by other divisions, for McDowell

well-remembered how his forces had been cut up at Bull Run due to piecemeal action.¹⁴⁵ The other violation of the principle of maneuver occurred when McDowell failed to move all his forces from the Valley in mid-June in time to reinforce McClellan for he still hoped to be of some service to the commander of the Army of the Potomac; that contravention, however, was beyond his scope of influence for Banks' inability to cross the Shenandoah River to hold the line from Luray to Winchester had caused Shields' Division to arrive in the vicinity of Manassas, tired and exhausted, on 23 June,¹⁴⁶ only two days before the commencement of the battle of the Seven Days.

The next principle infringed upon by McDowell was the principle of mass; the lone instance of the infringement was the failure to support the brigades of Carroll and Tyler against Jackson at Port Republic. That violation was due to one factor controllable by McDowell---the retention of King and McCall at Fredericksburg---and at least two factors not controllable by McDowell---Ord's sickness and consequent delay, and "General Rain," which "...slowed Shields'..." division considerably.¹⁴⁷ Thus, the Army of the Rappahannock was unable to achieve superiority at a given place at a given time.

Another principle that was contravened by McDowell was that of the principle of economy of force. Due to the scattering of his force of 56,747 men throughout the

Shenandoah Valley,¹⁴⁸ Fredericksburg, and Washington, McDowell was not able to allocate all of his troops in the primary effort against Jackson's force. McDowell, in part, was responsible for that infraction because he left McCall's Division and Doubleday's Brigade at Fredericksburg, as well as calling up King's Division too late to be of any benefit to Shields in his pursuit of Jackson; however, those moves were motivated by the mixed objectives set out for him by Lincoln and Stanton ---to defeat Jackson as well as the Secretary of War's desire to defend the capital against a possible Confederate attack, for he had ordered a brigade to Washington on 25 June. Thus, McDowell must take partial blame for the violation of the principle of economy of force for he still had his sights set on a march to Richmond and allocated his forces accordingly.

The last principle which was broken by McDowell was that of security. This happened on two occasions, both related to Shields' command. The first instance in which the principle was violated was in not ordering Shields to Strasburg on 31 June; by not obtaining a favorable advantage over Jackson after his advance forces had been driven out of Front Royal McDowell allowed the cagy rebel more time in which to withdraw. The second occasion involved the message sent to Shields while that general, joined with Fremont at last, was before Port

Republic; the order to withdraw towards Luray, however, was prompted by the President's wish to aid McClellan for he felt that the Confederate troops had made good their escape. The order was, in fact, made solely by the President.¹⁴⁹

The principle of surprise was neither neglected nor enforced by McDowell for it was never really his to begin with. Although McDowell certainly executed the move to the Shenandoah Valley in excellent time the wily Jackson had half-expected him for his diversionary tactics against Banks on 23 March, 23 May, and in mid-June were calculated to draw McDowell, or any Union reinforcements, away from McClellan. "Both for the withdrawal of McDowell and for the resultant improvement in the prospect of holding Richmond, the credit primarily belonged to Jackson and his men."¹⁵⁰

The Shenandoah Valley campaign, as well as the events preceding it since 4 April, although punctuated by errors throughout, was perhaps the most successful endeavor in McDowell's career as a field commander in the Union army. His tenure as commander of the Army of the Rappahannock showed McDowell at his best---quick to take the initiative and obedient to a fault for he largely ignored Chase's advice to, "...act on your judgment; do not wait for directions from Washington...do your own thinking, moving and fighting...."¹⁵¹ Although he made many crucial

decisions, especially in regards to the defense of Washington wherein he sometimes went against Stanton's wishes,¹⁵² in the main his actions were dictated by Lincoln and the Secretary of War who exercised their administrative prerogative in making military, as well as political, judgments. McDowell suffered somewhat from his adherence to those dictates from Washington rather than stepping to the beat of his own drummer; a case in point is the occasion when a wag in the capital tacked on a bulletin board a dispatch purporting to be from McDowell in which he said he held Willard's Hotel, a point of great strategic interest, and would defend it to the death but he needed reinforcements.¹⁵³

McDowell, in attempting to carry out the objectives set for him by the President and the Secretary of War, was hampered by the unstable character of those goals---due to impetus from Stonewall Jackson---and, hence, was not able to successfully fulfill any of them. Thus, in terms of a broad perspective over a three-months period, his effectiveness was virtually nil due to the fact that he had been immobilized by the powers in control in Washington.

Meanwhile, Major-General John Pope had arrived in Washington. His July address to the officers and men of the Army of Virginia confidently stated:

...I come to you from the West, where we have always seen the backs of our enemies; from an army whose business it has been to seek the adversary

and to beat him when he was found; whose policy has been attack and not defense.... Let us look before us, and not behind. Success and glory are in the advance, disaster and shame lurk in the rear. Let us act on this understanding, and it is safe to predict...that your names will be dear to your countrymen forever.¹⁵⁴

Pope was to find in the months ahead that disaster and shame lurked not only in the rear but also in the advance, especially if that advance had a basis in miscalculation and a groundwork in mismanagement.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter V

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474.

VI. TREACHERY AND IMBECILITY?

Major-General John Pope, a Radical favorite, assumed command of the Army of Virginia in late June and almost immediately began preparing to go to the aid of McClellan on the peninsula between the York and James Rivers. After reviewing the situation, however, the newly-appointed commander decided to forego the task of aiding McClellan because the enemy was concentrated between the latter and Washington; Pope reasoned that a battle with the enemy would leave the capitol, his primary objective, open to a Confederate movement and,¹ thus, he decided that "...the imperative necessity of insuring the safety of the capital must control my operations."² Rather than risk his newly-formed Army of Virginia in battle, thus leaving Washington open to a rebel attack, Pope decided instead to concentrate his forces north of the Rappahannock River. Thus, Sigel's I Corps was deployed in the Shenandoah Valley, Banks' II Corps was based between Warrenton and the Shenandoah, and McDowell's III Corps, composed of the divisions of King and Ricketts and the brigades of Carroll, Doubleday, and Bayard,³ was in the vicinity of Fredericksburg and Warrenton. This dispersal of his forces was formulated by Pope in order to facilitate, if necessary, a march on Gordonsville and

Charlottesville in the lower Shenandoah so as to cut off any Confederate movements to the Valley; at the same time he could carry out his primary objective by concentrating a portion of the Army of Virginia at various positions fronting the capital.⁴ Thus, the month of July was spent by McDowell's corps, which Pope had called "...the only reliable portion of my command...",⁵ in acting as a watchdog force over the lower Shenandoah Valley for rumors of an advance by the forces of Jackson, Ewell, and Longstreet had been rampant since the second week of that sultry summer month.⁶

As July drew to a close Lincoln and Major-General Henry Halleck, a westerner who had assumed command of the armies of the North on the twenty-third of the month,⁷ decided to unite the forces of the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Virginia in order to deal the Confederates a crushing blow. Soon after the decision was made, on 3 August, Halleck sent a message to McClellan which communicated to that general the decision to withdraw the forces of the Army of the Potomac from the peninsula and move them to Aquia Creek, near Fredericksburg. McClellan, in what had by now become a wearisome habit, told Halleck that the fate of the Union would be decided on the banks of the James River; he then proceeded to carry out his time-tested tactic of procrastination in the face of orders from the capital.⁸

For his part in the recently-devised scheme Pope was to defend Washington and, at the same time, delay the advancing rebel army by operating on the South's line of communication with Gordonsville and Charlottesville; this tactic was designed to force Lee, commander of the forces defending the Confederate capital, to detach some of his men from the peninsula, thus giving McClellan time to make an orderly withdrawal so as to facilitate a joint effort by the two Union armies on the butternut marauders.⁹

The result of the Union strategy was that Jackson, Ewell, and A. P. Hill, who had been detached from the peninsula, were sent to dispute the advance of Pope's Army of Virginia. They sped forward and broke through the weak Union advance line by crossing the Rapidan River on midnight of 7 August and pushing Bayard's cavalry brigade back toward Cedar (Slaughter) Mountain the next day.¹⁰ Banks, whose corps had arrived at Pope's headquarters at Culpeper on 8 August, was sent forward to check the enemy advance; he later stated that he was under orders to attack the enemy as soon as he approached while Pope, in a different vein, told a Court of Inquiry that Banks was to hold a position previously held by Crawford's cavalry brigade, without making an advance, until Sigel arrived.¹¹ Whichever version is correct the fact remains that Banks construed his orders in such a way that he felt justified in making an attack upon the rebel forces on 9 August;

the battle of Cedar Mountain see-sawed back and forth until darkness brought a cessation of activities which left the opposing antagonists in approximately the same positions as they had held that morning. By sunset Ricketts' Division and Sigel's Corps had been deployed by Pope as a reserve force in Banks' original position;¹² that was as close to battle as any portion of McDowell's corps came for on 10 August only sporadic skirmishes marred the scene and by 12 August Jackson had withdrawn toward Gordonsville.¹³ The next day Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was given orders to withdraw from Richmond;¹⁴ it soon began the northward advance which would bring pride and victory to Robert E. Lee, and shame and defeat to John Pope and Irvin McDowell.

Meanwhile, spies had reported to Pope that the rebels were massing on the Federal left flank with the object of interposing between the Army of Virginia and reinforcements from the Army of the Potomac bivouaced at Fredericksburg. As a result of this information Pope ordered his army to withdraw from Cedar Mountain and Culpeper in order to take up defensive positions on Robertson's River, near the junction of the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers; the object of this maneuver was to hold the line of the Rappahannock as long as possible so as to gain time for McClellan's troops to effect the previously-planned juncture.¹⁵ On 20 August, however,

Pope told Halleck that the line of resistance along the Rappahannock offered no defensive advantage; he stated that the true position of his army should be considerably in the rear of the present line, at least until his army was strong enough to advance.¹⁶

The opportunity to withdraw which the commander of the Army of Virginia was seeking came when the enemy was seen, from 21 August onward, moving to the Federal right in a northward direction.¹⁷ Pope, hoping to attack the rebels while they marched and alarmed by their advance and McClellan's slowness, ordered his forces to withdraw to cover the Warrenton Pike, thereby avoiding a flanking movement which would have cut him off from Washington.¹⁸ In his haste to order the withdrawal Pope gave up a plan to send McDowell's corps against the enemy's flank and rear.¹⁹

McDowell, who had been ordered to march toward Warrenton on 23 August,²⁰ two days later was told to occupy that position and to deploy the rest of his corps between there and Kelly's Ford on the Rappahannock River.²¹ On that day, 25 August, Pope told McDowell that he was to reconnoiter with his whole corps in the direction of Sulphur Springs in order to ascertain whether the enemy was there or had departed, as he suspected, through Thornton's Gap to the Shenandoah Valley.²²

The next day Pope sent two telegrams to McDowell,

at 5:00 A.M. and 8:10 A.M., which authorized him to use his discretion as to a crossing at Sulphur Springs due to the fact that Sigel had failed to force the passage at Waterloo.²³ McDowell then reported that, under the discretion given to him, he had decided not to throw his whole corps on to Sulphur Springs but, rather, to push a force toward Waterloo in order to feel the rebel right flank.²⁴ Accordingly, he took temporary command of Sigel's corps, which had fallen completely back from Waterloo, in order to determine the strength of the enemy at the latter position; McDowell had ceased his own movements in that direction due to the fact that Buford's and Bayard's cavalry were weary and broken-down, Sigel had withdrawn, and the Federal right flank had been weakened as a consequence.²⁵ In regards to those movements it seems clear that "...McDowell grasped the new situation quickly and changed his movements..." in order to fulfill Pope's orders and determine the strength of the enemy.²⁶ McDowell concluded the day by presenting his views on the general positions of the enemy:

However persons may have differed as to the force at Waterloo, Sulphur Springs, or elsewhere, all agree in one thing---the movement of the enemy toward our right from Rappahannock to Waterloo. Battalions, trains, batteries, all have the same direction. The force of the enemy now seems to be above Sulphur Springs...whether we attack them or they attack us, the contest must come off, it seems to me, as things now stand, above rather than below Sulphur Springs.²⁷

Meanwhile, Pope, who had earlier in the day told McDowell that Warrenton was too far to the front to be occupied,²⁸ by 8:00 P.M. of 26 August felt that the latter place would be the scene of an upcoming battle; he cautioned McDowell to avoid any major disturbance for two days and "...everything would be right..."²⁹ for reinforcements should be there by then.

Earlier in the day, at 3:30 P.M., McDowell had presented an excellent estimate of the courses open to the enemy when he told Pope that it was difficult to determine whether the rebels were moving through Rectortown to Washington or through Chester Gap to the Shenandoah Valley. McDowell further stated that regardless of which operation was to be followed, it seemed to him to be too hazardous for the enemy to undertake due to the fact that Federals would be in their flank and rear.³⁰

McDowell's dilemma as to the whereabouts of the enemy, and his objectives, was answered that evening when he learned that an "intelligent negro" /sic/ and Buford's scouts had reported the presence of enemy troops near Thoroughfare Gap,³¹ an entranceway to the area in which the Army of Virginia was operating. The question was further answered by Jackson's raid on Bristoe Station, Pope's supply base, wherein the rebel general burned the supplies, railroad cars, and telegraph wires of Pope's army.³² McDowell, surprisingly, was elated, rather than

depressed, by the daring raid; he wrote that, "If the enemy are playing their game on us and we can keep down the panic which their appearance is likely to create in Washington, it seems to me the advantage of position must all be on our side."³³ Pope must have thought so too for he was of the opinion that Jackson was trapped. He and McDowell both agreed that an opportunity had presented itself which every field commander dreams of---the chance to destroy a large part of an enemy force which had been hazardously divided.³⁴

The campaign had reversed itself. Originally, Lee had tried to destroy Pope before the juncture of his army with McClellan's and had failed. Then Lee's bold move, which had thrown Jackson into a hazardous position, had given the Union forces a chance to destroy a portion of the rebel army.³⁵ Accordingly, on 27 August Pope ordered McDowell, who now commanded Reynolds' Pennsylvania Reserves, recently attached to his corps from the Army of the Potomac, to send Sigel's corps and his own forces forward to Gainesville by way of the Warrenton Pike.³⁶ While enroute McDowell heard from Buford who stated that a force under Longstreet would be coming through Thoroughfare Gap. As McDowell prepared to act on his own initiative and send Sigel to the Gap to engage Longstreet an order came from Pope which negated that prospect.³⁷ The order, sent at 9:00 P.M., stated:

At daylight to-morrow morning, march rapidly on Manassas Junction with your whole force, resting your right on the Manassas Gap Railroad, throwing your left well to the east. Jackson, Ewell, and A. P. Hill are between Gainesville and Manassas Junction. We had a severe fight with them to-day, driving them back several miles along the railroad. If you will march promptly and rapidly, at the earliest dawn of day, upon Manassas Junction, we shall bag the whole crowd Be expeditious, and the day is ours.³⁸

Upon receipt of the order McDowell, early in the morning of the twenty-eighth, shifted his movements to a more easterly direction, intending to go to Manassas Junction;³⁹ he hurried his men along by stating that they had "...got to have pinched bellies and a Hell of a fight..." before they could eat or rest.⁴⁰ Before ordering his men to the Junction, however, McDowell sent Ricketts' Division to reinforce Buford's and Duffies' cavalry at Thoroughfare Gap in the face of the expected opposition from Longstreet.⁴¹ This was in direct disobedience of Pope's orders to send his "whole force," a departure from orders which McDowell stated he "...felt compelled upon to make to carry out the spirit of...crushing the enemy at that place before his reinforcements...could join, as those reinforcements ...could be better held in check at the Gap than this side of it."⁴² Meanwhile, when McDowell shifted his line of march from Gainesville to Manassas Junction, Jackson crossed the open turnpike and entrenched north of Groveton. A juncture with Longstreet was now possible.⁴³

The day of 28 August was an extremely active and

complicated one for McDowell and his men. Reynolds, between Manassas and Gainesville, was attacked in the early afternoon by a Confederate brigade. Although they inflicted little damage McDowell failed to examine more closely their source and position,⁴⁴ a mistake which would bode him no good when he was castigated by certain military figures in the fall and winter of 1862.

At 2:00 P.M. McDowell was ordered by Pope to move to Green Spring. This order was countermanded, however, by an order issued at 4:15 P.M. which stated that McDowell was to march to Centreville due to reports of enemy activity there.⁴⁵ King, marching toward Centreville under the impetus of the new order, was attacked in the early evening by Talliaferro and Ewell of Jackson's force just west of Groveton.⁴⁶ King reported that his position was untenable and that he was proceeding to withdraw.⁴⁷ Pope, completely misreading the designs of Jackson, stated that he felt that King had "...intercepted the retreat of the enemy."⁴⁸

Ricketts, meanwhile, had fought Longstreet at Thoroughfare Gap and had held the rebel general from breaking through until after dark. When Longstreet managed to force Hopewell Gap, however, Ricketts felt it expedient to retire from the field of battle.⁴⁹ Pope, however, had received information which led him to believe that Longstreet had been driven back through the Gap and

this misconception of the true situation eventually contributed to his undoing.⁵⁰

Pope now shifted directions once more. He devised a plan in the final hours of the twenty-eighth which he was sure would crush Jackson. McDowell and Sigel were to attack the rebel general from the south and west while Heintzelman's corps, Porter's corps, and Reno's detachment, all from the Army of the Potomac, were to attack from the east, thus preventing an escape by the wily Confederate through Thoroughfare Gap while at the same time pounding his grey-frocked forces to pieces.⁵¹ Pope, writing to Halleck, stated that "... the enemy was driven back at all points....," and would not be able to escape "...without heavy loss."⁵² Pope's plan necessitated changes, however, for McDowell's corps was not where the commander of the Union forces supposed it to be. King, after his battle with Jackson, had withdrawn towards Manassas while Ricketts, after his encounter with Longstreet, had retired to the vicinity of Bristoe; only the game Reynolds was well-situated, for he was in position near Five Forks midway between Groveton and Manassas. The crowning irony was that McDowell, who had gone with Reynolds' Division, became lost in the darkened woods that evening while seeking out Pope at Manassas Junction in order that he might converse with him;⁵³ therefore, McDowell was not in a position to countermand the tactical

mistakes made by his division commanders in their decision to withdraw to the Manassas area. Thus, a new plan had to be formulated by Pope to cover this unexpected contingency; McDowell played a vital role in that plan but, as was his custom, he became embroiled in yet another controversy which only added to his growing reputation as a storm center within the Union command structure.

The new plan formulated by Pope involved shifting Porter from the east to the west, thus taking the place of McDowell in the attack upon Jackson planned for the twenty-ninth.⁵⁴ McDowell, meanwhile, extricated himself from the wooded swamps, found Reynolds' Division, ordered it to support Sigel's Corps, and then left for Manassas Junction in search of King and Ricketts.⁵⁵ After joining King and Ricketts McDowell met Porter at Manassas Junction and was shown an order which stated that Porter was to make a movement upon Gainesville, taking King's Division with him.⁵⁶ Porter then moved up the road to Gainesville followed by the two divisions of McDowell's Corps. While thus enroute McDowell received a note from Pope, General Orders, Number 5, addressed to both him and Porter. It stated that they were to move forward toward Gainesville with their joint commands but added that the order was not to be strictly carried out if any advantage was to be gained by departing from it; however, the note warned both

men that their troops must occupy a position from which they could reach Bull Run by the evening of the twenty-ninth or the morning of the thirtieth.⁵⁷

When Porter's Corps halted McDowell rode forward to the head of the column; enroute he was met by a courier with a message from General Buford, commanding a cavalry brigade, which stated that seventeen regiments, one battery, and 500 cavalry, had passed through Gainesville about 8:45 A.M. on the Centreville road. McDowell then hastened forward past Porter's column until he saw it's commander observing from a slight eminence the dust clouds rising above the trees in front of the road ahead of them and listening to the sounds of artillery fire from the direction of Groveton, to their right. After discussing the joint order, Buford's note, the dust, and the artillery fire, Porter made a remark which convinced McDowell that he felt that the enemy was to his immediate front.⁵⁸ McDowell then told Porter to "...put your force in here, and I will take mine up the Sudley Springs road, on the left of the troops engaged at that point with the enemy"⁵⁹ Believing that Porter would "...put his force in at that point...",⁶⁰ that is, against the enemy flank, McDowell rode back to his own column, three miles away, and ordered King and Ricketts up the Sudley Springs road toward the firing coming from the direction of Groveton.⁶¹

Upon reaching the field of battle in the late

afternoon, about 4:30 P.M., McDowell was ordered to support Reno who had been hotly engaged all day. After moving his troops into position to carry out the order McDowell received another order which stated that he was to pursue the retreating rebel forces up the Warrenton turnpike. Bayard's cavalry, attached to Hatch, who had taken over King's command when the latter fell ill, attacked on the south side of the turnpike and for him McDowell claimed "...the finishing strokes of the day, which we could now safely claim as ours."⁶² Thus, neither Porter, who had held his position on the Manassas-Gainesville road through a misunderstanding with McDowell which was based on garbled orders, nor McDowell, who had spent most of the day marching to the scene of battle, had taken any effective part in the fray. Once again Pope had been foiled in his quest for victory.

On the morning of 30 August Porter finally arrived and was ordered, along with McDowell and Heintzelman, to attack the enemy's left flank. McDowell asked to make a reconnaissance first and, upon doing so, he and Heintzelman found that the enemy had fallen back, or so it seemed. Pope assumed that Jackson was in full retreat and, thus, at noon he ordered McDowell to take command of a pursuit force which was to press the enemy vigorously the whole day.⁶³ The pursuit force was composed of Porter, backed by Hatch, who moved up the turnpike, Reynolds, who moved

south of the turnpike, Sigel and Reno, who moved north of the turnpike, Heintzelman, in command of Ricketts, who moved up the Haymarket Road, and Bayard, who moved up the Gainesville-Manassas Road in order to observe the movements of the enemy.⁶⁴ As the three echelons pursuing Jackson moved forward Porter, in front of the advance, reported that the enemy was not retreating; Reynolds, covering Porter's left, also reported that the enemy was not retreating but, instead, was passing his troops to the south of the Warrenton pike and was massing them in a thickly wooded area in preparation for an attack which would turn the Federal left flank. McDowell then ordered Reynolds to the left to occupy a hill south of the turnpike in order to meet the expected assault. Meanwhile, Longstreet, the force seen by Reynolds, began a counter-attack on Porter who was thrown back.⁶⁵ The Confederate general, after he forced Thoroughfare Gap, had been on the field for twenty-four hours, unknown to the Union commanders.⁶⁶

After the attack on Porter McDowell ordered two brigades of Reynolds' Division and a Rhode Island battery, the only forces actually facing Longstreet, "...across the field to the rear of Porter, to form a line behind which the troops might be rallied."⁶⁷ Longstreet then hit the rear of Reynolds' withdrawing force of 4,700 men with his 30,000 rebel warriors, rolled up the Federal left flank

at a right angle to Jackson's movement, squeezing the blue-coats between them, and sent the Army of Virginia retreating in orderly fashion toward Bull Run. The blue-coats fell back near Henry House Hill upon which McDowell had, with some forthought, positioned a battery; this position was held safely until long after dark. By 7:00 P.M. McDowell had found what portions of his corps that he could and had taken up a position covering the bridges over an area that he knew well, Bull Run and Cub Run.⁶⁸

On the morning of 31 August the various corps were reunited and placed in reserve by Pope behind the town of Centreville. The next day the commander of the Army of Virginia ordered McDowell to advance to Germantown to intercept the enemy. Here Ricketts' Division was drawn up facing the enemy advance, holding it in check until Reno was able to repulse the Confederates with a flank attack. On 2 September, in compliance with general orders, the III Corps fell back to Hall's and Upton's Hills in front of Washington.⁶⁹ Here the campaign ended and the Army of Virginia was merged with the Army of the Potomac under the command of the Radicals' old nemesis, George B. McClellan.⁷⁰

Pope, who had begun his campaign two months earlier with a brilliant verbal offensive, was reduced, by the end of the battle of Second Bull Run (Manassas), to defensive measures and pleas for help from Halleck. On

2 September he told the general-in-chief that the enemy would turn him soon and added, "...unless something can be done...this army...will melt away before you know it."⁷¹ The campaign, begun on such high hopes for victory, ended on a note of defeat, not only on the battlefield but off of it, for Pope and McDowell were removed from effective field commands under informal charges of "treachery and imbecility."⁷² McDowell was never again to take command of troops in the field.

In assessing McDowell's generalship while he was engaged as a corps commander in the Army of Virginia it is necessary to consider those factors which were beyond his sphere of influence as well as those actions which may be regarded as breaches of the nine principles of strategy and tactics. In analyzing McDowell's effectiveness, however, it must be borne in mind that he was acting in a subordinate capacity and not as the supreme commander in the field.

With that thought in mind it can be seen that McDowell never had the opportunity to break the principle of objectives for that principle was never his to break. Since all long-range planning was conducted by Pope and the powers in control in Washington McDowell, of necessity, was spared the responsibility of determining worthwhile goals to be sought and won.

The principle of simplicity, on the other hand,

was violated by McDowell on at least three occasions. McDowell, who had been given command of Sigel's Corps on 17 August in order to make the joint march to Gainesville, was later criticized by Sigel for the apparent lack of unity and cooperation between the two corps on the march to Manassas on 28 August and at the battle at Groveton the next day.⁷³ On both charges, however, McDowell must be vindicated. Sigel was out of position most of the twenty-eighth due to the slowness of his corps and his lack of following directions for McDowell had cautioned him to march to the north, rather than the south, of the Manassas Gap Railroad; his failure to do so pulled King and Reynolds away from their positions and, thus, caused the two corps to be separated somewhat.⁷⁴

As to the second charge made by Sigel, that of lack of cooperation between the two corps at Groveton on the twenty-ninth, Pope himself cleared McDowell of malfeasance by stating that Sigel "...was under my immediate command and received my direct orders;"⁷⁵ that is, Pope considered the connection between the two corps commanders dissolved of necessity, not only due to his presence on the field as general commanding but also because of the separation of the two corps occasioned by Sigel's actions.⁷⁶ Thus, neither Sigel, who was not informed of the change in immediate commanding generals, nor McDowell, who had no control over the situation, can be held responsible for

this infringement of the principles of warfare.

Another instance wherein the principle of simplicity was infringed upon occurred on 29 August in relation to McDowell's conversation with Porter on the Sudley Springs road. After conversing with Porter about the events of the day and the rebel column which seemed to be in front of them McDowell had told the fiery general from the Army of the Potomac to "...put your force in here...,⁷⁷ on the flank of the enemy. Porter, knowing that the joint order from Pope stated that they were to move forward to Gainesville so as to be in a position to reach Bull Run that evening or the morning of the thirtieth, shouted to McDowell, who was riding back to his own corps, that he did not understand his orders. McDowell, apparently too far away to understand Porter's plea, merely raised his hand in a gesture of farewell.⁷⁸ McDowell later stated that he deviated from the letter of his instructions from Pope in order that "...the forces could be soonest and best applied..." while still being in a position to reach Bull Run,⁷⁹ which he considered to be the most important point in Pope's order. Thus, McDowell's garbled orders were partly responsible for keeping Porter, who received orders to attack at 4:30 P.M., from marching to the scene of battle and forced Pope, who had already changed his plans once on McDowell's account, to readjust those plans for an attack on Jackson once more.

The principle of unity of command was trespassed upon by McDowell on at least three occasions. One instance involved the aforementioned conflict with Segel over a lack of unity and cooperation between their respective corps; as related previously, that infringement was due to a lack of concise orders and was in no way a reflection on McDowell's generalship.

Another example of the lack of unity of command involved the responsibility for the disposition of Porter's Corps on 29 August. McDowell, in a later statement to a Court of Inquiry, conveniently disposes of any negligence on his part by stating that he felt that the Sixty-second Article of War, which directs that when troops happen to meet the senior officer commands the whole, applied to his relationship with Porter up until that point when he left the latter general in order to go back to his own troops; McDowell felt that at that moment Porter came under the orders of Pope, their common commander-in-chief, due to the fact that their joint operation had been dissolved when he "indicated" to Porter the point at which he might make an attack upon the enemy.⁸⁰ Regardless of the military procedure involved, and the loophole in Pope's message as to departures from orders notwithstanding, it seems clear that McDowell overstated his case and, thus, shirked some of the responsibility for Porter's actions in the process.

The final instance wherein the principle of unity of command was broken involved the evening of 28 August when McDowell became lost in the wooded swamps near Manassas. That incident, which prompted Pope to exclaim, "God. damn McDowell, he's never where I want him...",⁸¹ not only separated McDowell from Ricketts, ten miles away, King, six miles away, and Reynolds, three miles away, at a critical time,⁸² but also prevented the commander of the III Corps from countermanding the tactical mistakes of his division officers, thus deranging the plan of battle formed by Pope for the following day, "...the execution of which afforded an opportunity for...victory."⁸³

The principle of offensive initiative was not at any time contravened by McDowell for all defensive movements were made under the impetus of orders from Pope. Furthermore, McDowell very definitely grasped the initiative in ordering Ricketts' Division to Thoroughfare Gap, a move which Pope had not thought necessary,⁸⁴ but which was predicated by McDowell on reports from Negroes, scouts, and Buford's cavalry, that an enemy column was operating west of the Gap.⁸⁵

The principle of maneuver was upheld by McDowell when he meaningfully moved Ricketts to the vicinity of Thoroughfare Gap, but in at least two other instances that principle was trespassed upon by the "White Plume of Navarre." One occasion involved the withdrawal of King

and Ricketts to the Manassas area on the eve of 28 August for those movements were not countered by any contrary orders from McDowell and, thus, valuable time was lost on the twenty-ninth, not to mention the derangement of Pope's plans.

The other violation of the principle of maneuver occurred when McDowell, on 30 August, pulled Reynolds' Division and a Rhode Island battery, the only forces actually facing Longstreet, from in front of the rebel general to an area in the rear of Porter in order to form a rally line. That movement, which allowed the 30,000 troops of Longstreet to roll up the Federal left flank with little opposition, was in many ways McDowell's supreme blunder as a field commander in the Army of Virginia for it not only showed him to be a general with very poor tactical judgment, but it also induced his men to distrust him.⁸⁶ With sentiments such as this beginning to take precedence could the end be far off?

Another principle broken by McDowell was that of mass. The occasion for that contravention was the Confederate attack on Reynolds' force on 28 August; in not examining closely the rebel position McDowell relinquished the opportunity to gain a decided advantage in the skirmish as well as the opportunity to determine more about the size and source of the greycoats. McDowell stated in his reports that he "supposed" the force was a rear guard or

reconnoitering unit;⁸⁷ at a time when accurate and trustworthy reports were at a premium the difference between "supposing" and "knowing" looms great indeed. In not pursuing further the advantage he held, that of having a superior number of troops available, the commander of the III Corps thus surrendered the opportunity to achieve superiority at a given place at a given time.

The principle of mass was fulfilled, however, when on 1 September McDowell's forces checked the enemy advance near Germantown until Reno could repulse the rebels with a flank attack; their joint effort, although small in comparison with the battle they had just engaged in, must have provided at least a small psychological "lift" to the weary and downtrodden troops of the Union Army.

The only occasion wherein the principle of economy of force was violated can be seen in the separation of McDowell's Corps into three distinct units on 28 August. By separating the divisions in the aforementioned manner neither Ricketts, in his engagement with Longstreet at Thoroughfare Gap, nor King, in the battle at Groveton where "...men fell like leaves in autumn,"⁸⁸ could effectively support the other.

The closest that McDowell came to fulfilling the requirements of the principle of surprise was in sending Ricketts' Division to Thoroughfare Gap to reinforce the cavalry commands of Buford and Duffie; even this action,

however, was taken relative to the movements made by the rebel commander, Lee, and not because it was originally considered militarily expedient to do so.

The last principle of strategy and tactics with which McDowell was associated at the battle of Second Bull Run was that of security. The occasion for a violation of that principle occurred on 29 August when a courier presented to McDowell a note from General Buford addressed to General Ricketts. That message, with its information concerning "...seventeen regiments, one battery, and 500 cavalry....,"⁸⁹ was "...one of the most important of the campaign....,"⁹⁰ and should have gone to Pope immediately for it concerned the advance elements of Longstreet's column which were hastening to the aid of Jackson. McDowell, however, perhaps due to the press of other matters on that fateful day, apparently put the note in his pocket as he trotted on past Porter's column to talk to its commander;⁹¹ there the note remained until the end of the campaign.

Once again McDowell had played a vital role in an important Union defeat. Throughout the campaign he had combined excellent estimates of the courses open to the enemy with tactical blunders, undisguised negligence, and tragicomic errors. In short, McDowell caused Gideon Welles' words---what was needed was not a better army, but better generals---to become a distinct reality.⁹² Lincoln must have thought that changes were needed also for on

2 September, in spite of the anger of the Radicals, McClellan was given command of the "...fortifications of Washington and of all the troops for the defense of the capital."⁹³ McDowell, however, was relegated to virtual oblivion, spurned by his former political comrades, and forgotten by the press and the public who had always been, at best, "fair-weather friends."

FOOTNOTES

Chapter VI

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²Pope to McClellan, 4 July, 1862, O.R., Series I, Vol. XI, Pt. III, p. 297.

³O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. III, p. 523.

⁴Pope to McClellan, 4 July, 1862, O.R., Series I, Vol. XI, Pt. III, p. 296.

⁵Pope to McClellan, 4 July, 1862, O.R., Series I, Vol. XI, Pt. III, p. 296.

⁶King to Schriver, 10 July, 1862, Banks to Pope, 20 July, 1862, Pope to Halleck, 26 July, 1862, O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. III, pp. 463-486, 509.

⁷O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 3.

⁸Kenneth Powers Williams, Lincoln Finds a General (5 vols.; New York: Macmillan Co., 1949-1959), I, pp. 258-259.

⁹United States, House of Representatives, Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, Report No. 108, Vol. II, 37th Congress, 3rd Session, 1863, pp. 457-458.

¹⁰O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 326.

¹¹Williams, I, p. 267.

- ¹²O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. I, pp. 201-202.
- ¹³O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 328.
- ¹⁴O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 4.
- ¹⁵O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, pp. 329-330.
- ¹⁶Pope to Halleck, 20 August, 1862, O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. III, p. 603.
- ¹⁷O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 331.
- ¹⁸Pope to Halleck, 24 August, 1862, O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 64.
- ¹⁹Williams, I, p. 282.
- ²⁰O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. III, pp. 631-632.
- ²¹O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 332.
- ²²Pope to McDowell, 25 August, 1862, O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 67.
- ²³O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 333.
- ²⁴McDowell to Pope, 26 August, 1862, O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 348.
- ²⁵O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 333.
- ²⁶Williams, I, p. 295.
- ²⁷McDowell to Pope, 26 August, 1862, O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 68.
- ²⁸Pope to McDowell, 26 August, 1862, O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 353.
- ²⁹Pope to McDowell, 26 August, 1862, O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 69.

³⁰McDowell to Pope, 26 August, 1862, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 68.

³¹McDowell to Pope, 26 August, 1862, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 69.

³²Shelby Foote, The Civil War: A Narrative (New
York: Random House, 1958), p. 621.

³³McDowell to Pope, 26 August, 1862, O.R.,
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³⁴Williams, I, p. 301.

³⁵Williams, I, pp. 310-311.

³⁶O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 334.

³⁷O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 335.

³⁸Pope to McDowell, 17 August, 1862, O.R.,
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³⁹William Swinton, Campaigns of the Army of the
Potomac (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1864), p. 181.

⁴⁰Inside Lincoln's Army, ed. David S. Sparks (New
York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1964), p. 130.

⁴¹O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 336.

⁴²O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 336.

⁴³Swinton, p. 181.

⁴⁴Warren W. Hassler Jr., Commanders of the Army
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Press, 1950), p. 68.

⁴⁵O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 337.

⁴⁶O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 14.

⁴⁷King to McDowell, 28 August, 1862, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. III, pp. 717-718.

⁴⁸Pope to Kearney, 28 August, 1862, O.R.,
Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, pp. 74-75.

⁴⁹O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 337.

⁵⁰Williams, I, p. 321.

⁵¹O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 37.

⁵²Pope to Halleck, 28 August, 1862, O.R.,
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⁵³O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 337.

⁵⁴Williams, I, p. 324.

⁵⁵O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. I, p. 192.

⁵⁶Pope to Porter, 29 August, 1862, O.R., Series
I, Vol. XII, Pt. III, p. 729.

⁵⁷Pope to McDowell and Porter, 29 August, 1862,
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⁵⁸O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, Supplement,
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⁵⁹O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, Supplement,
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⁶⁴O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. III, pp. 741&757.

- ⁶⁵O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, pp. 339-341.
- ⁶⁶O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 564.
- ⁶⁷O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 394.
- ⁶⁸O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, pp. 341-343.
- ⁶⁹O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 344.
- ⁷⁰O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 242.
- ⁷¹Pope to Halleck, 2 September, 1862, O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. III, pp. 796-797.
- ⁷²New York Tribune, 5 September, 1862, p. 1.
- ⁷³O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. I, pp. 308&317.
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- ⁷⁶O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. I, p. 318.
- ⁷⁷O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, Supplement, p. 904.
- ⁷⁸O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, Supplement, p. 918.
- ⁷⁹O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 338.
- ⁸⁰O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, Supplement, pp. 911-912.
- ⁸¹Bruce Catton, Mr. Lincoln's Army (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1951), p. 42.
- ⁸²O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. I, p. 329.
- ⁸³O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. I, p. 331.

- ⁸⁴Williams, I, p. 432.
- ⁸⁵O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 334.
- ⁸⁶Catton, pp. 41-42.
- ⁸⁷O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, p. 336.
- ⁸⁸Williams, I, p. 319.
- ⁸⁹Buford to Ricketts, /29 August, 1862/, O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. II, Supplement, p. 903.
- ⁹⁰Williams, I, p. 326.
- ⁹¹Williams, I, p. 326.
- ⁹²/Gideon Welles/, Diary of Gideon Welles (3 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911), I, p. 99.
- ⁹³General Orders, No. 122, 2 September, 1862, O.R., Series I, Vol. XII, Pt. III, p. 807.

VII. COURT OF INQUIRY

After Second Manassas McDowell, who had never been a popular man with the soldiers due to his aloofness and haughty bearing, was rather universally disliked by his men.¹ The aura of failure which had trailed after him since the battle of First Bull Run had sown the seeds of distrust well for undisguised comments concerning his character ran rampant throughout the Union ranks after the failure against Jackson and Longstreet. Even a special hat constructed of bamboo and cloth to ward off the sun was chalked up as a point against him for it was believed by some that McDowell was secretively helping the enemy by allowing them to use the hat as a distinguishing mark to see and recognize;² one trooper wisely commented, "How guilty he looks, with that basket on his head."³ Such remarks as "traitor" and "scoundrel" were hurled at McDowell as the men retreated towards Washington, and among themselves they circulated humorous stories about his generalship: "We're holding our own now, but McDowell has charge of the left. Then God save the left."⁴ One officer, perhaps with more truth in his remark than he knew, stated that it was useless to fight under McDowell for "...we shall lose every battle where he commands."⁵

A newspaper correspondent remarked that he felt that the men would shoot McDowell down if he made an appearance among them;⁶ that comment was given credence when a rank-and-file soldier made the comment that he would rather shoot McDowell than Jackson.⁷ Further, a Colonel Broadhead of Michigan, while dying on the field at Second Manassas, had managed to scrawl a letter stating that he had fallen a victim to Pope's imbecility and McDowell's treachery.⁸ Adding insult to injury, McClellan, in a characteristic jab, made the remark that McDowell's men would have killed him had he made an appearance among them.⁹ In short, after Second Manassas McDowell's men felt that if they ever again obeyed his orders in a time of conflict they would be purposely wasting their lives.¹⁰

As if to compound McDowell's humiliation past ignommonious incidents involving his name were now remembered by politicians and the press. On 14 June the New York Tribune had printed a letter from an officer in McDowell's Army of the Rappahannock which stated that there was "...a screw loose somewhere in this...department....,"¹¹ for guards kept the Union-men from pilfering food and forage from secessionist fields and homes; beyond this, however, the officer stated that he had seen 160 rebel prisoners who were better fed than their Union counterparts.¹² On 20 June the Tribune had stated that a deputation of Union soldiers had gone to Stanton and Lincoln to ask to be

treated on an equal basis with rebel secessionists whose property McDowell had protected by using Union soldiers to replace some fence rails that had been stolen. The paper added that that incident was just one of many cases said to be attributed to McDowell.¹³ During Pope's campaign in Virginia the Tribune had published, on 27 August, an article by a correspondent who stated that an officer had told him that he had heard J.E.B. Stuart, during his attack on Catlett's Station in late August, give orders to his men to spare McDowell's baggage train; it was also rumored that eight wagons belonging to McDowell's body-guard had been spared looting by the rebels.¹⁴ The National Intelligencer, however, stated that twenty horses, a few thousand dollars, and a quantity of liquor had been taken from McDowell in Stuart's raid.¹⁵ Whether credence can be given to either of the above articles is a dubious point, however, for while McDowell did not ally himself with the Confederates neither did he partake of intoxicating liquors. Regardless of which report was more correct, however, the salient factor is that many people in the North chose to regard the former article as the correct one.

Other rumors circulated about McDowell took another tack, that of character assassination. One rumor which was widely believed was that McDowell had been shot by General Sigel in an argument.¹⁶ Another prevalent rumor

held that McDowell was a brother-in-law of Stonewall Jackson.¹⁷ It took a visit to McDowell's father-in-law's house in Troy, New York and a statement by Malcolm McDowell, Irvin's brother, to convince certain credulous persons that McDowell was not related by blood or marriage to any Confederate generals.¹⁸

The politicians, too, buffeted McDowell. It was remembered that on 25 June "Bluff Ben" Wade, the Radical chieftain, had forsaken the former commander of the Department of the Rappahannock on the Senate floor. In referring to McDowell's guard around a secessionist cornfield Wade stated that:

I say you will never bring this war to an end while it is the purpose of your commanders...to use their soldiers to guard the pigs and chickens and the fences of your mortal enemies than to fight them in the field. The general who will place his guard.. around the property of a rebel to protect it will not be very likely to fight that rebel in the field....¹⁹

By using the Senate chambers to hint of treason Wade thus brought McDowell's conduct out of the realm of purely military affairs and public confidence, and into the realm of politics. As the summer progressed Wade, the master politician, saw that political expediency would call for the repudiation of McDowell.

Thus McDowell, castigated by his officers, his men, the press, and the politicians, had but one man to turn to in his hour of need. In the midst of almost universal ridicule Salmon Portland Chase, an old political rival of

Wade's in Ohio politics and a cabinet ally of the congressional Radicals who had turned their backs on their former favorite, upheld McDowell's reputation.

On 4 September Chase wrote to William C. Bryant concerning his expectations of McDowell. He stated that his expectations of the latter had been better satisfied than those he had formed of McClellan. Chase then rather quixotically stated that McDowell was loyal, brave, truthful, capable, and a good disciplinarian. He further remarked that McDowell had appropriated rebel property for public use but had repressed private marauding as incompatible with the discipline and efficiency of his troops as well as the laws of civilized warfare. The Secretary of the Treasury felt that this fact, plus McDowell's obsession with cutting down the size of baggage trains in order to achieve rapidity of movement, accounted for a large share of the complaints against the general; he added that McDowell didn't drink, smoke, chew, or engage in any kind of license. He further mentioned that McDowell was serious, earnest, resorted to no acts to curry popularity, and had no political aims or pronounced political opinions, with the exception of his conviction that the war sprung from the influence of slavery, which must step aside if it stood in the way of successful prosecution of the war. In regard to McDowell's relations with his men Chase believed that he was too purely

military and indifferent in manner to his soldiers for them to feel any warm sentiments toward him. He did, however, feel that McDowell had led his men successfully and the honor of serving under him should compensate the men for their griefs.²⁰ These sentiments, although well-meant, were quite tactfully never expressed for the benefit of the public.

On 4 September McDowell visited Chase in Washington and attributed the defeat at Second Manassas to McClellan's lack of urging reinforcements forward and the conduct of Porter's Corps on the last day of the battle. After staying the night at Chase's house McDowell left the next morning to go about his business in the capital.²¹ The next day the President spoke to the Secretary of the Treasury, telling him that the clamor against McDowell was so great that he could not lead his troops unless something was done to restore confidence in him. He proposed to Chase that he speak to McDowell and suggest to him that he ask for a court of inquiry.²²

Later that day Chase invited the much-maligned general to his house for a visit and there suggested the court of inquiry to him. McDowell replied that he thought that it would be hard to demand a hearing when there were no formal charges against him and the Secretary stated that he felt that McDowell could assume the charge of "treachery" made by the Michigan officer. McDowell, after

agreeing, was then invited to stay the night at Chase's home once more.²³ That evening the Secretary reiterated in his diary his fondness for McDowell; he stated that he was atrociously abused in public and private with great effect and being a simple soldier he had only a small chance of self-defense. He added that he would "...remain his friend, whether he succeeds or fails as a military man."²⁴ On 6 September McDowell drafted his letter to the President; after breakfast at Chase's home the Secretary read the letter and modified it somewhat, couching it in terms which he felt would best meet the President's approval.²⁵

On 6 September Lincoln stopped by the Treasury Department and asked Chase what McDowell's plans were. Chase replied that McDowell had written the letter asking for an inquiry; upon hearing this the President asked for the letter. After Chase had given him the letter Lincoln stated, "Well, it ought to be done immediately; for the corps must march, and General Halleck feels that he /McDowell/ must be relieved, at all events, from command."²⁶ Later that day Chase learned that McDowell had been relieved from command at his own request;²⁷ that same day this rumor was corroborated by an official announcement from the office of Assistant Adjutant-General Townsend.²⁸ McDowell stopped in for a short visit with Chase that evening, however, and told him that he had not asked to

be relieved but had merely asked for a court of inquiry.²⁹ He believed that General-in-Chief Halleck had purposely misconstrued his request because he wanted his removal from field command.³⁰

On 7 September, the same day that he was assigned to the defenses of Washington,³¹ McDowell visited Chase and told him that his court of inquiry had been postponed indefinitely and that he had fifteen days leave of absence;³² the next day he left Washington on the five o'clock train.³³ Chase, with perhaps more political expediency than patriotism, stated that "...McDowell is out of the way...and so unity is apparently restored. The sacrifice is not too great; for no man should for a moment be preferred to any benefit to the country...."³⁴ McClellan, ever on the offensive against the man he scorned, also had something to say regarding McDowell's dismissal from field command; "...I have no hatred to the man---I simply regard him as a scoundrel, a liar, and a fool who, in seeking to injure me has killed himself---I have the most thorough contempt for him---nothing more."³⁵ He stated that the removal of McDowell was a "...signal instance of retributive justice ..." for now his /McClellan's/ enemies were "...crushed, silent and disarmed...."³⁶ It is obvious from the content of these statements that McClellan relished the thought of McDowell being relegated to military limbo.

For McDowell, defeated and alone, the months of

September and October were spent in resting and preparing his court defense at his father-in-law's house on the banks of the Hudson River.³⁷ In October many hours were spent in corresponding with Brig.-Gen. Carl Schurz, who had slighted McDowell in a published newspaper article wherein he had stated that he had found the commander of the III Corps "in full retreat" on the last day of Second Manassas. McDowell took exception to the article, which added to his already-injured pride and public image, and promptly showed his tenacity by persuading Schurz to promise to retract his statement in a published newspaper article.³⁸ For McDowell, lampooned by the press and his fellow officers and men, and neglected by those politicians and administrators whom he had formerly relied upon and used, the Schurz affair was but a prelude to his defense as he prepared to plead his case before a military tribunal.

On 25 October, 1862 the Headquarters of the Army issued Special Orders, Number 313, ordering a court of inquiry to assemble on 27 October. This court was dissolved and, by virtue of Special Orders, Number 350, issued on 17 November, a new court was ordered, at the request of McDowell, to convene in Washington at 11:00 A.M. on 21 November to inquire into "certain charges" against the former commander of the III Corps of the Army of Virginia.³⁹ The court met on 21 November but, due to the

absence of the court recorder, who had already informed McDowell that his presence would not be necessary, the court adjourned to meet on the following day.⁴⁰ On 22 November at 11:00 A.M. the court, composed of Major-General George Cadwalader, United States Volunteers; Brigadier-General John H. Martindale, United States Volunteers; Brigadier-General James H. Van Alen, United States Volunteers; and Lieutenant Colonel Louis H. Pelouze, Assistant Adjutant-General, the court recorder,⁴¹ met and administered the oath to McDowell. The charges referred to in the order convening the court had not been received, however, and a copy of them was requested from the Adjutant-General's office; thus, the court was adjourned to meet on Monday, 24 November, 1862.⁴²

On 24 November the court convened. A note from the Assistant Adjutant-General, J. C. Kelton, was then read to the court. The note stated that there were no charges against McDowell and, further, that the court had been requested by the latter to investigate his conduct and any charges which should be produced.⁴³ McDowell then presented a communication to the court which stated that the wording of Special Orders, Number 350, directing the court to investigate "certain charges" against him, did not apply for there were no charges in the possession of the government. He then requested the court to obtain a copy of his letter to the President, written on 6 September,

which asked that a court be convened to investigate his conduct and any charges which might be produced. The court, however, stated that it was not the proper medium through which that request should reach headquarters and, thus, they allowed McDowell time to apply for an enlargement of the scope of the investigation so as to embrace the subject referred to in his request.⁴⁴

On 25 November McDowell read a communication to the court stating his desire for that body to conduct the investigation based on the information contained in his letter to Lincoln.⁴⁵ The recorder then read a copy of McDowell's letter to the President:

I have been informed by a Senator that he had seen a note, in pencil, written by a colonel of cavalry mortally wounded in the recent battle, stating, among other causes, that he was dying a victim to 'McDowell's treachery,' and that his last request was that this note might be shown to you.

That the colonel believed this charge, and felt his last act on earth was a great public service, there can be, I think, no question.

This solemn accusation from the grave of a gallant officer, who died for his country, is entitled to great consideration; and I feel called on to endeavor to meet it as well as so general a charge, from one no longer able to support it, can be met.

I therefore beg you to please cause a court to be instituted for its investigation; and, in the absence of any knowledge whatever as to the particular act or acts, time or place, or general conduct the deceased may have had in view, I have to ask that the inquiry be without limitation, and be upon any points and every subject which may in /any/ way be supposed to have led to his belief

....

That this subject of my alleged treachery or disloyalty may be fully inquired into I beg that all officers, soldiers, or civilians who know, or who think they know, of any act of mine liable to the charge in question be allowed and invited to make

it known to the court.

I also beg that the proceedings of the court may be open and free to the press from day to day.⁴⁶

Thus McDowell, in his quest for an official exoneration from all the barbs which had been hurled at him since the first battle of Bull Run, opened the hearing to all those who felt that they had a legitimate complaint against him; further, it is to his credit that he invited the press to attend the proceedings for this confidence, in the face of past lampoons by the gentlemen of the press, must surely have won the unconscious plaudits of the court of inquiry.

On 25 November Special Orders, Number 362, was issued granting McDowell's request to have the investigation conducted along the lines of inquiry suggested in his letter to the President. The court then told McDowell that they would invite and receive any plan of investigation which he would submit to the court to be considered.⁴⁷

On 26 November McDowell read his plan of investigation for consideration by the court. McDowell stated that the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, headed by "Bluff Ben" Wade, had already investigated the first battle of Bull Run and, thus, he felt that this battle need not be inquired into. He then noted that he wished to have his general conduct as an executive and administrative officer investigated as well as five specific points which he felt "...may have had in the minds of others a direct bearing on the main question...."⁴⁸

The five topics which he wished to pursue in the course of the investigation were: his correspondence with the enemy; his conduct and policy toward inhabitants of occupied territory with reference to themselves and/or their property; his faithfulness to his superiors; his supposed drunkenness; and the rumors that through unworthy, personal motives he had not gone to the aid of, or sent reinforcements to, his fellow commanders.⁴⁹

The court, meeting the next day, announced that it had decided to inquire into "...all accusations or imputations of treachery or disloyalty..." against McDowell as well as his general conduct since McClellan's assumption of command of the Army of the Potomac.⁵⁰ For the convenience of the court the investigation was divided into four periods of time during which McDowell had held a field command. Those periods covered McDowell's tenure as follows: as a division commander in the Army of the Potomac until 13 March, 1862; as a corps commander in the aforementioned army until 4 April, 1862; as commander of the Department of the Rappahannock until 26 June, 1862; and as corps commander in the Army of Virginia until his release from duty on 6 September, 1862.⁵¹ With the plan of investigation now established the court was finally able, after a lapse of one month, to summon their first witness and begin the formal hearings. The court was to be in session for the grueling period of sixty-seven days.

Meanwhile, the Radicals had embarked upon a concerted drive to destroy as many conservative generals as possible. This drive, which embraced the period between the late fall of 1862 and early spring of 1863, was called a "reign of terror" by the Democrats because the Radicals employed the weapons of courts-martial, smear campaigns in the press, dismissals by the War Department, and congressional denunciations,⁵² in order to achieve their objective, which was to have the war conducted by "its friends," as Wade told Lincoln on 18 December.⁵³ McDowell was one of the generals who was submitted to their efforts to root out the incompetents and purify the army.

McDowell was initially brought to task by the aforementioned reports in the New York Tribune that he had become a convert to the policy of treating civilian rebels kindly by putting guards around slaveholders property and providing Southerners with better food and lodging than he did for his own men. Such conduct from a man whom the Jacobins supposed to be a pillar of radicalism angered that body of men and a resolution was soon put through the House of Representatives to determine the truth of the charges.⁵⁴

At the "trial" conducted by the Joint Committee, McDowell's alleged drunkenness, as well as his supposed treachery on the battlefield, was recalled and held up to the light to be scrutinized. Among the subordinate

officers brought in as witnesses was Abner Doubleday, who stated that "the soldiers complain that while they are doing their duty of guarding secession houses and property the secession women insult them, drawing up their skirts as they pass them."⁵⁵ It is of interest here to note that on 12 July, almost six months earlier, McDowell had told a colleague that Doubleday was a great menace to him because he had made the matter of guarding rebel property a test of his loyalty.⁵⁶ Wade became convinced that McDowell had become a convert to McClellanism and proceeded to launch a bitter attack on him.⁵⁷ The rupture between McDowell and the Radicals was now complete.

Meanwhile, the first witness at the court of inquiry requested by McDowell was sworn in on 28 November and submitted his testimony. It is well to note here that the witnesses subpoenaed by the court were requested by McDowell, and not the court, for it had been established that, as there were no charges against him, McDowell could submit the general plan of investigation to be followed by the court. Thus, it was basically up to McDowell alone to prove a negative through "...such evidence as shall cause innocence to be inferred..." as brought out by the investigation.⁵⁸ It is imperative, therefore, to realize that the accusations made against McDowell during the course of the inquiry were made known to the court solely through his efforts for he wished to refute them

publicly so as to "...leave no doubts to my prejudice."⁵⁹ With these thoughts borne in mind McDowell's defense in the courtroom on South Fourteenth Street in Washington, D.C. takes on added zeal and meaning for he was not defending himself against government charges but, rather, was preparing a defense of his own actions and principles in the name of public recognition of his services to his country and for the sake of his individual pride, dignity, and self-respect.

In examining and analyzing the McDowell Court of Inquiry it is necessary to choose a method of analysis which lends itself well to close scrutiny. The method chosen by McDowell in his concluding statement to the court is, perhaps, the most organized method for it deals with a subject-matter analysis rather than a chronological assembly of information, much of which is totally unrelated to the accounts which come before and after it. Consequently, the method used herein is that which was employed by McDowell, with many of the strengths and weaknesses inherent in that system.

The first subject taken up by McDowell in his concluding statement was that of the number and composition of the force to be left by McClellan for the defense of the capital as the latter prepared to invade the peninsula below Richmond. In regard to this matter McDowell asked the court to call Generals McClellan, Barry, Keyes,

Wadsworth, and Hitchcock to the stand in order to present evidence bearing on the case. In his questioning of these witnesses McDowell took the position that his responsibility in the matter had ended after he had given his estimate of the number of men needed to guard Washington to McClellan; further, he felt that his position was especially strong in light of the fact that he had known very little about McClellan's plans as to the character of the troops to be left behind.⁶⁰ Undoubtedly McClellan's suspicious nature, compounded by the councils of war called by the President in mid-January, had much to do with this lack of knowledge on the part of McDowell.

McDowell's questioning of McClellan in relation to this aspect of the inquiry was mainly directed at establishing the nature of his conduct while functioning as a field commander in the Army of the Potomac. Surprisingly, McClellan stated that his field commander's conduct had been "entirely satisfactory" and that he had received "the fullest co-operation" from McDowell while planning the peninsular campaign.⁶¹ McClellan graciously added that McDowell "...frequently, at my request, went beyond his strict duties as a corps commander to facilitate operations."⁶²

In questioning by the court McClellan stated that the means of water transportation used by the North had

rendered it necessary to embark the army piecemeal. It was his aim to leave Sumner's Corps in front of Washington to defend it from the enemy but when he became satisfied that the capital was in no danger he had directed Sumner to embark before McDowell so as to employ the latter's corps as a unit. He rather pointedly added that McDowell was not left behind in order to defend Washington for he expected that corps to follow as soon as water transportation could be readied.⁶³

General Hitchcock was also questioned by the court in regard to the force left behind to defend the capital. He brought documents with him which proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that McDowell had had no part in determining the size of the force left to defend Washington; the documents showed that Secretary of War Stanton had told Hitchcock and Thomas to determine whether Lincoln's orders with respect to the security of the capital had been complied with. Their diagnosis was that Washington had not been left "entirely secure."⁶⁴

In connection with the foregoing subject McDowell felt that the separation of his corps from the Army of the Potomac on 4 April, and the attendant formation of the Army of the Rappahannock, needed much illumination in the public mind. He was helped in this undertaking by McClellan's remark to the court that General Franklin, a corps commander in the Army of the Potomac and a

confidant, had given him a message from the President which stated that Lincoln assumed responsibility for the change in destination of McDowell's Corps. Further, Franklin had also told him that he was of the opinion that McDowell had not had a hand in separating himself from the Army of the Potomac.⁶⁵ McClellan, however, cast some doubt on this aspect of the investigation for, rather than saying that he believed McDowell had no complicity in promoting the formation of the Army of the Rappahannock, he merely answered that he did not know whether McDowell had had a hand in the matter or not;⁶⁶ this, of course, was an evasive answer which negated his own role in the dilemma as can be seen by noting Lincoln's comment to him on 9 April that it was his failure to leave Washington entirely secure "...that drove me to detain McDowell."⁶⁷

General Hitchcock reiterated McDowell's contention that he had had nothing to do with the separation of his corps when he stated that, "...I am very sure that personally General McDowell had nothing whatever to do in procuring the orders which detained him in front of Washington. I am very sure that his first information on the subject was derived from the order itself...."⁶⁸

Another subject upon which McDowell had been much censured was that of his conduct at Fredericksburg and his consequent failure to join McClellan on the peninsula

before Richmond. It was said of McDowell that he had flitted between Fredericksburg and Washington for mere personal purposes, had feared to cross the Rappahannock River due to the enemy there, had clamored for reinforcements against imaginary dangers, had protected rebel property, and had left Fredericksburg for the Shenandoah Valley in order to avoid coming under the command of McClellan. Further, it was rumored that his supposedly bad conduct had been covered up through the influence of two members of the Cabinet who were his brothers-in-law.⁶⁹

McDowell, striving to overcome the somewhat ridiculous criticism, requested that his brother be sworn in to testify in his behalf. Malcolm McDowell testified that there was no relationship whatsoever between his brother and Chase, Stanton, Stonewall Jackson, or any other Confederate generals or Union administrators.⁷⁰

McClellan then took the stand and related that he had "...every reason to be morally certain that the cause of his /McDowell's failure to advance to my assistance was due to circumstances beyond his control."⁷¹ McDowell then asked McClellan to examine a copy of the New York Herald of 31 October, 1862, which contained a speech by J. B. Haskins at Tarrytown, New York, in which the following words were attributed to McClellan: "I have been unfortunate in not taking Richmond in consequence of my... plan not having been carried out, because McDowell did

not re-enforce me, as he should have done and as it was agreed would be done."⁷² McDowell asked McClellan if those were his words and the latter replied that he was very sure that he had never made that remark "...in the connection as stated...."⁷³ In further testimony McClellan stated that he believed Richmond could have been taken had his forces and McDowell's been united after Porter's victory at Hanover Court House;⁷⁴ he also remarked that he agreed with McDowell that Jackson's Valley campaign had as its objective the prevention of reinforcements to the Army of the Potomac.⁷⁵ Thus, McClellan's testimony, which sometimes contradicted previous statements made by him in the heat of anger, corroborated McDowell's contention that he was desirous of marching to McClellan's aid while serving as commander of the Department of the Rappahannock.

McClellan's statements were corroborated further by the testimony of Hermann Haupt, former chief of construction and transportation for the Army of the Rappahannock, who testified that McDowell had been very anxious to advance beyond Fredericksburg with a view to co-operating with McClellan against Richmond. Haupt also remarked that McDowell's attention to the details of completing communications over the Rappahannock River "...frequently excited my surprise....,"⁷⁶ and that, far from idling away his time while at Fredericksburg,

McDowell and his men were actively engaged in making the preparations necessary for an advance on Richmond.⁷⁷

Major-General Hitchcock also supported McDowell by stating that the former chief of the Army of the Rappahannock was visibly upset at not being able to join McClellan. He noted that McDowell had told him that he hoped to accompany the Army of the Potomac to the peninsula because he was anxious to be put in a position where he could do something in his profession as a military man; Hitchcock inferred by this that "...he hoped to have had an opportunity of distinguishing himself as a soldier...."⁷⁸

Associated with the charges of misconduct against McDowell was the accusation that he had, on various occasions, gone to Washington for purely personal reasons. McDowell countered these charges by stating that whenever he went to Washington it was because he had been summoned there by his superiors; he added that, in any case, the capital was part of his command and thus, technically, no ill feelings should have been aroused by his visits.⁷⁹ When his character is taken into consideration it is safe to assume that McDowell did not travel to Washington at any time during his tenure as commander of the Department of the Rappahannock for personal reasons; however, this is not to say that once he arrived in the capital and took care of his business that he did not use

a portion of his free time to promote his own causes in the proper quarters.

Another charge launched against McDowell concerned his movement to the Shenandoah Valley for it was much rumored that he had gone there solely to avoid aiding McClellan on the peninsula before Richmond. In his defense McDowell depended mainly upon the dispatches between himself and the War Department, the Secretary of War, and the President. Those dispatches, which were principally appended to the proceedings of 10 December and 19 December, were offered as evidence of the fact that Lincoln and Stanton had ordered him to the Valley and that he had repeatedly voiced the opinion that he should join McClellan. McDowell, who stated that he had moved to the Valley in "good faith" but with a "heavy heart" due to the fact that he believed Richmond to be the primary objective, felt that the documents offered in his defense "...must certainly acquit me of having sought or procured this movement to avoid going to General McClellan."⁸⁰

Another sphere in which McDowell was much maligned was that encompassed in the charges of treason stemming from his supposed protection of rebel property. He was accused, not only of protecting secessionist property, but also of detailing guards to protect that property; it was generally felt that McDowell's actions stemmed from an active sympathy with the enemy and a corresponding disregard for

the soldiers committed to his care.⁸¹

Such sentiments were embodied within an extract from the 25 June proceedings of Congress which McDowell caused to be read to the court. The extract, which was a condemnation of McDowell by Senator Wade, hurt the former very much for Wade "...had been looked upon as being very kindly disposed toward me...."⁸² The text of the extract is as follows:

I have here an order from General McDowell that I ask to have read, just to show the principle upon which this accursed war is prosecuted.

The secretary read as follows:

....Colonel Meredith...will furnish from his regiment a guard for the house and property of Mr. L. J. Hoffman, who lives near Belle Plain. Colonel Meredith will see that no more corn is taken from Mr. Hoffman, and that no more fencing is disturbed. The guard will be so placed as to make this sure, even if it should be necessary to place a sentinel over every panel of fence.

By command of Major-General McDowell:

Saml. Breck, Assistant Adjutant-General

Mr. Wade. I am told that that Hoffman, whose every panel of fence is to be guarded by a soldier paid for out of our pockets, is as arrant a traitor as there is on the face of God's earth. Now, sir, what say you? Can we reach that property? Can we forage on the enemy? The Senator says no. Restrained by the Constitution, are we? We cannot even take it in the field....⁸³

In his defense against Wade's accusations McDowell called on no less than four principal witnesses. One of these, Brigadier-General Haupt, testified that McDowell took property and forage whenever necessary but wouldn't permit the troops to plunder, always gave receipts, and left subsistence enough to keep families from starving;

he further stated that McDowell "...claimed the privilege...of being the only plunderer in the Army of the Rappahannock..." for he would not allow his men to thus render families helpless by stealing their subsistence from them.⁸⁴

Brigadier-General Wadsworth corroborated Haupt's testimony by stating that McDowell protected non-combatants from Union troop depredations, took forage only when needed, paid loyal citizens in money for property taken, and gave verbal or written assurances to those of questionable loyalty that they would be paid after the war if they were loyal from that moment on.⁸⁵

Lieutenant-Colonel Myers, in agreeing with Wadsworth, took the stand to testify that payment to secessionists for goods taken was refused on the basis that they were loyal to the Confederacy and, thus, antagonists to the Union government and cause.⁸⁶

Major Clarence Brown, in direct reference to the Hoffman incident, stated that Hoffman's grain was taken by McDowell, and not paid for, because the sympathies of the former were with the South. He added that McDowell did, however, put a guard around that portion of the crop upon which the Hoffman family depended for sustenance as well as a guard around the buildings in which the family lived. When asked by the members of the court whether McDowell had ever given other orders, just as stringent, in regard

to the protection of the property of loyal citizens Brown stated that McDowell protected all growing grain, regardless of whom it belonged to.⁸⁷ This admission, although seemingly evasive, was an honest statement of the facts for the former commander of the Army of the Rappahannock did, indeed, believe that all growing grain should be harbored for it might prove useful to the Union army in the future.

Another incident aired by McDowell involved the charge that he had protected certain wheat fields near the Lacy (Chatham) house belonging to an officer in the service of the Confederate army; in this instance he caused fences to be rebuilt and fields to be guarded until the wheat contained within matured.⁸⁸

In reference to the above incident Brigadier-General King testified that McDowell's orders were to protect the wheat so that it could be used by the Union forces when it matured.⁸⁹ He further stated that McDowell's policy as regards marauding by Union troops was excellent and "...the best that could have been pursued."⁹⁰ Captain Chandler concurred with King's judgment of McDowell's activities for he stated that the Chatham wheat was afterward thrashed, ground into flour, and furnished to the troops.⁹¹

Thus, in terms of humanitarianism and economic expediency, McDowell must once again be vindicated of the

charges against him. He protected all grain, it is true, but only because he felt that his army could use it; the only exception to this rule was when there was a possibility that crops or buildings might fall into the hands of the enemy.⁹² The best defense of McDowell's actions can be found in his own words: "...there is such a thing as economy in war...."⁹³

Another subject which McDowell felt it expedient to bring before the court was that of his correspondence with the enemy. Both he and Colonel Schriver, his chief of staff, testified that his only correspondence with the enemy involved letters to Brigadier-General J. R. Anderson of the Confederate army in late May of 1862. One set of letters involved a Union escort through the Northern lines for the widow of Robert E. Scott of Fauquier County, Virginia while the other set of letters concerned an assurance on the part of McDowell that Generals Buckner and Tilghman of the Confederate army were not confined in dungeons, as the rebel commander had thought.⁹⁴ Both sets of letters were appended to the proceedings of 28 November and were offered to the court by McDowell as undeniable evidence that his correspondence with the enemy had not exceeded the allowable limits.

Another area of concern to McDowell was that of his reduction in transportation and camp equipage, for as General Hartsuff noted: "It was the cause of complaint,

and I saw afterward letters written by officers of the brigade and published in Boston newspapers, containing severe strictures on General McDowell, as the author of suffering on the marches...."⁹⁵ Hartsuff, along with General King and Major Tillson, stated that there was a considerable amount of grumbling and dissatisfaction over the decrease in transportation and equipage, particularly from those men who had been transferred to McDowell from other commands wherein a greater amount of camp equipage was allowed. McDowell, in a rather weak defense of his position, asserted that the reductions were made in order to comply with Lincoln's orders and, in any case, were nothing more than incident to military operations.⁹⁶ By this he meant that his experience at the battle of first Bull Run had taught him that large baggage trains did not lend themselves to rapidity of movement. McDowell's defense, however, did not sufficiently support this principle and the court, for whatever reasons, did not choose to dwell on this instance of his carelessness.

Another subject of much importance to McDowell, insofar as the charge of treason was concerned, was his policy toward secessionists. In his defense against the charges of treason he offered several documents, soon produced by his chief of staff upon request of the court, which dealt with his policy conducted toward inhabitants

of occupied territory.

General Orders, Number 12, stated that military commissions would be set up in each division to provide the inhabitants of the territory a practical redress of grievances; the order further stated that court martials or special proceedings would be arranged to deal with offenses such as rapes, wherein the punishment for mistreatment of a white or colored woman was to be death by hanging, or shooting if the former was inconvenient.⁹⁷

Special Orders, Number 65, dealt with the desecration of tombstones but offered no punishment for this disrespectful act. Finally, General Orders, Number 19, declared that anyone found obstructing military communications and/or transportation would be shot on the spot.⁹⁸ At the very core of McDowell's defense was the belief that it was "...a matter of justice to them, as one of discipline to my men, to protect their persons from outrage and insult, and...to require them, at the peril of their lives, not to harm my communications...."⁹⁹

Connected with the above subject was the charge of treasonable and unfaithful conduct on the part of McDowell by Peleg Clarke, Jr. of Fredericksburg, Virginia. Clarke stated that while residing in Fredericksburg he saw a rebel adjutant, William A. Little, visiting at General King's headquarters. He then told the court that when he told McDowell that Little was a spy the field commander

replied that he had no doubt that there were many spies within the lines at Fredericksburg because it was on the edge of the Confederate perimeter. Clarke then stated that he showed McDowell papers which proved that Little was a spy; upon receiving this information McDowell merely said that "...if Little told nothing but the truth, it would do him no harm, and that if he lied it would do the rebels no good."¹⁰⁰ Clarke added that, beyond taking no steps to arrest the rebel spy, McDowell also failed to prevent the stealing of Union supplies which was conducted on a rather large scale.¹⁰¹

In his defense the former commander of the Army of the Rappahannock sought to dispute Clarke's contentions by two means---through the vehicle of character assassination and by attempting to prove that he was not in the vicinity of Fredericksburg when Clarke supposedly observed the stealing of supplies and the bad treatment offered the bluecoats by secessionists and rebel sympathizers who were allowed to enter the Union lines unmolested.

Through the testimony of the faithful Colonel Schriver, McDowell was able to easily prove that he was not in the vicinity of Fredericksburg during the month of July when Clarke observed the proceedings contained within his charges.¹⁰² After having disposed of this matter McDowell undertook the task of describing Clarke's

character as it appeared to him during the few moments when they had spoken briefly together. McDowell, after first telling the court that Clarke's private grievances had more of a personal animosity in them than a devotion to public service,¹⁰³ concluded his defense by alluding to the fact that Clarke sometimes acted in the capacity of a commercial double-agent, squeezing payment from rebels and bluecoats alike for stolen goods.¹⁰⁴

By using subtle court-room tactics McDowell had, thus, shifted the responsibility for defending himself onto the shoulders of Clarke whom he portrayed as a selfish entrepreneur rather than a patriotic Union-man. Since their encounters in Fredericksburg were brief and unrecorded it must remain a matter of speculation whether McDowell, the busy commander of an army in the field, was too hasty in dismissing Clarke's contentions so frivolously; however, it must be concluded that there was an apparent element of carelessness present in McDowell's demeanor toward the possibility of a spy within the midst of the Union ranks.

A large portion of the court of inquiry, as well as McDowell's concluding statement, was taken up in dealing with the accusations made by Major-General Franz Sigel, a corps commander in Pope's Army of Virginia. Upon being questioned by the court Sigel testified that McDowell had been inattentive to his duties as a general officer;

among his reasons for making this statement he listed the following: not sufficiently hindering Longstreet from joining Jackson; not leaving a large enough force at Thoroughfare Gap to oppose Longstreet; not co-operating with his corps fully, thus losing the opportunity to attack Jackson's left flank as he supposedly retreated from Manassas; not making dispositions whereby the two corps could act with more unity on 29 August; not arriving on the battlefield sooner on the twenty-ninth; not attacking Jackson at Groveton from the west, or rebel right flank; leaving his position on the eve of 28 August when that position was the logical place from which to attack the Confederate right flank; and neglecting to co-operate with his associate commanders by not getting a personal knowledge of his (Sigel's) position on 29 August.¹⁰⁵

Beyond those charges Sigel also told the court that there were certain events which had taken place which had caused personal bias in his mind against McDowell. Among those events he listed the following: the belief that McDowell had not sufficiently assisted Fremont in the Shenandoah Valley, thus allowing Jackson to escape to fight once again on the peninsula against McClellan; the belief that McDowell should have given much more support to Banks at the battle of Cedar Mountain; the belief that McDowell should have supported him at Waterloo Bridge when he left his position exposed with the understanding

that McDowell's Corps would protect his right flank;¹⁰⁶ and the belief that McDowell had made a remark which wronged him. The remark, which consisted of the words "...General Sigel shall fight his own corps,"¹⁰⁷ later caused Sigel to sullenly decline to hold a private conversation with McDowell when the latter sought to speak with him in reference to public rumors that Sigel had shot McDowell in an argument. McDowell, who had remained ignorant of the reasons behind Sigel's silence, found out the truth only after the court of inquiry disclosed the ignominious and pride-ridden facts;¹⁰⁸ also disclosed was Sigel's admission that his silence had been compounded by a statement from an aide, Captain Asmussen, who had told him that McDowell had made improper expressions to him while enroute from Gainesville to Manassas.¹⁰⁹ Sigel, being of proud Teutonic ancestry, apparently had taken McDowell's alleged remarks as a personal affront.

Sigel further told the court that he had not made his opinions a matter of public record for he felt that he lacked true knowledge in regard to many of the charges and had no definite proof that McDowell was a traitor to his country.¹¹⁰ Sigel concluded his diatribe by stating that all of the above occurrences, in connection with the old remembrances of Fredericksburg and the first battle of Bull Run---a shoddy reminder that McDowell had always had the reputation of being a "loser," "...did not

contribute to give me full and undivided confidence in ...McDowell."¹¹¹

Thus, the rather sensational charges of Franz Sigel were concluded. When McDowell was through calling forth witnesses in his defense, and delivering his scathing remarks, the proud Major-General must have felt very foolish indeed.

One of the first witnesses requested by McDowell in his defense against Sigel's charges was Captain Dahlgren who stated that McDowell's remark to him--- "...General Sigel shall fight his own corps"---was in answer to a question asked by him for his own information and not in answer to a question from Sigel; he added, however, that the commander of the III Corps was busy studying a map when he interrupted him and, thus, he was somewhat irritated and indifferent in manner.¹¹² In contrast to that statement Captain Haven, one of McDowell's aides, testified that McDowell's remark was made in a manner indicating surprise at the question.¹¹³ Thus, the testimony of the two men was somewhat contradictory, indicating that the whole matter was very subjective and could only be answered definitively by McDowell; he, however, contented himself with stating that it was "inconceivable" that such a remark could have produced the results that it did.¹¹⁴

McDowell then dealt with the charge that he had

failed to fully assist Fremont in the Valley; McDowell easily dismissed this accusation by stating that the dispatches already introduced as evidence proved that Lincoln and Stanton had directed a large part of the operations in the Shenandoah theatre of the war, especially in early June.¹¹⁵ Beyond this, however, it can be readily seen that Fremont's dilatory tactics had much to do with the failure of the Union forces to trap the wily Jackson.

McDowell next concerned himself with Sigel's charge that he had failed to support Banks at the battle of Cedar Mountain. In this regard General Benjamin Roberts testified that Banks, who was to act on the defensive and hold the enemy in check until the army could be concentrated, instead assumed the offensive and attacked, thus negating arrangements which Pope had made to defeat Jackson.¹¹⁶ General John Pope testified that "...General McDowell was in nowise responsible for anything connected with these movements, but in all respects carried out my instructions faithfully and zealously."¹¹⁷ McDowell then rather viciously pointed out that Pope's testimony indicated that Sigel was to have supported Banks but had been unable to do so because of unnecessary delays in complying with orders to march, thus forcing Rickett's Division to be sent forward instead. McDowell testified, "It is plain the failure to have troops near to General

Banks...was not due to any neglect of mine, though...it may have been so from that of my accuser."¹¹⁸

As to the charge that he had not supported Sigel at Waterloo Bridge McDowell again enlisted the support of John Pope to corroborate his own contentions. Pope pointed out to the court that his headquarters had been with McDowell during the time in question and that "... the dispositions of his corps were made by my orders on those days and under my immediate observation."¹¹⁹ Pope then declared that McDowell had not failed to carry out any orders with respect to any movement near Waterloo, especially considering the fact that he had rescinded the order to McDowell to proceed to Waterloo Bridge in support of Sigel in light of a reconnaissance by Buford's cavalry which reported no enemy forces on the north side of the river.¹²⁰ Once again Sigel's charges had been refuted.

McDowell then took up the several charges concerning his lack of expediency in connection with Longstreet and Thoroughfare Gap. Sigel had stated that he felt that McDowell had not done what he could to hinder Longstreet and had not left a sufficient force in the vicinity of Thoroughfare Gap to prevent the enemy troops from passing through that defile.¹²¹ Further, he intimated that he had not known that McDowell had made arrangements to meet the enemy on 28 August.¹²² McDowell, in his defense,

provided the court with an order which he had given to the commanders under his control,¹²³ Sigel being among them, as well as General Orders, Number 10,¹²⁴ both of which gave specific orders as to the movements to be followed in regard to the detention of Longstreet on the west side of the Gap. Further, McDowell elicited testimony from Major Willard,¹²⁵ Lieutenant Colonel Davies,¹²⁶ and Captain Leski,¹²⁷ which indicated that he had taken the measures desired by Sigel who, it was proved, had known of those precautions at the time. McDowell then noted that Sigel had condemned him for not having done precisely what Pope had regretted that he had done for Pope had stated that he "...regretted afterward that any portion of.../McDowell's/ forces had been detached..." to Thoroughfare Gap.¹²⁸ It is to be noted, however, that contemporary military historians have praised McDowell for that very maneuver which his commanding officer wished he had not made.

McDowell concluded this portion of the court of inquiry by stating that his "...duty consisted...in sending...an adequate force 'to the right place at the right time.'" "The time was the earliest one possible under the circumstances produced by my accuser, and the place is the one he himself has indicated, and the force a greater one than he has named...."¹²⁹ Thus McDowell, in effect, concluded that Sigel, least of all, should be

the one to censure him for supposed wrongdoings since he had met all of the latter's criteria for the operation indicated.

The next line of questioning pursued by McDowell concerned Sigel's charges that there was a lack of co-operation between their respective corps on the march from Buckland Mills on 28 August by virtue of which they lost the opportunity to attack the enemy's left flank as he supposedly retreated from Manassas.¹³⁰

McDowell's defense against these charges rested on four factors. One of these elements was that Sigel had marched very slowly due to the fact that he had disobeyed an order stating that there were to be no baggage trains accompanying his corps;¹³¹ Sigel, in fact, had nearly 200 wagons.¹³² That departure from orders had two consequences: it caused Ricketts' Division to be detached as a rear guard, and it stopped the whole column from moving forward.¹³³

Another factor was that Sigel had again departed from orders by moving to the south of the Manassas Gap Railroad instead of to the north of it as ordered. This digression forced Reynolds' Division to march nearly two miles further than ordered with the result that McDowell had to fill in the ensuing space with King's Division, formerly slated for a different position; the original objective, which now was foiled, had been to give the

troops proper spacing so as to bring them into line at the battlefield.¹³⁴

The third and fourth points in McDowell's defense were related very closely to one another as he attempted to refute Sigel's charge that he had broken up the German's line of battle near Groveton and ordered him to march on Manassas, thus forcing him to give up the opportunity to defeat Jackson. McDowell used the testimony of Major Kappner,¹³⁵ Lieutenant Burchard,¹³⁶ and Captain Pell,¹³⁷ to prove that no line of battle had been formed by Sigel, but was only intended to be formed, and that the maps brought by Sigel to the court of inquiry, showing Jackson's position on 28 August,¹³⁸ had been made from afterthought and were, in fact, an inaccurate basis for testimony. McDowell then concluded his attack on these charges by Sigel by stating that:

It will be seen...how little all General Sigel's...theories are worth concerning Jackson being at noon on the 28th with his flank within convenient striking distance of Sigel's column.

We were not only at noon, but since 2 o'clock in the morning, all in error as to the position of the enemy. It was not until the 30th I found out what it had been on the 28th and it seems General Sigel has yet to find it out, without he has acquired his information since he was before this court....¹³⁹

Thus, McDowell's four-pronged attack on Sigel's disobedience of two orders and miscalculation of two others served to render Sigel's arguments relatively harmless. In one particular, however, McDowell's arguments did not

hold water either. The former commander of the III Corps of the Army of Virginia admitted to the court that he had not informed Pope of the shelling his column received in the early morning of 28 August, a point in which Pope concurred,¹⁴⁰ because "...it did not impress me sufficiently...."¹⁴¹ McDowell then rather lamely stated that the importance of the incident had grown all out of proportion due to the fact that it was erroneously believed that the small rebel force was a part of Jackson's main army.¹⁴² McDowell rationalized his tactical mistake by haughtily stating that he did "...not pretend to be able to stand the test of being judged by 'wisdom after the fact.'"¹⁴³

McDowell next treated the last series of charges brought up by Sigel; among those were the accusations that; McDowell had not made the necessary dispositions on 29 August by which the two corps could have acted with more unity; his troops could have been on the field at an earlier hour of the day on the twenty-ninth; the former commander of the III Corps had given the wrong direction of march to his troops on the aforementioned date; his troops had attacked the enemy from the south, or rear, instead of assaulting their left flank; he had not gotten a personal knowledge of the I Corps; and he (Sigel) could not understand the reasons behind McDowell's withdrawal from the positions he had held on the eve of 28 August.¹⁴⁴

In justification of his actions McDowell used the testimony of John Pope to good advantage by showing that Sigel was mistaken in believing that the commander of the III Corps should have gotten a personal knowledge of the I Corps on 29 August; Pope testified that he did not consider McDowell as having command over Sigel's Corps on the twenty-ninth for from that date on the various corps commanders were under his personal and direct command. Pope further stated that he had not sent any orders to Sigel countermanding the relations under which the two corps commanders had marched on 27 and 28 August because the connection between them had been "dissolved of necessity" due to their separation and/or his personal presence among them.¹⁴⁵

Two more of Sigel's charges were refuted in short order when Pope testified that he had indicated to McDowell the direction in which he should march to reach what then was the supposed field of battle. In complying with these orders to "...move by the most direct road from where he was to Centreville..." McDowell could not possibly have emerged upon the enemy from the direction which Sigel preferred.¹⁴⁶

As to the last of Sigel's charges against McDowell ---arriving on the battlefield late, and unnecessarily moving from the positions held on the eve of the twenty-eighth---the former commander of the III Corps of the

Army of Virginia did not fare well in his defense. He tried to defer the responsibility for moving from the positions held on 28 August to King, whose division had retreated from the Groveton area after the battle with Talliaferro and Ewell of Jackson's army; these verbal tactics, however, neglected to take into account the fact that he had separated himself from his divisions by distances of three, six, and ten miles, not to mention the fact that he had inexcusably become lost in the wooded swamps and was unable to counteract the withdrawals made by his division commanders. Not only did these mistakes harm Pope's plans but they also disrupted McDowell's time schedule for he spent a large part of the morning of the twenty-ninth in searching for, and organizing, the various components of his corps. In relation to this Pope testified that he knew of no reason for which McDowell needed to leave his corps in search of him and, further, that the consequence of that act was "...a serious and unlooked-for mistake."¹⁴⁷

Pope, although admitting that his corps commander made mistakes, in answer to a question as to McDowell's conduct stated that:

...I am gratified to be able here to bear testimony to the zeal and energy, the ability, and the cordial sympathy, of General McDowell from the first to the last day of the campaigns in Virginia. In my judgement he has merited and should receive the gratitude of his country and the applause of his countrymen.¹⁴⁸

With the use of hindsight the credibility of Pope's statement can be questioned but its importance at the moment of impact cannot be so easily dismissed; that is, the effect of the remark was such that Sigel's accusations, in the face of contradictory testimony from his superior, was apparently taken much less lightly than they may have been under more rigorous conditions where the court, rather than the accused, controlled the direction and depth of the proceedings.

The next subject examined by McDowell was that of the case of General Milroy, a brigade commander in Sigel's Corps. Milroy charged, in a letter to the court, that on 30 August he sought reinforcements from McDowell due to the fact that his men were being cut to pieces by enemy gunfire. He stated that McDowell's answer to his plea was that "...it was not his business to help everybody, and he was not going to help General Sigel...."¹⁴⁹ Milroy then declared that McDowell had asked an aide if General ____ /Meade/ was fighting on the left; upon being assured that he was "...McDowell replied that he would send him help, for he was a good fellow...."¹⁵⁰

To refute Milroy's charges McDowell requested three witnesses to the aforementioned episode to be called to testify before the court. Lieutenant Roebling, the first witness, testified that Milroy had been very excited for his hat was off, he spoke at the top of his

voice, and he waved his sword around wildly.¹⁵¹ Captain Cutting stated that his manner was so confusing, and his language so indefinite, that it was difficult to determine where he needed the assistance which he requested.¹⁵² The last witness, General Buchanan, declared that Milroy's excited manner caused special attention, even in the midst of battle, and induced many to inquire as to the identity of the man who was rushing about so wildly.¹⁵³ McDowell, in his own behalf, stated that the troops asked for by Milroy were Porter's, a reserve force; while silently debating the advisability of sending this force to Milroy, thus possibly deranging Pope's plans, Meade came up with a clear and definite request so the reinforcements were sent forward to him.¹⁵⁴ Although the latter explanation does not sufficiently explain why Meade should be the recipient of a reserve force, at least the testimony of the three witnesses requested by McDowell does tend to bear out the fact that Milroy was in no condition to take command of Porter's column.

Another area of concern to McDowell was the controversy with Porter over the events of 29 August. On that date Porter had been under the impression that McDowell had given him an order which prohibited an advance whereas the latter was just as sure that he could not be so construed. The result of their inability to communicate was that Porter had advanced only as far as

Dawkins' Branch and, thus, had partially upset Pope's plan of battle. This plan, as events of the twenty-ninth were to prove, was based on a disastrous misconception of the true military situation and was doomed to failure.

The repartee between the two generals, McDowell and Porter, constitutes one of the most fascinating portions of the entire court of inquiry. Their conversation consisted largely of contradictory statements, tales of misconstrued words and gestures, misunderstood and often vicious leading questions and, in many cases, remarks that they had forgotten entirely notes and orders sent to one another. Generally, Porter's aides supported his contentions while McDowell's aides supported his.¹⁵⁵ At one point in his testimony Porter stated that he would like to comment on McDowell's integrity as a witness before his court-martial,¹⁵⁶ which trial was being conducted at the same time as McDowell's court of inquiry. The subject of whom was responsible for Porter's relative inactivity on the twenty-ninth was not resolved and, due to the seeming prejudice of the various witnesses called to testify, may never be solved beyond a reasonable shadow of a doubt; however, it should be noted that Porter was later partially exonerated from any wrongdoing by President Arthur when he appealed his court-martial conviction in later years.¹⁵⁷

The last subject covered by McDowell in his court of inquiry was that of drunkenness. To this end he requested that Colonel R. D. Goodwin, the author of a letter to McDowell contained in the 28 September edition of the Sunday Mercury, be called as a witness. Goodwin had stated in his letter that the former commander of the III Corps of the Army of Virginia had asked, through the medium of the New York Herald, for anyone who thought they knew of any act by him liable to the charge of treachery or disloyalty to come forward. He had then added:

Now, sir, I don't know what frame of mind you was /sic/ in when you wrote such a defiant letter. I cannot say you were under the influence of liquor, as I have seen you at other times, both in the field and out, but that you are one of those brazen-faced Christians who bid defiance to truth I have not the least doubt.... If a drunken man is incapable of holding office I am satisfied you are, for I have seen the proofs at Fairfax Court-House and in Washington, and I am sorry to say there are more of the same sort in command of our army, whose time would be short if we had not such a good-natured man for President.¹⁵⁸

Upon being called to the witness stand Goodwin testified that he had once seen McDowell walking down Thirteenth and Fourteenth Streets in Washington in a rambling fashion and with a ruddy complexion, looking very much as if he were under the influence of liquor. Further, he added that he had, on another occasion, seen McDowell at Fairfax Court-House in an evidently drunken state for he had a loose, careless, unsteady appearance; an unsteady

gait; and a dull vacant look in his eyes.¹⁵⁹

In his defense against Goodwin's accusations McDowell called upon Major-General Heintzelman who stated that he had quite often heard rumors of McDowell being drunk; he added, however, that "...I believe he don't drink tea or coffee, no wines or liquors; totally abstemious."¹⁶⁰ In a surprise move, but with obvious confidence as to the outcome, McDowell also called on McClellan to corroborate his contention that he was a complete teetotaler. McClellan stated that he had known the defendant for nearly twenty years and had always regarded him as one who abstained entirely from wine or liquor. He added that he could "...imagine nothing more absurd than the charge of his being in any way under the influence of intoxicating liquor."¹⁶¹

After most of the defense witnesses had concluded their testimony, and McDowell had finished questioning Goodwin as to his past military experience, he attempted to discredit the witness by proving his "character and credibility;"¹⁶² the court, however, ruled that those questions which related to Goodwin's character were "incompetent."¹⁶³ After trying once more to assassinate the character of the witness, with the same aforementioned result, McDowell gave up that tack and, instead, presented a paper to the court which purported to show that Goodwin had once attempted to pass forged papers on the Government

and had been an inmate of one of the New York penitentiaries. He told the court that surely "...such acts must be sufficient to discredit the witness among military men."¹⁶⁴ Thus, Goodwin's accusations were proven to be unfounded. Had he known that McDowell prided himself on once, after his horse fell on him, having refused pain-numbing liquor to pass between his lips even though he was unconscious at the time Goodwin might never have written the letter which many people saw and, undoubtedly, accepted at face value.

On 4 February McDowell told the court that he had no more witnesses to produce; there being no more witnesses to be called forward by the court it was announced that the evidence in the court of inquiry was closed. McDowell then declared that he would submit a statement to the court on 9 February.¹⁶⁵ On that date the proceedings of the court were read by the recorder; following this McDowell presented his statement to the court, portions of which are herein cited:

...at the end of the campaigns in September last the outcry against me was so great, that my usefulness as a public officer was thought to be so impaired as to cause it to be intimated to me from high authority that my friends could continue to support and defend me better if I were to have this investigation than they otherwise would be able to do....

In taking this course I was far from supposing I could submit to such an inquiry as I asked into my whole conduct without something I had done or omitted to do being discovered, which I could not now wish had been otherwise. But if, on the one hand, errors of judgement

should appear, on the other, I felt confident errors of intention would not, and that it would be made clear that nothing had occurred to warrant the gross and infamous charges of drunkenness, disloyalty, and treason.¹⁶⁶

After reiterating those basic contentions which he had brought out during the court of inquiry McDowell concluded his statement to the court by observing that:

...I have been in constant active service. No doubt of my loyalty has been entertained by the authorities or my superiors, and no evidence questioning it has been brought before this court. And yet I have had to leave my command and undergo the humiliation of this investigation on a charge in my case as baseless as it is senseless, and this is as intelligent a country as ours claims to be....

Is it not a bad symptom in the nation when such things can take place? Can its officers sustain themselves under such a system, and render that service which the country needs in its present critical state and must have as a condition of its salvation?¹⁶⁷

Thus, in his concluding statement McDowell gave vent to those pent-up emotions which had arisen as a result of the grueling court of inquiry which had just consumed ten long weeks of his life. The ordeal was not over, however, for the court of inquiry still had to render a decision, one that would affect his career, his way of life, in the many years yet to come.

On 14 February the court of inquiry adjourned sine die and issued its facts and opinions. After first observing that the court of inquiry had been requested by McDowell, and not by the government,¹⁶⁸ the court noted that while serving under McClellan, McDowell had been

energetic, intelligent, faithful, and without reproach in the performance of his duties.¹⁶⁹

As to his separation from the Army of the Potomac, and the corresponding formation of the Army of the Rappahannock, the court found that the minds of the officers and men were imbued with the capture of Richmond which had "...all the importance and brilliancy of expectation to awaken ambition and a soldier's thirst for glory."¹⁷⁰ Hence, the view that McDowell's separation was the primary cause of McClellan's failure to take Richmond became adopted by the soldiers and affected their opinions of him.¹⁷¹ When McDowell assumed command of his own department the public then believed that he was personally responsible for McClellan's defeat; the court felt that this fact, coupled with the memory of the first battle of Bull Run, accounted for the widespread discontent with McDowell throughout the country, his army, and McClellan's army.¹⁷²

While commander of the Department of the Rappahannock the court found that McDowell desired to proceed to the peninsula but dutifully followed the President's orders to consider Washington his primary concern;¹⁷³ he did, however, continue to occupy himself with thoughts of helping McClellan for "the ambition of General McDowell was deeply interested in this movement."¹⁷⁴ Further, the court observed that "public opinion and censure were

never more at fault than in imputing to General McDowell a want of earnest zeal and desire to assist General McClellan from Fredericksburg in the assault of Richmond."¹⁷⁵

In regard to the time McDowell spent on the banks of the Rappahannock River the court noted that, "instead of furnishing any occasion for censure, his whole conduct at Fredericksburg should receive unqualified commendation."¹⁷⁶ The court added that while at Fredericksburg McDowell was not found guilty of any illicit correspondence with the enemy nor was his conduct regarding the citizens and property of occupied territory considered to be inappropriate.¹⁷⁷ The court noted that "it is apparent that the censure which was passed upon his conduct during the course of a debate in the Senate on this subject arose from a want of information of all the circumstances relating to it."¹⁷⁸

McDowell was further commended for his actions in the Shenandoah Valley wherein the court observed that "...his conduct was irreproachable..." at all times.¹⁷⁹

Only regarding his actions while commander of the III Corps of the Army of Virginia did the court offer any criticism of McDowell. The court noted that his absence from his command, at the time in which he became lost in the woods, was unwarranted for they felt that there was no imperative necessity for him to seek out Pope at a critical time, thus leaving his scattered corps without

any purpose or direction:

However valuable he might have supposed the expression of his views to General Pope, they could be of no avail, while the misconduct of his own corps thwarted a plan the execution of which afforded an opportunity for speedy victory.¹⁸⁰

McDowell was also censured for splitting up his command into three different segments on 28 August for this came at a time when his whole corps was requested to advance to the vicinity of Centreville;¹⁸¹ however, the court commended his actions taken to gather up the scattered corps and press them forward for they disclosed that his separation from his forces, although inconsiderate and unauthorized, was not induced by any unworthy motives.¹⁸²

As to the charge of treachery made by the dying Michigan officer the court found that the accusation had no basis in fact whatsoever, and that the officer had probably been the subject of "...deplorable misapprehension, like many others...."¹⁸³

In regard to the charge of drunkenness as expressed by Goodwin, and echoed by many others, the court stated that "the fact is that there is no man in the land more free than he is from all taint of such vice;"¹⁸⁴ the members of the court added that they were "...entirely satisfied that no man ever saw him in the slightest degree under the influence of intoxicating drink."¹⁸⁵

The court then chose to make a concluding statement

which had in it the ring of McDowell's diatribe against the American public:

In taking leave of the many groundless imputations against General McDowell the court call attention to the alacrity of a portion of the public press to disseminate, and a portion of the people to accept, for a time at least, as true such absurd and unjustifiable rumors against general officers, who are thereby disarmed of power and influence essential to the complete performance of their important duties.

It is to be hoped that the public misfortunes entailed by such calumnies will in future lead to greater circumspection and secure for patriotic and meritorious soldiers more considerate treatment from the American press and people.

In the opinion of the court the interests of the public service do not require any further investigation into the conduct of Major-General McDowell.¹⁸⁶

Nine days later, on 23 February, 1863, Irvin McDowell was ordered to report for duty to the Adjutant-General of the United States Army.¹⁸⁷ The long ordeal was over.

Whether much was proven in the eyes of the powers that be in Washington, however, is a moot point for McDowell was never again allowed to command an army in the field. The aura of failure born of the first battle of Bull Run, when the war was still in its infancy, continued to trail after him for the inquiry which some have termed a military "whitewash" apparently left many questions unanswered in the minds of those who were able to control his military destiny. McDowell, forelorn over much that had taken place since that month in 1861 when

he had become the supreme commander of the troops around Washington, laid bare his innermost thoughts when he sadly stated that, "...I can truly say I have done things I wish I had done differently, and have omitted much I wish I had done...."188

FOOTNOTES

Chapter VII

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⁸New York Tribune, 9 September, 1862, p. 5.

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- ¹⁶New York Tribune, 28 August, 1862, pp. 4-5.
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³³National Intelligencer (Washington), 9 September, 1862, p. 1.

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³⁶Myers, p. 351.

³⁷American Historical Association Annual Report, 1902, Diary and Correspondence of Salmon P. Chase (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1903), pp. 92 & 104.

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VIII. BALANCE SHEET

The balance sheet of McDowell's career as a field commander suggests that his unskilled mediocrity, augmented by the pressures of time and circumstance, fused with conditions which few commanders could have controlled to bring about disastrous results, both for him and for the Union cause, at the first battle of Bull Run, in the Shenandoah Valley, and at the battle of Second Manassas (Bull Run).

At Bull Run McDowell aptly revealed his lack of generalship by violating many of the principles of warfare; however, the fact remains that certain elements were beyond his sphere of influence for he was rather adamantly thrust into a situation for which neither he nor the country was adequately prepared.

In the Shenandoah Valley McDowell, although reacting quickly to the rapidly-moving events, once again contravened many of the principles of strategy and tactics. As before he was seriously hampered by factors which were beyond his control; that is, by the dabbling in tactics prescribed by the President and the Secretary of War, and by the unstable character of the objectives set down by Lincoln, for he expected McDowell to march double-quick to the Valley, defeat the cagy Jackson,

march promptly back to Fredericksburg, and be prepared to aid McClellan on the peninsula before Richmond.

At Second Manassas McDowell was not, in contrast to the two previous campaigns, hindered by any high-level political and military decisions beyond his control but, rather, he was curtailed instead by the extreme mismanagement and miscalculation on the part of his commanding officer, Pope. This, however, in nowise negates his own negligence and errors, which were considerable, for his role in the conflict carried with it a vast amount of responsibility; unfortunately, McDowell's lack of ability prevented him from living up to the responsibility reposed in him by virtue of his rank and position.

Thus, with the successive losses of the Union forces in the Virginia theatre of the war, confidence in McDowell's ability to command had waned. He was a " . . . good bureau officer . . . " and a " . . . disciplinarian and drill-officer for a school of instruction . . . ,"¹ but he did not have the occasional flashes of brilliance or the steadiness in the field which many times are the mark of a good field commander. Thus, even though he was often " . . . more sinned against than sinning . . . ,"² his lack of confidence in his own ability to command, coupled with his sometimes burning ambition for success in the field, his lack of experience, and many of his irritating personal characteristics, combined with the discouraging and well-publicized Northern

disasters linked to his name to invoke a lack of confidence on the part of those who were able to control his military future. Among those who were able to exert a strong influence on his military destiny were the Jacobins.

In his relationship with the Radicals, too, McDowell was often the victim of circumstances which were beyond his control. Although he did not deliberately use politics to try and achieve selfish ends he was certainly astute enough to take advantage of the political opportunities which presented themselves through his relationship with Secretary of the Treasury Chase; however, he seems not to have curried favor with the Radicals in any direct way. Rather, the evidence points to the contention that the Jacobins used his name, instead, to further their own causes. McDowell was their pseudo-favorite for basically two reasons; his views on slavery were sound, and he was available; that is, not only was he on an intimate relationship with Chase, at whose funeral he was a pallbearer---perhaps the ultimate act of friendship,³ but he was also a high-ranking officer with a responsible position operating in the theatre of war nearest to the Radical bailiwick. Thus, a watchful eye could be kept on his movements to detect any deviation from the Jacobin cause.

McDowell's own statements support the premise that

he knew of the Radicals' reliance on him to further their objectives, and that he allowed himself, with few reservations, to be willingly thrust forward as a pawn on their political chessboard due to considerations of personal ambition and self-proclaimed military efficiency. When their views did coincide, however, it was largely due to the fact that they often operated simultaneously for vastly different goals; one was involved with the intricacies of political intrigue while the other was concerned with the fortunes of a man and a nation at war. Thus, although McDowell was by no means a Jacobin lackey, neither was he at all times the master of his own destiny.

When the Radicals felt that McDowell's usefulness as a military tool had been exhausted, due to the large amount of public opinion raised against him, political expediency called for his repudiation. Having lost their support McDowell was relegated to the military rubbish heap and left without a field command. He had been acquainted with the Jacobin cause for as long as was politically possible in the complex world of Washington politics.

After his brief and controversial career as a field officer McDowell served on various army boards in Washington, D. C.⁴ Following this endeavor he presided over a court of inquiry in St. Louis which dealt with the cases

of military personnel who were being investigated for improper use of their authority in dealing in cotton with the South.⁵ In 1864 he was appointed to the territorial command of the Department of the Pacific; this was followed the next year by his appointment to command of the Department of California in the Division of the Pacific.⁶ Over the course of the next seventeen years he received the rank of brevet major-general and major-general in the regular army, and commanded the departments of the East, South, and Pacific.⁷ Upon his retirement from active service in 1882 he became the San Francisco City Park Commissioner, indulging in his hobbies of architecture and landscape gardening on a grand scale; he served his adopted city in that capacity until his death on 4 May, 1885.⁸

McDowell was but a puppet, not a primary actor, in the drama of war between the states for he had been manipulated almost continually during the conflict by either Chase, Scott, McClellan, the Jacobins, Lincoln, Stanton, Pope, or Halleck; although many times they may not have directly pulled the strings which induced McDowell to move, they all, nevertheless, did play a major role in influencing McDowell's ideas and actions both on and off the field of battle.

McDowell's case is unique only insofar as the large number of intangibles that attended his every move are

concerned, for, in a broader sense, his plight was very typical of a situation which was destined to develop anyway, irrespective of the personalities involved, due to the command problems encountered by the Union which engulfed all other aspects of the war in its early stages.

Those command problems, which affected the overall strategy of the federal forces in the early years of the war, largely centered around four immediate areas; unpreparedness, political intrigue, undefined civil/military functions, and caution on the part of the generals entrusted with carrying the war to the Confederacy.

The North, unprepared to conduct a modern war due to non-involvement in military action since the Mexican War, was hampered by an extremely archaic and inadequate system of command; this, in turn, was heightened by the lack of good weapons and maps of the countryside, the lack of a general staff, and the lack of experienced officers and men. McDowell, even as his country, was unprepared for a field command for he, too, was a rusty remnant of the archaic system of command which spawned such figures as General Winfield Scott, the senile coordinator of overall federal strategy in the early stages of the war.

Another block to cohesive federal strategy was the presence in Washington of inexperienced, jealous, or

incompetent, administrators. Although some of these men, such as Secretary of War Cameron, were eventually weeded out others remained to cause the Lincoln administration many problems through their attempts to gain control of the executive branch of government. They used such media as the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War and the cabinet, both of which strived continually to choose their own generals and, hence, control the conduct of the war itself.⁹

The Union was further weakened due to the fact that generals were often chosen for political reasons: to unite discordant groups in support of the war, to keep down division in the North, to enlist the support of nationality groups, and to satisfy the political egos of powerful Democrats and Republicans located in state or national positions.¹⁰

In the above-mentioned regard, also, McDowell's role was a controversial one for he had been appointed to his initial command in the field for reasons which were partly political, had hobnobbed with Joint Committee members and their cabinet ally, Chase, and had been identified with certain military/political maneuverings in the public mind. Thus, a second area of controversy revolved about McDowell and, at the same time, pointed toward a serious fault within the federal command structure.

Also deeply involved in the problems of the Union

command system was President Lincoln who performed many of those functions which, in later years, would be handled by the joint chiefs of staff; in this capacity he formulated policy, drew up strategic plans, and directed tactical movements.¹¹ The mistakes which he made generally resulted from his ignorance of how to translate his strategic concepts into workable instructions for his generals and, conversely, the generals were often ignorant of how to establish relations with the President so as to counsel him and be advised.¹² Lincoln, who sensed that something was wrong in the command system, felt that there should be a division of functions between his office and the military but he was at a loss as to where to draw the line.¹³ Thus, the functions of the civil administration and the military became inextricably mixed; the problem which the military had to face was how to make Clausewitz's dictum a reality; "'The art of war in its highest point of view becomes policy, but, of course, a policy which fights battles instead of writing notes.'"¹⁴

In his relationship with Lincoln, too, McDowell's role as a vital cog in the command structure is an indicator of why the Union failed to win the war earlier than it did. Indicative of this failure are the instructions given by the President to McDowell during the Shenandoah Valley campaign; by thus playing the role of

tactician Lincoln took over the functions normally relegated to the military. Another indication of the breakdown within the command structure was the January, 1862, councils of war called by the President to plan a movement which, hopefully, would eventually culminate with a Union victory at Richmond. In this instance Lincoln assumed McClellan's role as general-in-chief due to considerations of public opinion concerning the lack of movement on the part of the Army of the Potomac; here, also, McDowell's role was a vital one for he, a mere division commander, was called upon to draw up a strategic plan to invade Virginia. Thus, Lincoln's actions, which engendered much distrust on the part of his generals, only served to weaken the Union command structure further for the relationship between McClellan and McDowell deteriorated steadily from this time onward.

The Union generals, many of them inexperienced and inept, constitute the last factor which kept the North from winning the war earlier than it did for they lacked the slugging, driving force to use the power at their disposal for anything other than the carrying out of cautious, inconclusive engagements which, in the final analysis, only prolonged the "irrepressible conflict."¹⁵ Lincoln, who eventually came to doubt the capability of the military mind, had asked for decisions, action, fighting, and victory; instead, he had received only

indecision, inaction, excuses, and delay.¹⁶

McDowell, typical of the cautious field commanders the President so wished to replace, once again proved himself to be an indicator of the inadequate structure of command and the lack of federal initiative which prolonged the war. His failures at Bull Run, in the Shenandoah Valley, and at Second Manassas, although often induced by factors over which he had no control, are perfect examples of the disastrous results which awaited the Union cause as a result of the policy of fighting a limited war for a limited end with limited means. By 1864 the North would have a modern system of command but until then it would go through many agonizing moments and bitter experiences before the glaring gaps in the inadequate arrangement were bridged.¹⁷

McDowell, thrust into the limelight during crucial moments in America's struggle for survival as a unified nation, emerged as a storm center around whom many of the Union command problems revolved. His meagre ability as a field commander and his involvement with political figures who often operated at cross-purposes to the objectives of the Lincoln administration---both of which were indicative of factors that prolonged the war, could not overcome the fate which the wheel of fortune seems to have spun for him. Perhaps his most fitting epitaph emerged from the pen of a long-time antagonist, George

Brinton McClellan, who stated that McDowell should have been relieved from command after the first battle of Bull Run " . . . and allowed . . . to sink at once into obscurity."¹⁸ Thus, he would at least have avoided the ignominy which attended his name.

In retrospect it is a sad commentary on the fortunes of war that a man who devoted forty-four years of his life to the service of his country is best-remembered for the two years during which he was an acknowledged failure. Today all that remains to honor his memory is McDowell Avenue, an obscure, lonely, and forgotten street on the Presidio military reservation of San Francisco, the city on the bay which was his adopted home.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter VIII

¹George B. McClellan, McClellan's Own Story (New York: Charles L. Webster and Co., 1887), p. 71.

²Shelby Foote, The Civil War: A Narrative (New York: Random House, 1958), p. 745.

³Thomas Graham Belden and Marva Robins Belden, So Fell The Angels (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1956), p. 273.

⁴Warren W. Hassler Jr., Commanders of the Army of the Potomac (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), p. 25.

⁵The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, ed. Roy P. Basler (9 vols.; New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953), VI, p. 397.

⁶United States, War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (129 vols.; Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series II, Vol. VIII, p. 840.

⁷Lyman Abbott (ed.), "Irvin McDowell," The National Cyclopedia of American Biography, IV (New York: James T. White and Co., 1895), p. 50.

⁸Hassler, p. 25.

⁹Bruce Catton, Mr. Lincoln's Army (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1951), pp. 198-199.

¹⁰Thomas Harry Williams, Lincoln and His Generals (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1952), pp. 10-11.

¹¹Williams, p. 8.

¹²Major General Sir Frederick Maurice, Statesmen and Soldiers of the Civil War (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1926), pp. 153-154.

¹³Williams, p. 13.

¹⁴Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 73.

¹⁵Catton, p. 150.

¹⁶Williams, p. 9.

¹⁷Williams, p. 14.

¹⁸McClellan, p. 71.

FIGURE

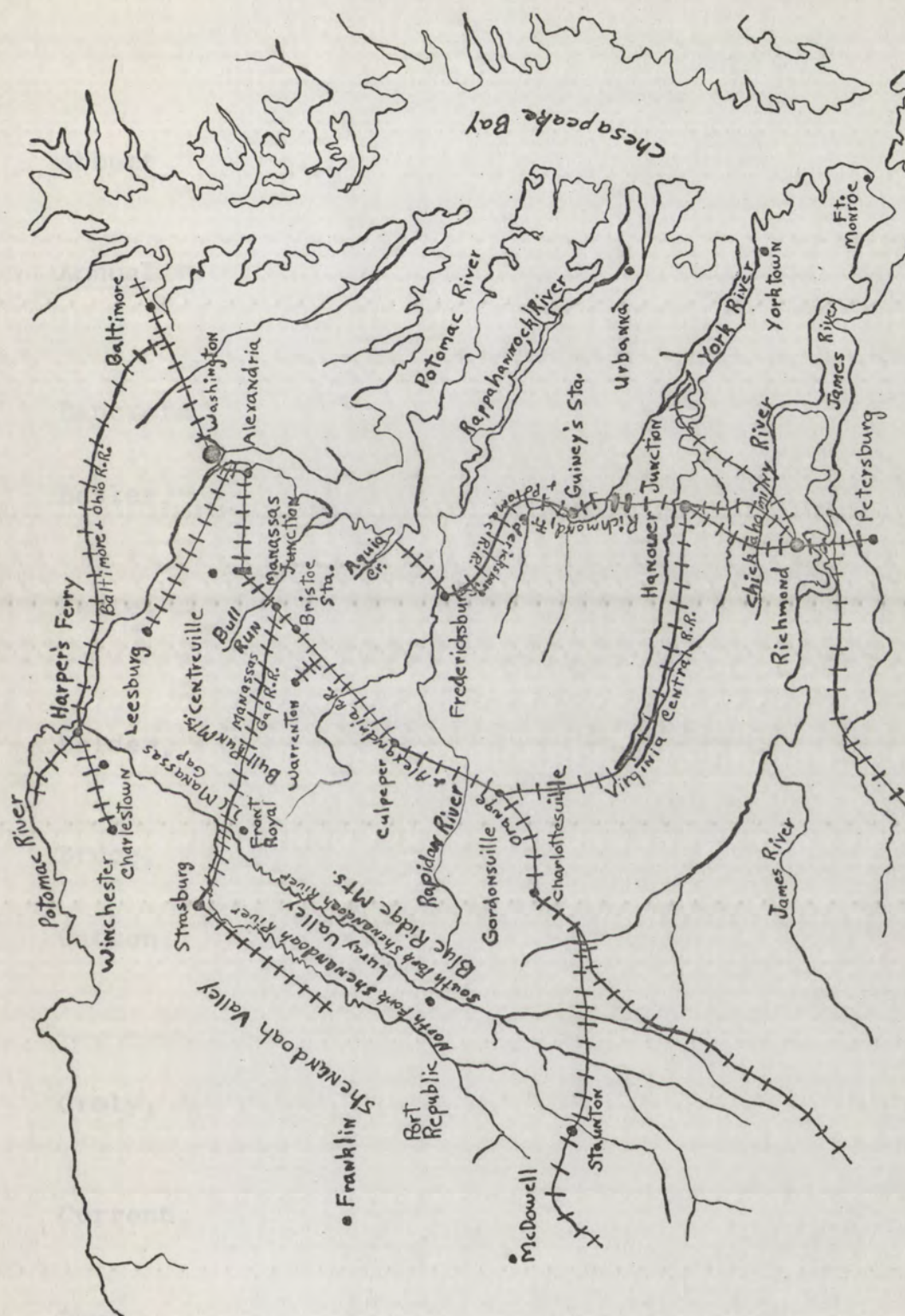


Fig. 1. Map of Virginia, 1861-1862 *

*After Bruce Catton, Never Call Retreat (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1965).

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