VALLEY FORGE HISTORICAL RESEARCH REPORT

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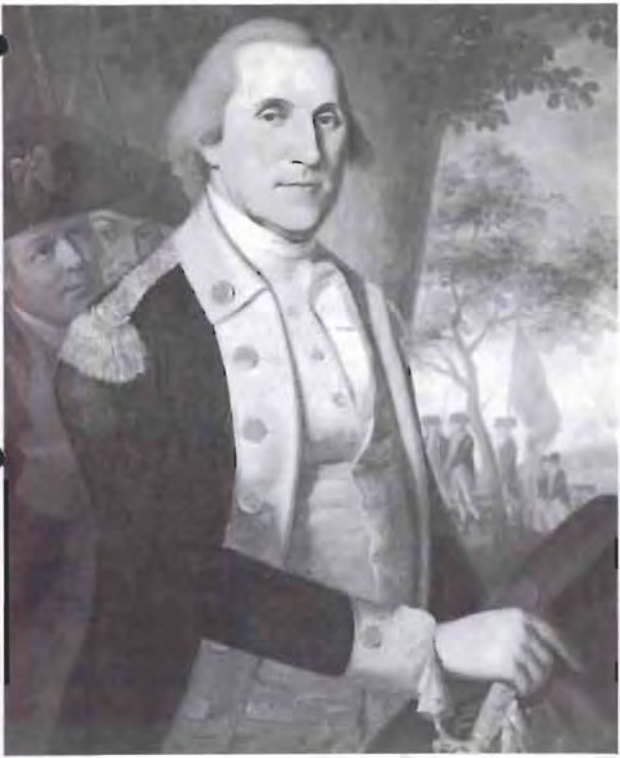
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General George Washington
1732-1799
Commander in Chief of the Continental Army

James Peale, after C. W. Peale, c. 1787-1790

Courtesy of Independence National Historical Park

THE VORTEX OF SMALL FORTUNES: THE CONTINENTAL ARMY AT VALLEY FORGE, 1777-1778

FINAL REPORT: VOLUME ONE

By

Wayne K. Bodle

THE VALLEY FORGE HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

The army, you know, is the Vortex of small fortunes & wo betides him who makes no provision for a wet day - while we are under every disability in the field, to take advantage of the times, or even to keep the old ground good.

Josiah Stoddard
Chatham, New Jersey
February 21, 1778

But for the virtuous few of the Army, I am persuaded that this country must long before this have been destroyed. It is saved for our sakes; & its salvation ought to cause Repentence in us for all our Sins, if evil and Misery are the consequences of Iniquity. For my own part, I believe they are; And expect by this Pennance, to emerge into the World, after leaving this Place, with all accounts fully ballanced. I shall then take care how I sin again, ever having a retrospect to its Consequences.

James M. Varnum
Camp at Valley Forge
March 7, 1778

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Jacqueline Thibaut
Wayne K. Bodle
Valley Forge
May, 1980

I. THE CAMPAIGN FOR PENNSYLVANIA

On July 30, 1777, George Washington, Commander in Chief of the Continental army, supervised the movement of most of that army into Pennsylvania at Coryell's Ferry, a small community on the Delaware River, approximately thirty-five miles northwest of Philadelphia. The British army, against whose anticipated depredations Washington was moving to defend the state, was at that moment somewhere on the Atlantic Ocean between New York City and Virginia. Its precise location was momentarily unknown, although recent intelligence reports had placed it at the capes of the Delaware Bay, apparently gauging the possibility of using that estuary as an avenue to Philadelphia.

Under the pressure of the seemingly imminent appearance of the enemy, the Continental army and its several political constituencies - the Continental Congress, the civil government of Pennsylvania, and the Board of War - proceeded to test the waters of complex cooperation at close quarters. Washington, through Congress, pressed the state to complete the fortifications and underwater obstructions of the Delaware River, which were intended

to guard Philadelphia against the British fleet.[1] The state in its turn, through the same agency, urged the release of at least part of the Pennsylvania militia assembled at Chester, citing the need for the men to plant winter corn, "on which this Country greatly depends."[2]

Washington was neither disposed nor in a position to spare the men, even for so essential a service as agriculture. By August 22 the army had remained at the Crossroads in Bucks County, half way between Coryell's Ferry and Philadelphia, for ten days, "in the dark with regard to [the enemy's] designs."[3] According to one officer, the camp was conducively sited for hurried military preparations. The army was situated, he observed, "in a plentiful Country which furnishes Our Troops with sundry little necessaries, from which they reap great advantages, our Hospitals decrease every day, and in a general way the Army may be said to be very healthy, and higher spirits never prevailed among any set of men."[4]

Good health and high spirits could be expected to count for a great deal against an opponent which had been bouncing around on the Atlantic in cramped transport vessels for nearly a month, but Washington could not ignore the tangible importance of sheer numbers. Learning on the twenty-third that the British were preparing to land at Head of Elk, Maryland, he uprooted his troops from their sylvan resting place. After marching them through Philadelphia to boost civilian (and presumably Congressional) morale, he hurried them on toward Wilmington, Delaware. In the meantime he began drumming the middle states for every body he could put behind a musket.

To one officer who had delayed joining the main army until he could recruit a full complement of men, Washington wrote ordering him to come on with as many troops as he had, leaving subordinates to finish the recruiting.[5] Members of Congress were impressed to serve as epistolary recruiting officers, writing to the heads of their respective states to urge them to raise, arm, and send forward fresh regiments to fill up the "Grand Army." By early September, with the enemy on dry land and showing every intention of menacing Philadelphia, even Pennsylvania's Supreme Executive Council had gotten the message. Forgetting the planting season momentarily, the Council ordered 5,000 of the militia, however equipped, to place themselves on the "heighths of Derby" to defend the city.[6] It was "very necessary," the Council gravely noted, to "contradict all reports that the army under his Excellency General Washington, is already too numerous."[7]

Any complacency which may have existed while the enemy remained unheard from on the Atlantic rapidly gave way to sobriety and attention to the business at hand once the Redcoats and their Hessian allies had left their boats. The pulse of activity quickened discernably, not only in the American army, but in all legislative and administrative bodies, from the Continental Congress down to the committees that provided day-to-day local government in Philadelphia. In addition to the indispensable business of mobilizing, arming, and equipping large numbers of troops in Pennsylvania and adjacent states, the sudden shift of the seat of war into what had previously been at most a support area necessitated a flurry of disruptive adjustments.

The large numbers of British prisoners of war who had been housed in the backwater towns of interior Pennsylvania, such as Lancaster and York, had to be moved even farther inland to prevent their being freed and wreaking havoc on the state.[8] Massive stores of military and other equipment needed to be moved out of harm's reach from the towns of Reading, Lancaster, and Easton, or at the very least carefully guarded.[9] In anticipation of the sudden movement of the American army, supplies of food, clothing, and equipment had to be forwarded to strategically located magazines and protected.[10] Trade and crafts people with specialized skills had to be carefully allocated among a diversity of competing departments, both within and outside of the army.[11]

The city of Philadelphia, long the anticipated target of William Howe's campaign in Pennsylvania, was disrupted by rumors and alarms from the beginning of August, and would linger in an alternating state of tranquility and frenzied activity until the British captured the town in late September.[12] During the seven week interval vital supplies and private goods were packed and forwarded toward the interior of the state.[13] In the interior the approach of war was felt as a kind of ripple effect, as men of military age and consumable supplies were moved toward the zone of probable conflict, while noncombatants and essential support activities were relocated from the east and south.

The flurry of preparations resulted in what amounted to a dislocation and partial rearrangement of the social and economic geography of the settled parts of the state, and placed unforeseen strains on the institutional arrangements by which its society

and economy had formerly functioned. Expedient solutions were imposed upon problems in the necessary and hopeful belief that the paperwork could be done later, that erroneous decisions could be formally retromanded, and restitution made when necessary.[14]

As August gave way to September, a brief lull fell over Philadelphia and its surrounding provinces. Mobilization proceeded apace, but the immediate, visible face of war temporarily receded. The Continental army was once again outside of the borders of the state in Delaware. A summer of anxious maneuvering was finally about to culminate in combat, but the terms of the engagement were at least for the moment defined. The British army was no longer an invisible, indeterminate entity which might any morning materialize on the city wharfs. Rather, as eyewitness accounts reached the city, it took on the appearance of a slightly wobbly, sea-weary force, recovering its terrestrial equilibrium at boatside; the feared Redcoats more interested for the moment in refreshing themselves at the expense of Maryland farmers than in immediately threatening the Continental capital.[15] The possibility existed for the moment, however remotely, that the decisive battle or battles might occur at a distance.

As William Howe waited for his troops to regain their land legs, and scouted the countryside for the most appropriate routes into Pennsylvania, he wrote to American Secretary George Germain outlining his expectations for the expedition. Contrary to the

King's hopes, he cautioned, it would be impossible for him to complete his operations in the south in time to return to New York and support the northern army's invasion of New York State. Indeed, he hardly had any hope of concluding the war in 1777 without the sizeable addition of reinforcements from England for which he had been pressing since late 1776. Even his immediate object of seizing Pennsylvania would be, he lamented, "greatly impeded by the prevailing Disposition of the inhabitants who, I am sorry to observe, seem to be... strongly in Enmity against us many having taken up Arms, and by far the greater Number deserted their Dwellings, Driving off at the same time, their Stock of Cattle and Horses."[16]

Howe concluded by promising to do his best. Although he was clearly indulging in the commander's traditional prerogative of restricting in advance the criteria by which his accomplishments would be judged, he was not wildly overestimating the obstacles which lay in his path. A British general would later remember the campaign to Philadelphia as "as hard an exertion as ever was made by any army, through the strangest country in the world."[17] Howe may well have contributed greatly to his own difficulties by his dilatory manner of launching the campaign. Having consumed the better part of the summer bringing his army to the brink of battle, however, he was not about to promise a triumphal procession to final victory.

With Washington in a similarly cautious mood, what occurred instead was a series of sideling maneuvers on the part of both armies, punctuated by sporadic skirmishes between scouts, piquets,

and other detachments. The two armies moved during early September in a northerly and then northwesterly direction, their parallel tendencies keeping the Americans between Philadelphia and the British. September 10 found the armies arranged a short distance apart, the Americans on the east bank of the Brandywine Creek, centered at Chadds Ford, in Chester County, Pennsylvania, and the British several miles away in the hilly country west of the stream. An engagement seemed unavoidable. For Howe, continued sideslipping to the northwest would have begun carrying him farther from, rather than nearer to, his objective of Philadelphia. For Washington, such a development would have supported the lingering suspicion that the Continental storehouses in Lancaster, Reading, and other interior cities, rather than Philadelphia, were the real object of British attention. That conclusion would have suggested changing his ground and engaging Howe on the spot, or at least interposing the American army between the enemy and their presumptive new target.

The Americans, however, entertained few serious doubts that the British intended to thrust toward Philadelphia, or that such a movement would precipitate a major battle. On the tenth, Major General Nathanael Greene wrote to his wife that a general action would take place within a few days. He described the army as being in high spirits, and reported that they wished for action, but he questioned the value of the Pennsylvania militia. The latter were, he noted, "not like the Jersey militia - fighting is a new thing with these - and many seems to have but a poor stomach for the business."[18] Greene vividly described the effect of the movement

of the armies through the countryside on the inhabitants. They "generally depart their houses", he reported, "furniture moving - cattle driving and women and children traveling off on foot. the country all resounds with the cries of the people. The Enemy plunder most amazingly."[19]

Washington's arrangement of the army for the expected encounter was based on his understanding that the Brandywine Creek was crossable only at a fixed series of fords, to which the road network of southern Chester County connected. He was thus able to concentrate his forces at those points, where he was certain the enemy would have to strike.[20] Disastrous flaws in the intelligence on which this assurance was based nearly proved the army's undoing. Its defensive arrangements only extended for six miles above Chadds Ford, to the forks of the Brandywine. Beyond that point, it was believed that there were no suitable places to cross what then would have been two branches for another twelve miles.

Howe knew better. Availing himself of local intelligence, he sketched a sharp arc-like route north of the forks, located untended fords across both branches, and discovered a path which would, if he could execute the march without alerting Washington's scouts, put him in a position to fall on the right flank of the unsuspecting Americans. Leaving part of the army under the command of the German general Wilhelm von Knyphausen to maneuver as if in preparation for a frontal assault, Howe in the early hours of September 11 marched the bulk of his troops north in the direction of the unguarded fords.

The Americans fell for the bait. They immediately began to skirmish with forward elements of Knyphausen's force and, girding for the expected direct onslaught, ignored fragmentary and contradictory reports which reached Head Quarters during the early afternoon warning of Redcoats marching northward. By about three that afternnon, Howe had the satisfaction of being precisely where he wanted to be, on the right flank of a startled opponent who, having belatedly realized that they had been outmaneuvered, were frantically struggling to swing around to receive his assault.[21]

Having made a hard march of between twelve and fourteen miles since daybreak, however, the British lost some time assembling the "column of battallions" that would smash into the exposed flank.[22] The delay gave Major General John Sullivan, who commanded the division on the immediately threatened flank, a brief interval in which to reorganize his men, and afforded Washington time to assemble reinforcements and rush them toward the point of expected impact. The respite, momentary though it was, helped to turn a probable complete rout into a desperately improvised and sharply contested, if ultimately crumbling retreat.

As it was, even a mitigated defeat was not assured unless the Americans proved markedly more adept at regrouping under hot fire than they had the previous year in the Battle of Long Island. The British were impressed with the improvement of their foes. Watching the Americans desperately wheeling about as they organized the assault, Lord Cornwallis is reported to have remarked to Howe that

the "damn rebels form well."[23] This was, of course, relative, if grudging praise. American communications began to fall apart, and the regiments and battalions had to be grouped and positioned as best they conveniently could, using whatever elements of terrain or structures that presented themselves to form strong points. Several units broke and ran as they found themselves out of position and in danger of being cut off from the main body. Those troops who did betray a "stomach for the business" were rallied by whatever officers were available and retained the presence and imagination to improvise.[24]

Fortunately for the Americans, the British assault displayed a certain improvisational character of its own. One body of Redcoats, momentarily wandering out of the main line of advance and meeting unexpectedly hot resistance, spontaneously drafted an officer on leave from his regiment at Rhode Island "attend[ing] the army as a spectator." Gratified when this officer dashed off and brought up reinforcements, the men "devised to elect him our chief, and meant to have gone on under his command," before they were hastily annexed to another battalion.[25]

Thanks to the quick thinking of some of the American officers, and the courage of large numbers of their men, the fall-back was conducted with some degree of order, so that there remained at least the semblance of a defensive line when Washington brought up the first reinforcements, including his unattached and then still untested aide, the Marquis de Lafayette.[26] They were followed closely by Nathanael Greene, with the "high spirited" regular troops

he had touted the day before. Greene's men gave an account of themselves which fully justified their commander's praise, allowing the broken units which Sullivan had held to fall back. Despite exhaustion from having double-timed to the front, they conducted an impressive and professional, field-by-woodlot retreat toward the village of Dilworth in their rear.[27]

The retreat was complicated when Knyphausen, seeing that Washington had pulled some of his best units from their positions facing the Brandywine to reinforce the crumbling right flank, abandoned his maneuvers and charged across the stream to join the fight in earnest. Anthony Wayne, who had been left in command of the American remnant on that front, withdrew those forces gradually, skirmishing enough to prevent Knyphausen from falling on the retreating army.[28]

The battle ended, not as it might have, in the complete disintegration of the Continental army, but with a managed withdrawal from the field toward Chester. The end of daylight, and the exhaustion of the British troops from the effects of constant marching and fierce combat, combined to keep Howe from extracting a decisive victory from the stumbling which had characterized American planning for the event. Howe's army camped on the battlefield, collected its casualties, and spent several days licking its wounds, while the Americans regrouped at Chester and limped back toward Philadelphia.

At midnight on the eleventh, Washington duly reported to Congress that he had been "obliged to leave the Enemy masters of the field."

The American wounded, he noted, putting the best possible face on the affair, did not appear to be considerable, the men continued in high spirits, and the baggage, having previously been sent away, was secure. Washington concluded that he hoped another opportunity would present itself to "compensate for the loss now sustained."[29]

Other reactions to the battle ranged around Washington's tersely worded report, but the general opinion was that the army had acquitted itself well in difficult, and indeed potentially disastrous circumstances. Writing in his diary several days later, Adjutant General Timothy Pickering mused that the battle had suggested to him "two or three important lessons." The most important of these related to the need for having complete and accurate knowledge of the terrain on which a battle was to be fought.[30] An anonymous memorialist concluded that the battle had indeed been a British victory, but speculated that "such another Victory would establish the Rights of America," and allowed that he would "wish them the honor of the field again tomorrow on the same terms."[31]

By the fourteenth, writing from Germantown, where the Continental army was resting, nursing its wounded, and resupplying, Nathanael Greene was in an even more optimistic and combative mood. He reported to his wife that the enemy's recruitment of Chester County doctors indicated a terrible carnage among their troops, and ventured to predict that the "next action" would "ruin Mr. Howe totally."[32] He thought such an action would occur "in a few days," and said the troops remained healthy and full of fight. Blaming the "vilinous Quakers" for the army's problems, Greene warmed eloquently to his

subject: "these are only so many preparatory steps to Mr. Howes ruin -- We are gathering about him like a mighty cloud charg'd with destruction, and by the blessing of God I hope its execution will be dreadful."[33]

It is necessary in weighing comments of this nature to make allowances for wishful thinking, as well as for the adrenal effect of combat itself on soldiers who had by mid-Spetember marched and countermarched for hundreds of miles, in constant anticipation of battle, without having once "gave or got a thrust or cutt of a sword," much less smelled gunpowder fired in anger.[34] No amount of bravado could dispel the feeling that the American army had walked into the jaws of destruction itself at Brandywine, and extricated itself only through a rare combination of initiative, bravery, and luck. The limits of American military organization in a general action had been rudely discovered on the eleventh, along with the courage and fighting ability of individuals and small units. Nevertheless, it is difficult to overestimate the effects of the engagement on the army's morale. The troops had clashed head-on with the vaunted Redcoats in a major action, and emerged with the feeling that they had gotten only a little the worst of it. For the army, Brandywine had generated the feeling, which would intensify after the battle of Germantown, that it was at least a match for Howe's best troops.

Germantown was several weeks away, however, and the more immediate likelihood of battle loomed. Whatever dispostion may have existed toward recriminations over responsibility for the defeat

at Brandywine, too much immediately remained to be done in its wake for those feelings to be thoroughly aired. Every constituency with responsibility for the American war effort had immediate work to do. Washington had first to see to the immediate safety of his troops. Having removed them to a comfortable distance from the enemy, he set about increasing their numbers.

From the military hospitals, Washington was able to recruit enough convalescents to cover the casualties he had suffered at Brandywine.[35] He turned to Congress for help in pressing the states to send forward more men. Even the president of that body was enlisted in the campaign, writing to Generals Philemon Dickinson of the New Jersey militia, and William Smallwood of Maryland, urging them to "fully exert themselves at this critical juncture" to conclude their recruiting expeditions and join the grand army.[36] Washington also began to draw upon the supply of troops stationed in the lower Hudson ("North") River valley in the vicinity of Peekskill, New York, who were kept there to serve as a buffer between Sir Henry Clinton's garrison in New York City and the "northern" armies of both sides, which were then nearing a crucial engagement at Saratoga. From this force he ordered General Alexander McDougall's brigade to come south on the fourteenth.[37] Within ten days he would dip more deeply into this crucial reserve.

While Washington and Congress wrestled with the problem of army strength, Pennsylvania's civilian government involved itself more directly and urgently than before with the defense of Philadelphia. Forgotten for the duration was the planting season,

as the Supreme Executive Council ordered its county lieutenants to scrape the militia barrel bare. The reaction in the city to the news of the American setback was one of controlled anxiety, bordering only occasionally on panic. The bustle of military preparations increased.[38]

Both Washington and the Supreme Executive Council turned their attention to the defensive positions along the Schuylkill. Washington worried anew about the state of the forts and river obstructions below the city.[39] The Council, more concerned about the British army than the navy, glanced uneasily at the fords and ferries at and above the town. It dispatched two cannon and "a considerable corps of city militia" as far up river as the Swedes Ford, and hoped that the Chester County militia would assemble there.[40] At the city itself, heavy cannon were hauled to the ferries.[41] Washington ordered redoubts and breastworks thrown up at all fords and ferries along the river.[42]

As preparations continued, the British army stirred from its post-battle convalescence near Brandywine. Washington took his own considerably mended and refreshed troops forth from Germantown to resume the minuet. Howe still appeared intent upon capturing Philadelphia, and Washington, whatever reservations he may have held about another general engagement before reinforcements could join him, had received no Congressional dispensation from his charge to defend that place.

The two armies moved on September 15, with no particular knowledge of each other's intentions, and only partial intelligence of each other's whereabouts. By the morning of the sixteenth they were in eastern Chester County, within striking distance of one another, seemingly on the brink of the "next action" that Greene had approvingly predicted. The affair got underway that day when British and American scouting parties stumbled into one another and brought up small detachments in support. Just as it appeared that the main armies might follow into the fray, turning a skirmish into a major, and possibly a decisive battle, a torrential, blinding rain began to fall. The storm continued throughout the day and into the night, soaking the combatants, destroying the ammunition of both sides, and soon washing out the battle altogether.[43]

The storm, which at once named and aborted the "Battle of the Clouds," may have been providential for both sides, as each would have been risking its fortunes on what amounted to a chance encounter. Washington would have opened himself to serious questions had he been defeated while large reinforcements were hastening his way from both the north and south. Needing to replenish his munitions, he drove the army late into the night, splashing through swollen streams and freshets to Yellow Springs, where he awaited the arrival of dry powder from the Continental storehouses.[44]

The British moved toward the Schuylkill, sending a large detachment to Valley

Forge where they drove off a smaller party of Americans attempting to remove flour and other material from that post, and helped themselves to the goods.[45]

As the chess game continued in Chester County, anxiety remained at a high level in the city and in American political councils. A resident of Philadelphia reported "some little confusion in consequence of the advancing of the British army, however we have not been molested...."[46] Congress called on Pennsylvania's militia commander John Armstrong to spare men to remove all but one printing press from the city.[47] That body continued to busy itself attempting to supply more troops to the Continental army. John Hancock reported to Washington that 2,000 Virginia militia were available at Williamsburg and waited only for Washington's orders to march.[48] He also transmitted Congressional resolves giving Washington "the most extensive powers" to seize provisions and other supplies necessary for the army.[49]

On September 19 Washington marched his troops north from Yellow Springs to Parker's Ford and crossed the Schuylkill, intending to use them to support the militia in defense of the fords across which the British would have to move to threaten either Philadelphia or Reading. Congress had already placed its bet on the intended target, and was in hot pursuit of the printing presses leaving Philadelphia.[50] Washington left Anthony Wayne south of the Schuylkill with a large detachment of Pennsylvania troops to lie in the rear of the British army, watching their movements and harrassing them if the opportunity presented itself. He ordered William Smallwood,

just entering Pennsylvania with the Maryland troops he had raised, to join and support Wayne.[51] Smallwood arrived too late. Howe's local intelligence again proved invaluable, as he discovered the supposedly secret location of Wayne's camp near Paoli. On the night of the nineteenth, a large British detachment fell on the outpost and routed it with heavy casualties. Wayne collected his scattered force, joined Smallwood, and crossed the Schuylkill to rejoin the main army.[52]

With Congress gone from Philadelphia, soon to be followed by the Pennsylvania state government and a large part of that town's Whig population, the campaign's strategic equation had measurably changed. No formal decision was reached to abandon the city to the British, and indeed, the defenders of the Schuylkill fords remained confident that they could hold them if necessary.[53] However, with the political authorities gone to the interior, the relative importance of the city as opposed to that of the inland storehouses declined. Washington now had to consider the potential threat to both places on more of an equal basis than previously had been the case, a factor which importantly influenced the events of the following days.

A strong upriver feint by British detachments on the twenty-first forced Washington to reveal his priorities. Faced with risking allowing Howe to get between his position and the interior towns on the one hand, or letting him cross the Schuylkill below that position, and thus be in a position to enter Philadelphia, Washington chose the latter.[54] Howe's choice of targets was made for similar

reasons. He had been without a regular source of supplies, except for what could be commandeered from the countryside, since leaving Head of Elk three weeks before. Although a considerable amount of provisions apparently was secured locally, Howe's first priority had to be reestablishing contact with his fleet.[55] This could only be accomplished at Philadelphia, and there only if the British could break the stranglehold which the Americans still held on the river below the city.

Washington thus choosing to keep his army on the upper reaches of the Schuylkill, Howe was able to cross the river below the Americans on September 22, and the fate of Philadelphia was settled. Patriot inhabitants made preparations to leave the city as quickly as they could pack. One resident reported on the twenty-second that the city was "much thinned of its inhabitants... I think I never knew less noise Bustle or tumult than there has been for this three days past."[56] What clatter there was was the sound of wagons and carts hurriedly moving loads of household possessions, storekeepers' inventories, and the like out of town.[57] Residents were making their choices in the fairly certain knowledge that once the British had assumed control of the town the choices would cease to be theirs to make.

With the loss of the city virtually certain, Washington continued to concentrate on strengthening his army. McDougall's brigade was approaching the Delaware at Coryell's Ferry, within two days' march of the main army. Washington decided to tap the force at Peekskill for a further reinforcement. He ordered Israel Putnam, the

commander of American troops in the Hudson Highlands, to make further detachments sufficient to bring the total, including McDougall's force, up to 2,500 men and officers. Washington expressed surprise that McDougall had only about 900 men with him, signaled his intention of remaining on the offensive, and said that Putnam was to consider the order "peremtory [sic] and not to be dispensed with."[58] He took care to guard against the impression that he was recklessly endangering the Peekskill position, by ordering Putnam to call in his outposts, to forego attempting to cover all of the country in his district and, if threatened with attack, to rely on the local militia.[59]

Howe's chronically deliberate manner of doing everything extended to his approach toward Philadelphia. Instead of immediately seizing the city, he halted his troops in Norriton Township and settled down to look the situation over.[60] In fairness to the British commander, he needed time to discern the mood of the town, and to prepare his army for its return to urban quarters. He also undoubtedly at least glanced back over his shoulder to make sure Washington did not intend after all to make a fight of it. Howe's half-step caught the American commander off guard, however, and provoked in him an unusual attack of anxiety.

Washington dashed off a quick note to Lord Stirling, at the head of a detachment from the main army, expressing the concern that "this army, and not the city, is their [the enemy's] object."[61] He asked Stirling to carefully watch the British, and, remembering Wayne's debacle at Paoli, warned him to take

every precaution for the security of his troops. If "the Enemy [should] turn upon us & oblige us to retire," he observed, "the consequences would be bad."[62] Howe was in motion toward the city the following day, however, and Washington was left unmolested to supervise the build-up of the army that he had initiated. From his Head Quarters near Pottsgrove he wrote to McDougall, who had finally reached the Delaware, to bring his detachment to "the best ground near Markleys, about two miles below Pennibacker's Mill on the Skippack Road," where, if no further surprises intervened, Washington would join him with the army the next day.[63]

The impending fall of the city had a galvanic effect on the Supreme Executive Council, which redoubled its efforts to turn out the Pennsylvania militia.[64] Until his reinforcements came to camp, Washington would be preoccupied with the availability of men, from whatever source. Even the trickle of convalescents who became fit for duty at the military hospitals each day were not too few to bother about, and Washington took pains to ensure that these men were not detained at those posts longer than necessary.[65] His concern stemmed partly from the need to make small but strategic detachments from the army to offset the loss of the city, including placing a regiment of Continental troops in Fort Mifflin to guard the lower Delaware.[66]

Howe left the main body of his troops at Germantown on September 25, and sent a party into Philadelphia the following day to officially assume control of the city. After what must have seemed

to Washington like an eternity, the reinforcements he had called for began joining him; McDougall with 900 men, Smallwood with 1,100 Maryland militia, and a group of 600 militia which Washington and Hancock had extracted from New Jersey.[67] Washington placed the enemy's strength at about 8,000 men, and his own at about 5,400 fit for duty. There was also a body of Virginia troops approaching York, consisting of the 2,000 militia which Hancock had reported to Washington, although they were reported to be badly armed.[68]

Altogether, Washington estimated that the American army could probably soon count on a total of about 8,000 regular troops and perhaps 3,000 militia. On September 28, he called a Council of War, and asked his general officers for their opinions on whether it would be advisable to "make a general and vigorous attack upon the enemy, or to wait further reinforcements."[69] The council recommended against an immediate attack, advice undoubtedly consistent with Washington's own view of the situation. Instead, it called for the army to move to within about twelve miles of the city to "be in readiness to take advantage of any favorable opportunity that offers."[70]

The repeated calls for reinforcements occasioned surprise, and not a little discontent, in the Hudson Highlands. Brigadier General Jedediah Huntington of Connecticut, whose brigade was included in the second contingent detached from Peekskill, expressed astonishment that the southern army was shorthanded. They had been "misinformed of the Numbers of Militia with Genl W_," he observed.[71] "...The enemy would have been but a Breakfast for 30,000," he believed,

apparently referring to the strength thought to have been with Washington at Brandywine.[72] Huntington felt that the removal of more troops from the Highlands would enable Henry Clinton to move up from New York and seize that place virtually at will. Concluding on a note which might well have caused the Council of War to question its decision to rely on reinforcements from the north, Huntington damned the men under his command with the faintest of praise, calling them "personable but hot half of y^{m} armed."[73]

Samuel Holden Parsons, whose brigade had been pulled in to Peekskill from White Plains in accordance with Washington's instructions to Putnam to narrow his base in the Highlands, was openly derisive. Disclaiming any intention to "recriminate," he expressed his fear of "impending Ruine." He ridiculed the "boasted Courage of the Southern Heroes" for the loss of Philadelphia, and lamented the stripping of the Highlands to "reinforce an army who Southern newspapers tell us is 45,000 Strong."[74] The militia of the middle states "have been as usual; Paper Men only," Parsons observed, and insisted that Peekskill was "more important than a Thousand Philadelphias."[75]

Washington thought differently, doubtless influenced at least in part by the close superintendence of Congress, whose members waited impatiently at York to recover the comfortable quarters they had enjoyed in the city. Those members, judging from their letters, were embarrassed but not unduly discouraged over their displacement, viewing it as more of a temporary setback than an ultimate defeat. Their expectations were warmed

by the sight of several thousand Virginia militia stepping smartly through the streets of York on September 30 on their way to join the army, and by the news of further reinforcements approaching camp. Henry Marchant of Rhode Island was emboldened to congratulate his Governor on "the general Prospect we have of completing a glorious Campaign," which he thought "we [still] have the most rational Expectations of."[76]

As October opened, Washington began cautiously stalking the British. On the second, John Armstrong informed Governor Wharton that the whole army was moving about six miles closer to the enemy lines at Germantown. Given favorable circumstances, Armstrong believed, Washington would "rather make than receive the attack." Troubling discrepancies existed, however, between previous impressions and current appearances of the relative strengths of the contending armies, to which Armstrong could only allude, having been enjoined to secrecy by the Council of War.[77] He felt compelled to report that the British army seemed larger than had formerly been believed, while American reinforcements were "not half what has been Expected."[78]

Disappointed or not with the new troops, Washington found that circumstances were combining to press him to make good on the gathering assumption that he would take an offensive stance. Not only were Congress and the state authorities expectant on their own accounts, but having worked with Washington to extract reinforcements from jurisdictions which were understandably reluctant to spare them, they were anxious to show tangible results. Washington, moreover, was in at least tacit competition with the achievements of the northern

American army, which was then, under General Horatio Gates, entering the conclusive phase of its struggle with Burgoyne's invading force on the upper reaches of the Hudson River.[79]

On October 3 Washington notified the army that the northern troops had brought Burgoyne's previously steady march toward Albany to a halt, and had a fair prospect of defeating the enemy altogether in that quarter.[80] The news had its intended effect as a morale booster, and seemed to call for a corresponding triumph in the southern theater. Washington could not have been unaware that his performance during the campaign to that point, while relatively sound from a tactical standpoint, had been devoid of any conspicuous successes, or that it would inevitably be compared with that of Gates to the north.

Washington having determined to make a bold stroke at the first favorable opportunity, it remained only for the trigger to be pulled. The honor of doing so fell to William Howe. Tradition has placed Howe and his army warm and snugly settled in Philadelphia, well supplied and facing no more severe problems than choosing between the ball and the theatre of a given evening. The evidence indicates otherwise. The Americans still controlled access by water to the city, through a series of forts and obstructions on the Delaware river below the town. The two forts closest to the city, Fort Mifflin in Pennsylvania and Red Bank on the opposite shore, were relatively well situated and manned by regular troops and militia. Several miles below Red Bank on the Jersey side lay the more vulnerable fortification at Billingsport.[81]

Howe, more than history has appreciated, was in an uncomfortable position. As was noted in discussing his decision to move toward the city rather than threatening the Continental storehouses, he had indulged in a game of logistical chance by campaigning away from his ships. The countryside had supplied a sufficiency of provisions until Howe could reach Philadelphia. Once there, however, the problems of importing supplies were magnified, and the well-being of the British army depended on opening the river. To do so, Howe had to eliminate the forts which kept it sealed, and Billingsport was the first target.

It was Howe's decision to move against Billingsport, an implicit indication that he was giving the Continental army less attention than his logistical problem, that precipitated the engagement at Germantown. On September 30 Howe detached part of the Germantown garrison to attack the American position at Billingsport.[82] Washington learned of the movement virtually at once. Howe had his quarters at Stenton, a mansion below the British outpost of Germantown and well above the city. Washington could guess in which direction Howe's attention was turned, and he seized upon the situation as the opportunity he had been waiting for.[83]

After dark on October 3, the American army flew into motion for the attack which it had been anticipating since Brandywine. Divided into four columns, it marched through the night toward the sleeping village. The plan called for a surprise attack at dawn on the fourth, in which American units would fall in simultaneous and

successive waves on the enemy across a broad line, driving them backward toward the city.[84] The underlying assumption was that once the British began retreating they would be unable to recover sufficiently to stem an attack that was converging from several directions.

The assumption was a good one, but its execution was predictably problematical. The battle began in a dense early morning fog, and, as the gunsmoke increased, visibility deteriorated. The attack in the center, along the main road that defined the village of Germantown, began well. Virtually every contemporary account agrees that the British were surprised to be attacked in their quarters, and fell back under heavy fire for two miles or more. The militia units responsible for the two flanks of the attack did little to dispel Samuel Parsons' slur that they were "as usual; Paper Men only," as neither wing managed to become seriously involved in the affray.

Though thus unsupported on the flanks, the regular army appeared to be well on its way to routing the British. The attack became unglued only when the two main columns, approaching along different roads, failed to join smoothly; instead one wing overlapped the other and fell in behind it. In the fog and smoke, with one division under fire from its own mates in the rear, and unable to discern the source of the fire, confusion spread through the Continental ranks. With its ammunition rapidly being exhausted, the American army hesitated, and despite attempts by the officers to rally it, began to retreat.[85]

Given a brief respite, and bolstered by reinforcements who hastened up the road from Philadelphia, the British counterattacked and effectively turned the tide. For the second time in less than a month the Continental army ended a major engagement in retreat. Washington would once again have to report that he had left the enemy "masters of the field." Beyond these parallels, however, the difference between the two engagements could not have been greater. If at Brandywine Washington had been able to salvage a mitigated defeat, at Germantown he was compelled to settle for a correspondingly mitigated victory. Indeed, the least sanguine American analyses of the event focused on the army's having "fled from victory."[86]

It is worthwhile to examine in some detail the accounts which the Americans recorded of Germantown. That battle, coupled with Brandywine, constituted the whole of the fighting between the two sides on an army-wide scale for 1777. Germantown was a litmus test for the Continental army. In view of the stalemate illustrated by the two engagements fought to that point, subjective perceptions of the event are significant in establishing a benchmark by which to measure the rest of the campaign.

American reactions to the Germantown clash began on October 4, within hours after the army came to a somewhat scattered halt at Pawlins Mill, twenty miles above Philadelphia on the Skippack Road. Many of the officers and men were so exhausted that they literally slept in the road, but a few penned accounts of the day's action before retiring. The accounts would continue to come forth for at

least a month after the event itself. They reflect a surprising uniformity of perception among the authors, undoubtedly resulting partly from shared campfire conversations and other communications, but in no way entirely attributable to those factors. Together, the analyses of the battle formed the basis for a collective expectation of what the future held for the army. That expectation would have important implications for the concluding months of the campaign.

George Weedon, who stayed up to write on the fourth, portrayed the result with clearly mixed feelings. While he felt "we got disappointed," he also thought the "day was well sold[?]," and was pleased to report that the army "have no Objections to another tryal which must take place soon."[87] Weedon worried that "fortune sports with us," but he seemed willing to sport right back. Lord Stirling was less ambivalent. "This affair will Convince the World," he observed, "that we Can out General our Enemy that we dare Attack them, that we can Surprise them, that we can drive them before us for Several Miles together, and that we know how to Retreat in good Order & defy them to follow us."[88] He reported that the army was stronger than before the fight, and predicted that "the Enemy will find that after every Battle our Army will increase, and their[s] diminish, this is fighting at such a disadvantage that they must soon be Convinced that they can never Support the war in America."[89]

Benjamin Talmadge wrote to a friend in Connecticut that the Americans had driven the enemy "from post to post," before misfortune reversed the verdict. Prior to the commencement of the retreat, he

observed, he had "expected to have been in Philad[a] by 10 [o]Clock."[90] William Beatty attributed the retreat to the fog, and reported that it was "done in very good order." He informed his father that he had received a "Dead Ball on my thigh," which only reddened the spot, although "Unlike Michael" had been killed. He "Expect[ed] we shall soon have another touch with them which will soon lessen their Numbers."[91] Jonathan Todd, a Connecticut surgeon, observed that he supposed "hotter fire was never known." Todd dressed seventeen or eighteen men, in several instances cutting balls out of limbs on the opposite side from where they had entered. He said that they were "preparing for another battle our army are in good spirits and are determin'd to see it out this fall."[92]

Optimistic reports of the engagement were soon reaching Congress, as well as far-flung commissaries and other auxilliary officials of the army, and being dutifully passed on to their correspondents. Charles Stewart, Commissary General of Issues, wrote from Trenton to an assistant at Peekskill relaying news of the "bloody and almost fatal to our enemy [battle] at Germantown."[93] It may have surprised skeptics in the Hudson Highlands to hear that "the enemy feel most sensibly the Torys are near distracted not a smiling countenance in the City the Second Edition of Bunkers Hill is the term used by the British officers in their description," or the prediction that "a few days will produce the third... I think the business will be done."[94]

Eliphalet Dyer, a member of Congress from Connecticut, passed on the favorable reports which he had received in York: "our troops before had behaved with the greatest spirit and bravery and [a]

most Compleat Victory seemed full in prospect, till this unfortunate mistake occasioned by the fog snatched it out of our hands... we expect Another Attack will soon be made on the Enemy [I] hope we shall soon learn to beat them."[95]

Nor did the assessments of the affair diminish in confidence as better returns of casualties came in, or as participants had the opportunity to reflect at greater length on the matter. Indeed, if later accounts differ at all from immediate ones, they indicate that the Americans were even more satisfied with their work, having had time to contemplate it. After reading returns of killed and wounded suffered by both sides, George Weedon's ambivalence appeared considerably dimmed. "And tho' the enterprise miscarried." he reflected, "it was well worth the undertaking, as from their own Accounts, by Prisoners, & Deserters, their light Infantry (the flower of their Army) was cut to pieces."[96] The grand cause was within fifteen minutes of final triumph, Weedon thought, when the American retreat commenced. "While the British Army is by these Engagements diminishing fast, Ours are reinforcing," he observed, and noted that American resources "are constantly at hand, and inexaustable," making ultimate victory certain.[97]

Washington's own comments on the battle were terser and more judicious than those of many of his officers and men, but they reflect a discernable sense of achievement, and of complete victory nearly snatched. A week after the event he wrote to Governor Thomas McKean of Delaware: "we must not repine [over the retreat], but on the contrary rejoice that we have given a severe blow to our Enemies and that our Ranks are as full or rather fuller than they were before the engagement."[98]

The junior officers labored under none of the responsibilities or political constraints that required the Commander in Chief to couch his satisfaction in relatively modest phrases. Mordecai Gist, a colonel in the Maryland militia, wrote of the fight "the laurels were fairly won and only modestly prevented our wearing them. We are now on our march to gain them a second time. Our troops are in good spirits and make no doubt of carrying the point - I shall take possession of the City Tavern [and] dance a minuet with Miss Footman...."[99]

The enthusiasm which swept the camp in the aftermath of Germantown communicated itself even to the northern reinforcements who joined the army immediately after the battle. Jedediah Huntington reported intelligence from Philadelphia that British "Officers say they had experienced Nothing like it since that of Bunker Hill,"[100] and soon had convinced himself that the enemy "got a hearty Beating in both Engagements [Brandywine and Germantown] the last was very severe - and went very near to a complete Victory on our Side."[101] Henry Knox, who had been involved in the actions, took a more pragmatic if scarcely less satisfied view of the result, reporting that "we kill'd and wounded as many of the enemy as one could reasonably wish...."[102]

The almost uniformly positive tone pervading the letters which emanated from the American army in the weeks following the battle concerns not only the perception of that event itself, but also the expectations their authors had for the immediate future. Germantown engendered a feeling within the army, not as has commonly been assumed of frustration for a missed opportunity, but rather of determination to

maintain a relentless offensive posture. Many of the early post-battle letters, as quoted above, mentioned the imminent probability of another engagement. This mode of thinking persisted long after the immediate excitment of combat wore off. On October 12, more than a week after Germantown, Jedediah Huntingdon wrote that "the Army is in daily Expectation of visiting [the enemy] again, and are not only in high Spirits, but by best Information, much Superior in Numbers to the Enemy."[103] William Beatty informed his father that "it is Daily Expected that we shall have the other tryal for Philadelphia. our army are in high Spirits and wait with impatience for the other Brush."[104] Nor was Henry Knox so satisfied with the havoc wrought on the fourth that he was ready to dispense with offensive action for the season; rather, he reported to Joseph Trumbull of Connecticut "we Shall soon have another brush with them in which we humbly hope for the blessing of providence - we are fully convinced that vigorous methods must be pursued."[105]

This aggressive spirit soon affected the politicians. Thomas McKean notified Caesar Rodney that the depleted British army was "soon to be attacked again by General Washington & an army of more than double the number," and predicted that "a month more will, in my opinion, give us peace, liberty & safety."[106] Thomas Wharton, acting on intelligence from John Armstrong, informed Robert Morris on the eighteenth that a general attack on the enemy was imminent that day or the next.[107]

This anticipation of another attack was not a mere collective delusion. The army was in a state of constant readiness during the

week of October 12 to 18, and at least two officers kept finished letters unsealed throughout that period in expectation of being able to enclose decisive news.[108] Beginning on the eighth and continuing during the next week the army, which had withdrawn more than twenty miles after Germantown, began inching down to within striking distance of the city.[109] By the sixteenth, it was back at "the Grounds we occupied before the Action of the 4th."[110] The expectation of renewed battle on the part of the officers was at a fever pitch, as seen from their letters, and indeed many circumstances suggested that a repetition of that event was in the works.

The army had been, as was the case prior to Germantown, reinforced both by regulars from the north, and by a substantial body of militia from Virginia.[111] As before Germantown, there had been news of significant developments in the north. On the twelfth, Washington learned that Henry Clinton had indeed, as Huntington had predicted he might, struck north from New York and assaulted the weakened American detachment in the Hudson Highlands, seizing Forts Clinton and Montgomery, and imperiling the American hold on that vital post altogether. This unhappy prospect was softened three days later by news that General Gates' forces had dealt Burgoyne's army a crushing defeat at Saratoga.[112]

Either piece of intelligence considered by itself, and certainly both taken together, could be construed as providing Washington with a strong incentive for bold action. In the latter case, his awareness of comparisons between the progress of the northern and southern armies would undoubtedly have been

triggered by Gates' triumph. In the former, the fact that his withdrawal of 2,500 troops from Peekskill had probably contributed to the vulnerability of the Highlands forts must have increased the pressure to make some decisive use of his reinforcements.

Finally, Howe's apparent preoccupation with the American stranglehold on the lower Delaware River, the discovery of which had more than anything else catalyzed the decision to launch the Germantown assault, appeared to be undiminished. Washington's official explanation for bringing the army back to its pre-Germantown staging area was that the move would "divert the enemy's attention from the [Delaware] forts."[113] In the estimation of many of the officers and men serving under Washington, and in the judgment of many of the political leaders on whose cooperation he depended, something more than a mere diversion was called for; indeed something more was what they fully expected would take place. Jeremiah Talbot informed his wife on the night of the nineteenth that the whole army had been ordered to be ready to march early the next morning, and there was not much doubt, in his mind at least, about their objective: "I Expect Every Moment to hear the Action Begin... I hope to Dine to morrow in Philadelphia."[114]

In truth, by October 20 Washington's assessment of the situation was closer to the mark than the more ambitious schemes of his associates and subordinates. The opportunity for delivering a decisive blow to the British army was not lost in the retreat from Germantown, as had been assumed, but it did wither steadily in the fortnight that followed. For a variety of reasons which

will be discussed below, the American army was unable to follow up rapidly on its surprise attack. Within two weeks the situation had changed so fundamentally that a general assault would have been foolish to consider, much less to execute.

In many ways the situation began to alter almost immediately in the aftermath of the fourth. If Howe had been loath to give even grudging credit to the Americans for their escape at Brandywine, he displayed no such hesitation following Germantown. Indeed, measured by the criteria of his customary deliberateness, he fairly flew into action to remedy the defects which the attack had revealed in his situation. The assault had done serious damage to some of Howe's crack units, even if George Weedon's boast that the "flower of their army was cut to pieces" overstates the case, which it does. Within four days of the battle Howe dispatched a report on the action to Henry Clinton at New York. It was an upbeat account of the events of the day, giving generous credit to Howe's troops, and mentioning neither the fog nor the blind and disastrous groping which the Americans had done in it as factors in the decision. Howe left little doubt, however, that he expected the action to be renewed, reporting that the Americans were reinforcing and "are collecting all their Militia to risk, as they say, a third Action, rather than leave us in quiet Possession of Philadelphia."[115] He ordered the immediate detachment of reinforcements from New York to bolster his bruised army. Lest Clinton tarry on the assumption that his chief was merely taking routine precautions, Howe wrote again the next day

repeating the order, and saying "I should not be so pressing for the Troops from you, were we not much in need of them at this Crisis."[116]

Howe also pushed forward with preparations for withdrawing the army from its outpost at Germantown, which had proved, in view of Washington's offensive disposition, to be a dangerous position. He pressed his engineers and fortification details to complete a line of redoubts across the north of Philadelphia for two-and-a-half miles, between the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers, behind which he intended to place the army.[117] To get the work on these defenses finished as rapidly as possible, Howe drafted civilians into the work parties, and, it was alleged, forced American prisoners to labor on the project.[118] Howe's involvement with the security of the army and with the works north of the city was time consuming, personal, and, contrary to the hopes of some Americans, took priority over his attention to the work of opening the river.[119]

The circumstances that had favored the Germantown offensive were therefore only apparently duplicated in mid-October. The advantage of Washington's reinforcements would eventually be nullified by the arrival of Howe's, and the possibility of another genuine surprise would never really exist. Much as Washington may have wanted to match the victory at Saratoga by driving the enemy from Philadelphia, to have attempted to do so by a direct assault

would by mid-October have been to court disaster. On the nineteenth Howe removed his army from Germantown and placed it behind the new fortifications, and once again the basic strategic equation had fundamentally changed. Jeremiah Talbot would not dine the next day in Philadelphia. As it turned out, he was probably grateful enough if he dined at all.

The fond hope of an opportunity for renewing offensive actions on a large scale never really died altogether. It was intermittently voiced in the personal letters of a few of the officers. As late as November 2, Nathanael Greene thought that "we must... give Mr. Howe a twiging," and predicted that "perhaps we may get to fisticuffing of it in the morning."[120] The always hopeful and demanding politicans, both in Congress and the states, never completely gave up hope for a southern Saratoga. The question of a general attack was even "agitated" in Councils of War on at least two occasions, but no evidence indicates that the affirmative position received significant support.[121]

There remain perplexing questions about the ten-day period immediately following Germantown. Clearly, this was the time when a second attack on the British army might have produced significant results. Even without the element of surprise, the Continental army would have enjoyed some fairly compelling advantages. Washington's reinforcements from the Hudson River were within two days' march of camp on October 4, and the Virginia militia were also streaming in. Howe, on the other hand, didn't get around to summoning reinforcements of his own until the eighth. From the tone of his letter, and the fact of his follow-up the next day, he had doubts about how quickly the order would be complied with.

An immediate attack, moreover, would have caught the British without benefit of the fortifications they were frantically struggling to complete. It would have lifted the pressure from the American forts on the lower Delaware. Finally, an attack would have been consistent with the overwhelmingly expressed expectations of the American military establishment, as well as of the various political constituencies to which the army was responsible.

Questions about the performance of the American army during this period are as complex as the potential answers are numerous and varied. The available evidence is fragmentary, and any conclusions are necessarily speculative. Nevertheless, some hypotheses can be hazarded. John Armstrong, the redoubtable commander of the Pennsylvania militia, offered the most immediately obvious answer, even as he notified Governor Wharton that another attack was "undoubtedly in contemplation." "It is," he lectured, "impossible for persons at a distance to conceive the time requisite to refit after an affair such as ours of the other day."[122] In the confusion of the retreat from Germantown, units had become separated from their divisions, and in some cases even from their immediate officers. While British pressure on the retreat had a somewhat pro-forma quality about it, it was uncertain how far they would follow.

Large numbers of American soldiers continued marching far beyond the intended fallback point, and the army as a whole had rendezvoused considerably farther from the city than Washington wished. Several days were spent collecting all of the stragglers.[123] Moreover, the soldiers, if not their officers, undoubtedly believed that they had earned at least a period for recovery and convalescence. It would be hazardous to presume to judge the morale and mood of the privates, or their taste for plunging back into battle, from the combative letters of their officers.

Washington and his generals, meanwhile, could not have realized how truly brief an opportunity they would have for resuming the offensive. It was not expected that Howe would lock the British army up in Philadelphia and concentrate on opening the river. Rather, the Americans were constantly under the apprehension that the British might make the next move.[124] The extent to which the enemy had been knocked onto a defensive footing was not completely understood, nor was the imminence of Howe's request to be relieved from his command, with its presumption of cautious generalship.[125]

All of these factors undoubtedly entered into Washington's decision to proceed cautiously. And yet alone they do not satisfactorily explain or account for the train of events of early October, 1777. To understand those events it is necessary to understand what was occurring in the departments which performed the indispensable but usually invisible functions of supplying the army with food, clothing, transportation, shelter, and other necessities that enable it to remain in the field. Briefly and

bluntly, those functions were beginning to unravel. By the end of the year the logistical organizations would be in temporary collapse. As a result the army would be eviscerated, and the usually invisible processes of supply (or in this case their failure) would be made glaringly evident. During the winter at Valley Forge, the performance of the support departments would become in many respects the story of the army itself. In October of 1777 those departments remained in their traditional place of obscurity, but increasingly, breakdowns in their areas of responsibility were seriously affecting the ability of the army to maintain its operational effectiveness.[126]

By mid-October, the army was receiving at best stuttering support in the way of provisions, on a basis so irregular as to be inconsistent with the offensive intentions of the officers. On the sixth Thomas Jones, the Issuing Commissary at camp, observed that he had that morning received a herd of 400 head of cattle, prior to which he "had not one beef on hand." It was always the case, he reported, that "our Cattle is... out Before we can get a supply also Liquor in the same manner." He asserted that the affair at Germantown had cost the army three days' provisions.[127]

Thus the expectations of many of the officers were being rendered unrealistic by the performance of the support departments. The army was functioning at the end of an exceedingly short logistical rope; a rope, moreover, which was beginning to fray badly. The assault at Germantown had been conducted with about as much of a degree of precision and order as could reasonably have been expected at that point in the army's

training. In withdrawing from the action, the troops had not been excessively careless about leaving goods and supplies on the field. Even so, the attack had resulted in the expenditure of three days' provisions.

This calculation precluded any further large scale offensive operations while the army remained as marginally supplied as the evidence indicates it was from Germantown until long after the 1777 campaign ended. It was rare enough that the commissaries could even assure the army of its next day's victuals, much less provide it with a three days' margin sufficient, at a minimum, to risk a general engagement. The shortage may even go a long way toward explaining the army's halting procession from its post-Germantown encampment at Pawlins Mill, which it left on October 8, to its arrival at Whitpain on the twentieth. With its supply lines in as fragile and tenuous a condition as they evidently were, the wisdom of making any sudden dislocations of the troops would have been questionable. Given a communications system dependent on horseback couriers, and with the key officials in the support departments dashing from post to post in an area bounded by Trenton, Easton, York, and Head of Elk, to have moved the army suddenly over any great distance would have meant to have risked starvation.[128]

The argument set forth in the preceeding pages requires close evaluation and cautious interpretation. There is no conclusive evidence to indicate that Washington would have attempted a major follow-up attack in the immediate aftermath of Germantown, had the shortcomings of his commissary organization not intervened. The near

unanimity of the officer corps in their expectation that some major undertaking was afoot is impressive, but any interpretation based on it is necessarily speculative. It is equally hypothetical to infer what might have happened had such a venture been possible, and had it been essayed. What is clear is that the ten-day period after October 4 offered the best, and as it turned out the last, opportunity for defeating the British army on the battlefield in 1777. There was every motivation to seize the opportunity, and indeed every expection that it would be seized. The records of the Commissary Department suggest, however, that the opportunity existed on paper only.

With the withdrawal of the British army from Germantown on the nineteenth, and Howe's decision to concentrate on opening the Delaware to his fleet while waiting out the Ministry's reply to his request to resign his command, the strategic equation of the campaign once again fundamentally changed. The American response to these circumstances evolved gradually during the second half of October. It consisted not of a single watershed decision to change the disposition of the army, but rather of a series of limited responses to specific new needs and opportunities. In its overall form, the new American strategic imperative involved three broad elements: the redistribution of personnel to give maximum support to the defense of the Delaware River fortifications; the modification of tactics to aggravate the British logistical problems which resulted from the continued blockage of the river; and the redeployment of energy and resources to resolve the critical deficiencies of supply and organization in the American war machine.

These elements proceeded simultaneously and interacted in a complex manner. It was imperative for reasons both of need and opportunity for the army to begin to operate on a more dispersed and flexible basis. If vital supplies could not be brought to the army - if the troops would now have at least to some extent to provision themselves - the army would have to be brought to the food. Washington was faced with the ironic truth that the very reinforcements that he had summoned were aggravating the shortages of supplies. Thomas Jones sounded the appropriate note of desperation to Charles Stewart on October 10: "I am almost distracted for want of Flour not hav[in]g But one Barrell now in Camp... Our Army is now Encreas[d] Almost without Number & would eat the Devil himself if it was Bread Beef and Rum."[129] Two days later, Robert Dill informed Stewart from York that the supply of flour there was "about done."[130] On the thirteenth, Washington informed Congress of the situation, and put the matter into the hands of that body.[131]

Through the Board of War, Congress requested the state of Pennsylvania to cooperate in devising ways of keeping the army supplied.[132] It also transmitted to the states news of the "greatest distress" in which the army lay, and enclosed a return of clothing that Washington considered "absolutely necessary" for its continued effective performance.[133] Congress notified Pennsylvania that unless measures were exerted to meet the army's needs "it will be impossible for the Troops to keep the Field, And Consequences the most alarming will therefore ensue."[134] By October 22 the situation had stabilized,

at least momentarily. Jones alerted Stewart that several hundred barrels of flour had arrived in camp and a similar number were in the vicinity. "We make out tolerable well at Present for Supply," he observed, "if it Would Continue so."[135]

It would not continue so, however. The supply crisis would occasionally be blunted temporarily, but never so effectively or for sufficiently long to remove it as a primary factor in the conduct of what remained of the campaign. It would influence the placement and movement of troops, and every other tactical and strategic variable available to the American command. In combination with the altered disposition of British purposes, it would give shape to the months between Germantown and Valley Forge.

Small-unit operations would now constitute the order of the day, both because they could operate more effectively within the constraints of the new strategic circumstances, and because they could be more effectively provisioned on an ad hoc basis. Washington detached part of the Pennsylvania militia under General James Potter, to move into Chester County and attempt to sever communications between that area and Philadelphia, and to prevent the farmers from bringing their supplies to the British.[136] At the request of Congress, the state increased the call for militia in Chester County, and ordered the officers there to seize arms, clothing, and blankets from those who refused to swear allegiance to it, or who had assisted the enemy in any way.[137]

In pressing for the general mobilization of state militia, the Supreme Executive Council could not withhold the lingering hope for a grand offensive. It argued that it was "not too late to attack General Howe and drive him with disgrace from our country," and called on Pennsylvanians of military age to follow the "animative example of the Eastern States," whose outpouring of militia had overwhelmed Burgoyne.[138] This small bit of rhetoric aside, however, the state government seemed to recognize the probable futility of such an ambitious scheme, and to accept its own measure of responsibility, admitting that had a more general turnout taken place earlier the campaign would have already been over.[139]

Taking advantage of a flareup of fighting on the Delaware, which had been precipitated when Howe detached a large party of Hessian troops to make an overland attack on the American fort at Red Bank, the Americans sent parties toward the main British lines. Jedediah Huntington informed his father of the change of strategic emphasis and reported that the light horse had several times attacked British pickets within two miles of the city and taken a number of prisoners.[140]

By the end of October, the campaign had become largely a war of nerves and supplies. Its focal point, to the extent that it still had one, was on the narrow bottleneck on the Delaware River below the city, and on the pair of forts which sealed the bottleneck. The entire perimeter of the city and the country beyond it for thirty or more miles became a secondary theater of operations. The main

armies of either side would remain entrenched and largely inactive; the British behind their lines in Philadelphia, and the main body of the Americans in their new camp at Whitemarsh, thirteen miles northwest of the city, to which they moved on November 2.[141]

As early as October 12, Washington had intelligence that the inability of the British fleet to reach the city was causing hardships, by driving up the prices of supplies of all kinds there, and making some goods disappear altogether.[142] With the cold season coming on, firewood was reportedly all but impossible to obtain by the civilian population, and the military command would soon put increasing restrictions on the inhabitants' rights to collect their own.[143] Jedediah Huntington reported that the British had begun "to despair of removing the Obstacles to their Navigation in the Delaware - the Consequence is the[y] must leave Philad[a]."[144]

The new American strategy, necessitated by the inability of the army to carry out large scale offensive operations, aimed at aggravating that despair as much as possible, and, it was hoped, forcing the fulfillment of the prophesy. Washington decided to put his newly arrived northern troops into action, and on the twenty-ninth, detached James Varnum's brigade to cross the Delaware and proceed through New Jersey to reinforce Fort Mercer at Red Bank.[145] Two days later he wrote to General Potter in Chester County revealing his decision to make still another detachment. As soon as the rain-swollen Schuylkill became fordable, Washington promised to send over to Potter another "large body of militia" to assist in interfering with the British communications between

the city and their fleet at Chester.[146] Howe, unable to satisfy his army's consumption of food and supplies by seizures and purchases from the outlying farmers, had inaugurated heavily guarded overland convoys from the fleet, and occasional night passages by small vessels on the river.[147] In addition to enabling Potter to interfere with these convoys, Washington outlined a detailed plan for dismantling and stripping gristmills from Chester County as far south as Wilmington, and asked the militia to execute it as soon as possible.[148]

As October closed, some American officers thought they had begun to see some signs of success from the new strategy. George Weedon noted that the enemy had proceeded more cautiously in the vicinity of the American forts since their unsuccessful attempt to storm Red Bank ten days before, and observed that if "our little Forts [could] but hold out a month longer, and by that means prevent the Shipping from getting up, the Enemy, I think, will evacuate the City."[149] Matthew Irwin thought that "Howe can't winter in Phila[a] without the possession of our River... I think he must soon retreat."[150] Jedediah Huntington expressed the obverse of the formula: unless the Americans could "scare them [the enemy] away,... we must set down about them somewhere and watch them for the Winter or fight them in their strong Hold."[151] On either view, British activity seemed to be becoming increasingly constricted by their lack of free access to supplies. Several sources noted that, except for large armed foraging parties, enemy activity seldom extended more than two miles beyond the perimeter of the city.[152] "It is very evident," one officer wrote, "that if they cannot take the Mud Island Fort [Fort Mifflin] they must either leave Philadelphia

or starve. They have no other choices for they are not able to Fight us out of Town."[153]

It is similarly evident that Washington was feeling his way, not always comfortably, toward a more dispersed and, it must have seemed to him, a more potentially hazardous strategy. Even with the main body of troops nestled in the hilly, protective terrain at Whitemarsh, he must have felt the army denuded in the absence of the increasing detachments he found it necessary to make, and he was not above making and changing decisions several times. On November 7 he informed Potter that "the Number of Men you have may be rather prejudicial than servicable to you, as they are a more attractive Object for the Enemy."[154] He directed Potter to retain enough to "cutt off the Enemy Communications with their posts," and to forward the remainder to the main army.[155] Within four days Washington thought better of the matter and informed Potter that he could retain as many men as he needed. He suggested using them to harass the enemy on Carpenter's Island as a means of helping to relieve the pressure on Fort Mifflin.[156]

The commissary crisis continued to loom like a dark shadow over American operations, complicating every decision about troop placement, and making even middle-range planning almost impossible. Thomas Jones reported to Charles Stewart at the end of October that provisioning the army was still a day-to-day affair, and that it was virtually at the mercy of the vagaries of weather. The recent heavy rains had flooded the roads, he lamented, and threatened to "ruin" the army itself if they continued.[157]

Nor did it appear likely that the British would docilely sit still and be starved. While Howe's taste for combat was undoubtedly dulled by his decision to leave the army, he was prepared to exhaust every available resource to open communications with his ships and secure his position in the city. While the defeat of the Hessian assault on Fort Mercer had buoyed the spirits of the Americans, regular British troops and work parties were quietly carving out a foothold on Province Island in the rear of Fort Mifflin. The situation of the forts was such that they depended on each other to effectively seal the river, so that the reduction of either one would nullify the advantage of the other. Weedon and Huntington, though posing the question from opposite perspectives, were stating the matter accurately: the fate of the rest of the campaign would largely hinge on whether or not the forts could be held and the river kept closed.[158]

The first two weeks of November witnessed a massive British assault on Fort Mifflin, the bastion on the Pennsylvania side. The assault was ferocious, and focussed so squarely that there was no question of whether the positions would be overwhelmed, but only of how long that fate could be postponed. Time was by far the most important question, because if the river could be kept closed until it froze, the surrender of the forts would become academic. Washington had only limited options available to resist the siege, such as making what detachments of reinforcements he safely thought he could, and carrying on harassing actions on the perimeter

of the city to mitigate the pressure on the forts.[159] The main army was reduced by its logistical problems to virtual immobility at Whitemarsh. The defense of the river fell with disproportionate weight on the shoulders of a small part of the American war machine.

This is not to imply that the army's stay at Whitemarsh constituted a placid period in that organization's existence. In fact, quite the contrary was true. During this period of relative enforced inactivity, many of the pressures which had been operating through the American political and military establishments for some time began to manifest themselves openly. The magnitude of the logistical crisis registered in the consciousness of the officers and men; the momentum of expectation, which had built steadily during the late summer and early fall, collided with the reality of limited achievements; and the reservoir of frustration and recrimination, which had been held back by the anticipation of important events to come, began to overflow. On the river, the eagerly awaited freeze which might still have undone the enemy seemed to be taking forever. In the camp of the American army, the winter of discontent had begun early.

One of the consequences of bringing the troops to a halt and placing them in a stronghold was that such a maneuver complicated, at the same time that it was partly intended to relieve, the provisions crisis. While at last the far-flung commissary agents would have a fixed location to which to forward whatever goods they could obtain, reducing the "leakage" attendant on attempting to supply a moving target, the informal supplementary means by which the troops could

be supplied partially from the neighborhood would be increasingly disrupted.[160] The longer the army remained in one place, the more the locally available supply would diminish.

This consequence was mitigated by the increasing detachments which were central to the new strategic order. While the headquarters of the army would remain stationary, a larger proportion of the troops than before would be operating throughout the belt of counties which lay on the periphery of the city, where they could presumably continue to partially supply themselves. This circumstance only partly answered the problem, however. Incipient hunger continued to stalk the army. By early November, the larder was once again almost bare. Ephraim Blaine reported on the third that there was "not one barrel of flour in Camp, nor any whiskey but what was seized from the sutlers."[161]

The army had just arrived at Whitemarsh, so the difficulty can probably be attributed partially to the move itself. The day's provisions may well have been merely lagging in the rear of the troops, and the newly occupied area adjacent to the camp probably could have bridged a short gap. Once the army had come to rest, however, in a place where it would remain for more than a month, future shortages would become increasingly critical. Now that the prospect of large scale combat operations had faded, moreover, the troops remaining in the camp would have less imperatively pressing business to distract them, and they could be expected to be less tolerant of short rations.

Blaine's letter suggests that he was not unaware of this. In response to an exchange between the state government (which was anxious to minimize its liability for the supply crisis and to protect the interests of its citizens) and the American command, the sale of liquor to the soldiers by private vendors had been prohibited, and their supplies seized.[162] In eighteenth century America, liquor was far from being regarded as the evil or "demon" commodity that it would be labeled during the nineteenth, but in this crisis it was blamed, with some degree of truth, for both stripping and starving the army. The state authorities argued that the troops were selling their clothing to raise cash for whiskey, and that the competition provided by distillers for grain was driving up prices and depleting the supply.[163]

Blaine, in informing his deputy that the Commissary Department would now have complete responsibility for providing the army with spirits, revealed his difficult position. "The army depending Intirely on us for Liquor, will greatly murmur if not punctually supplied," he warned, and all but pleading said, "...if you have any regard to my peace and Interest with the General... you will by no means disapoint my expectation ...."[164]

From all indications, the fortnight after the army reached Whitemarsh was a hungry one. By November 16, in the already familiar pattern of stuff and starve, the coincident arrival of several supply trains provided the army with a rare three days' supply of flour, as well as a quantity of beef, salt, soap, and candles.[165] The enthusiasm with which the camp commissaries greeted

the situation suggests that it had, in fact, interrupted a severe shortage, and that there had indeed been some "murmur[ing]" on the part of the troops. "Thank god at last I had as much so as to Enable me to Cram their Guts full" Thomas Jones reported, "all this is for your Comfort as well as [that of] the poor tools that remains here to Bear every Blunt...."[166]

The first half of November also witnessed increasing friction within the army, and between its several adjunct constituencies. It is difficult to discern any coherent pattern in this discontent and occasionally outright rancor. Rather, it seems to reflect the usual experience of human beings and organizations involved in complex cooperative enterprises, particularly ones which are generating few conspicuous evidences of success. Officers who a month before had been predicting imminent offensives, or dreaming of dances at the City Tavern, now found the time to analyze the army's shortcomings and to offer prescriptions for its improvement.

Some of the rancor grew out of personality conflicts between individual officers, or from jealousies over promotions and other rewards. Colonel Daniel Brodhead of the Pennsylvania line wrote to Benedict Arnold to congratulate him on the victory at Saratoga, adding "Since you left us your Division has suffered greatly and that chiefly by the Conduct of G[l]. W [probably Wayne] most of the officers are unhappy under his Command and as to my own part I have had very little satisfaction since the Command devolved on him."[167] Others couched their chagrin over the stalled momentum of the campaign in more general terms. Joseph Ward, Muster Master

General, argued that the army had "act[ed] too much on the defensive (in my humble opinion)," and felt thereby "we have lost the fairest prospect of success, and the best opportunity for defeating the British army."[168] Ward thought that the enemy should have been attacked within twenty miles of leaving Head of Elk, and frankly stated that another general attack had been expected shortly after Germantown, but "for certain reasons it was delayed."[169]

For still other officers, their discontent appeared to reflect more remote patterns of circumstance which impinged on the situation in which they found themselves. Jedediah Huntington wondered "What probability is there of recruiting our Army - Money will not do it for it has almost intirely lost its Value - how is it possible to Clothe our men - they have worn out their Blankets & other Clothing and I see no prospect of renewing them...." Huntington discussed the desirability of "One Grand Exertion" on the part of the people as a whole to "drive [the enemy] out of the country or put them in our power," but doubted whether it could be attempted before January.[170] The more he considered the matter, the more he uncovered gloomy portents for the cause.

Dissatisfaction was not confined to the army, nor was it merely directed at abstract external factors such as the loss of the value of money, or the apparent dispiritedness of the general population. Bitter inter-institutional disputes boiled open over specific arrangements, past performances, and future expectations.

The performance of the Pennsylvania militia, and that of the middle states in general during the 1777 season, was thoroughly aired out. As early as mid-October John Armstrong, who had commanded those Pennsylvania irregulars who had turned out at all, complained to President Wharton of a "very infamous falling off of the Militia which may with great justice be called desertion," which he said had become endemic after Brandywine.[171] Samuel Hay, a major in the 7th Pennsylvania Battalion, observed to fellow officer William Irvine: "I suppose there is a new cargo of militia coming out; they may as well stay at home, for not one fourth of them are of any use - about three fourths of them run off at the first fire and their officers formost... There is no more regulation amongst what I have seen of them, than there is amongst a flock of bullocks...."[172] Nor were non-Pennsylvanians kinder to that state's part-time soldiers. Mordecai Gist raged at "the Boasted state of Pennsylvania whose number of enrollers amounted to 62,000 men now the Enemy are even at their Doors have turned out about 1500 militia. Kent & Delaware not a man the Jerseys 900, Md and Virginia 500 whose time generally expires in about three weeks from the date of their arrival at Camp and during that time are subject to no law whereby we can bring them to support good order and regularity ...."[173]

To a large degree the frustration and irritation was directed at and between the institutions that shared responsibility for the war effort. Gist's anger boiled over not merely at the militia itself, but at the political proponents of reliance on militia. He indicted "the wise and learned" Congress for their resistance to a large Continental establishment. The Pennsylvania state government, being centrally located in the institutional network, received its

share of abuse, and readily joined in the faultfinding itself.

The failings of the militia were only the first point for which responsibility was laid at the state's door. Supply problems in general tended to focus on the state government. The shortage of clothing and blankets became an increasing irritant between the state and the Continent as the cold season approached. The Supreme Executive Council was caught directly between its citizens and the army, and its responsibilities extended to both. Congress had begun pushing the state to furnish more clothing, and particularly blankets - which since before Brandywine had been discarded under fire by harried troops - from as early as October. Once the army was ensconced at Whitemarsh, the temper of the Continental authorities erupted at what they considered to be the state's foot-dragging over this issue. The aggravating factor was the Council's attempt to limit the power of county commissaries to gathering clothing from "such of the disaffected as could possibly spare them." The Board of War exploded over the apparent scruple, demanding that what the army needed should be seized "without paying a more scrupulous Attention to [the disaffected's] Comfort than these infatuated Wretches have shewn to the Lives and Liberties of the loyal Citizens."[174]

The state was in fact under heavy pressure, both from its citizens and from its own officers in the Continental line, not to take an overly punitive stance toward the local population. Major General Arthur St. Clair wrote bitterly to Robert Morris, complaining of the difficulties of operating in an area which had been "stripped almost Naked," and in which the people "are already not a little jealous of the Army."[175] Giving vent to some of the regional

jealousy which was rife within the army, St. Clair testily observed that the New England states "have never contributed a single Blanket towards the general Supply of the Army...."[176] The state was not loath to use information sent to it by its officers, to the effect that much of the clothing and blanket drain was created by carelessness, baggage mixups, and losses to "whores and rogues that went with the baggage." Its liability was not much lessened, however, when Samuel Hay reported that "the generality of the people would much rather take a blanket from a soldier for half price, than let him have one at double its value. The Devil will get half of them yet."[177] Try though it might to mitigate its own responsibility for the shortages, the state could not easily overlook the critical letters it received from Anthony Wayne, who reported that the Pennsylvania troops suffered as much if not more than the rest of the army from ragged uniforms. Wayne lamented the honor of the state "which was held in high Esteem - but from the Supineness of some and Disaffection of Others - is fast Dwindling in that Consequence which I wish to see it hold...."[178]

There is also evidence that the army was being stalked by payless paydays, the most dreaded decimator of military morale after empty camp kettles. The evidence appears ominously in the personal attention which Henry Laurens, President of Congress, paid to the matter. On November 14, Laurens assured army Paymaster William Palfrey that he would soon be supplied with "such part of your requisition as will keep you employed until the remainder shall be transmitted."[179] The snowballing demands created by simultaneous crises in the supply of food and clothing, and by desperate attempts to bring the army up to full strength, had

created an unprecedented drain on the Continental treasury. They inspired in Laurens the fear of the "impending evil of being in arrears to the army."[180] The almost inevitable consequence of this circumstance was the imminent threat of resignation on the part of the officers, as well as the enlisted men's more immediate remedy of desertion.[181]

Nor would the provisions crisis allow itself to be set aside. By November 23 Thomas Jones was once more emitting cries of distress, more desperately than ever before. He warned an assistant of "the approaching calamity which I expect here every moment. Not a single barrel of flour... have I to deliver out to the troops this morning." "For God's sake exert yourself in this affair," Jones beseeched his associate, "or all's over."[182]

It should not be forgotten in this apparent catalogue of complete decay, that the army was continuing to perform its mission, if in an uncertainly altered environment, and with an inevitable decline of efficiency. While the main body of troops languished at Whitemarsh, the detachments in the twin forts on the river withstood a brutal naval and land assault.[183] Generally helpless to affect the outcome of the siege, Washington continued to make detachments to aggravate the British supply shortages. The use of detachments may have been manipulated to serve morale as well as strategic or logistical purposes. Being included in a party sent into action served to relieve boredom, temporarily removed individuals and units from the soured situation of the camp, and thus tended to minimize the formation of cliques and factions. General Charles

Scott, about to depart with a party to intercept convoys between Chester and Philadelphia, informed a friend that he was in "High spirits and full of hope of Bringing This most Horrid War to a Conclusion by Defeating Genl. Howe in a fiew days." Scott had "no doubt of success and [I] intend doing somthing very Cleaver [clever]."[184] Talk of this nature had been routine from the officers a month before, but by the time Scott wrote such sentiments were unheard of at camp. His optimism can probably be partly attributed to the liberating effect of his imminent departure from the scene of the army's travail.

After the loss of Fort Mifflin on November 16, following almost two weeks of murderous bombardment, the fall campaign entered its final phase. Knowing that Fort Mercer at Red Bank - Mifflin's twin on the New Jersey side of the river - was essentially indefensible without its counterpart, Washington considered the possibility of holding it anyway. He sent a team of generals to New Jersey to report on the prospect, but was probably very little surprised when they found that it was not worth the risk which such an attempt would have entailed.[185] The British had won the gamble which Washington's logistical difficulties had forced on him, in relying on the river forts to defeat them. If it had been a gamble, it had at least required only a low stakes bet. While the withdrawal of the American detachment from Red Bank on November 20 virtually assured the British of relatively comfortable possession of Philadelphia for as long as they chose to remain there, little damage had been done to the American army in trying to prevent that result.

Before Red Bank was surrendered Howe moved to force the issue. On November 17 he dispatched Lord Cornwallis with 3,000 troops to Billingsport by way of Chester, with orders to march north toward Red Bank and compel its surrender. Washington countered by detaching Jedediah Huntington's brigade, followed by an entire division under Nathanael Greene, to New Jersey, and ordered John Glover's brigade coming down with the reinforcements from the northern army to meet them there. They were to join James Varnum's brigade which was already in the vicinity, and undertake either the defense of Fort Mercer, or whatever other opportunities presented themselves against Cornwallis' force.[186]

Greene, who had command of the entire American contingent in New Jersey, found the fort abandoned and proposed to engage Cornwallis directly, to which Washington agreed. Washington was once again considering the possibility of a general attack on Philadelphia. The chance that Greene might threaten Cornwallis' detachment and compel Howe to reinforce it was sufficiently tempting to hazard using the smaller American division as bait.[187] Greene's response to the prospect of an engagement after three frustrating weeks at Whitemarsh was similar to that of Charles Scott. He wrote to his wife that he "hope[d] to have the pleasure to meet his Lordship [Cornwallis]" and ventured the guess that "this excentrick movement will lengthen out the campaign for some weeks at least and it is possible may transfer the seat of war for the winter."[188]

Greene's expectation notwithstanding, the maneuvers in New Jersey were not in any manner decisive. Cornwallis proved too

strong and cautiously disposed to bring him to anything more than a series of sharp skirmishes. He was able to complete his assignment of mopping up at Fort Mercer and return to Philadelphia by the twenty-fifth, bringing with him 400 head of badly needed cattle to help feed Howe's troops until the large British transport ships could be unloaded.[189] Greene reluctantly returned to Whitemarsh, and the 1777 campaign had ended in New Jersey. Although the reduction of forts had opened the Delaware to British shipping, and thus ended any hope of starving the enemy into submission, Howe could not hope to completely provision his army by that route and supply the civilian inhabitants under his jurisdiction. By continuing to disrupt trade to, and foraging parties from Philadelphia along the perimeter of the city, Washington could threaten to aggravate a situation in which the occupying troops were, according to one British officer, "very well supplied, tho: the Inhabitants, being numerous, may be straitened."[190]

To capitalize on this opportunity called for a continuation of the evolving strategy based on frequent detachments, small unit operations, and hit and run raiding parties. Small unit skirmishing had been a daily feature of the army's regimen since at least early November and, whatever the officers' regrets over their unsated lust for bigger battles, the men seemed to be acquiring a taste for the new exercise.[191] The cavalry, which in one officer's estimate had begun the campaign with no more defined responsibility than acting as messengers or handservants for the general officers, had come into its own under the new strategic circumstances.[192] One officer

described these encounters, mentioning "our General's rule; he sets no store by carbines or pistols, but rushes on with their swords."[193] Another officer observed that the American troops "are generally successful" in small detached skirmishes with the enemy.[194]

While the opportunity to give battle, on whatever scale, may have lifted the morale of those individuals and units included in the detached parties, it had little overall effect in tempering the sour mood that the army was in. The most choleric assessment of the situation was offered by Brigadier General Louis Lebeque Duportail, an engineer who would later supervise the construction of the camp at Valley Forge. Duportail, one of many European volunteers serving in the Continental army, attributed what little success he credited the Americans with to the monumental stupidity of the British. He damned the American character in every particular he could think of, concluding that "as for us, in doubling our army, we would not double our strength by a great deal, we would triple our trouble."[195] Washington probably did not have to deal directly with this opinion, and if he had it would have merely confirmed his low opinion of most of the foreigners, but he seems to have fielded a substantial amount of the intra-army friction personally. Indeed, if the 1777 campaign ever afforded him a moment of discouragement so sublime as to tempt him to wonder, as he had the year before, whether the game was not "pretty near up," it may have occurred when Mordecai Gist's note of November 30 crossed his desk. Gist complained of his "misfortune to be encamped near the quarters of Gen'l Maxwell," who, having the only supply of good water in the vicinity, had refused Gist access to it.[196]

Gist's complaint was microcosmically representative of a larger problem. As the supply system deteriorated, and the army consumed its way through whatever resources were locally available, intramural conflicts over those resources were increasingly unavoidable. Important decisions about the army's immediate future were needed, and the declining resource base was finally forcing the issue. Despite the state's somewhat self-serving incredulity that the army could be "starving for Want of Flour when the very Neighborhood of the Camp is at this moment full of Wheat," it was becoming clear that the Whitemarsh area had outlived its usefulness, and that a new site would have to be found.[197]

The question was not a new one. Jedediah Huntington informed his father in mid-November that the general officers had been "agitating the Disposition of our Troops for the Winter and find ourselves, the more we canvass the matter, the more at a loss."[198] Three weeks of alternating food crises, strategic reverses, and disagreements within the army's high command over how best to respond to the situation had done little to clarify the question.[199] Part of the problem stemmed directly from the fact that the decision was not the army's alone to make.

Indeed, if the question of "dispositon" seemed bent on defying the search for an answer, it was not without reason. In reality it comprised three separate but intertwined questions, each one of which would have been difficult enough by itself. Where would the army spend the winter? What if any activities would it undertake there? How, if at all, could it be supplied with the minimum material necessities to enable it to remain an integrated entity, much less accomplish a mission? Moreover, the same overlapping set

of military imperatives and convoluted political accountabilities which had woven through and shaped the 1777 campaign itself loomed to complicate the decisions which had to be made in its wake. The political minuet by which the army and the governing bodies on which it depended for existence groped toward a compromise answer for those questions would be fully as elaborate as the military minute which had characterized the campaign.

The specific steps which brought the army from Whitemarsh to Valley Forge are tangled in a web of partial documentation, multiple and often conflicting perception and reportage, as well as the customary reliance which complex decision-making networks place on verbal persuasion when making difficult choices. The full particulars of the process by which these questions were sorted out, defined, and answered will never be satisfactorily reconstructed. It can be safely assumed that the lamps burned late into the night in the committee rooms of Congress at York, and of the Assembly and the Supreme Executive Council at Lancaster, and that the roads between those places and Washington's Head Quarters at Whitemarsh were well travelled by messengers carrying the conflicting opinions back and forth.

The basic positions of the constituencies involved can be outlined with some confidence. The state wanted and expected the army to provide a maximum of protection to the countryside surrounding the British Head Quarters in Philadelphia, from a position as close to the enemy as could be safely maintained. It felt that it was entitled to this consideration because of its primary responsibility

for the immediate support of the army itself.[200] Congress, which because of its long-term domicile in the state, maintained a close, supportive, and it might almost be argued, client relationship with the Pennsylvania government, was inclined to a similar viewpoint.[201] Congress was anxious to see the army arrange itself for the winter in a manner as consistent as possible with its tenacious belief in the desirability of a "winter's campaign."[202]

The position of the army on the question of winter quarters was, as Huntington's observation indicates, considerably less than unanimous, but there were certain central tendencies. As was his habit in considering important decisions, Washington had been informally floating the question among his aides and high officers during the latter stages of the campaign. By December 2 he was able to succinctly pose the result to Joseph Reed. Stationing the army "from Reading to Lancaster inclusively," he reported, "is the general sentiment, whilst Wilmington and its vicinity has powerful advocates."[203] Washington portrayed himself as being "about fixing" on the decision, although he said he was "exceedingly embarrassed [undecided]...in my own judgement."[204] He was in fact making it clear that the army would in any case winter in "cantonments" rather than in the field itself, and tacitly inviting Congress to join in the deliberation in the spirit of finding a reasonable compromise, rather than with a view toward imposing an unacceptable decision.[205]

Congress needed no such invitation. It had, in fact, on November 29 appointed a three-man committee consisting of Robert Morris, Elbridge Gerry, and Joseph Jones to proceed to camp to confer

with the Commander in Chief and "consider of the best and most practicable means for carrying on a winter's campaign with vigor and success."[206] The committee arrived at Whitemarsh on the evening of December 3. Its members had scarcely been in camp for twenty-four hours when, as had been expected by American intelligence officers for over a week, the British army assembled and moved out in a body toward Whitemarsh. The American army, which had been rested, armed, and equipped in anticipation of the event, took positions in the heavily fortified hills before the camp, and scouting and skirmishing parties were detached to make contact with the advanced British units. Deliberations were hastily broken off and the committee was treated to a firsthand, full-dress demonstration of the army's strengths and liabilities; indeed, of its very ability to undertake the winter campaign that the Congressional group had come to camp to promote.[207]

The maneuvers at Whitemarsh of December 5 through 8, 1777, were in some respects a microcosm of the entire campaign to that point, at least in terms of their tentative execution and their ultimately inconclusive result. Each side had reason to hope for a decisive battle; Howe to salvage some presentable result with which to return to England (where he knew he would be called upon to justify the decisions which even then were being blamed for the defeat of Burgoyne at Saratoga), and Washington because his already uncomfortably close superintendence from Congress had been escalated in to an outright essay in to participatory generalship. And yet, neither commander felt so desperately pressed for a victory that he was prepared to take unreasonable risks, or to fight the other on his chosen ground.

Howe found the Americans securely ensconced in a heavily fortified camp which could be carried, if at all, only at the cost of unacceptably heavy casualties. Washington was not willing to leave that ground, even for the sake of the battle which his army had long been spoiling for, because his casualties in the ravine in front of the camp would have been as heavy, and as impossible to justify, as Howe's would have been on the redoubts themselves. Howe therefore settled for a methodical probing of the American position, proceeding laboriously from the right wing to the left, a maneuver which consumed more than two full days. Upon completing what amounted at most to a hotly contested inspection tour, Howe retired to Philadelphia, satisfied that he would at least be able to report to London that he had done his utmost to provoke a decisive engagement.[208] The British withdrew under cover of night, leaving the field they had occupied littered with "cooking kettles and many blankets," and a variety of other military equipment.[209]

The Americans were quick to claim a victory by default, and the boasting, occasionally even derisive tone of their letters rivaled those which had followed Germantown. Jedediah Huntington was sure that had not half of the American troops been sick or otherwise unfit for duty "this Time we might in all human Probability have prevented Mr. Howes ever returning to the city." "We hoped [Howe] would try," Huntington crowed "as he said, to send us Home after Shoes and Stockings, which he understood we wanted."[210] John Steel Tyler was disgusted to report the "disgraceful retreat"

of the enemy.[211] Benjamin Talmadge derisively observed "thus has the mighy Conquerors of America returned again to his [sic] stronghold with disgrace," and lamented that "I am prodigiously mortified that the Thieves should go back without a confounded drubbing."[212]

Indecisive though they were in purely military terms, the Whitemarsh skirmishes had one significant result, in addition to allowing the Americans to convince themselves that they had ended the campaign with at least a moral victory. They helped to decisively tip the balance away from the stalemate that had developed over the question of the army's winter "disposition," toward the compromise that Washington wanted and needed. The Congressional committee had come to camp with the specific charge, and the frankly expressed intention, of pressing upon the army Congress' scheme for a winter campaign.[213] Elbridge Gerry had written to John Adams shortly after the committee's arrival that the army appeared to him "stronger than it has been this campaign," although he noted that clothing was badly wanted.[214] He lamented that "In some of the officers there seems to be an irresistable desire of going into winter quarters but others are averse to it, as are Congress unanimously and [we] ... are not disposed to come to camp for the purpose of promoting this plan... I think the committee will most heartily propose the measure [a winter campaign]."[215] After having witnessed the maneuvering of both armies, Gerry's personal opinion had changed little. He informed Adams that the British had been able to "puzzle our officers by their manoeuvers," which he thought

could have been prevented had the Americans initiated the attack. "Until such an enterprizing spirit prevails," Gerry concluded, "[I] think that the enemy will manoeuver to advantage." [216]

If Gerry remained unconvinced, his colleagues on the committee may well not have been. Certainly they could have seen little in the American camp to contradict the grim reports which had been descending on Congress since the early fall testifying to the perilously ill-supplied state that the army was in. There is little evidence to document the reaction of the committee on their return to Congress, but after the Whitemarsh maneuvers, the latter body became noticeably diffident in regard to the question of a winter campaign.[217]

On December 3, Washington's close aide, John Laurens, had written to his father Henry Laurens, the President of Congress, a long letter outlining both the perilous situation which the army was in, and the undesirable consequence of abandoning the countryside in deference to that situation. Laurens then suggested the possibility of a compromise disposition for the winter; "a position which will not absolutely expose us to a Winters Campaign, but furnish us excellent Quarters for our men at the same time that it leaves us within distance for taking considerable advantages of the Enemy - and covering a valuable and extensive Country."[218] Laurens did not specify what position he may have had in mind. However, Anthony Wayne, who well into November had been a diehard proponent of strong offensive measures, had in response to Washington's request for written recommendations on winter quarters made such a

proposal. Wayne had suggested "hutting at the Distance of about twenty miles west of Philadelphia," an area with which he was intimately familiar due to his long residence there.[219]

It is impossible to reconstruct the decision with any degree of precision, given the evidence which exists. Congress fell silent on the subject until December 19, when it notified the state government that it had desired General Washington to "inform [it] whether he has come to a resolution to canton the army and if he has what line of cantonment he proposes," by which time the army was already on its final march to Valley Forge.[220] Congress may have perceived its obligation to the state to have been satisfied by the gesture of sending a consulting committee to camp, and been content to allow the state to make whatever additional representations it desired. When the state realized that the process of consultation had reached the face-to-face stage, it determined to frame a remonstrance on the subject. This document did not enter the deliberations until almost mid-December, however, by which time the decision to canton the army had been made and all but the precise location set. By this time, even the state's position had a somewhat fatalistic quality about it, as revealed by Thomas Wharton's letter to Elias Boudinot, who was known to have access to, if uncertain influence with Washington. Wharton wrote that he hoped "our troops will not retire to winter quarters and leave our country open to the...ravages and insults of the Enemy...," and expressed the hope that "some opportunity may turn up in the course of the winter for our army if they should be near the enemy to attack them."[221]

There is certainly little in this to suggest the traditional image of the state's having strong-armed the army, through Congress, into an unwanted encampment for 1777-1778. The entire campaign had been conducted in a complex and highly charged political environment. The various constituencies and interested parties had vocally pressed their viewpoints and availed themselves of whatever influence they could. The interaction of different forces had shaped the campaign, and there is no question that the decision on winter quarters was any exception. There is no evidence that the state had sought to be directly represented during the consultation at Whitemarsh in early December. There is none to suggest that it later felt that the Congressional committee, or Congress itself, had betrayed the state or its interests.

The state had in fact had representatives of its own in camp while the deliberations were proceeding, looking into charges that the Pennsylvania troops were more poorly clothed than the army in general.[222] Pennsylvania's position was seriously undercut, not in the least in its own eyes, by the performance of its militia during the skirmishing at Whitemarsh. The state's attention to that matter, together with the other support responsibilities with which it was charged, may have diverted its attention from the final decision. John Armstrong, the state's workhorse representative in the army itself, conceded to President Wharton that the question of winter disposition was "a point... of the utmost importance to Pennsylva[ni]a and to which I have paid & shall pay every degree of attention in my power."[223] There is no reason to believe, however, that his counsel carried any special weight with Washington as a result of his affiliation.

In the final analysis, the decision to winter the army at Valley Forge was probably Washington's to make, with the advice of his most trusted aides and officers. It represented a compromise among the wants and needs of the constituent elements of the American military and political establishments. For the army it meant that it would be separated sufficiently from the enemy to minimize the possibility of a ruinous surprise attack. It would also provide what was known to the officers as a "proper cantonment," which they insisted was necessary to shelter the badly clothed troops from the ravages of the elements. For Congress, it provided some assurance that opportunities would arise for interference with British depredations, even if it could not be characterized as the "winter's campaign" which that body had considered necessary. For the state, while it could hardly argue that it had assured the protection of Bucks, Philadelphia, and Chester Counties from the marauding Redcoats, it had at least spared itself the nightmarish vision of thousands of demobilized soldiers streaming toward the inland towns, there to further disrupt the already badly distended economies and social systems of those places.

From a purely military viewpoint, Valley Forge was located in suitably rough terrain, if not as ideally inaccessable as Whitemarsh had been, then at least acceptably so. Moreover, it lay hard by the Schuylkill, which had since September divided the zone of war into roughly equal halves, thus allowing for the protection of both sides. While it remained unfrozen, the river itself would offer a means of communication and transport to the camp from the interior Continental storehouses, especially the vital logistical staging areas of Pottsgrove and Reading. What the new camp lacked in terms of natural defensibility could be made up for by the army's increasing competence in building field fortifications. The still necessary system of supplementary provisioning would be facilitated by the access to western Chester County, the best remaining local source of agricultural supplies relatively unscathed by the demands of two armies. There may have been more than one potential site which combined these and other desirable characteristics, and which could also have satisfied the broader strategic requirements outlined above, but there could not have been many. Washington's keenest accomplishments during the 1777 campaign, if not during the whole war, had been as much political as purely military. The forging of a workable compromise solution to the question of the army's winter quarters, in a climate which bordered on political paralysis, certainly ranks among the most important of them.

It was, however, a transparently imperfect compromise, and no one realized that better than Washington himself. Ultimately, it begged more questions than it answered. Of the three subquestions

comprised by the larger one of disposition, only the first: where would the army spend the winter? had been answered. The remaining two: what activities would it undertake? and, how would it be materially supported? had only been tentatively addressed. It would take the winter itself to provide their answers. They would prove to be inextricably interrelated, indeed partially functions of each other.

The winter of 1777-1778 would, in fact, be a continuation of the phase which the war had entered when Washington brought the Continental army back into Pennsylvania - the scene of its darkest hours in December of 1776, as well as the staging area for its saving triumphs at Trenton and Princeton - to contest the British threat to Philadelphia. The Pennsylvania campaign had been a time of experimentation; of tentative thrusts on both sides punctuated by periods of prolonged inactivity; of cautious attempts at strategic and tactical innovation by the American command, and a time which offered a revealing glimpse of both the strengths and weaknesses of the American war machine. The winter would offer some opportunity for serious repair work on that machine, but only if emergency measures could be found to stabilize the hemorrhaging logistical systems.

Having made some preliminary decisions which provided a framework for the immediate future, Washington put the army into motion on December 11. That night it moved to Matson's Ford and began crossing the Schuylkill on its way to Chester County, with its precise destination known, if at all, only to a few of Washington's confidants.

Its passage of the river was interrupted when the first units reaching the west bank stumbled into a large British foraging party under the command of Lord Cornwallis, and a hasty retreat had to be conducted.[224] The next day the army completed the crossing at Swede's Ford, several miles above Matson's, and halted in a rugged, wet, hilly place known as the Gulph, while final arrangements were made for the establishment of a winter camp. On December 19 the army began its final mass movement of the season toward the Valley Forge six miles to the west.[225]

The day is burned indelibly into the collective American historical consciousness. In that consciousness, Valley Forge bears more resemblance to a passion play than to a concrete historical event. In the play, the Continental army itself has been transformed into a giant, silent greek chorus, and December 19 marks its entry, stage left, into an undifferentiated part of the howling wilderness. The army has been characterized at this point in its history as a virtual rabble, a ragamuffin outfit, even the "relics of an army." Valley Forge would, in this version, be its Gethsemane, and the coming spring its deliverance.

It is impossible to take seriously <u>both</u> this image and the demonstrable facts of the 1777 campaign. The army was certifiably badly kept by December of 1777, and no argument can be made with the record which shows that it was much the worse for wear as a result of that campaign. December 19 found it in the throes of yet another food crisis and, based on the record of its previous movements, no one connected with it would have hazarded a

prediction on when the supply lines would begin flowing again.[226] As for its appearance, it may well have justified the epithet "as ragged a band of scarecrows as ever graced a cornfield," for the supply of new clothing had long since all but dried up totally.[227]

The army was not, however, in its death throes as an organized force. This image contrasts appealingly with the equally facile one which depicts the British comfortably lodged by the warm fireplaces and bright lights of Philadelphia. Together with the picture of the Continentals marching briskly out of the hills along the Schuylkill on their way to chasten their luxury loving opponents at Monmouth six months later, it conveniently brackets the Valley Forge story like a pair of alabaster bookends. It reassuringly suggests that deliverance does happen, and that there is justice somewhere in the universe. It also poses impossible questions of historical explanation.

The army had fought ably and with spirit during 1777. Emotionally, the campaign had been a roller coaster affair for it, punctuated by the giddy highs of the days immediately following Germantown, and the frustrating lows of the immobile weeks at Whitemarsh in mid-November. Militarily, the army had registered dramatic improvement over the previous year, and no better testimony of this fact can be found than in the British army's heavily barricaded disposition in Philadelphia. For William Howe, the lessons of Trenton and Princeton had been brutally reinforced at Germantown. By 1777, Howe knew better than to carelessly leave detachments of drunken Hessians to roister in exposed positions, as an open invitation to the kinds of

small, symbolic successes that count so heavily in dire revolutionary straits. This Christmas, His Majesty's allies would carouse behind heavily defended fortifications north of the city.

The appropriate note of benediction for the dutifully observed American celebration of Thanksgiving was sounded by Joseph Ward. Ward, who as Muster Master General for the army was as responsible as any officer for monitoring the metabolism of the organization, saw more silver than lead lining the clouds of war. On December 17 he wrote privately to his friend Sam Adams in Massachusetts, and he hardly sounded like a man listening for the death rattle of the army. Rather, he beheld in the hardships of the present the hand of "Providence...administering a political and moral physic to this people." While admitting that there would "not be much feasting here," for the December 18 Thanksgiving observance, on the whole he thought "we have infinite cause for gratitude supreme."[228]

II. STARVE, DISSOLVE, OR DISPERSE

There would not be much feasting anywhere in the vicinity of the army for the remainder of the winter. Whatever gratitude may have arisen periodically, moreover, would have its roots in relentlessly finite causes. The army's logistical situation, never more than barely adequate, and growing progressively more precarious as the fall campaign went on, would become worse still. Its material well-being would unravel, and its very ability to continue as a coherent, functioning organization would be openly questioned, by no less an authority than its own Commander in Chief.

Consistent with the army's experience throughout the fall, its movement from Whitemarsh to Valley Forge precipitated another traumatic provisions crisis, by dislocating the fragile and tenuously maintained communications and transport links by which large amounts of food were delivered to the constantly hungry troops. Once again the at best barely functional Commissary and Quarter Master's Departments struggled with the problem of attempting to service a moving target. For what must have seemed like the thousandth time, the issuing commissaries traveling with the army

found themselves staring into the bottoms of empty barrels. Thomas Jones, their continually hard-pressed foreman, issued another desperate plea for assistance, bemoaning the "approaching Calamity that threatens our Army for want of Provisions," and grimly predicting that the army would "not be able to Exist one week longer" without 200 to 230 barrels of flour per day.[1]

That the army had stripped the vicinity of its Whitemarsh encampment bare of provisions before leaving there is probably more testimony to the little that remained at that place after more than a month of intensive occupation, than to the amounts that it was able to carry off.[2] The week it took the hobbled troops to cover the thirteen miles between Whitemarsh and Valley Forge, and especially the four-day hiatus in the barren and inaccesible defile known as the Gulph, had consumed the remaining provisions, and left the army once again in the "hand to mouth" situation which had characterized its hungriest intervals throughout the fall. The usual logic of mass movement - that the disruption of organized supply occasioned by the temporary severance of communications and transport lines would be at least mitigated by access to untapped local supplies - would prevail only partially in this instance. While it was hoped that posting the army at Valley Forge would give it access to the still relatively unravaged farmlands of western Chester County, both armies had occupied parts of Tredyffrin Township itself during the fall.[3] The British had placed a large detachment at Valley Forge during late September, stripping the place of military hardware, burning the forge and mills, and presumably helping themselves to as much of the available foodstuffs as they

could carry off at the height of the harvest season.[4] The vicinity of the new camp had been well within the boundaries of the overlapping procurement systems of both the state and the Continent throughout the campaign. By early winter it had already surrendered substantial amounts of its agricultural resources to the voracious demands of both armies.[5]

If the circumstances facing the Continental army as it began its sojourn on the Schuylkill could thus be fairly described as desperate, a more appropriate characterization might well be "desperate, as usual." For all that the travails of the autumn campaign may have dashed the sanguine expectations of the American officer corps, and brought many summer soldiers in the fledgling revolutionary government to the brink of despair, they had at least taught Washington to recognize patterns of incipient disaster. In addition, they had given him and his aides and advisors the opportunity of experimenting, under conditions of slightly less fatal potential, with hastily devised remedies. In many respects, the encampment at Whitemarsh had constituted a rehearsal for Valley Forge. The difference between the problems faced on the two occasions was essentially one of magnitude and simultaneity, and the solutions essayed were basically parallel.

As at Whitemarsh, the main part of the army would be placed in a rugged, not easily accessible place which could be further fortified against enemy attack, and which would serve as a stable anchor or focal point for an increasingly far-flung supply network. As had been the case since November, it would be necessary

both for reasons of strategy and ecological necessity for parts of the force to be detached from this main body. By such a disposition small parties, in communication with and under the overall direction of Head Quarters, could serve scaled down strategic purposes, such as guarding key towns, harassing enemy movements, and generally protecting "well affected" parts of the population. This would offer the real benefit of tending to deny the British the unobstructed enjoyment of the fruits of their campaign success, and at the same time help to maintain the fragile political relationships among the army, Congress, and the governments of the middle states, particularly that of Pennsylvania. It would also serve the latent function of distributing the troops, and with them their need for material sustenance, especially food, in a more even relationship to the increasingly scarce local supplies available to satisfy those needs. In this way, the system of local self-requisitioning which had supplemented the formal operations of the Commissary Department, and which had filled the breach when that department had faltered altogether, could be continued despite a progressively diminishing local resource base.

Washington moved quickly to implement the new disposition, even before the main body of troops had completed the march from the Gulph to Valley Forge on December 19. In essence, the army was trading places with the Pennsylvania militia, which previously had held responsibility for the area to the west of the Schuylkill. Now the latter troops, under the command of General John Armstrong, were thrown over to the east side of the river, with instructions to

deploy and interfere with communication between the city and its environs to the north in Bucks County, and to the northwest in upper Philadelphia County. The same spate of cold, wet weather which plagued the movement of the main army to Valley Forge, together with a shortage of wagons and a long sick list, hampered the deployment of these troops, but Armstrong quickly grasped the nature of his assignment. The function of the militia would be an extension of the dispersed, small unit tactics which it had labored to execute west of the city after Germantown.[6]

Armstrong realized that his force, probably numbering fewer than 2,000 men, with many of these due to complete their obligated service within a matter of days or weeks, could not hope to blanket the district to which it had been assigned.[7] Instead he proposed to split his command into small, mobile parties, and to post them at a series of "common duty stations" with a view to maintaining control of "every capital road," of which he thought there were about nine.[8] He would establish a central camp from which to supervise these activities, and through which supplies could be distributed to the troops and communications maintained with the main army. Before effecting this dispersal Armstrong promised to use his collected force to sweep the innermost part of his sector, adjacent to the city, to attempt to round up whatever cattle may have remained "convenient to the enemy" for the use of both his own troops and of the army as a whole.[9]

It remained for Washington to establish a similar screening operation west of the Schuylkill, to hem in British foraging parties,

to discourage civilian cooperation with the enemy, and to provide a vehicle for his small force of intelligence officers and their secretly recruited civilian spies. His first priority for the regular Continental units, however, was to collect them at the new encampment, to establish their quarters at that place, and to survey the strength, condition, and material needs of the army as a whole, before deciding on any detached duties. It was therefore necessary to temporarily withhold a small party of Pennsylvania militia from Armstrong's detail to anchor this forward network until more permanent arrangements could be made. Brigadier General James Potter was given this assignment, in recognition of his competent performance of that duty during the fall, and of his familiarity with the area and its communal and political temper, as well as its road network.[10]

Potter, with perhaps 200 or 300 Pennsylvanians, was posted toward the city to serve as the nucleus of an advanced guard. He established his headquarters at the small village of Radnor and directed his men in the same manner as Armstrong, in small parties detached along the major roads linking eastern Chester County with Philadelphia.[11] This force was supplemented with Daniel Morgan's regiment of "riflemen," a spirited body of Virginia frontiersmen who had recently distinguished themselves at Saratoga. To ensure the coordination of this somewhat hastily contrived assemblage of forces, which would at least temporarily be responsible for covering an essential territory, Washington sent Lord Stirling to Potter's side as a kind of roving overseer.[12]

Having put into place the elements of a screening force which could at least temporarily check casual intercourse between the enemy at Philadelphia and its immediate hinterland, and laid the groundwork for a winter-long experiment with petite guerre aimed at exploiting British logistical weaknesses and counteracting their political strengths, Washington turned his attention to the task of erecting a secure camp at Valley Forge. The well-worn campaign tents were pitched for temporary shelter, and the troops were dispatched to the hillsides and woodlots to retrieve raw materials for the "log city" which they had come to realize was going to constitute their winter quarters.[13] General Orders for December 20 directed the army's engineers to survey the ground in the broad triangle between the Schuylkill and Valley Creek, and to point out to the field officers their troops' assigned living areas.[14] The woodcutting teams were directed to save those sections of tree trunks adequate for hut construction. A three-man team of generals was appointed to receive proposals for new methods of roofing the huts, and a monetary award was promised to the author of the most effective innovation.[15]

While the army labored to complete the camp, appearing in Thomas Paine's vivid imagery "like a family of beavers,"[16] Washington concerned himself with broader matters of strategy and army organization and function. Having received "credible news" that the British intended to seize Wilmington, Delaware, from where they might command access to supplies in the three "Lower Counties," secure their hold on the Delaware River, and "countenance the disaffected"

in that area, Washington decided to annex the vicinity to his own control.[17] He ordered William Smallwood to take charge of the "division lately commanded by [General] Sullivan" and to proceed with them to Wilmington. He was to fortify the place as well as he could, and complete the porous, semi-circular blockade which Washington was struggling to erect around Philadelphia.[18] The state of Delaware was requested to mobilize its militia to support the Continental detachment.[19] Washington promised Smallwood that he would remain eligible to draw on the Commissary, Quarter Master's, and Forage Master's Departments for material support, but he hoped that local supplies could be relied upon.[20] If the evolving policy of detachments was to serve its secondary purpose of easing the logistical strain, in addition to meeting specific strategic objectives, it would be necessary to limit the continuing drain on the central supply system.

It was crucial to Washington's ability to manage the army in a disposition which would rely heavily on scattered commands that a tight overall control be exercised from Head Quarters, and that all personnel detached from the main camp be operating on specifically defined assignments. A low density deployment could effectively serve as a cover for loitering, desertion, and all manner of marauding unless measures could be devised for controlling the flow of army as well as civilian traffic. A porous, partly effective net thrown around Philadelphia could be tolerated, if not officially sanctioned, on the grounds that conditions precluded anything more. If the perimeter of Washington's camp proved to be equally porous

and halfheartedly managed, however, not only would the security of the army itself be threatened, but the already delicate internal political relationships within the revolutionary cause might be jeopardized.

By the end of December, it was becoming ominously evident that the army, which had leaked both men and equipment throughout the campaign, had become virtually sieve-like during its exodus from Whitemarsh to Valley Forge.[21] Unattached soldiers and commissaries were reportedly roaming the countryside, indiscriminately unleashing their appetites, whims, resentments, and responsibilities on friend and foe alike, crippling the ability of legitimate functionaries to perform their essential duties, and arousing the fury of the populace. Anthony Wayne, a resident of nearby Chester County, found himself virtually besieged by acquaintances and neighbors complaining of their treatment at the hands of soldiers and employees of the support departments.[22] The result, he warned, would not be limited to resentment and grumbling; rather, since even the families of militia were being "stripped and insulted," angry militia men soon would be leaving the service and bringing their weapons back to defend their homes.[23] Wayne recommended the issuance of "garrison orders" to keep the troops in camp. He also reported that he had taken the liberty of promising inhabitants that if they applied to the camp commissaries they would be re-issued at least part of the food, forage, and supplies which had been seized from them.[24]

The situation in which at best half-uniformed soldiers had the de facto liberty of the countryside was also providing a brigand's paradise for self-appointed guerillas. Private parties calling themselves "Volunteers" were patrolling the roads near the city, indistinguishable from official detachments, stopping and looting civilians and soldiers alike. John Clark, the supervisor of Washington's small intelligence service, complained that this "set of Gentry" who "infect[ed] the public Roads," amounted to "no better than as many highway Robbers."[25] One of these men had stopped a subordinate of Clark's and scorned the legitimacy of the official pass the man was carrying. Clark joined Wayne in voicing the opinion that the situation would be the ruin of the army unless it was halted.[26]

Particularly hard hit by the tendency to wander, because of the instability of their tenure and the necessarily peripatetic nature of their service, were the various support departments, whose employees enjoyed all of the temptations of the emergency situation and few if any of the constraints. Henry Lutterloh, a deputy quarter master, reported that wagonloads of public goods were being abandoned in every conceivable manner, pilfered, and diverted to private uses. He recommended to Washington that the drivers be given uniform clothing, and appended drawings of a proposed system of leather badges to be affixed to their shirts to signify the details to which employees of the auxiliary departments belonged.[27] The loose personnel practices of these departments had resulted by late December in a disastrous scattering of supplies and equipment in the wake of the army.[28]

Washington could well recognize, as many of his officers explicitly did, that the straggling and illegal behavior of members of the army was at least partly a rational response to acute hunger, and to the various failures of the political and military organization.[29] He could not, however, either for political or military reasons, afford to condone it. His expressions of outrage, intermixed with measures of varying severity aimed at suppressing it, became almost daily features of General Orders. The collective burden of his decisions was to accede to Wayne's advice concerning garrison orders. Washington ordered officers into the countryside to round up stragglers; required his brigadiers and regimental officers to make "constant rollcalls" to account for their men; promised severe punishment to any soldier caught outside of camp without a pass from his field officer, or within it on horseback; forbade the troops to carry their weapons except when on specific duty; and almost daily lectured the army on the need to maintain a disciplined deportment.[30]

Washington's initial decision to pull in all of the Continental units and to rely on militia to do front-line patrol duty partly reflected his recognition of the political sensitivity of having a tired, frustrated, resentful army operating among a fractious citizenry of mixed loyalties. By using the Pennsylvania militia in the attempt to keep the civilians and the enemy separated, the chance of provocative clashes would presumably be minimized by the attachment of the troops to their fellow citizens. Any random incidents that did occur, as some surely would, could be referred to the state as an internal matter. Events soon conspired, however,

to undermine this convenient arrangement. There were simply not enough Pennsylvania militia to do the job. Washington's agreement with the state to get along with half the number he wanted meant that regulars would have to take up much of the front-line slack.

Before Washington could even get his camp at Valley Forge secured and devise a comprehensive plan for the use of Continental detachments, he was pressed into making such detachments anyway. He became the recipient of insistent requests from John Armstrong, asserting the latter's need for more men on the east side of the Schuylkill. Armstrong was appalled at the immense area which he was expected to cover with his tiny force. He noted that no sooner had he moved the militia to the east side than he found people were "beginning to Crowd upon me from the Delaware side," especially the "Whiggs of Neshamany, near the Cross Roads."[31] Until Washington could make a detachment of regular troops to a point on the Delaware above Philadelphia, similar to the one he had made at Wilmington below the city, Armstrong's responsibility would apparently extend from the Schuylkill virtually to Trenton. Armstrong began to importune the Commander in Chief with the hope that Potter might be sent to join him.[32]

Washington was not prepared to accede to this request, although he can not have been blind to its legitimacy. By the first of January, as part of his agreement with President Wharton as to the total number of militia which the state would furnish, he was able to suggest that he would probably not need to use state troops west of the Schuylkill.[33] For the moment, however, Potter's

familiarity with the situation there, and his demonstrated capacity for supervising patrol work and directing hit-and-run tactics, were indispensable in what had evolved into a serious military crisis. Instead, Washington detached several companies of Continental light horse across the river to relieve Armstrong of part of the burden there. These parties were instructed to patrol roads leading into the city, to watch for enemy movements, and to intercept goods and supplies going to the British army. All goods seized were to be used first to support the detachments themselves, with any remainder to be forwarded to the army, and horses, wagons, and carriages sent to the Quarter Master General. Washington instructed the officer in charge of these parties to make "exact returns" of all Continental troops east of the river "that they may be increased or diminished as the nature of the Service may require."[34]

If he had any hopes that the "nature of the Service" would point toward the reduction of the force there, Washington was to be disappointed. The Continental dragoons were posted along Ridge and Germantown Roads, two principal thoroughfares adjacent to the Schuylkill, allowing the militia to extend their operations to the north and east into Bucks County in the direction of the Delaware.[35] The reports which Washington began receiving from his officers in that quarter were not promising. John Jameson, who commanded a company in Theodorick Bland's Regiment of Virginia dragoons, wrote that he had insufficient numbers to divide his men and cover both roads simultaneously. A week's experience with the business convinced him that it would be impossible to prevent the "market people" from

going into and out of the city. They had adapted easily to the mounted patrols by going on foot, inquiring of neighbors for the whereabouts of the cavalry, hiding in each others' houses, and slipping off "through the Plantations" as soon as the patrols had gone by.[36] Jameson thought that the people could be more easily enticed than coerced into dealing with Continental rather than British commissaries, if the former were stationed along the roads with hard cash, instead of the ubiquitous certificates of seizure which had to be brought to camp for redemption, where as often as not they were not being honored.[37] As it was, the business of disrupting commerce between the city and its hinterland was an exhausting, discouraging and infrequently successful enterprise. One cavalry officer wearily informed a friend in Connecticut at the end of December that he had "not pulled of[f] my boots or cloaths for these 18 Days."[38]

Meanwhile, Washington had begun to receive ominous reports that the British army was stirring in Philadelphia, possibly in preparation for a large-scale movement. John Clark, his intelligence officer, had reported even while the army was still enroute to Valley Forge that engineering parties were building an entrenchment along a road leading north from the Middle Ferry. They were also leading 300 horses covered with blankets around on the city common, and cutting large quantities of wood on the west bank of the Schuylkill and bringing it into town.[39] On December 20, Washington was informed that 1,000 enemy troops had crossed into New Jersey to "let the Country People have the benefit of the Market," by

suppressing militia activity there which had been interfering with British food gathering activities.[40] Clark also reported that over one hundred wagons, escorted by as many Hessians, had probed west of the Schuylkill toward Derby, where they were loaded with hay and rye straw and returned to the city. He lamented his inability to attack such a thinly protected detail, boasting that he could have "caught them easily" if he had any troops. If Morgan's company were stationed with him, Clark allowed that he would venture to keep them busy. Otherwise, he feared that it was useless for him to gather information, as the opportunity for using it always vanished before the news could be communicated.[41]

Clark did not observe, although he might have had reason to wonder, that he himself may have born the major responsibility for the timing, if not for the fact of the enemy's sudden interest in the Derby area. On his relentless circuit riding the previous day some of his subordinates had reached him with the news that they had encountered a party of British light horse scouting along Marshall's Road.[42] Apparently acting on his own initiative, Clark had sent a man in civilian clothing to accost the party, feign Tory sentiments, and inform them that a large body of American troops was marching toward Derby to take a post there for the winter. He contentedly informed Washington that the ruse had "startled" the enemy cavalry, and sent them off in haste toward the city.[43] In light of subsequent events, Washington may have wondered whether his intelligence chief had not inadvertently precipitated the first serious military crisis of the winter.

Clark's apparent indiscretion may in fact have directed Howe's startled attention toward Derby, and the productive result of the small detail sent there on the twentieth perhaps prompted him to envision bigger things in that quarter. The principal reason for the flurry of British activity during the last ten days of 1777, however, was the fact that their army was by then in the throes of a subsistance crisis of its own. While it was measurably less severe than the one which the Americans were facing, moreover, it can have been scarcely less disconcerting to Howe, if only because of his 3,000 mile supply line. As a result of personnel changes at the head of his Commissary, which partly resulted from and partly compounded a series of miscalculations in the computation of rations on inventory with the army at Philadelphia, Howe found his storehouses filled to considerably below the margins customarily afforded to eighteenth century British military expeditions.[44] Indeed, his reserves had been plummeting precipitously since the capture of Philadelphia, and would continue to do so until March, 1778, when they would begin to stabilize.[45]

The British army was in no imminent danger of starvation in late 1777, as the Americans arguably were. Reserves of bread and meat stood at approximately 120 days by current consumption levels.[46] However, with ice beginning to appear in the Delaware in large, ship-threatening chunks, and in light of an increasing awareness of his dwindling reserves, the immobility of the American army as it

struggled to hack out its winter quarters, must have struck Howe as a propitious opportunity to restock his larder. For all that they may have made life miserable for the American officers assigned to stop them, and significantly supplemented the operations of the formal British logistical departments, the market people could only slow the decline of the army's stockpiles. If those stores were to be increased, the army itself would have to move out into the countryside in force.

From the intelligence which began to bombard the American Head Quarters, that is precisely what the enemy was preparing to do. On December 20 Washington anxiously queried Clark, emphasizing the importance of receiving the earliest intelligence of all enemy movements if any advantage was to be taken of the situation.[47] Clark was able to respond the same day with substantial detail, delivered in timely fashion. The enemy was indeed expected to leave the city that week to "plunder," he reported, in much larger numbers than the previous week. The object of their attentions, he predicted, would be Derby, Marple, and Springfield Townships.[48]

Washington, nervous about the state of his army - which was hungry, restless, and indeed still imperfectly accounted for in and around a camp which was as yet entirely unfortified - may have imputed a greater degree of urgency to this news than Clark had intended to imply. He seized the occasion to attempt to mobilize at least a part of the army to resist the British movement. This provided several of his brigadiers with an opportunity to expound on the willing spirited but weakly-fleshed state of the men under

their command. Jedediah Huntington dryly informed Head Quarters that in his view "fighting will be far pref[erable] to starving," but noted that his brigade was entirely out of provisions, and that his commissary was unable to obtain meat under any circumstances.[49] Huntington hinted at unrest among the men, which he said he had done his best to quiet, and predicted that stealing would be the consequence of a continuation of the situation.[50]

James Varnum, Huntington's "brother" brigadier, camp neighbor, and fellow New Englander, waxed wryer still. Taking as his text Solomon's aphorism that hunger would break through a stone wall, Varnum observed that it was a "very pleasing Circumstance to the Division under my Command, that there is a probability of their marching."[51] The material state of Varnum's brigade was, however, by his portrait of it, if anything worse than that of Huntington's. The men were not only entirely out of provisions, but they had been so for three days. What beef they had been procuring was so vile as to be all but inedible. Varnum also alluded to possible difficulties in controlling his troops, observing that "the Men must be Supplied, or they cannot be commanded."[52] He allowed himself a veiled criticism of Washington, suggesting that if the Commander in Chief allowed any further neglect of the army from scruples about imposing military law upon a recalcitrant citizenry, "your final Disappointment will be great, in Proportion to that Patience which now astonishes every Man."[53] Varnum hinted at the removal of the army to a state which could better meet its vital needs, and said that he was committing these ideas to paper "that the Evil may be inquired into."[54]

There may be other and perhaps better interpretations for Washington's handling of the situation than the one suggested above; that he seemingly overreacted to a piece of tentative intelligence. He may have had more specific information, from a source besides John Clark, warning of an imminent enemy movement on the twenty-first. He would explain to Congress that day that he "had reason to expect from intelligence" that the enemy was to have crossed the Schuylkill that morning.[55] In that letter Washington allowed the implication to be drawn that his army, rather than Derby, Marple, or Springfield Townships, had been the apprehended defensive objective of his aborted mobilization. No other reports are to be found in Washington's papers which confirm, refute, or in any way modify Clark's seemingly benign forcast of a limited foraging expedition at an unspecified time during the following week.

Intriguingly, the suspicion lingers that Washington seized upon the incipient activity of the British army as a pretext for assembling the case which he must have wanted to make with Congress for weeks if not months. He was on the verge of altering dramatically the tenor of his relationships with his political constituencies. Undoubtedly stung by the kind of criticism of which Varnum's delicately phrased slap is merely an infrequent (among Washington's friends) written example, Washington was about to channel the frustration stemming from his current military impotence into a political offensive aimed at the governing bodies which sonorously deliberated at York and Lancaster.

The rapidly developing situation, however, first called for interim measures for ascertaining the enemy's real intentions and for preparing as effective a response as the circumstances would permit. Even as Washington drafted the letters by which he would throw down the gauntlet to Congress, and through it to the state, he was interrupted almost hourly with messages from the lines near Philadelphia reporting that the British army had indeed begun to move. On December 21 Howe sent a small detachment across the Schuylkill on a temporary bridge constructed near the left wing of the British lines, above the Middle Ferry. The party may have encountered a patrol from Potter's militia or Morgan's corps, for it "had to retreat along the river to Grey's [sic] Ferry," where the British engineers were building another, larger temporary span.[56] That evening 8,000 men were put under orders to be ready to march from Philadelphia the following morning.

On December 22, Howe led this party, which consisted of well over half of his effective force, together with about 500 wagons, over the lower bridge. The troops marched "in one column" along the road toward the village of Derby, continuously deploying in a thin line which stretched for about four miles. At Derby the end of the column fanned out into a flank guard, and the wagon detail went to work behind this protective shield gathering hay and other forage.[57] General Knyphausen was left behind in command of the approximately 6,000 troops which remained in the city.[58]

The intelligence reports which began to pour into the American Head Quarters, although they varied widely in specific details, soon

confirmed the general outlines of John Clark's forcast. The British were indeed abroad in much larger numbers than they had been previously, and Derby and its adjacent townships appeared to be the object of their efforts.[59] This fact had propitious strategic implications for Washington. While it did not alter the political ramifications of his inability to mobilize the American army through its formal organizational structure, militarily it meant that he could resort to short-term emergency measures which would be at least partially adequate to the situation. Unless Howe changed his mind, or was preparing a grand ruse, it meant that the encampment at Valley Forge itself would not come under immediate attack.

If the formal brigade and regimental structure of the army was disabled by hunger, rampant sickness, and particularly by the distribution through the units of nearly 3,000 men unfit for duty because they were lacking some essential articles of clothing,[60] then the response to Howe's "Grand Forage" would have to be made, if at all, outside of that structure. On December 22, having ascertained the apparent import of the enemy movement, Washington attached an appendix to the General Orders for the day: each brigade would detach eight officers and "fifty privates, all picked men," under the command of "a good partizan Captain."[61] All of the troops selected were to be in fighting trim, "fit for annoying the enemy in light parties." The parties, depending on the placement of their brigades in the camp, were to report to Generals Sullivan, Greene, or Stirling for orders, and were to be issued rations and a "full supply of ammunition of 40 rounds each."[62]

By the following day the effect of the newly organized skirmishing units was being felt along the perimeters of the British expedition, if in something less than truly lethal force, then at least in sufficient weight to call into question the traditional image of the Continental army as virtually disabled by its logistical and organizational deficiencies during its first fortnight at Valley Forge. The force which Washington had been able to assemble to resist the brazen enemy domination of the inner belt of Philadelphia's hinterland was undeniably a makeshift weapon at best. It elicited less than unqualified approval from the very officers to whose guidance it had been entrusted. Daniel Morgan, who knew skirmishers when he saw them, was under no illusions that these were the real article. Upon making contact with fifteen or sixteen parties fresh from camp, Morgan found that they each considered themselves to be under separate commands.[63] He had called out all of his own corps of riflemen to meet the contingencies of the situation. As for the new detachments, he would venture to advise them, but felt that under the circumstances he could not command them, "even if we were engaged."[64]

Nor was it merely by backwoods Virginia standards that the hastily carpentered light parties seemed to fall short of the requirements for small unit, hit-and-run fighting. James Potter, who, having commanded in the Pennsylvania militia, could spot misfits as readily as Morgan could identify dead shots, was hardly more optimistic about the new units. He too remarked on the problems occasioned by the separate commands.[65] He noted,



Daniel Morgan (1736-1802)

Patrolled the countryside between Valley Forge camp and British lines near Philadelphia during January and again during May-June 1778.

"Every day we keep close around them, they don't offer to come out side of their pickets so that we have little chance to take any of them."

Courtesy of Independence National Historical Park

moreover, that they had arrived at the front without rations, contrary to the orders by which they had been mustered. He seemed no more anxious than Morgan to add the problems of commanding them to the burdens he was already laboring under, and after having found them "pickets," or guides, dispatched them toward the British line. On balance, he reported, he had no great expectations for the parties, even as an expedient solution.[66]

While these impressions were not necessarily categorically unfair, they were nevertheless undeniably first impressions. Even Potter had to admit grudgingly that the fresh parties had thrown themselves into the spirit of their assignment with enthusiasm. One such detail, he reported, having scouted all night, had in the morning encountered a small body of British light horse beyond Derby. They had pursued the enemy lustily, he wrote, before abandoning the chase. Potter also observed that the British were generally keeping "pretty close" to their lines, and were content to concentrate on the haying operation.[67] Indeed, the British were anything but contemptuous of the patched together net which the Americans had thrown around them. One of Howe's aides-de-camp noted in his diary that "some rebel dragoons and a few hundred of Morgan's riflemen are swarming around us."[68]

Morgan rapidly overcame his scruples about extending his command to technically independent parties. To have refused to do so would have been to invite anarchy to a quarter where it already had substantially more than a foothold. The initiative may have come from the detachments themselves, as their initially

independent-minded "Partizan Captains" sized up the situation and opted in favor of centralized direction over their freedom of action. Morgan wrote to Washington that several of the captains had "put themselves under my Command," and reported that "I took charge of them, fixed upon a place of rendezvous," and promptly turned them loose to cover the enemy lines.[69] Morgan was still not overwhelmed with the quality of the reinforcements. They were, he complained, "by no means fit for scouts, being taken promiscuously from the reg[imen]ts, when they ought to have been pickd men."[70] Their lack of provisions "renders them almost useless," he lamented. They were so apt to straggle that Morgan believed if the British had been "any ways interprising" they could have captured two Americans for every man they lost.[71]

On the other hand, one party had cut off a troop of enemy horsemen and driven them into a swamp where, their mounts becoming mired in the muddy ground, ten men and a dozen horses had been captured.[72] His willingness to catalogue their faults notwithstanding, there is in Morgan's narrative a bit of the tone of the stern but proudful parent anxiously watching the first steps of a child. Three or four of the parties had been patrolling in the country north of Derby Creek, and had not been heard from when Morgan wrote the last report of the evening from Springfield Meeting House. Far from assuming that they had come to grief, he hazarded the guess that "perhaps they have done something clever."[73]

From Washington's perspective, the new detachments represented something above a tenth of his able-bodied force, and their

operations required the supervision of someone of higher rank than a militia general and a colonel, however capable or trusted. As he anxiously received the first reports on the performance of the augmented forward elements, he cannot have overlooked the ambivalence in the attitude of his informants. It would be necessary, he concluded, to send a general officer to the front to superintend the operations there. Providentially, as a result of a vigorous scouring of the countryside near the camp, and the inception of a thin trickle of supplies from Armstrong's sweep of the inner apron of townships east of the Schuylkill, the provisions noose around the neck of the main army had just been loosened slightly.[74] Washington was possessed of the temporary, and probably the unexpected opportunity of being able to consider reinforcing the advanced outposts. He seized the option, ordering Stirling to proceed with a force of unspecified size to Potter's quarters at Radnor.[75]

On his arrival at Radnor late in the afternoon of December 23, Stirling found that Morgan had taken charge of the detachments sent the previous night, and with part of Potter's militia, proceeded toward the enemy lines that morning. Stirling reported that he had found the front generally quiet, despite a few scattered incidents of firing. The British were keeping close to their lines, which extended for about one and a half miles to northeast from Derby toward Philadelphia. While he had not had time to gather intelligence from their rear, he believed that they were fully occupied with the removal of hay and forage from the islands between Derby and the Schuykill.[76]

The air of crisis ebbed once the American detachments had been reinforced, and the limited objectives of the British expedition discerned. Punctuated by occasional random clashes between mounted parties of both sides, which often resulted from virtually accidental encounters, the situation developed rapidly into a stalemate. American intelligence confirmed Howe's apparent intention of keeping his force concentrated, and of avoiding if possible outbreaks of fighting which might delay or disrupt the expedition's purpose of stripping the area behind his lines of forage.[77] With the situation secured, the Americans used the opportunity to turn the detachments to foraging purposes of their own. Howe's defensively drawn line along the Derby Road left a considerable part of the countryside exposed. While the 1,500 to 2,000 Americans in the area could not protect a massive, systematic sweep of the kind which the British were enjoying, they could escort commissary squads in heavily armed convoys to and from targets of specific opportunity.

Stirling, who on his arrival at Radnor had discovered considerably more agricultural resources than he had been led to believe would be available there when he left Head Quarters, took the initiative in expanding the scope of his mission. He detached an officer with 300 men to the area around Marshall's Mill to "cover our foraging parties and disrupt any of theirs which may come out."[78] He also established a kind of informal "flying" commissary group, by loading captured enemy wagons and sending them to camp, and exhorted Head Quarters to send him as

many wagons as could be spared. Stirling predicted that he would be able to "make a very good forraging tomorrow" and, recognizing Washington's well-known sensitivity toward military intrusion into civil affairs, promised that "no force will be used while limetive measures will answer the purpose."[79]

It delighted Washington to learn that what had originated as an almost desperately improvised defensive step now had a reasonable prospect of yielding an unanticipated flow of material sustenance for the army. Already launched upon the orchestration of a political offensive aimed at both his critics and his ineffectual supporters in Congress, he was prepared to suspend his scruples against the imposition of military power until such time as the civil authorities had shown themselves more capable of sustaining the army.[80] He took immediate steps to increase the size and range of the special commissary detachments, again resorting to drafts from the brigades. Each unit was directed to furnish one lieutenant and eight men, who would put themselves under the direction of the Commisary General. To increase the number of wagons available, each brigade was ordered to unload three baggage vehicles and turn them over to the foraging parties.[81]

Stirling was notified that a "parcel" of wagons had been dispatched to him. Washington concurred with intelligence estimates that Howe would probably not attempt any offensive measures, but cautiously insisted on receiving prompt "notice of the least movements."[82] His aide Tench Tilghman voiced the sentiments of much of the army, both officers and privates, on

the anniversary of the Battle of Trenton, when he appended to the message the wish that "we could put them in mind tomorrow Morning of what happened this time twelvemonth."[83] Stirling responded that he could think of no way of accomplishing that end other than by making "a Grand Bonfire," and destroying the hay and foodstuffs which the British were relentlessly collecting.[84]

Washington's cautious approval of the ramification of the operations between his camp and the enemy lines, from an emphasis on closely watching and containing the British movements into an American mini-forage, was well apprehended. The army was in desperate need of whatever supplies could be scoured from the area, but its security needs were necessarily paramount. Washington did not want his patrols to become so engrossed in covering the collecting operation that they lost sight of their primary responsibility as a buffer between the camp and Howe's strong concentration of troops near Derby. An equilibrium had been established in the area between two armies, but from the perspective of the commander of a weakened, indeed a partially crippled force, it was a perilously delicate equilibrium.

Stirling, Potter, and Clark, with occasional assistance from Smallwood and Armstrong, combined to all but bombard Washington with the news of the "least movements" that he had requested. Their initial reports suggested the possibility that the equilibrium was breaking down. Howe appeared to be enlarging the scope of his expedition, and whether for strategic or supply purposes was not immediately clear. Clark's patrols had stumbled upon a troop

of enemy dragoons accompanied by some artillery advancing along the road between Derby and Chester.[85] Stirling delayed an early morning report on the twenty-fifth in an effort to discover the source of some cannon fire which he had heard, and by the time he completed it at noon, he too was nervously covering the enemy on a broader and still undetermined front. He found that a British party had been working overnight carrying away forage in the neighborhood of Merion Meeting, considerably closer to his own post at Radnor than they had been operating previously. Stirling was also investigating a report that an enemy party was operating along the Lancaster Road, "near the four Mile Stone." He guessed that these developments indicated that the British had exhausted the area behind their lines at Derby, and were looking to "extend their Ravage into the Country."[86]

The latest intelligence from east of the Schuylkill was also of concern. The inhabitants of that quarter had been "much alarmed" on the evening of the twenty-fifth by "a little noise," Armstrong reported, and were in anxious expectation of a visit by the "ravagers."[87] Armstrong was still hampered by the undermanned state of his detachment. While he was giving the problem of intercepting the market people every attention in his power, he found that they could not be stopped completely, even with the administration of "considerable discouragement" by way of exemplary punishments.[88] Indeed, the British "grand forage" seemed to be paying them ancillary dividends everywhere along the perimeter of the city, as inhabitants hurried toward the town with their goods, on the

pragmatic calculation that they would be better compensated for products voluntarily delivered than for goods which were forcibly seized by either side. The belief that the 8,000 British troops would sweep back through the city's western apron, raking before them everything of material or military value, had become prevalent.[89] In opposition to it, the deaf ears and cold hearts that Stirling, Armstrong, and their subordinates turned toward the excuses offered by those marketeers who were unlucky enought to be caught, were of but slender avail.[90]

Before American apprehension about the apparent expansion of Howe's designs could be translated into any decision to redeploy their forces, intelligence began to indicate that the British operations had crested and were probably about to be terminated. John Clark had personally made a complete circuit around the enemy outpost at Derby, and concluded that the purpose of the previous day's feint toward Chester had been to disperse American light parties to allow for the removal of the last remaining hay from Tinicum Island over the bridge at Gray's Ferry. Three days' provisions had been sent to the troops at Derby on the twenty-fourth, leading Clark to infer that they would begin to withdraw toward Philadelphia that night.[91] In the evening, Stirling relayed the welcome news that, the morning's alarms notwithstanding, the enemy remained apparently concentrated within their former lines.[92]

Both men's reports evidenced the strain of attempting to cover a wide-ranging and ill-defined front with parties drawn from improvised detachments. Clark's men had bungled a "glorious opportunity" for ambushing a patrol of thirty British light horse through the

"imprudence of one of our officers forming his men." He had later looked on helplessly for want of a handy force as 100 unarmed Hessians struggled to drive a herd of cattle across the Schuylkill at the Middle Ferry.[93] Stirling had stretched all but 100 of his troops along a thin, broken line between the five-mile stone on the Lancaster Road and the eleven-mile stone on the Chester Road near the White Horse.[94] The troops were worn out from constant duty, and both Clark and Stirling proposed withdrawals from their detachments, which were becoming scattered, desertion-prone, and in some cases almost useless due to the wear and tear on both men and material. Both asserted the need for still more detachments of fresh troops from camp if either a defensive or offensive posture was to be maintained at close quarters to the enemy for a prolonged period.[95]

By the twenty-eighth, reliable intelligence of the retreat of the British expedition was at hand.[96] The force under Howe, which had pulled back behind Derby on the twenty-seventh after a report that Washington had detached 3,000 more troops toward the lines and was following in person to lead an attack, lumbered across the Schuylkill over the Gray's Ferry and the upper pontoon bridges, dismantling those structures behind them.[97] The expedition had yielded over 200 tons of vitally necessary hay, and several hundred head of cattle and sheep.[98] Weary American detachments trailed the enemy all the way to the river, conducting obligatory annoyance forays at the heels of the withdrawing columns.[99] These actions, which resulted in the capture of approximately forty American prisoners, accomplished little more than to assert formally the fact of dispute over control of the area between Philadelphia and the Continental camp.[100]

With the enemy safely escorted back into the city, there apparently to remain for the duration of the winter, Washington quickly dismantled the improvised force which had operated along the western border of the British stronghold during the ten-day emergency situation. He ordered Stirling to collect the troops under his command and to bring them to camp as soon as he was certain of the finality of the British withdrawal. These men were promised refreshments and assured that they would be seen immediately to their winter quarters.[101] James Potter predicted to Thomas Wharton that the enemy would now "Bless themselves and sit down in peace this winter in the City."[102] His own brigade of militia was breaking up due to the expiration of their terms of service. By the fifth of January the brigade would be disbanded, except for about 100 men who would probably be sent to join Armstrong east of the Schuylkill.[103] Potter would insist on a long-delayed furlough, and Continental troops would assume full responsibility for the west side of the river. John Clark asked for a well-earned leave of his own to visit his family, offering to do any errands of Washington's choosing in Lancaster and York.[104]

Clark's application was granted, and Washington's generous letter of recommendation to Congress resulted in his appointment as a deputy auditor assigned to the adjustment of the army's accounts.[105] The request had been couched in timely terms. During the last weeks of 1777, Washington was doing a brisk business with

the political bodies which sat in both of the towns on Clark's proposed itinerary. His role in the maneuvers and skirmishing around the British positions near Derby, and indeed along the entire perimeter of the city, had of necessity amounted to barely more than that of a concerned observer. The dispersed nature of the operations in that quarter effectively put their actual direction into the hands of the field officers who had been placed in command of the emergency detachments. Washington was reduced to anxiously receiving continual and often contradictory intelligence reports from the front, which he answered with sugestions for general responses, cautionary admonitions, and constant requests for still more intelligence.

He quickly discovered, however, that while his ability to manage the situation on a purely military basis was severely constrained, he was in a position to extract a considerable amount of political leverage from that very circumstance. Washington fairly leapt at the opportunity to do so. The entire Pennsylvania campaign had transpired within a convoluted political context, partly as the result of the broader evolution of the war and of the revolutionary government itself, and partly because of the close quarters at which that government and its military arm were now operating. Washington had been required to divide his attention throughout the fall between the immediate combat situation and his political constituencies. Now with the campaign at an apparent conclusion, he was able to take a more active part in shaping the war's immediate political context.

The issue which catalyzed his involvement was the continued rumbling within the political sphere of ill-tempered debate over the question of the army's winter disposition. Washington had taken advantage of the apparent tapering of that debate in mid-December to reach his own decision on the placement of the army at Valley Forge. He assumed that having settled that question, any continued discourse would revolve around the second and third issues involved in that debate: the interrelated matters of winter strategy and supply. The ultimate viability of his decision - indeed of his ability to keep the army where it was - depended on answers to those questions, especially the third, which lay in the particular province of the political bodies. However, while the virtually starving state of the army upon its arrival at Valley Forge attested to the apparent primacy of this issue, new evidence indicated that the question of placement itself was not settled, at least in the eyes of the army's political constituencies.

Individual members of Congress continued to communicate with officers in the army in an attempt to influence what they took to be the still-open question of where it would pass the winter.[106] Congress itself chose to resurrect the issue officially, when on December 19, after having considered for three days the report of the committee which had visited the camp at Whitemarsh, it resolved to transmit to Washington Pennsylvania's strongly worded remonstrance against his going into winter quarters, together with a series of questions on the subject.[107]

Congress wanted to be informed whether Washington had reached a decision about winter quarters, what the particulars of that decision were, and how he proposed to protect Pennsylvania east of the Schuylkill as well as New Jersey.[108] The import of the resolution was clearly to raise sharp questions both about the wisdom of the army's stated sense that it should not be compelled to remain "in the field" for the winter,[109] and by implication, about Washington's failure to keep Congress informed of his actions.[110]

Congress' decision to reopen what Washington apparently regarded as a settled question coincided with Washington's bluntest criticism to that date of the logistical and administrative support which he was receiving from that body. On December 22, in the aftermath of the army's failure to mobilize to oppose the threatened enemy movement across the Schuylkill, he decided to speak plainly. He did not know, he wrote, "from what cause, this alarming deficiency or rather total failure of Supplies arises; but unless more Vigorous exertions and better regulations take place in that line, and immediately, this Army must dissolve."[111] Washington asserted that he had done everything in his power to compel better performance from the Commissary Department, but without effect. The result had been the immobility of the army more than once during the campaign, and again that very morning. He concluded by imputing at least indirect responsibility for the situation to Congress, by pointedly "reminding" it of the "necessity of filling, as soon as possible, the [then vacant] Offices of Quarter Master and Adjutant General."[112]

Before Washington could seal what, measured by the carefully deferential tone he customarily maintained toward Congress, amounted to harsh criticism, Henry Laurens' letter dutifully transmitting Pennsylvania's remonstrance, together with Congress' resolve and accompanying questions, was laid before him.[113] Its receipt seems to have thrown him badly, if momentarily, off guard, by undercutting the implicit purpose of the very letter which it interrupted: that of moving the discourse between the army and the civil governments at whose pleasure it served from the question of where it would pass the winter, to the related one of how it would be enabled to pass the winter at all. Congress' resolution, with its implicit endorsement of Pennsylvania's aggrieved petition, indicated that the state and Continental governments were not of a temper to be transported lightly from the first issue to the second according to Washington's chosen agenda.

He appended a hastily drafted justification of his actions to the letter he had been finishing. Its tone alternated between wounded defensiveness and biting sarcasm. As to his plans for covering Pennsylvania, he wrote "It would give me infinite pleasure to afford protection to every individual Spot of Ground in the whole of the United States. Nothing is more my wish. But this is not possible with our present force."[114] He carefully reviewed the arguments for and against each of the proposed solutions to the question of the army's disposition, and took personal responsibility for the decision to bring it to its current camp. Alluding to New Jersey, he pronounced himself "sensible of her sufferings," but nevertheless momentarily powerless to allieviate them.[115]

Whether in the heat of argument, or for more calculated reasons, Washington did not return in his appendix to the theme he had been developing upon the receipt of Laurens' letter: that of his acute material embarrassment and its effect on his military situation. This would seem to have been the most telling among the arguments available to him. He did not, however, propose to abandon his determination to force the issue of supply. Indeed, Congress' unsolicited reopening of the question of disposition provided an explicit political pretext for pressing that issue harder than ever. The army's predicament for want of food had already impelled Washington to take the initiative toward the political sector. The complicating fact that the British army was again in motion coincided with the arrival of Congress' resolve to give shape to that initiative. It would take the form of short but intense political offensive. It bore every mark of Washington's military style under similar circumstances. It occurred at a time when he was ostensibly in retreat; it would be conducted by means of a brief flurry against an exposed and unsuspecting target; and it would have carefully delineated objectives. If a military replication of the previous year's Christmas raid on Trenton was impracticable (and Washington was not fully convinced that that was the case) then a domestic political equivalent of that event might prove to be a timely substitute.

Washington returned to the subject the following day, in a less even tempered and more combative mood. "Fresh, and more powerful reasons" had come to light, he wrote to Laurens, to

support his conclusion that the army was in grave peril as a result of its tenuous logistical circumstances.[116] In fact, he observed he was "... now convinced, beyond a doubt that unless some great and capital change suddenly takes place in that line, [the Commissary Department] this Army must inevitably be reduced to one or other of these three things. Starve, dissolve, or disperse, in order to obtain subsistence in the best manner they can;...."[117] He hastened to add that the situation he was describing was "not an exaggerated picture," but rather that he had "abundant reason" to think it was an accurate one.[118]

He depicted his abortive attempt to mobilize the army the previous day upon the receipt of intelligence that the enemy was moving from Philadelphia: "behold! to my great mortification, I was not only informed, but convinced, that the Men were unable to stir on Acct. of Provision, and that a dangerous Mutiny begun the Night before, and [which] with difficulty was suppressed by the spirited exertion's of some officers was still much to be apprehended on acct. of their [for] want of this Article."[119] A commissary had been brought forward, who informed the Commander in Chief that there were no cattle in camp, and only twenty-five barrels of flour to feed the entire army. Moreover, the commissary could not predict when to expect any further provisions.[120]

Washington couched the matter in personal as well as administrative terms. His "own reputation [was] so intimately connected, and to be affected by the event," he observed, that he felt justified in resorting

to strong language.[121] "Finding that the inactivity of the Army, whether for want of provisions, Cloaths, or other essentials, is charged to my Acct., not only by the common vulgar, but by Those in power," he argued, "it is time to speak plain in exculpation of myself; with truth then I can declare that, no Man, in my opinion, ever had his measures more impeded than I have, by every department of the Army."[122] He reviewed the inadequate performance of the support and logistical departments, noting that the recent changes in the Commissary Department had been made "contrary to my judgement, and the consequences thereof were predicted."[123] One result of these deficiencies was that there were currently in camp no less than 2,898 men unfit for duty for want of proper clothing.[124]

Washington reserved his heaviest scorn for the state government of Pennsylvania, which he accused of insensitivity to the condition of the soldiers, of laboring under delusions with respect to the performance that could be expected from the army, and of outright duplicity in its dealings with him. "I can assure those Gentlemen," he sneered, "that it is a much easier and less distressing thing to draw remonstrances in a comfortable room by a good fire side, than to occupy a cold bleak hill, and sleep under frost and Snow without Cloaths, or Blankets."[125]

He implied that Congress should have been aware of the complaints he felt compelled to report through the committee he had entertained at Whitemarsh earlier in the month. Having vented his wrath, Washington's temper cooled visibly, as he turned his pen to a series of specific recommendations calculated to

alleviate the problems to which he had alluded. These included the necessity for "some better provision for binding the Officers by the tye of Interest to the Service," (as a means of minimizing the problem of their resignations) and the appointment of another committee from the Board of War, Congress, or both, to confer with him on the reorganization of the military machine.[126]

If the biting tone of much of Washington's rhetoric derived from his resentment at finding himself (in his own view) blamed for circumstances of which he considered himself more the victim than the prepetrator, the structure of his argument was a matter of design. He wrote with the intent of forcing an apparently uncomprehending Congress to attend to a desperate situation on the terms in which he perceived it. If that necessitated eliciting shock, or the use of intemperate language, he was finally prepared to resort to it. The problem was a matter of defining the terms under which the discourse between Congress and the army would be carried on during the winter. Washington, having tried those of the former and found them wanting, was seizing the initiative.

Washington's "starve, dissolve, or disperse" letter has figured perhaps more prominently than any other contemporary document in portrayals of the state of the army during the opening phase of its sojourn at Valley Forge. It has achieved nearly universal citation in the literature on the subject, but it has received little or no analysis or explication of its context.[127] This

has resulted from its general availability in printed editions of Washington's writings, from the universally acknowledged authority of its source, and from the supremely evocative language of the document itself. It also derives from the close consonance between the tenor of the letter and the widespread and long standing image of the phenonemon to which it was addressed.[128] The letter fairly cries out for such analysis and explication. The problem is one of finding a way of taking it seriously without automatically taking it literally, as has been the wont of previous historians. It claims need to be compared with available evidence from external sources, and its broad intent and effect scrutinized.

Washington's introductory statement that "fresh and more powerful reasons" called for a recapitulation of the points he had made the previous day bears the marks of a rhetorical device intended to explain his suspension of those arguments on receipt of Laurens' letter, and his reintroduction of the subject a day later. It can hardly be doubted that he availed himself of the twenty-four hour interval to canvass the camp for new evidence of the army's disability, but little such information can have turned up overnight that would not have been available previously. Indeed, depending on the time of the day when Washington drafted his counter-remonstrance, he may have been in receipt of messages from the lines around Derby conveying intelligence that the British foray had been at least momentarily contained, or from east of the Schuylkill informing

him that a significant amount of beef and some clothing were on the way to camp.[129]

Washington's treatment of the British foraging expedition and the hamstrung circumstances surrounding his attempts to respond to it shows impressive political ingenuity. By withholding reference to the fact that he had advance intelligence of the probably limited nature and extent of the enemy thrust, and confining his allusion to reports that "a body of the enemy [was to have] crossed the Schuylkill this morning," he placed himself in a position to depict the event in whatever terms he deemed most suitable to the points which he was attempting to make.[130] With Congress now contemplating not only a Continental army immobilized by logistical deficiencies for which it bore a preponderant responsibility, but one possibly facing an aroused and offensive-minded enemy, Washington was suddenly in possession of the initiative.

He used it with the confidence of a man who has little reason to believe that his portrayal of the situation will be challenged. Thus his assertion of amazement at being "not only informed, but convinced," of the immobility of the troops under his command, as well as the incredulous depiction of his "discovery" of the empty state of the commissary magazines.[131] Far from worrying that some armchair generals in York might wonder how a Commander in Chief could profess to be ignorant of such contingencies until they had stopped him in his tracks,

Washington pressed on assuredly. He omitted to mention, although it cannot have escaped his notice, that the British foraging expedition was a perfect example of the "movement in force" which it had long been understood could not be prevented by a wintering American army, whatever its strength, disposition, or intent. Moreover, he drew on a hitherto little appreciated talent for literary embellishment to evoke for his readers - who could not easily have verified or refuted his interpretation - images of a "dangerous mutiny" at camp, suppressed only with difficulty, out of the by then ubiquitous grumbling and ill-tempered unrest which had characterized the army at least since it had come to a halt at Whitemarsh two months before.[132]

Indeed, the bulk of the letter, after the opening paragraph and prior to the last several, was largely a matter of embellishment; portrayals of fact and depictions of circumstance more or less true depending on the context in which they were considered. Washington provided both his enemies and supporters in Congress with a variety of points to fall upon or stumble over, according to their inclination. The allusion to his own reputation carried a message to his opponents that he had declared a combative personal stake in the matter. The lambasting of the Pennsylvania authorities offered equivocators the opportunity of wondering whether they might have overreacted to pressures from the state, to the detriment of their relationship with the army.

The heart of the matter, however, was enunciated at the outcast of the letter. It lay in Washington's implicit affirmation of the

principle that if the complex, multifaceted question of the army's winter disposition was still an open one, then it was open in each of its component facets. In arriving at the decision to place the army at Valley Forge instead of in urban quarters in Pennsylvania's interior, he undoubtedly believed that he had erred, if at all, in the direction of the state's and Congress' desire for some kind of winter campaign. He had, it is true, unilaterally fashioned the "compromise" between the variously proferred alternatives on the matter, but it had been a compromise generously slanted toward the political rather than the military viewpoint. If the bickering over the decision was to continue, however, to the exclusion of serious consideration of the tandem auxiliary questions of supply and strategy, then the entire decision might have to be reconsidered. In Washington's view the result could only be detrimental to the interests of all parties concerned.

In his letter of December 22, Washington had hinted at the possible dissolution of the army. In less than a day, stung into a counterattack by the seeming intransigence of the political bodies, he had hardened his position: the placement of the army at Valley Forge would be untenable without some "capital change" in the system of material support. The elaboration of his presentation of the alternatives underlined the gravity which he attributed to the situation. It had come to a choice between starvation, which could not have been seriously considered. and either dissolution or dispersal. Washington was not given

to a scattershot literary style, and the latter possibilities had distinguishable implications. Dissolution might be read as being virtually tantamount to surrender, or at least to abandoning the pretense of a concerted military resistance to the British presence in the middle states, whether for the winter or for good.

Dispersal was a uncertain concept, at least as a formal proposition. It had about it, however, a firm basis in reality. Washington had already detached a large part of the army to Wilmington for the winter. He would soon send another sizeable contingent to Trenton. He had discounted the feasibility of breaking the army into detachments for strategic purposes only the day before, but he had been experimenting with less extreme variations on that very principle throughout the fall.[133] Dispersal was left as a vague image, probably deliberately so. It could be perceived in terms of troops streaming, singly or in undisciplined groups, through eastern Pennsylvania and its neighboring states, or it could involve a decision for the army to claim quarters in the towns where it already had logistical footholds, such as Reading, Easton, or perhaps even York and Lancaster.

Alternatively, the grim options implied under the rubric of "starve, dissolve, or disperse" could be obviated altogether if Congress was disposed to cooperate realistically with the army. Having gained the attention of that body by bluntly hinting at the dismantling of its military arm, and after holding it in suspense while he rehearsed the various arguments and problems he was

faced with, Washington concluded by holding out that hopeful possibility. It would require only that the political sector show a more realistic appreciation of the material circumstances with which the army was confronted. That appreciation could be most effectively demonstrated, Washington suggested, by a resumption of face-to-face consultations between the two groups at Valley Forge.

While he waited for Congress' response to his challenge, Washington busied himself with a variety of pressing matters. He lobbied with at least one member of Congress on behalf of his proposal for having a committee appointed to confer with him on the reorganization of the army.[134] He corresponded with the governors or chief executives of several of the states, stressing the army's reliance on their "exertions" to recruit full quotas of troops and to stem the flow of officer's resignations.[135] He also continued to monitor the developments which had been taking place along the lines near Derby during his brief dispute with Congress.

As those developments began to cohere into a solid image of the enemy's location, strength, and evident intention, an ambitious military scheme began to emerge at the American Head Quarters. Its inception is profoundly obscured, and its very existence has scarcely been acknowledged in histories of the Revolution. It may have been the product of Washington's own imagination, or of one of his aides or general officers. It centered on the months-old siren of another

general attack on Philadelphia. It almost certainly had its roots at least partly in the tangible yearning among many of the officers that the anniversary of the Battle of Trenton should not be permitted to pass without celebration, preferably by a repetition of that engagement. A kind of conditioned response may also have resulted upon the realization that Howe had once again, incredibly, contrived to get himself dangerously separated from his Hessian allies. It is not even too farfetched to speculate that the scheme may have been conceived in idle Head Quarters conversation intended to pass a few hours on an otherwise dreary Christmas Eve.

Whatever its origin, the idea was soon sketched out on paper for the consideration of Washington's advisors. It had as its premise the realization that if Howe, with at least half of his army - including probably many of his best troops - could be caught outside of Philadelphia, the diminished garrison in the city itself would be dangerously vulnerable to a direct assault. The plan that was contrived to effect that end gives lie to the notion that the near-debacle at Germantown had disabused American war planners of their fondness for elaborate maneuvers.

The enterprise was to begin with a feigned attack on the left wing of the British outpost at Derby by the combined force under Lord Stirling which was already posted in that vicinity.[136] This force was to "keep up the appearance of an Attack," and "harrass the Enemy as much as possible."[137]

If Howe accepted the fiction that he was under a sustained attack, the main body of the army would leave the camp, cross the Schuylkill, and advance in two columns down its east bank toward the British fortifications north of Philadelphia. The light horse on the west bank would divide, with half of it patrolling north of the embattled British position at Derby to screen it from the movement of the main army, and the other half crossing the river to trail the columns as a rear guard, leaving detachments to cover each of the crossings from Swedes Ford down to the city.[138]

As the army approached the Philadelphia fortifications, from which the Hessian guard's attention was expected to be drawn by the commotion in the direction of Derby, a shock corps of sixty men and eight officers withdrawn from each battalion would proceed in advance of the two columns to seize the redoubts, forming a "Chain of Centrys ... to prevent any Person going out, and to defend them to the last extremity against the Enemy."[139] Once the defensive works had been breeched, the right column, under John Sullivan, would rapidly file off along the Schuylkill, seizing the four ferries (Upper, Middle, Gray's, and Lower), and cutting the makeshift bridges at those places adrift from the west bank.[140] This wing would be responsible for guarding these crossing points to frustrate Howe's attempts to return to the city to relieve the beleaguered garrison.

Simultaneously, the larger left wing would force its way into the city itself to release the American prisoners held there, and "demand a surrender of the Enemys Arms under promise of good Quarter in case of compliance, and no Quarter if opposition is given."[141]

The plan included contingencies for seizing the batteries around the city and manning them with Continental artillery troops, for threatening the British shipping at the wharfs along the Delaware river, and for stationing a reserve guard on the city commons. It also envisioned Armstrong's Pennsylvania militia re-crossing the Schuylkill to the west bank "the Moment our lodgment is made," to reinforce Stirling's badly outnumbered detachment in the event that Howe elected to turn on him rather than fight his way back into the city. Stirling would also be joined by General Smallwood, who would hurry up from Wilmington, and hopefully by a Saratoga-like outpouring of local patriots who would be "pourd In to Crush Howe before he could recovr. from the Surprise or regain his Ship."[142]

The design presupposed such a degree of precision and organizational dexterity on the part of the army that a skeptic could be forgiven for supposing, if only in light of Washington's own depiction of its half-crippled state, that the plan was indeed the result of a sugar plum reverie gone awry; the by-product, perhaps, of a holiday induced overindulgence in hemp or Madeira at Head-Quarters. The scheme was never communicated to Congress, nor to Smallwood, Armstrong, or a host of other individuals on whose performance its success would have depended. In light of these and other circumstances surrounding its formulation, it might easily be assumed that the projected offensive was never seriously comtemplated, the appearance of the "Intended Orders" to the contrary notwihtstanding.

Such skepticisms would be more credible if there was not evidence that Washington was in fact simultaneously sounding several of the general officers on the advisability of attacking the enemy. The scattered responsibilities of those officers attendant on the construction of the new camp, together with the political and military sensitivity of the project, precluded summoning the by then customary Council of War to consider the scheme. Washington was far too attached to that forum, however, as part of his decision-making style to abandon it altogether. The consultation was instead carried out informally, by word of mouth among an unspecified number of individuals. The seriousness which Washington accorded the question is attested by his choice of John Sullivan to coordinate the canvass. Sullivan was then fully occupied with supervising the construction of a critically needed bridge at Fatland Ford, designed to link the Valley Forge camp with the east side of the Schuylkill.[143] He reported that in accordance with Washington's instructions, he had discussed the question of an attack with "some of the General officers which I thought most Capable of advising" on the matter.[144] The details of the project had apparently been kept guarded; the outline evidently implied an attack upon Howe himself.

The tone of the responses, as summarized by Sullivan, was polite but not wildy enthusiastic. The generals could "by no means advise for or against an Attack," but in their view the British commander had a strong force with him, and was or could quickly be "possessed of very Strong Grounds." If Washington was personally determined to attack him, they were "willing to Risque their Lives & Fortunes with [him] in the attempt."[145]

They believed, however, that in the army's current condition it would require a two-day march to get into position to give battle. If an attack was hazarded, they thought, it should be made on Howe's right flank (toward Philadelphia), rather than his left (at Derby), from which place he could easily retreat.[146] A successful assault on the right wing, aimed at the bridgehead connecting the road to Derby with the one from Philadelphia, would result in the enemy's ruin. If it failed, however, the generals warned, the attackers would be pushed into the Schuylkill.[147] On the whole, they thought there was more to be lost than gained from the venture. While they would cheerfully vote to attack Howe if he moved toward camp, they could not advise in favor of taking the offensive. Sullivan acknowledged the gravity of the reservations he had collected. He personally felt "so weary of the Infernal Clamor of the Pennsylvanians," however, that he was in favor of "Satifsying them at all events, & Risquing Every Consequence in an action," which he thought might even in the event of a defeat at least teach Congress to "censure with more caution."[148]

Washington also sought the advice of Lord Stirling, who would play a pivotal and personally risky role in the offensive, by being required to sustain the protracted "appearance of an attack" on Howe's force of 7,000 or 8,000 men with a patched-together troop of less that a third of that size. Again the mission was apparently phrased in terms of a massed assault upon the foraging expedition itself, and the response was scarcely more favorable. At most, Stirling concluded, his troops might make a series

of feints and thrusts along the front of the enemy's thinly-stretched line, while a freshly outfitted detachment of 1,500 men from camp struck a glancing blow on the left flank of the expedition, before retreating through Ridley and Upper Providence Townships.[149]

This puzzling, altogether shadowy episode bore no fruit, military or otherwise. In light of the faint trace which it left in the documentary record, and its utter absence from the literature of the Revolution, its significance resists analysis. It is difficult to determine, for example, what relation the proposed attack that Washington dangled before his generals bore to the one sketched in the fragmentary "Intended Orders." It is possible that he decided to keep the knowledge of the real nature of the prospective operation confined to his closest aides, while he proffered a more conventional proposal to the generals, as a way of maintaining security while ascertaining their overall offensive inclination. It is even uncertain whether Sullivan himself was aware of the real scope of the mission which he was dutifully floating among his colleagues.

Even less clear is the question of the construction which can fairly be placed upon the fact that <u>any</u> assault - whether simple or elaborate, conventional or otherwise - could have been contemplated under the circumstances in which the army was situated at Christmas of 1777. It could appear to give lie to Washington's depiction of the army as being on the bitter brink of dissolution. Indeed, if Congress had been apprised of the

project, questions might have been raised as to how the army could have been so inert on the twenty-second, on the first intelligence of the British foray, and yet be thought equal to a full-scale assault on a heavily fortified, if half-garrisoned town a mere three days later.

On the other hand, the venture might be construed almost as easily as the ultimate proof of Washington's pudding; presumptive evidence to refute the suspicion that his implied threat to dismantle the army had been put forth as a bluff or a political poker chip. Anyone who recalled the desperate circumstances surrounding the assault on Trenton the year before would have had to acknowledge the existence of at least superficial similarities between it and the situation which attended the closing weeks of 1777. Admitting, if only for argument's sake, Washington's worst-case analysis of that situation, the army could be seen as at least on the potential threshold of oblivion. In Washington's military personality a gambler's instinct played occasional counterpoint to an essential conservatism. The former was usually only unsheathed when all rational cause for optimism had been exhausted. That he could even have considered an all-out attack may underscore the view that he seriously doubted the tenability of the position in which the collapse of the commissary, combined with the apparent intransigence of the Continental and state governments, had placed him, and was prepared to risk everything, as he had done before, on the success of an unexpected and improbable venture. He may even have been wrestling with Sullivan's exasperated conclusion that it would be worthwhile to risk incurring defeat itself as the only way of forcing the political leadership to acknowledge the desperate straits in which the army lay.

If its origin and intent remain obscure, the outcome of the project lies even more within the realm of speculation. It cannot even be asserted with complete confidence that the plan was never put into motion. Such an assertion would have to account for at least two British observations that Howe had notice that Washington was moving toward Derby with 3,000 rebels on December 27, in consequence of which the British commander appears to have drawn his lines in and hastened preparations for withdrawing the detachment to Philadelphia.[150] There are no other accounts of American movements of like magnitude, but the reports may have had their basis in more than the imagination of some British scouts. The intelligence may have been deliberately leaked to the enemy to hasten their withdrawal, or indeed to observe their reaction to it. Had Howe moved troops up from Derby Road near Gray's Ferry to reinforce his left wing, rather than retracting that wing as he did, the signal might have been given to execute the long march to the redoubts north of Philadelphia. As it happened, Howe reacted as a majority of the American generals had predicted he would, and the project died in obscurity.

Whether the proposed attack was merely an instance of wishful thinking at its most extravagant, or a seriously contemplated scenario for an expiring army's hail and farewell, the movement of events eclipsed it before it could amount to anything. Howe's withdrawal to the city on the twenty-eighth deprived the Americans of both of their prospective targets. They would have the choice of attacking neither a strong but exposed force, nor a fortified but presumably diminished one. Instead of a full-dress reenactment of the triumph at Trenton, they would have to settle for

staging a Christmas Eve dumb show, replete with the elements of comic relief, but otherwise devoid of consequence for either side.[151] The British put their army into winter quarters for good, and the Americans settled down to the real question of whether they could hold theirs together at all.

III. TRUBLESUM TIMES FOR US ALL BUT WORS FOR THE SOLDERS

Politically, if not materially, the prospect that the army would be able to survive began to improve almost immediately upon Congress' receipt of Washington's letters of December 22 and 23. Although their tangible result would not be felt at camp for more than a month, their blunt language had an almost galvanic effect upon that body. Pennsylvania delegate Daniel Roberdeau, a faithful correspondent of the state's Supreme Executive Council, informed President Wharton of the "grim news" from the army concerning its food supplies.[1] General Washington "speaks out for the first time," he reported, and conveniently neglecting Washington's bitter denunciation of the state authorities, claimed that he blamed the Commissary Department for the deficiencies.[2] Roberdeau observed that Pennsylvania was "in an excentric way to provide flour and fat Cattle." It would have to do so, he warned, "otherwise I have no other prospect but that the army will be reduced to the necessity of abandoning their post and disperse."[3]

Congress referred Washington's letters to a special committee of three members, choosing for some reason to bypass another committee which it had established two days earlier to "take into consideration the wants of the army."[4] Three days later the special

committee was discharged, and the matter was put into the hands of yet a third group, which was to consist of the members of the Board of War, together with three delegates appointed by Congress. This group was "fully empowered to take the necessary measures for supplying the army with provisions and other necessaries."[5] The deliberations of these ad hoc committees defy adequate reconstruction, as a result of the skeletal nature of the records which were kept, or which have been preserved, but the impact of Washington's words on the sense of Congress as a whole is difficult to miss. His implicit warning about the dissolution of the army effectively swung the pendulum of opinion in that forum away from the interests of the state of Pennsylvania. Daniel Roberdeau lamented to the Supreme Executive Council that his "situation" had become "extremely delicate on this occasion, the ruin of our army, or the interference with the police of the State I apprehend will be the alternative set before me." Sensing his increasing isolation, he appealed to the Council for instructions.[6]

The matter was by then virtually out of the state's hands. The new committee was soon pressing the Council in forceful terms to come forward with food and other supplies or face the withdrawal of the army from Pennsylvania. Congress had "received such unexpected and distressing Accounts... relative to the Situation of the Army," it ingenuously informed President Wharton, that emergency measures were required.[7] The committee "deplore[d] the Necessity" of resorting to seizures from the inhabitants on its own authority, acknowledging that such measures would "give Umbrage" to the civilian population.[8]

It would risk that consequence, however, unless the state could find effective means of its own to forestall continuing shortages. The tone of the committee's colloquy with the Council bespoke the all but client relationship which its summary deliberations had conferred upon the state government. "Your Excellency will therefore judge," it intoned, "in what Manner the Concurrence of this State is to be procured...."[9]

Congress as a whole, meanwhile, moved with uncharacteristic alacrity to devise interim steps to molify the army while it formulated long-range solutions to the organizational and provisions crises. It resolved to award the troops in camp one month's "extraordinary pay" to compensate for their hardships, and for the labor involved in constructing their own winter quarters.[10] It also voted to ask the officers to forego the extra rations to which their ranks entitled them, over and above their actual subsistence, and to accept the balance in cash at rates to be computed by the Commissary General of Purchases.[11] This was intended to stretch the available food supplies as far as possible until the shortages could be alleviated. On the last day of the year, Congress entertained a motion to appoint a committee to go to camp to confer with Washington on means of promoting "a speedy reformation in the army," which it referred to still another special committee of three.[12]

After his angry outburst of December 22 and 23, meanwhile, Washington withdrew from the controversy with Congress, preferring to allow the political leaders to contemplate his message and consider their response to it in isolation. Politically, it was a necessary decision,

for he had narrowly skirted the allowable borders of insubordination itself in even hinting that he might consider permitting the army to disband. From a tactical standpoint it was a brilliant stroke, as the ringing silence which emanated from camp dramatically bracketed the threat, allowing its implications and effect to metastasize in York and Lancaster. Washington turned his immediate attention to urgent matters relating to the security of the army and its needs for reorganization.

He continued to press for accurate returns of the regiments, both for purposes of internal control and for transmission to the states to bolster their lagging recruiting drives.[13] As if in anticipation of Congress' agreement to confer with him, he began to collect memoranda from officers and staff department heads, containing their views on the problems they faced, and their recommendations for organizational reforms.[14] These documents provided him with a surfeit of information to lay before whatever inquisitors might arrive from York, and served to tap at least some of the frustrations which were festering within the officer corps. If reform itself was not in immediate prospect, then the rehearsal for it might at least pay some short-term morale dividends. The exigencies of the situation did not provide, however, for a rational agenda for dealing with long versus short-range problems. Rather, both had to be managed virtually simultaneously. Continuing detachments for strategic and subsistence purposes had to be made. Because of the severe shortage of forage near camp, and the virtual irreplaceability of horses, cavalry, and light horse units were prime objects of this policy.[15] Casimir Pulaski was ordered to proceed with most of the cavalry to Trenton to find

winter quarters for them there. They were to provide for the security of that town, but Pulaski was strictly enjoined to arrange his patrol schedules to avoid unnecessary wear and tear on the animals and men. Among his primary objectives were to afford rest and recuperation to the companies, and to train and reorganize them for the coming campaign.[16]

A smaller party of light horse was dispatched to Wilmington to serve under Smallwood, who had complained of his inability to raise any mounted troops locally. Smallwood was so pressed for horses for such essential purposes as gathering intelligence and guarding his post against a surprise attack that he had been reduced to the laughable expedient of sending out officers on "long tail Mares, big with Foal."[17] Washington provided him with some relief, but under even tighter restrictions than he had placed upon Pulaski. The mounted units were being sent to Wilmington "as much with a view of refreshing them as any thing else."[18] Unless Smallwood was immediately threatened by the enemy, they were to "lay entirely still." Even expresses were to be hired from the countryside, if at all possible.[19]

By bits and pieces - although the cause can hardly have been of much comfort to Washington - some of the subsistence pressure on the commissary began to abate, as battalions serving on expiring short-term enlistments prepared to depart for home.[20] Even this decidedly mixed blessing was compromised, however, when it was realized that these troops would have to be provisioned for the anticipated duration of their trips.[21] John Armstrong's scouring of the countryside east of the Schuylkill, and the improvisational foraging

done in conjunction with the containment of the British foray to Derby, had somewhat blunted the immediate supply crisis by the last week of the old year, but Washington was under no illusions that the situation would not recur.[22]

His "apprehensions of similar and indeed greater inconveniences" notwithstanding, however, Washington had little choice but to act as if he could count on their being overcome, and workable long-term solutions to the logistical problems devised.[23] Whenever the pressure of immediate emergencies slackened, even momentarily, he attempted to focus his attention, and that of his subordinates, on the hoped for early resumption of the coming campaign. Although the camp storehouses were themselves by no means full, he pressed the commissaries and quarter masters to draft plans for establishing magazines of provisions and equipment in anticipation of the army's movements in the spring.[24] It was infrequently the case, however, that his understaffed headquarters "family" could spare enough attention from recurrent problems of immediate consequence to the army to concentrate on long-range planning. While mills in the neighborhood of the camp itself were being discovered "unemployed," there was not much use in diverting energy to speculation over where the army might be likely to require flour three or four months hence.[25]

Until a comprehensive reorganization of the military system as a whole could be effected in conjunction with Congress, a substantial part of the day-to-day business of administering the army consisted of making ad hoc adjustments aimed at coaxing whatever service could be gotten out of the existing mechanism. The continuing decline in

the strength of many units, particularly in terms of the number of troops fit for duty, left the army with a temporary, and in a sense an artificial surplus of officers in the lower ranks.[26] Washington took pains to find assignments for some of these "supernumerary" personnel. One officer was sent to Virginia to collect deserters and stragglers from that state's regiments. Another was dispatched to Boston to procure clothing for a destitute cavalry company.[27] Learning that there were a number of horses in Lancaster and Carlisle which had been purchased for the use of a company of North Carolina light dragoons, whose members lacked arms and equipment, Washington applied to the Board of War to have the horses delivered to George Baylor's company of Continental light horse, with whose work he was familiar from the previous campaign, and whose mounts were worn out. He also reported that he was squeezing as much use as possible out of his limited equine resources by assigning horses too debilitated for cavalry service to the itinerant recruiting officers.[28]

On January 1, 1778, Washington interrupted his silence toward Congress to renew his efforts on behalf of the cause of comprehensive reform. He adopted a tacitly conciliatory, if reserved manner, in sharp contrast to the harshly critical tone of his letters of the previous week. Indeed, he wrote with a detachment which suggested that he felt he had already carried his point, and that it only remained to ascertain the schedule for compliance with his suggested reforms.[29] He wanted to assist Congress in accomplishing some of the steps which he had insisted that it undertake. In that spirit he had been canvassing some of the officers in an effort to find a person to

nominate for the office of Quarter Master General. He was pleased to recommend Colonel Udny Hay, a Deputy Quarter Master in the Northern Department. He could make no such recommendation for the vacant post of Adjutant General, however, and until Congress found a replacement he was obiged to detain Timothy Pickering to continue acting in his former capacity, preventing him from taking his seat on the reorganized Board of War.[30]

As for the overall state of the army, Washington refrained from adding to (or subtracting from) the dismal and alarming picture which he had painted the previous week. Instead, he confined his attention to particulars, carefully mixing good news with bad. Congress was formally notified of the capture of a British ship by the detachment at Wilmington, with an unspecified number of prisoners and an undetermined quantity of military supplies. Less auspiciously, its attention was called to the continuing rancor infesting the officer corps, and particularly the brigadiers, over questions of rank and seniority.[31]

Washington's confidence that he had effectively seized the initiative from Congress and the state by means of his aggressive letters of the previous week was not misplaced. Even as he composed his conciliatory but presumptive letter to Henry Laurens, that gentleman was writing to Washington to inform him that Congress had at last been aroused to the army's plight. Laurens, who had been summoned from his sickbed to attend to the mounting crisis, attested that the Commander in Chief's recent messages would "have the desired effect" with the delegates.[32] Had he been privy to

Laurens' other correspondence, Washington would have had stronger reasons still for believing that he had at least gained the army a hearing with the political leadership. From his viewpoint at York, the army must have looked to the President of Congress like a teeming bundle of insatiable needs. Laurens confided his distress to Governor William Livingston of New Jersey, in a letter that was by turns astonished, mournful, and in places virtually hysterical. Washington's evocation of an army in dispersal had found in his harried imagination a fertile breeding ground.

Laurens wrote to Livingston to "lament with your Excellency the deplorable situation of our affairs in general." Within a few days, he averred, the Governor would "be informed...that our whole system is tottering, & God only knows whether we shall be able to prop it up, half the first Month of the approaching New Year."[33] Apparently unable to contain his incredulous sorrow, Laurens decided to inform him on the spot:

> ... My heart is full my Eyes overflow, when I reflect upon a Camp 1/4.th and more of Invalids for want of necessary covering - an Army on the very verge of bankruptcy. for want of food - that we are starving in the midst of plenty - perishing by Cold, and surrounded by Clothing Sufficient for two Armies, but uncollected...[34]

There was providentially, he thought, "some hopes now of having this necessary work performed in a few Weeks," but the loss to the army from its previous neglect had already been and would continue to be very great.[35]

Laurens endorsed Washington's "proper and sensible" reply to Congress' recommendation for the protection of New Jersey, and



Henry Laurens (1724-1792)

President of the Continental Cougress,
November 1, 1777, until December 9, 1778

"Within a few days, you will be informed... that our whole system is tottering, and God only knows whether we shall be able to prop it up, half the first month of the approaching New Year."

Courtesy of Independence National Historical Park

introduced a theme that would dominate his view of the situation for weeks to come: that it would now be necessary for Congress to broaden its purview from the "great outlines of public business," and "descend even to the executive parts of the Duties of Clothier General, Quarter Master General, Commissary General... etc."[36] If it did not, he warned, "we should not now be tottering we should be flat down."[37]

At the army level the descent had long since been made. It must have amused Washington to learn of Congress' new found inclination to depart from "their regular sphere" to meddle with particulars, since he reportedly believed that he had been personally required to "stand his own Quarter Master" since at least the fall, which perhaps accounted for his eagerness to recruit a replacement.[38] Down through the ranks, officers found themselves becoming unaccustomedly involved in the daily details of the army's maintenance and housekeeping. Jedediah Huntington's wry lament that the brigadiers had been forced to "become sope boilers, oilmen, armourers, tanners, and the Lord knows what" probably overstates the case.[39] Nevertheless, the tenor of the times, and the duties which it imposed on everyone drawing rations, deviated glaringly from the martial imagery which had led many officers to seek commissions in the first place. Fondly cherished visions of a short victorious campaign, culminating in celebratory balls at the City Tavern, dissolved in the snow and sleet of early winter into the grim realization that there was more than enough mundane duty to go around. While the high command waited for Congress to respond to the need for long-range organizational reforms, January would be a month of relentless tinkering with the

burdened systems of supply and survival, in an effort to sustain the fragile equilibrium which in turn sustained the army itself.

That there remained any equilibrium to be sustained must have occasioned wonderment at Head Quarters. The trough in the supply curve which had accompanied the movement of the army from Whitemarsh to Valley Forge had been the deepest of the 1777 campaign, and even an optimist could have been forgiven for doubting whether the situation would stabilize, as it had invariably done in the past, in time to prevent the complete collapse of the army's organizational metabolism. By the end of the year, however, there was evidence that a fragile balance between need and supply had been at least temporarily achieved.[40]

This equilibrium stemmed from no single dramatic development, but rather from the collective effects of a number of processes, each of which contributed marginally to the tenuous equation. These included a variety of factors which increased the supply of provisions available to the army, and a simultaneous series of events which reduced the demand on those supplies. The supply factors included the desperate scouring of the area around Philadelphia which had been undertaken upon the arrival of the troops at camp, the operation of some logistical dynamics which inherently attended the army's movement, and the apparently fortuitous arrival of a sizeable amount of provisions from the New England states.

In connection with the deployment of the Pennsylvania militia on the east side of the Schuylkill, John Armstrong had swept the inner part of that area adjacent to Philadelphia just before Christmas.

He had found the country to be generally "picked clean," and complained that he had been personally "beholden to the highway for a Christmas dinner," but his labors had not been without result. Indeed, he had been so attentive to the plaintive appeals of need emanating from the grand army, that he had sheepishly had to ask Washington to return 6 of the 200 head of cattle which he had forwarded to camp the day before in order to feed his own men.[41]

Meanwhile, the special commissary and threshing detachments which Washington had ordered out on December 22 were conducting a similar operation on the west side of the Schuylkill. There is no quantitative indication of the result of their efforts, but Lord Stirling, who labored to protect the parties while simultaneously overseeing the harassment of the British foragers at Derby, found the countryside less bare of agricultural goods than he had been led to expect, and was able to direct the teams to scattered objectives. Moreover, the flurry by both armies in search of sustenance at year's end engendered a state of nervous anxiety in the farming communities bordering the city, which had the effect of revealing supplies which might otherwise have remained hidden. As farmers sought to get their goods to the British markets before they could be seized, American patrols had increasing opportunities to do just that, on the highways rather than in neighboring barnyards. The commanders of those patrols were loud in their protestations of inability to seal the supply routes effectively, but they were able to make substantial seizures of provisions which thus became available to the army.[42]

These were, however, at best emergency devices, intended to bridge the chasm between need and supply until the regular commissary system could be reestablished. As the army took root at Valley Forge, the dynamic between local and long-distance supply mechanisms moved back toward equilibrium. The movement of the army had temporarily severed the connections between it and its far flung network of procurers, haulers, and distributors. The viability of such a severance was predicted on an increase in the availability of local resources, deriving from the access which a new site would provide to previously untapped supplies. The immediate vicinity of the new camp may have struck its occupiers as being virtually bone bare, but it lay on the western edge of the zone of most intensive military involvement during the fall campaign. In addition to competing with the British army for resources between Valley Forge and Philadelphia, the commissaries serving with the army were advantageously posted to extend their grasp into western Chester County.[43] This was perhaps the last immediately adjacent area relatively unravaged by the war. Whatever the ambivalent and perhaps hostile political sentiments of its inhabitants, it promised to provide better pickings than could have been found anywhere to the east.

More importantly, the establishment of the new camp re-anchored the wider supply network. By the last week of 1777 the army was once again a stationary target. Purchasing commissaries could concentrate on their primary function of procurement, without wondering whether the supplies which they forwarded would go astray between the point of purchase and the intinerant troops. Whatever goods they may have been able to place in the logistical pipeline could once again be reliably

directed toward the camp.

Supplemented by the improvisational mechanisms described above, that pipeline continued to perform sporadically at best, but by all evidence it limped into the new year serving at least the minimum subsistance requirements of the army. At the beginning of January, food and clothing began to arrive in camp from New England, where vigorous collecting drives had been mounted with the support of the local political hierarchies.[44] A Massachusetts officer was sufficiently pleased with the "large supplies of provisions" coming from home. to predict that "those difficulties [food shortages] are at an end."[45] A private from Connecticut was less fulsome, but though he found the provisions "very poor," he conceded that they were "better than we have had time back."[46] Jedediah Huntington, the son of a politically active Connecticut family, congratulated his father on that state's performance. It had "exerted itself beyond most, if not any, of her Sister States," he exulted, but he warned that it "must do more than her Part." Huntington was not sanguine that the shortages had been permanently abated. "We live from Hand to Mouth," he opined, "and are like to do so, for all anything I see."[47]

The collective effect of all of these means, however, in augmenting the total amounts of food available to the army, could only partly relieve its situation. In order for its survival to be assured, at least a temporary reduction in the number of claimants on the food resources had to be achieved. Beyond the political implications which Washington allowed his rhetoric to carry, he was enunciating a simple ecological truth when he contemplated the dispersal of the troops "in order to

obtain subsistence in the best manner they can." To the extent that their technological systems for producing and transporting foodstuffs fail, human aggregations - including armies - are as subject to stark ecological limitations as wintering herds of Arctic caribou. The number of troops which could be kept near Head Quarters could not exceed the number which could be fed there. The remainder would have to be redistributed in accordance with the availability of resources.

The distribution was effected through a variety of means, both planned and otherwise. The detachments sent to Wilmington and Trenton had been made with specific reference to subsistence as well as strategic purposes. Unintended developments contributed to the same end to a significant degree. The inevitable incidence of death and desertion, as well as the flow from camp of troops whose enlistments had expired, and officers who had resigned or wrung furloughs from their superiors, had negative implications for the army's combat readiness, but quite opposite ones for its ability to subsist.[48] Continuing short-term detachments of small parties "on command" for scouting and patrol duties, and parties sent to thresh grain or collect food and supplies, also relieved the strain on the central commissary. John Armstrong was far from being unique in finding himself "beholden to the highway" for his Christmas dinner, and undoubtedly for a good many more after that.

The precarious stabilization of the army's subsistence situation did not portend the inauguration of anything like an era of good feelings at Valley Forge. On the contrary, January would be a month of watchful waiting at every level of the army, characterized by friction, discontent, and the occasionally rancorous expression of

the distemper which invariably attends the business of soldiering, particularly during prolonged periods of inactivity. The emergency of late December had kept written communications official, and for the most part to the point. Once it had been blunted, however temporarily, issues which had been suppressed were revived and antagonisms freely vented. Individual concerns assumed a primacy which was intensified by their customary deferment during periods of desperate struggle for collective survival.

The greatest part of the discord in camp was unquestionably fleeting and idiosyncratic, but there were a number of recurrent themes. The general officers had been encouraged, and indeed probably required to enumerate their constructive criticisms and suggestions in their memorandums to Washington. They discovered their overwhelmingly favorite topic of extracurricular complaint in matters of rank and seniority. There were a number of individual disputes outstanding, but their collective dissatisfaction found a common target in Congress' recent decision to promote Thomas Conway from rank of brigadier to that of major general, in connection with his appointment to the newly created office of Inspector General for the army.[49]

The appointment and promotion, which were bound up in the struggle for political control of the army, were seized upon as a vehicle for the expression of individual discontents within the high command. Washington had undercut Conway's pretensions to an influential role in that struggle in November by publishing an alleged extract from Conway's correspondence with Horatio Gates. Now he was able to sidestep the issue by refusing to officially confirm

the appointment without specific instructions to do so from the Board of War, which were never forthcoming.[50] In consequence of the snub, Conway had taken quarters at a distance from camp, to which he infrequently came, and carried on the controversy in an exchange of testy letters with Washington.[51]

The generals were in no position to similarly finesse the question of Conway's concurrent promotion. For the brigadiers, it meant that they would be subordinate to a man whom many of them had commanded, and with whom all had been on at least an equal footing.[52] They unanimously subscribed to George Weedon's aphorism that "a soldier's rank and reputation is all that's dear to him," and for officers the two were inextricably connected.[53] Even at the risk of jeopardizing their continuance in the service, they were unwilling to overlook what they took to be the "irregular" nature of the promotion without protest. John Laurens informed his father that Conway's advancement had caused "universal anger" in the camp, indeed that it had "convulsed the army."[54]

Nine of the brigadiers, claiming to speak for any nonsigners, put their case in writing in a "Representation" to Congress, which they forwarded through Head Quarters.[55] Although they couched their complaint in phrases of profuse attachment to the principle of military subordination to civil authority, they frankly acknowledged that their service had been tendered in expectation of "Fame excited by a laudable Ambition."[56] They "expected the Reward of military Toils," which they defined to include "Promotions in a regular Line as circumstances might offer."[57] "While they feel the rights of citizens,"

they intoned, "they deeply imbibe the sentiments of soldiers." Of Conway, they observed that having commanded him in the field, they were "totally unacquainted with any superior Act of Merit which could Intitle him to rise above us." They noted that they had no desire to depart from their duty, which might have been interpreted as an admonitory allusion to mass resignation, but preferred to rely upon their trust in relief from Congress.[58]

Nothwithstanding the proclaimed unanimity with which the "Representation" was forwarded to Washington, the document in fact papered over an apparently deep division among the brigadiers as to the most appropriate way of dealing with Conway's promotion. One of its signers, Lachlan McIntosh of Georgia, hastily wrote to Henry Laurens to exculpate himself in advance of the charge of inconsistency. He had recently expressed to Laurens the hope that Congress would find a way of keeping Conway, whom he had then thought of as an officer of exemplary merit, in the service. On his arrival at camp, he explained, he had discovered the "general disgust & Umbrage" which the promotion had given to the entire army. After making "every allowance for Rivalship," he had concluded that Conway's reputation had been unduly inflated.[59] He found himself strenuously opposing arguments in favor of "Resenting" the promotion by "Resignations or any Violent, or other Measures that might tend to Injure the Service."[60] An apparent compromise had been reached when McIntosh agreed to join his fellow brigadiers in "any decent, Respectful Representation of the Matter to Congress," which, he reported, "was agreed to, drawn up, & Signed."[61]

The Conway affair would lie in limbo until he resolved it himself by resigning from the army in April, to pursue his candidly expressed intention of using his paper promotion to advance his rank in the French army.[62] Congress received but refused to act on the brigadiers "Representation." John Clark reported from York that it was looked upon by many delegates as "too peremptory," and wished that "some other mode" of expressing the grievance had been chosen.[63] If Congress was unwilling to give even the appearance of being dictated to by soldiers, however, it was even less anxious to risk the consequences of openly rebuking the majority of Washington's already depleted staff of general officers for their flirtation with insubordination. Clark reported that he had been regularly asked for his views on the matter, and observed that he had argued it would be as difficult to alter the disposition of the army against the unanimous sentiment of its officers as to "change the System of the Universe."[64] The viewpoint found some adherents. At least one delegate privately expressed the opinion that the appointment and promotion would never have been made had Congress foreseen the furor which it had precipitated.[65]

Public indulgence in special case pleading by general officers was not limited to such quasi-official issues as rank and precedence. Holders of the highest commissions in the army were as aggressive as anyone in laying claim to the division of whatever scarce goods became available. Six brigadiers petitioned Washington on behalf of their subordinates to share in the distribution of the baggage and private effects captured in the British brig Symmetry by



Lachlan McIntosh (1725-1806)

Brigadier General from Georgia.

"This is the first time I ever attempted housekeeping (in camp)... and a most wretched hand I make of it."

Courtesy of Independence National Historical Park

Smallwood's detachment at Wilmington on New Year's Day.[66] Washington's high-minded attempt to play the self-appointed role of the "common guardian of the rights of every man in this army," in seeking the fairest and most widely beneficial distribution of the goods, resulted in an unseemly display of intra-army bickering which assumed almost comic proportions. Before the affair had run its course, it witnessed an importunate protest by the Wilmington officer corps to Washington; their self-righteous declination to partake in the "scramble" for the goods if there had to be one; Smallwood's apparent endorsement of their position; Washington's wounded denial of any intent to "rob them [the captors] of their rights"; the proffered resignations of angry medical and staff officers at Wilmington over their proposed exclusion from the fray; Washington's equivocating authorization and suspension of the distribution; and the sorry spectacle of the Commander in Chief appealing to Congress for guidance in the matter.[67] The squabble engendered sufficient pique on all sides to result in a virtual suspension of communications between Head Quarters and the important garrison at Wilmington for ten days, and undoubtedly deprived Washington of much of the satisfaction which would otherwise have resulted from one of the few indisputably successful military actions of the winter.

The disputatious demeanor observed among the generals and other senior officers set the tone for camp life, and provided abundant example, if any was required, for the rest of the ranks. Around the New Year, the officers in camp became clamorous enough in their unhappiness over the infrequency of liquor in their ration to induce

Nathanael Greene to intercede on their behalf at Head Quarters. They chafed under their hard, exposed duties, he explained to Washington, with "nothing but bread and beef to eat morning, noon and night... or anything to drink but cold water."[68] They would patiently endure the situation, he observed, "if the evil in its own nature was incurable - but they think by a proper exertion spirits may be procured."[69] Greene wondered if it would not be "consistent with good policy" to take measures to remedy the situation, but Washington saw the matter in a more egalitarian light.[70] The privates, in common with the officers, were getting by on bread and meat, and were, according to one of their number, "glad to git that."[71] The Commander in Chief ordered the issuance of a "gill of spirits " to each private and non-commissioned officer in celebration of the New Year, pointedly omitting to include the rest of the officers.[72]

The contentious mood within the camp had become endemic by the middle of January. Relative inactivity compounded its instigating causes, as the first frenetic phase of the army's construction activities came to a conclusion. By the twentieth, most of the regular huts had been completed. The bridge-building project at Fatland Ford stalled, as a result of the unavailability of equipment to raise the heavy timbers,[73] and the continuing freeze hindered progress on the fortification of the camp. With more time on their hands than they had been accustomed to, opportunities for the troops to express antagonism and discontent abounded. As they occupied their huts, or were

recalled to the camp from command detachments, many individuals found the opportunity to write to family and friends at home for the first time in months.[74] Their anxiety to relieve the concerns of loved ones only slightly exceeded the relish with which they fell upon unjaded listeners to which to address their complaints.

A number of junior officers followed the example of their superiors in wrangling over promotions and related matters of rank and seniority. One captain contemplated quitting the service in disgust over the promotion of another to a major's rank recently vacated by his correspondent, a close friend and apparently his patron.[75] In another instance, two officers disputed each other's right to an unspecified command, and a recommendation that they "toss up," the fairest resolution which their elders could devise, was frustrated by the refusal of one of the contestants to submit to it.[76] Still a third disappointed claimant to advancement, upon being superseded in the New York line by an unnamed rival, earnestly wrote to Washington renouncing the prevalent view that such a circumstance justified an officer in resigning. Honor was honor, however, and after considering the matter at length, the man concluded that he deserved in compensation the command of an independent "partisan corps." If Washington disapproved, he hastened to add, he hoped that his application would be "attributed to mistaken zeal rather than presumption."[77]

While much of the discord which infested the ranks found these and similarly intramural outlets, there were also significant expressions of the hostility which many of the troops had come to feel toward the local community, and toward specific targets within it.

Jedediah Huntington depicted for his father the consequences of the interaction between the civil and military communities: "an Army, even a friendly one, if any can be called so, are a dreadful Scourge to any People - you cannot conceive what Devastation and Distress mark their Steps."[78] By the beginning of 1778, the Continental army could only with exceeding generosity have been characterized as friendly in its disposition toward the belabored civilian population among which it was restlessly encamped. Five months of enforced intimacy with the inhabitants of the state, which coincided with a precipitous decline in the army's material well-being, had engendered among many of its members - justifiably or otherwise - an inclination to perceive a causal relationship between the two phenomena.

John Buss and his hutmates may have been "glad to git" whatever foodstuffs the harried commissaries were able to drag into camp. Many of their comrades in arms were markedly less tolerant. John Brooks, an almost prototypically crusty New Englander, angrily surveyed the domain of the army's plight, vigilantly poised to scathe anything that moved. When he considered the "unequal distribution and scanty allowance of provisions" with which the troops were confronted, he had no trouble discerning, to his own satisfaction at least, the roots of the problem. The former, he allowed, was the fault of the Commissary Department. "The cursed Quakers and other inhabitants," he seethed, "are the cause of the latter."[79] Brooks indulged in a bit of the regional derision that was popular in the anything but homogenized Continental army, observing that "The States of Pennsylvania and Maryland to not seem to have any more Idea of Liberty than

a Savage has of Civilization."[80] Surrendering to unbridled disdain, he shuddered to imagine what the fate of New England would have been had its citizens "Shown the same Disposition towards Gen[l] Burgoyne, which the cringing, nonresisting ass-like Fools of this State have done towards How[e]."[81]

Brooks' litany was singular chiefly because of his facility with the vocabularly of disparagement. Many of his fellow soldiers shared his visceral disesteem for the subjects of his stinging sallies. The apparently equivocal response of many Pennsylvanians toward the invasion of their state, and particularly their demonstrated preference for British currency if not politics, incited in some of their putative defenders paroxysms of spiteful ambivalence toward the impact of the war on the community. Jedediah Huntington's empathetic concern for the fate of the locals was not universally shared. An officer reported disbelievingly, and perhaps hyperbolically, that a pair of shoes cost a soldier a month's pay in the vicinity of camp. He attributed what he believed to be an 800 percent inflation rate largely to the avarice of the "banditti inhabiting Penn[a] count[r]y [who] openly refuse it [continental currency] as a tender."[82] "Tis beautiful," he gloated, "to see the said vestiges of war thro' their plantations." Having unsheathed the sword of resentment, he buried it to the hilt in the vulnerable underbelly of the local community:

> What the English began the Americans have finished - the dutch the Welsh and the Scots & the quaking gentry hailed brother Howe a welcome guest but ruin and devastation indiscriminately befel the friend and foe. Military power that so long deprecated evil must soon take place in the vicinity of our army to curb that spirit of dissention now prevailing throughout the state. The sufferings of the inhabitants are intolerable, but they may thank their own perversity.[83]

Predictably, the state's large and diverse population of religious dissenters to war became particular targets for the invective of the frustrated community of soldiers who were encamped in their midst. The Society of Friends, or Quakers, as the largest and most visible segment of that population, stood proxy for the generalized scorn which prevailed among the troops toward those presumed to be "disaffected" from the cause. This resulted partly from the provincial, and no doubt theologically unlettered background of much of the army, most of whose members could not have distinguished among the small myriad of local sects, of which many of them had probably never heard, much less between conscientious and self-interested abstainers. It also stemmed from the fact that the Friends were the best organized among the dissenters, and therefore the best equipped to resist, or at least to "resent" the incursion of the war on their communal life.[84]

To a large degree the perception of the dissenting strain in the community fabric, as exemplified by the comments quoted above, consisted of an almost offhand bigotry. Variations of such phrases as Quaker or "quaking" served as easily available epithets for men who would have happily found substitutes had these not been readily at hand. This facile resort to derogation obscures an interesting diversity of viewpoints within that perception among members of the military community. Some soldiers, such as Jedediah Huntington, eschewed emotional or evaluative comment altogether, choosing to regard the disinclination of the Quakers to fight as an uncontrollable fact of professional life.[85] Others were not even disposed to

take that much for granted. John Clark, whose responsibilities as the former head of the intelligence service had given him as close an association with the civilian population as any man in the army, was convinced that nine out of ten Quakers would "be happy" to provide regular intelligence, in exchange for exemption from active military service, or fines for its refusal.[86] Even the hard-bitten John Brooks saw signs that the "Thees & Thous, who have had their Wives ravish'd, houses Plunder'd & burn'd, are now ready, on any party's making a Sally from the City, to take their Arms & oppose them."[87] Washington characteristically sought to extract for the army whatever advantage he could from even the most unfavorable of circumstances. He cajoled Thomas Wharton with the argument that, from the number of its inhabitants "who being principled against Arms, remain at home and Manufacture," the state should "have it more in [its] power to cover [its] Troops well, than any other State."[88]

Some of Pennsylvania's soldiers were scarcely less critical than their compatriots, if they were perhaps somewhat more restrained, in their treatment of the state and its civil government. Richard Butler castigated the "blind supineness of the state" for allowing its troops to languish in the energetic but overburdened care of Anthony Wayne, the state's only general actively in the field.[89] Nor was Pennsylvainia alone in feeling the stinging lash of its natives' disenchantment. Others were similarly critical of their own states for the faltering support which they felt the army was receiving from home. A New Jerseyan "wish[ed] with all my heart our State wou'd make better provisions for our Brigade, respecting clothing & other necessaries than they do."

"If they had any Idea of the hardships we have & do undergo," he added, "they Certainly wou'd do more [for] us, than they do."[90] John Brooks was somewhat constrained to temper his venom when he weighed Massachusetts' contribution to the ragged spectacle which its "bare footed, bare leg'd, bare breech'd" regiments presented, as opposed to Pennsylvania's responsibility for their meagre rations. The burden of his judgment nevertheless fell heavily on the state, whatever his inclination to qualify the terms of his condemnation. "Where the Fault is I know not;" he mused, " but am rather inclin'd to think our g[enera]l. Court has not done every thing that might be expected of them."[91] "If it be for want of foresight in our Rulers," he railed, " the Lord pity us: But if it be thro' negligence or Design, is there not some chosen curse reserv'd for those who are the cause of so much Misery?"[92]

Enoch Poor laid the plight of his New Hampshire troops almost as bluntly in the lap of that state's Council. "I am every day beholding their sufferings," he lectured its Governor,"and every morning waked with the lamentable tale of their distresses."[93] They looked to him for relief, he observed, and noting that it was currently beyond his power to furnish it, made it clear that he in turn looked to the state:

> If any of them desert how can I punish them when they plead in their justification that on your part the Contract is broken? That you promised and engaged to supply them with such things as were requisite to make them comfortable here, and the situation of their families tolerable at home, this they say they had an undoubted right to expect. You promised they should be supplied with the common necessaries of life at a reasonable rate... instead of which they must now give [extravagant prices] ... which vile extortions if

> permitted they say must inevitably reduce their families to a starving condition to a dependence on the cold hand of meek eyed charity alone.[94]

Poor fairly begged the state's authorities to devise means of relieving the concerns of their troops on this score. Their very right to expect the men to discharge their responsibilities, he implied, would depend on such relief. If the matter was neglected, he would "shudder and tremble at the consequences - nay it will be impracticable to keep them much longer in the field."[95]

In less apocalyptic terms, but no less forcefully, Jedediah Huntington made the same point with Connecticut authorities. In transmitting his men's gratitude for the state's exertion in sending them clothing, he could not forebear passing along their simultaneous anxiety about the situation of their families. They were aware that the war-induced inflation was forcing up prices, not only in the vicinity of camp, but at great distances from the theatre of combat as well. They had been led to believe that their families were suffering almost as much as they were, and were not particularly inclined to tolerate it. Huntington assured his brother that he did not doubt that the state would take measures to alleviate their concern.[96]

It was a source of particular vexation to many of the troops (as it probably always has been for soldiers) that the expectations and reactions of their acquaintances at home were frequently not linked to a realistic appreciation of the circumstances under which they labored. John Brooks' tirade, which before it subsided had encompassed in damnation virtually every aspect of Revolutionary military service, was provoked by a

friend's apparently innocent observation that he was "not so Sanguine about matters in this Quarter at present," as he had formerly been. Brooks wondered, by way of prefacing his catalogue of the trials under which the army conducted its business, how his friend could ever have been sanguine in the first place.[97]

Ichabod Ward, a private from Connecticut, found himself similarly strained to place the army's accomplishments into a context which would be comprehensible to the uninitiated citizens at home who footed the expense. He wrote in feeble exasperation to a friend to allay "the unesyness thare sems to be att hum conserning the Solders." He had heard "that some are very unesy becaus that we have not kil[d] all the Enemy thay wonder what we are about forty shillings a munth and Nothing to Do."[98] Ward wished that the army's critics could be made to "undergo half so much as one of us have this Winter... that those grumbling att Solders New what they undergo." "Conserning thare grat wages," he lamented, "What Expence we are at for Everything." A pound of butter cost a dollar, he reported, and a small bread pie twice that amount.[99] Ward's halting command of written English contrasted glaringly with Brooks' literary acrobatics. Between them they must have virtually bracketed the army in terms of raw articulateness. It is altogether improbable that they ever knew each other. Notwithstanding that, however, they shared a bond of experience which irretrievably separated them from either of their friends at home. In the end, it was the barely literate Ward who wrote the epigram to which Brooks, Poor,

Huntington, Washington, or indeed anyone in the army could have enthusiastically subscribed. "I can tell you S^{r}," he assured his homebound friend, "it is trublesum times for us all but wors for the Solders."[100]

By the evidence, then, the army's first month at Valley Forge was fraught with disgruntlement, rancor, and frustration, which were spread widely through the ranks, and which found expression in both intramural and external outlets. Material shortages aside, the camp was recognized as a good place to stay away from by those who could find expedient reasons for doing so. Key staff officers, by and large lacking the means of fulfilling their support responsibilities to the troops, made themselves as scarce as possible. The Commissaries General of Purchases and Issues avoided the camp altogether, allowing their subordinates to absorb the wrath of the frequently short-rationed soldiers.[101] The Clothier General's department established its quarters as gingerly as possible, taking rooms in a house near Gordon's Ford, well beyond the periphery of the camp.[102] The Paymaster, out of cash until Congress saw fit to supply him with some, lingered at York, realizing, as he understatingly explained to Washington, that he would "not meet a hearty welcome at camp without it."[103]

It is altogether too easy, however, to make a case for the ill-tempered mood and fractious disposition of the army at this point in its history, at the expense of equally important components of its character. Its traditional image as a disorderly rabble in

arms, sullenly awaiting its Prussianization at the hands of the genial dictator Friedrich von Steuben, has fed too freely, or more accurately, too carelessly and single-mindedly on picturesque but nonetheless idiosyncratic evidence of the kind presented above. This is not to discredit the evidence itself, but rather its use. The army had a certifiably surly and contentious streak, as the foregoing pages have attempted to evoke. Indeed, the trait was one of the primary underpinnings of the collective intransigence which held it stubbornly together, in the face of the almost irresistably centrifugal forces of material and logistical inadequacy, to say nothing of the manifest improbability of ultimate military success. The invariably colorful terms in which that trait found expression, however, have masked its coexistence with other characteristics, including a hitherto uncelebrated reinforcing strain of innate discipline.

That discipline gave coherent shape to the contentious individualism of many of the troops, and indeed, in the absence of an army-wide level of formal organization comparable to that of contemporary European forces, made it a militarily useful quality. It never found sufficiently distinctive or evocative forms of expression in traditional sources of evidence, however, and has therefore been eclipsed in the army's historical reputation. The lack of organization, in other words, has been taken for a deficiency of discipline. The discipline which the army possessed was remarkable more for what it prevented than for what it visibly accomplished. This negative achievement has had

less than an incendiary effect upon our historical imagination. It bears noting, nevertheless, that by late January of 1778 the army had continued for several months to function, if not prosper, on a tether of logistical disarray that would have decimated many more outwardly regimented European military organizations. The oft-celebrated instances of discord and disenchantment notwithstanding, there had as yet been no evidence of overtly disorderly actions in their consequence. It would take the near disaster of mid-February, when the supply system again tottered and briefly collapsed altogether, to bring even a part of the army toward but not over the brink of outright disorder. For the moment it remained a contentious aggregation, but by no evidence a mutinous one.

It fell to some of the officers to recognize the discipline which the men who embodied it could not articulate. Many of them were struck to the point of comment by the restraint with which the troops accepted their precariously sustained situation. Jedediah Huntington informed Governor Trumbull of Connecticut that the state's troops, notwithstanding their open concern for the welfare of their families, had uniformly acquiesced in their own plight. "Every Hardship and Distress," he fairly beamed, "they have encountered and endured without Murmurs or Complaint."[104] Others were even more lavish in their praise. Richard Butler believed that the "Private men [were] the best in the world Else they would Mutiny and Desert in Bodys, I think they have more virtue than half the Country...."[105] Even John Brooks saw fit to suspend his cynical critique when it came

to the men in the huts, if only by way of illustrating the extraordinary qualities of temperament required to surmount the array of hardships which he had enumerated. "Under all those Disadvantages," he eulogized, "no men ever shew more Spirit, or prudence than ours. In my opinion nothing but Virtue has kept our Army together thro' this Campaign."[106] John Laurens fittingly summarized the view from Head Quarters, observing to his father that "our men are the best crude materials for Soldiers I believe in the world, for they possess a Docility, and patience which astonish foreigners - with a little more discipline we should drive the haughty Briton to his ships."[107]

The "little more discipline" of which the army stood in need consisted, to judge from its mixed success during the preceeding campaign, less of individual restraint than of coordination between units in close-order maneuvering under fire. Failures in this area had caused its greatest problems throughout the war. The army could cover enormous amounts of ground quickly and efficiently in forced marches. Contrary to several recent characterizations, its marching repertoire was anything but limited to primitive "indian file" formations.[108] Indeed, it had badly outmarched the British army throughout the summer and fall of 1777. Once engaged, moreover, individual units had repeatedly proved their ability to stand and fight, and, depending on the host of variables upon which eighteenth century battles customarily turned, prevail or falter according to the individual merits of the action in question. It was in complex, close-order drill, upon which depended an army's ability to adjust

to sudden changes in combat situations, that the Continental army had proved consistently inferior to its British counterpart. Its broken rout after its right flank had been turned at Brandywine, and its inability to form a smooth junction between two converging columns at Germantown, which had turned a previously smart advance into a disintegrating retreat, were the hallmarks of the army's deficiency. The hot fire maintained by Greene's division while covering the Brandywine retreat, and the spirited assault which had opened the Germantown attack, conversely, were the benchmarks of its strength.

These deficiencies were well understood at Head Quarters, and measures aimed at correcting them were under consideration, and indeed preliminary implementation, before Freidrich Steuben had been heard from, much less before he came clanking into camp in mid-February with his efficient demeanor and impressive European entourage. This fact has enjoyed less than general circulation largely because Thomas Conway, a foreigner infinitely less savory to American sensibilities than Steuben, figured prominently in its elaboration. Conway had arrived at Valley Forge at the end of December, with his freshly minted Congressional appointment to the imperfectly defined office of Inspector General. Finding his fellow generals busily drafting, upon Washington's request, their suggestions for the reform of the army, Conway decided - with or without invitation - to contribute his ideas to the pool. Conway proposed to detach several officers and non-commissioned officers from each regiment to Pottsgrove where, presumably under his supervision, they would be drilled in a new set of maneuvers. They would

then return to their units and "spread the instruction." Conway claimed to have seen as many as 200,000 men similarly trained in European armies in less than three months.[109] Washington coolly brushed off the suggestion, saying that he would entertain instructions on the subject only from the Board of War, but Conway refused to be snubbed.[110] He wrote again the next day, citing orders of his own from the Board, and repeating essentially the same proposal.[111]

Washington had no intention of being dictated to by a man whom he was on the verge of acknowledging to be his "enemy," and in any case he was not about to institute piecemeal changes until he had a chance to bargain with Congress for comprehensive reforms through the committee which he was preparing to entertain at camp. Conway had, however, outlined at least the germ of the logarithmic method of introducing changes into the army's drill system which Steuben would employ to his eternal credit - and the great benefit of the army - later in the winter. A similar plan, moreover, had at least one trial in the field before Steuben's arrival. By late January, James Varnum was maneuvering the officers of his division, with the reported intention of "continu[ing] it daily till they are perfect & then to menoeuver the whole division daily."[112]

Comprehensive improvement in the army's field drill technique would not be effected until someone could be found to provide training full time, and on an army-wide, not a divisional basis. This would await Steuben's assignment to the task in March. Whatever limitations Varnum's interim program may have had as a training device, however, it undoubtedly benefited its participants by

counteracting raw boredom, which closely followed hunger, material shortages, and missed paydays as a decimator of the army's morale. In a culture of war in which fighting was at best an eight-months out-of-the-year affair, a wintering army was almost by definition a distended, collectively dispirited institution. Aside from the business of preparing for the next campaign, and doing what they could to blockade the enemy in Philadelphia, there was little about the daily routines of life in an encampment to provide the troops with a sense of purpose, much less of progress. An almost palpable sense of what amounted to suspended animation emanated from Head Quarters, where the high command restlessly awaited Congress' seemingly interminably delayed decisions about sweeping organizational reforms, down through the ranks and into the huts.[113] Except for those troops with command assignments which took them away from camp, time began to hang heavily. A soldier could only write so many repetitive letters before the realization became unavoidable that, as one of them put it, "barren is the Camp of news."[114]

Even detached duty could become routinized, pointless, and devoid of stimulation. One officer wrote to a friend from the army's principle "stationary detachment" at Wilmington that he was suffering from a severe cold, which he had caught, not on all night guard duty, or a wet weather scouting patrol, as might have been supposed, but rather from an overindulgence in ice skating on the Brandywine Creek. "We have Great Diversion at that Sport," he reported, "some days upwards of 50 men on all day."[115] Even such apparently light duty, however, did not dispose men to remain in a cold camp if they could

see their way clear - legally or otherwise - toward getting back to their families. Men were deserting from the Wilmington post every night, the officer wrote, which he attributed to the mistake of stationing Maryland troops too close to their homes.[116] Such as it was, however, detached duty offered the soldier the best opportunity for involvement in the activities customarily associated with his occupation, such as marching, riding, and occasionally even fighting, and some freedom from the repetitive routines of camp life. It must have been absolutely preferable to some of the troops, and at least a welcome diversion on an irregular and perhaps a rotating basis for many more.

It is convenient to envision the army in terms of the conventional image that it "spent" the winter of 1777-1778 "at" Valley Forge. The reality of its disposition, however, was far more complex. The camp at Valley Forge was most importantly the site of "Head Quarters." It housed by far the largest single contingent of troops and officers; it was at the heart of the logistical and supply system; and it was the place to which intelligence was sent, and from which orders came. Prior to the beginning of the massive training program in late March, however, and to a lesser but still significant extent thereafter, the largest single part of the army's winter mission was conducted on detachment, along the far flung perimeter of the British garrison at Philadelphia. The army perched, in fact, in a giant, uneven, crescent-shaped configuration along that perimeter. The crescent was thickest at the center, at Valley Forge, and tapered in either direction toward anchoring points on the Delaware River above and below the city. On the right, it fastened to the Delaware at Wilmington, and on the left it

clung tenuously to the river at Trenton.[117]

The situation at Wilmington has been discussed in some detail, if peripherally, above. The outpost there was hampered by a provisions situation as tenuous as the one at Valley Forge itself, by an acute shortage of horses for scouting and security patrols, and by the disappointing turnout of the Delaware and Maryland militia, upon whom Washington had counted to supplement the Continental division which he had sent to hold that place.[118] While Smallwood's "little garrison," as Washington affectionately called it before the eruption of the controversy with its officers, staged the army's biggest coup of the early winter by capturing the British brig Symmetry on January 1, its principal military value was defensive. Indeed, Washington had seized it mainly to prevent the British from doing so. The very presence of armed Americans there forced the enemy to tread warily by on that part of the river, helped to confine their mobility southwest of the city, and provided a continuing stream of intelligence. Through Smallwood's ministrations, Washington received regular notice of the arrival of British supply ships, as well as of the flow of troops into and out of the city on the river.[119] The outpost also afforded at least potential protection to the Whigs, and discouragement to the Tories in Delaware's three "Lower Counties," and in Salem County, New Jersey, across the river.

After the excitement of the brig's capture had passed, the garrison at Wilmington settled into a period of relative quiescence, punctuated by the controversy over the division of the vessel's spoils. The problems as well as pleasures of life there reflected those at Valley Forge. Smallwood reported that his troops, like Washington's,

were "pennyless, & are dissatisfied & clamorous."[120] Aside from occasional alarms provoked by the appearance of enemy shipping on the Delaware, they passed the time as well as they could. When the cover of darkness provided the opportunity, many of them went home.

In Pennsylvania, closer to camp and to the city, the detachments were small, mobile, scattered, frequently mounted, and their responsibilities were more varied than in the garrison at Wilmington. Their duties resulted in more frequent contact with the enemy, and virtually constant interaction with the civilian population as a result of their efforts to enforce the Continental ban on commercial, and indeed all intercourse between the countryside and the city. For administrative purposes the area was informally divided by the Schuylkill River, with the respective zones of responsibility being designated as "west" and "east" of the river.

Responsibility for covering the west side of the Schuylkill was assumed by the Continental army, and was carried out through small and frequently changing detachments from camp. These parties operated independently of each other, but their overall supervision, after Lord Stirling's return to camp at the end of December, fell to Captain Henry Lee, who commanded a company of dragoons, and to Daniel Morgan, who patrolled the area with his riflemen. Lee assumed responsibility for John Clark's intelligence service after Clark resigned to become an assistant auditor for the army in early January.[121] He enjoyed an almost unparalled reputation within the army for horsemanship,

leadership, and particularly for an intense personal concern for the men who served under him, a reputation which he would embellish on all three counts during the winter.

Lee shared with Morgan overall responsibility for disrupting trade with Philadelphia west of the river, but one of his particular assignments was to assure the security of the camp, by transmitting early notice of any enemy movements west of the city. The army was thought to be particularly vulnerable to attack from that direction, since it did not enjoy even the dubious buffer of protection from the Schuylkill River that it did on the northeast. Washington had operated extensively through that country for almost five months, but he considered his geographic knowledge of the area to be inadequate for security purposes. Lee made regular reports on its road network, together with recommendations for the placement of patrols and "piquet" or guard posts to protect access to the camp.[122]

Like many officers whose duties involved regular or close contact with the civilian population, Lee recognized the virtual impossibility of efficiently accomplishing the objective of totally segregating them from the enemy. Like some of them, he developed a keen appreciation for the local inhabitants' point of view, for the essential (if largely unavoidable) unfairness with which the war's exigencies imposed upon the civilians, and a belief in the need, or at least the expediency, of finding flexible and realistic solutions to the problem.[123] His rapport with the common soldiers seemed to extend to the class of common citizens from which they were drawn. He drafted a thoughtful plan for consulting with the farmers in his sector of responsibility

to determine mutually the amounts of food and forage which they could spare for the maintenance of his patrols, without undue hardship to their families. Those individuals who cooperated with the plan, by agreeing to transport their surplus goods to his quarters, would not only be paid for them, but given a "protection" for the remainder. This would relieve the overburdened Continental wagon service, he reasoned, and in addition the participating farmers would be "eased from the dread of the forage masters, whose general injudicious conduct afford[s] just cause for murmurs and complaint."[124]

Lee's assumption of responsibility for gathering intelligence was not without the problems which ordinarily accompany periods of managerial transition in all organizations. Aside from his detailed geographical descriptions of the area between Valley Forge and the city, his intelligence reports were at least initially less frequent, less elaborate, and seemingly somewhat less accurate than the ones which Washington had become accustomed to receiving from John Clark. This partly reflected the increased control that the British army had succeeded in imposing within Philadelphia as their occupation of the city extended into its fourth month. Howe's army, like Washington's became relatively quiescent during the first weeks of 1778. Having officially retired into winter quarters at the first of the year, well-stocked with supplies which they had seized on their forays to Derby and into New Jersey, they were generally content to

allow the inhabitants to assume the risks of the road with such supplementary goods as they were willing to sell. Their prudence in this regard was facilitated by the fact that the American patrols were struggling with only partial success to intercept the trade.[125]

Lee was new at the intelligence business, moreover, and he needed an interval of time to establish an effective working relationship with whatever may have been left of John Clark's network of spies, or to develop one of his own. By mid-January he had at least one agent working in the city. He transmitted what he deemed to be a reliable report that the British had once again nearly exhausted their forage supply. There was, Lee concluded "every appearance of a move in [their] army."[126] His analysis of the information appears to reflect the liability which accompanied his "on the job" training as an intelligence officer. Contemporary accounts from Philadelphia strongly contradict his spy's perception of supply shortages in the city, and no movement of the British army materialized.[127]

Lee also had a spy who may have been placed within the American prisoner community in the city. He transmitted the details of an obscure negotiation with a man, who was apparently either an American prisoner or possibly a British officer. The unidentified subject had "engaged to bring off" 300 of his fellows in return for an unspecified command. The proposal may have concerned a massive escape attempt by Americans, or perhaps the defection of a large body of disenchanted British or Hessian troops. In either case, the report elicited sharp interest at Head Quarters. One of Washington's aides-de-camp authorized Lee to proceed discretely with the negotiation,

commenting that if it succeeded it would "alarm the enemy greatly and be the source of jealousy and discomfort" in the city.[128]

While the well-stocked condition of British magazines, and the flourishing Philadelphia marketplace encouraged the enemy to cleave to the city during much of the month of January, minimizing their contact with American scouting patrols, there were sporadic clashes between elements of both armies west of the Schuylkill. One such incident was particularly sharp, and provided Lee with an opportunity to demonstrate that he was a spirited skirmisher, as well as a genteel dragoon and an eager, if amateurish intelligence officer. His repeated warnings that his small patrols were vulnerable to surprise attack unless they were reinforced were bloodily borne out on January 20. Lee and a handful of his horsemen were surprised in bed at dawn at their temporary headquarters in a farmhouse near Radnor, by a party of British cavalry.[129] As he reconstructed the episode, the attackers numbered about 200 men, while he had less than one man for each window in the house. The British dragoons were literally breaking down the front door before resistance could be offered, but the occupants kept us such a "very warm" fire that the intruders retreated. When they attempted to salvage the engagement by turning on the adjacent stable and stealing the American horses, the defenders rushed from the house and chased them into the countryside. Lee collected a party of infantry from the neighborhood with the avowed intent of pursuing the enemy back to the city, but the mounted party soon outdistanced their erstwhile victims. Lee's casualties included three men who had been wounded in the house, and four others captured in the chase.[130]

The incident briefly became the talk of the army, and was construed into an internally effective propaganda "victory," which helped to dispel the lingering sense of stagnation, if it did not have any real military significance. Lee received Washington's profuse gratitude, both publicly and privately, and the episode contributed to his growing reputation both among his fellow officers and the privates.[131]

Provision for the coverage of the area east of the Schuylkill, along a broad circumferential line around the city between that river and the Delaware just below Trenton, was a more complicated piece of business. The area was somewhat larger than its counterpart west of the Schuylkill. The alternating freeze and thaw on the river made communication, supply, and support between it and the main camp at Valley Forge difficult to sustain, at least until Sullivan's Bridge was completed in March. The river somewhat reduced the security threat to the camp from that side, but it also complicated the army's mission of disrupting British foraging there, and especially of keeping the "country people" from carrying their goods into the city. Nominally those responsibilities belonged by agreement between Washington and the state to the 1,000 militia troops which Pennsylvania had promised to maintain on the east side of the river. The state's contingent never even approached that stipulated number, however, and reinforcements of Continental troops were continually required there throughout the winter.[132]

Washington had detached several mounted companies to patrol along the roads leading northwest from Germantown in late December, to compensate for his need to retain James Potter's militia on the

west bank during the British foraging expedition to Derby. In January, when Potter's troops were released to join John Armstrong's division east of the river, continuing delays in mustering new militia companies had compelled him to keep the Continental troops on that station. To simplify the command structure, it was hoped that all of the operations "east of Schuylkill" could be kept as autonomous as possible, to allow Head Quarters to concentrate its attention on the security threat west of the river. John Jameson, the ranking officer with the Continental detachments, was instructed to direct future requests for support and material assistance to General Casimir Pulaski, the commander of the cavalry garrison which was to be established at Trenton.[133] With Jameson along the Schuylkill, and Pulaski on the Delaware coordinating Continental efforts, the intervening area covered by the hard-pressed Pennsylvania militia would be reduced, and the state troops might be stiffened by their placement between two "regular" army elements.

The course of events conspired from the outset to confound that intention. Pulaski had his hands full merely establishing his own outpost at Trenton, and would have to recur constantly to Head Quarters himself for assistance. Washington repeatedly found it necessary to attend personally to problems arising east of the river. Coordination between the undermanned militia and the Continental detachments proved to be no easy thing to maintain. Washington saw fit not to appoint a Continental commander with overall authority for the area, probably in deference to the state's sensibilities, or even to specify an explicit division of responsibility between the state and Continental

troops, who operated independently of each other. The relationship between the two forces was plagued by repeated instances of non-cooperation and mutual distrust, and the intended embargo of the city consequently operated with the inefficiency of a rusty bucket. If, as a Hessian officer reported, the Philadelphia markets were teeming with cheap Pennsylvania produce in late January, Washington needed to look no further than the east side of the Schuylkill to discover a principal source of the goods.[134]

The commanding officer of a Continental foraging party which swept through lower Bucks County from the Old York Road to the Delaware River at mid-month reported that the area was being literally drained of provisions for the benefit of the occupied city. "I can assure your Excellency," he informed Washington, "not less flour than is sufficient to maintain Eight to Ten Thousand men goes daily to Philadelphia, carried in by Single Persons, Waggons [and] Horses."[135] What could not be accomplished by stealth was sometimes being achieved by force, as recalcitrant farmers turned to para-military methods to thwart the restraints of martial law. A drove of cattle had reached the city the previous week under the escort of "a Small Party of armed country men."[136] Scarcely a day passed, the officer observed, "but a Number gets into that place by different roads on this side of Schuylkill."[137]

Washington professed, undoubtedly with complete sincerity, to be "amazed" by the magnitude of the leakage which beset the blockade operation on the east bank.[138] None of the individuals upon whom the responsibility devolved for maintaining that operation could have

shared his surprise, although conflicting explanations of the source of the problem proliferated. Some in the militia contended that their Continental counterparts were blinking at the business. John Potter, who had been visiting his scattered patrol posts, confirmed the existence of a "smart trade" between the country and the city, which he attributed to the perfidy of several Continental officers who had given general passes to their "favorits... in Consequence of which waggons loaded with flower souls etc. go into the City."[139] Perhaps protesting too much to disguise the debility of the state troops, Potter maintained that this practice would put it out of his power to stop the marketing.[140]

Washington began an immediate investigation of the charge. An aide-de-camp informed John Jameson of the substance (but not the source) of the allegation, and instructed him to "minutely inquire" into its accuracy. Jameson was ordered to select some reliable "countrymen" to "tamper" with his horsemen, to discover whether any of them were accepting bribes.[141] The inquiry did not immediately implicate or acquit any Continental troops of the nefarious practice to which Potter had alluded, but it indirectly proved the undoing of at least one malefactor. A dragoon captain stationed at Germantown arrested a subordinate named Hofman Lowrey who "under the character of being one of my horsemen rob'd a number of Poor people - Takes provisions from the poor - and Sel's it for hard money to others."[142] The man and two of his fellows had been suspected of the crime for some time, but the captain had delayed apprehending them in hopes of implicating any accomplices in their scheme.

Notwithstanding the fact that wrongdoing had been revealed within the Continental companies, their officers were adamant in their insistence that it was not themselves, but rather the militia who were responsible for the flagrant success of the civilian trade with the city. The state troops "run away on the least alarm," one of them complained, allowing the country people to "keep going to Market Constantly."[143] General Potter and his men "Talk very Largely at a Distance," he observed, leaving his small patrols dangerously exposed. The officer mirrored Potter's disgruntled language, concluding that it was "not in my power to Discharge the duty of an officer on this post at present," as a result of the militia's alleged dereliction.[144]

It is curious, to say the least, that Washington, upon being confronted with evidence of a widespread breakdown in the performance of an important element of the army's stated mission, did not act more forcefully than he did to reorganize the division of labor, if not of authority, east of the Schuylkill. Any attempt to do so, of course, would have carried at least the potential risk of further complicating the already delicate political relationship between the army and the state government. The merits of both the militia and Continental officers' cases against each other seem on the surface to have been about equally valid. There was evidence both of Continental criminality, and of a dispostion among the undermanned militia to remain aloof from close involvement in contested areas near the city.[145] Above all, however, it was clear that the arrangement which had been made to disrupt trade between the city and its hinterland was malfunctioning in a critical geographic sector, to

the detriment of the war effort in general. Washington's choice to tread gingerly in search of a solution to the problem reflected the limited options available to him, and the implicit liabilities which all of them carried.

Aside from investigating the allegations of complicity on the part of Continental officers, Washington left the problem largely in the lap of the state. He asked Potter to take the "most immediate coercive measures" to combat the illicit trade, and to furnish him with information on the individuals who were granting the passes.[146] He instructed John Jameson to cooperate with Potter in carrying out the embargo effort east of the river, which perhaps indicated that he was more persuaded of the malfeasance of the Continental troops than of the militia, but more likely constituted an attempt to leave the onus of any continued failures on the state.[147] Gradually, and with at best sporadic attention to the situation, he began to cast about for ways to make changes in the personnel of the Continental detachments in the area.[148]

In settling for what amounted at most to a token attempt to resolve the problem - one which was founded, moreover, on the unsecured and indeed improbable premise that the militia might succeed where it had previously failed, merely by being asked again to do so - Washington was running the risk that the situation east of the Schuylkill would not improve. He was accepting the consequences, in other words, of adhering to the division of state and Continental responsibility along the line of the Schuylkill River, probably as the best half of a bad bargain. His alternatives were neither many,

nor promising. Arguably, the state, recognizing its failure to fulfill its commitment to provide 1,000 militia troops, would have accepted the implicit rebuke that would have gone with the assignment of a larger Continental force to the east side, or the appointment of a Continental commander to coordinate the activities of both the militia and regular troops. Such an action, however, would have placed unacceptable strains on the resources of the main army. From Washington's viewpoint, the costs of the measure would have greatly outweighed even the potential benefits.

His chief security problems lay on the west side, where the bulk of the army was tenuously encamped. He had reserved his best dragoon units, in Henry Lee's corps, and his most effective skirmishers, in Daniel Morgan's riflemen, for use in that quarter. The parties of light horse which he had sent to reinforce the militia must have been merely the best of what little was left. Even they had been kept contiguous to the river, from where they could have been recalled quickly to the west bank in the event of a threatening enemy movement. Further detachments from the main camp for active service east of the Schuylkill were out of the question. While the army's subsistence situation had precariously stabilized during January, its functional immobility due to clothing deficiencies had quietly worsened. The approximately 2,900 troops whom Washington had reported unfit for duty for want of clothing on December 23 had increased in barely a month to almost 4,000.[149] In essence, Washington already had on detachment as large a force as he was able to maintain in that status.

Any rearrangement to provide more Continental coverage to the area east of the Schuylkill would have had to draw strength from other parts of the city's thinly manned perimeter. The benefits which the adjustment might have provided could not have justified the diminution in the army's security west of the river. In addition, the effect might well have been merely to spread the leakage that was plaguing the embargo effort, from a part of the city's perimeter to its entirety. From a political as well as a strategic standpoint, the confinement of the inefficiency to one area was preferable to its general distribution through the army's sphere of responsibility. In any future debates over the performance of its mission it would be valuable to the Continental position to be able to point clearly to the militia as the chief source of the problem. Moreover, by taking up more of the slack from the state than was absolutely necessary to the welfare of the army, Washington would have been undercutting his own attempts to pressure the state into increasing its efforts.

In the absence of specific documentary evidence, these arguments are conjectural, but they are consistent both with Washington's action and with the logic of the situation. The army had remained tenuously "in the field" for the winter, largely at the behest of the state authorities, conditionally committed to executing the state's policy of opposing British exploitation of the population and resources around the city. In the priorities which Washington articulated, however, that objective remained secondary to the interests of the security of the army, its comprehensive reorganization, and

preparations for the resumption of the campaign in the spring. The inability of the state to muster a force sufficient to sustain its contribution to the success of the policy, and the apparent fact that a significant part of the population was actively participating in the exploitation, largely shaped Washington's adherence to those priorities.

An important contributory reason for the breakdown of the effort to interdict the flow of supplies into the city east of the Schuylkill, and for Washington's inability to do very much to correct the situation, lay in the failure of the Continental cavalry to establish a strong outpost at Trenton, New Jersey. The detachment of the cavalry there resulted from a variety of circumstances, including the lack of sufficient forage in the country near Valley Forge to subsist its horses, in addition to the hundreds required for the Quarter Master's and other support departments. It was also a cornerstone in the expedient of dispersing the army's subsistence needs to the level of available resources. In this instance, however, the selection of a specific site for the cavalry's winter quarters stemmed from the confluence of a variety of political and strategic imperatives, which overrode, and indeed ignored important logistical and material realities.

Politically, a Continental military presence in Trenton constituted at least a token response to Congress' strongly expressed desire for the army to do what it could to protect parts of New Jersey adjacent to Philadelphia from British depredations.[150] Strategically, a strong and mobile force based at that place would have functioned as a Continental hinge, linking and reinforcing the makeshift assemblage of militia troops struggling to carry out

the blockade of Philadelphia on the northern and eastern perimeters of the city. Its very presence would have had a suppressing effect on overt Loyalist activity both in Burlington County, New Jersey, and in the lower end of Bucks County directly across the Delaware River. The cavalry would have been in a position to reinforce both state's troops in specific engagements, and might well have encouraged a more enthusiastic turnout of the militia in both places. This might have greatly improved the performance of the Pennsylvania militia, by allowing it to focus its efforts more effectively than it otherwise could. By discouraging the "disaffected" citizens near the Delaware River, an effective dragoon base at Trenton could have relieved the Pennsylvania troops of some of the debilitating pressure for protection from lower Bucks County Whigs.[151] This would have allowed them to concentrate in the center of the region between the Schuylkill and Delaware, and particularly to patrol the roads closer to Philadelphia.[152]

Obstacles to quartering the cavalry at Trenton began to develop, however, even before the companies rode into town, and for more than a month they defied every effort to resolve them. Far from being able to help pacify the immediate neighborhood, and assume responsibility for directing and supporting the Continental detachments east of the Schuylkill, the cavalry would itself have to recur repeatedly to Head Quarters for assistance, absorbing precious administrative time and energy that were badly needed elsewhere. The disputes which attended its placement at Trenton pitted army imperatives against militia needs, local wishes and state priorities; soldiers against civilians; and even parts of the Continental establishment against each other.

The mere rumor that Trenton had been selected for the cavalry's winter quarters aroused vocal opposition from the local populace. The unsavory reputation which dragoons enjoyed in the eighteenth century disposed the residents of the small New Jersey village to look skeptically at the "protection" which they were given to understand the measure was intended to afford them. A group of local civil magistrates attempted to forestall trouble by petitioning Washington to find a place more deserving of the honor, or at least one better equipped to sustain it. Having garnered the wages of Hessian patronage the year before, they were openly dubious toward claims about the defensive value of the American article. Far from securing the town from the ravages of war, they argued, a cavalry garrison would more than likely constitute a temptation to the enemy to belabor it. The previous year's damage, particularly to the stables and other facilities on which the cavalry would need to rely, had not even been repaired yet. Trenton's location at the intersection of several highways through the region had stripped it of forage, they claimed, and if the Continental horses found sustenance there it could only be at the expense of their own. Finally, attempting to interpose state politics between their town and the unwanted visitors, they pleaded that the proposed garrison would deprive the New Jersey legislature of its scheduled seat at Trenton.[153]

The magistrates' arguments were demonstrably narrow-minded and self-serving, but their warnings were substantiated by other individuals. Charles Pettit, a state official, wrote to Elias Boudinot to make similar

points. Pettit reminded Boudinot that the town was hosting several hundred "gondola men," or state and Continental sailors from the freshwater navy which had participated in the defense of the Delaware River forts the previous fall. The townspeople had already reaped "an uncommon share of Trouble" from the war, he observed, and recommended that the cavalry be sent elsewhere.[154] Washington, who had witnessed, and indeed participated in the previous year's ravages upon Trenton, was sympathetic toward the local viewpoint, but not disposed to let it interfere with his perception of the army's strategic needs. He somewhat high-handedly chose to stand upon his Forage Master's opinion that the town would "afford a sufficiency of forage," as opposed to the magistrates' claim that it would not. Acknowledging that he petitioners were "of a contrary opinion," he assured them that they would "find [themselves] deceived," but implied that he would consider altering the plan if he was mistaken.[155]

Upon the trial, it was Washington and Forage Master Clement Biddle who would prove to have been mistaken. When the four companies of light horse arrived at Trenton on the evening of January 8, confidently expecting, upon Biddle's assurance, to find warm beds and at least several day's forage, they were astonished to discover that there was "not a load of Hay in Town."[156] Moreover, General Casimir Pulaski informed Washington in unbridled dismay, he had only with the "greatest difficulty" been able to find even temporary shelter for the troops, and none at all for the horses, which he had had to divide into several squads and send some miles into the country

beyond the town. Perhaps not knowing of Washington's correspondence with the town's civil magistrates, Pulaski had applied to one of their number about forming a magazine, with what melancholy result he did not report. He had already tangled with the "galley men," insisting upon their removal from the town, to which they had replied that they had an order from Governor Livingston to remain there. Pulaski irritably notified Washington that he would await his further orders before making any movements.[157]

Benjamin Talmadge, the acting commander of one of the companies of light horse, had similarly discouraging news of the situation. After four days in the town, he reported, fully a quarter of the horses were still without shelter, and there had been no hay whatever for most of the time since the cavalry arrived. The navy men had co-opted most of the available quarters, leaving the dragoons "at best" to billet themselves among the "Jack(als?) scattered through the town." They were laboriously subsisting the horses by transporting forage across the Delaware from Pennsylvania. In Talmadge's opinion, the regiment could starve to death as happily, and with more convenience, back at camp as at Trenton.[158] He wrote to his friend Jeremiah Wadsworth in Connecticut, scornfully castigating Pulaski, and lamenting the disarray in which the cavalry was mired. Its regulation was "despicable," he opined, and not likely to improve under its current regime. Two of the first officers of the companies were on the verge of a duel. Talmadge sarcastically predicted that with any luck the troop would be settled in the town by April.[159]

Washington responded to the situation with a weariness befitting a man who had to attend personally to virtually every piece of business of import to the army, large or small, and an incomprehension of the dimensions of the problem at hand which suggested that he would not be of much help in resolving it.[160] He had referred the question of forage to Clement Biddle. If it could not be obtained at Trenton, he suggested moving the cavalry to Flemingtown (Flemington, New Jersey), but if the problem was merely "a little difficulty that may at first occur in procuring the most desirable Quarters," he was not disposed to listen to it. He was certain that the town could meet the needs of both the cavalry and the galleymen. In response to Pulaski's request to purchase horses locally, which were reportedly otherwise being sold for enemy use, he withheld a decision until he could confer with the committee from Congress. He hoped, however, that Pulaski could "engage the Owners" to keep the horses on the spot until a final determination could be made![161]

Deprived of effective or realistic guidance or succor from Head Quarters, Pulaski dealt with the situation to the best of his ability. He concluded that Trenton could not furnish enough forage or billets to keep the entire cavalry there, and decided to split the detachment into three parts, sending two companies to Flemingtown, two to Pennytown (Pennington, New Jersey), and keeping a small guard of dragoons under his personal command at Trenton. His men were poorly armed, and the prospect of training them before the winter ended seemed to be slipping away. Relations between the dragoons and the "seamen" were at a flashpoint, and internal discipline in the mounted companies was tenuous at best. Pulaski somewhat ·ilenly concurred with Benjamin

Talmadge's conclusion about the town, observing that on the whole "we have not gained much by changing our Quarters." He glumly contented himself with the hope that if orders were given at camp "for furnishing the infantry with the means for making themselves merry [i.e., liquor] you will not leave the Cavalry in the dumps."[162]

The failure of the cavalry to establish a viable base of operations at Trenton, and its consequent dispersal into the country northwest of the town, had profoundly negative implications for the effective performance of the army's mission of cutting off the enemy from their important supplementary source of provisions in the ring of agricultural communities on the periphery of Philadelphia. Instead of a strong hinge connecting the thinly-stretched Pennsylvania militia stationed between the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers with the equally threadbare New Jersey irregulars operating along the Delaware opposite the city, the post at Trenton would be at best a weak link. The state troops on both segments of the city's hinterland would be effectively unsupported. As a result, along perhaps two-thirds of the town's circumference, the resistance to the flow of supplies would be minimal, and in some cases only token in effect.[163] The British garrison would remain comfortably supplied during the month of January with the exception of a chronic shortage of firewood, leaving Howe's troops with little reason to venture beyond the city's heavily guarded fringes to risk encounters with American skirmishers.[164]

The full implications of the weakness of the outpost at Trenton are doubtless clearer in hindsight than they could have been to Washington or his staff at Head Quarters, at least initially.

Even if they had been completely understood, however, the overall context of finite American resources from which they proceeded would have limited the flexibility with which alternatives could have been sought to mitigate them. If, as Benjamin Talmadge reported, the cavalry was reduced to sustaining itself on forage ferried over the Delaware River from Bucks County, it might be wondered why the companies were not brought back into Pennsylvania to brace the tottering Pennsylvania militia. In terms of actual combat effectiveness this would have subtracted relatively little from the protection of New Jersey, while it might have had a substantial effect in reinforcing the morale, and possibly the performance, of the state's forces east of the Schuylkill.

There is no evidence that the idea occurred, much less that it was debated among the Continental staff. If it had been, it would have faced considerable political obstacles. In addition to the probable outcry that it would have elicited from Congress over the "abandonment" of one of its constituent states, Washington had a valuable relationship of his own with New Jersey's Governor William Livingston to consider. Livingston had been singular among his fellow governors in his personal concern about the army's plight, and he had gone to considerable lengths to cooperate with Washington. He ordered the state's militia to remove cattle from the New Jersey shore of the Delaware; volunteered the belief that the army's want of provisions was "partly owing to the avarice of some of our farmers"; and took pains to communicate regular intelligence to Washington concerning the availability of cattle and grain

in various parts of the state, the existence of "unemployed" mills overlooked by the commissaries, and specific instances in which supplies were going from New Jersey to Philadelphia.[165] Livingston, moreover, took seriously the potential of a garrison at Trenton, notwithstanding the objections of the town's local functionaries, as a significant contribution to the security of the state.[166]

Washington, a determined proponent of the long view whenever desperation itself did not require the short, was responsive to that kind of a cooperative attitude. By mid-January the critical provisions shortage of the army had been at least temporarily checked, leaving him with the precarious luxury of looking down the road. He was already envisioning the likelihood that the next campaign would result in the movement of the seat of the war back to, or at least toward New York, in which case the army's dependence on the state of New Jersey would be at least as great as it currently was on Pennsylvania. The winter strategy of containing the British army closely in Philadelphia was, as has been noted, essentially a conditional commitment, dependent upon effective cooperation among the army, Congress and the state. Washington was not willing to significantly disarrange the disposition which he had made of Continental forces, at the possible long-term expense of the army's welfare, to make up for the inability of the state to fulfill its responsibilities. He continued to offer encouragement to the commanding officers of the militia of both Pennsylvania and New Jersey, expressing his confidence and reliance on their exertions to resist enemy depredations in their zones of responsibility.[167] Beyond that, however, his energies had begun to focus on the war's next phase, and

on preparations for the impending effort fo formulate and implement long-range reorganization measures, upon which the success of that phase would depend.

IV THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS HAVE REJECTED

The specially appointed committee from Congress which Washington had been dutifully preparing to entertain for almost a month arrived at Valley Forge on the evening of January 24.[1] The five members of Congress were met, apparently without elaborate ceremony, and escorted to Moore Hall, a large stone house near the Schuylkill River about two and one-half miles northwest of headquarters, from where they would conduct their inquiry into the state of the army during the next two months.[2] The committee's formal meetings would not begin until the morning of January 28. Its members probably spent their first three days in camp resting, looking over the army, and in informal consultations among themselves and with those members of the military establishment sufficiently familiar, influential, or forward to arrange for private interviews.[3]

The committee, which consisted of Francis Dana of Massachusetts, Nathaniel Folsom of New Hampshire, John Harvie of Virginia, Gouverneur Morris of New York, and John Reed of Pennsylvania, represented a rough geographical balance from among its parent body, and a broad mixture of temperaments, styles, and overall political orientations.

It carried a broad, and yet in many ways a somewhat indefinite mandate to initiate reforms throughout the military establishment. In its incorporating resolution Congress had directed the committee to:

> concert with [General Washington], to form and execute a plan for reducing the number of batallions in the continental service...to remove officers in the army for misconduct, negligence, or incompetency, and to appoint others in their room till the pleasure of Congress can be known; to remove all just causes of complaint relative to rank...to determine and report... to Congress, their opinion of the necessary reinforcements for the cavalry, artillery, and infantry, and the best mode of obtaining them...and, in general, to adopt such other measures as they shall judge necessary for introducing economy and promoting discipline and good morals in the army. [4]

Entwined in this uneasy mixture of investigative, executive, and pastoral responsibilities were such seemingly particular injunctions as to determine the "expediency of appointing brigade instead of regimental chaplains."[5]

Any potential uncertainty over the nature and extent of the committee's mandate that may have been embedded in its constituting instructions could not have been lessened by several last minute changes which had to be made in the membership of the group itself. Congress had contemplated that the delegation would comprise three of its own members (Dana, Reed, and Folsom), together with three representatives of the newly constituted Board of War (Horatio Gates, Joseph Mifflin, and Timothy Pickering).[6] Before the group could leave York, however, the Board decided that it could not interupt its own business of reorganization, and asked to be relieved from participation in the mission to camp. Congress accepted the "sundry reasons

assigned by General Gates" in justification of the request, and elected Gouverneur Morris and Charles Carroll of Maryland in place of Gates, Mifflin, and Pickering.[7]

It was generally recognized both in York and at camp that the reluctance of the Board of War to involve itself in the enterprise stemmed as much from lingering antagonisms which existed between Washington and several of its members, particularly Gates, in the wake of Washington's running dispute with Thomas Conway, as from the press of the Board's military or administrative responsibilities.[8] James Lovell, a delegate from Massachusetts, obliquely suggested that the word "ostensible" be inserted to modify the given reason for the alteration of the committee's membership.[9] Richard Peters, Secretary to the Board, addressed the issue more directly, noting that "Congress have thought it most prudent considering the State of Parties at Camp to keep General Mifflin and Gates here."[10] The machinations underlying the makeup of the committee were less fully comprehended in the army, but the discordant implications of the maneuvering were clear enough. Jedediah Huntington observed that the Board had been intended to participate in the conference, but suggested "I fancy they don't like us well enough to come."[11]

The simultaneously particular and yet open-ended character of the instructions which the committee brought to camp resulted in part from the fact that it comprised almost a quarter of the active membership of Congress itself at the time of its appointment. In the words of one delegate, the confederating American states were content, at the highest political level, at least, to "have their Business

managed by a snug set indeed," which numbered at most twenty-one or twenty-two members actually in attendance at York.[12] In dispatching so large a proportion of its total membership to attend the army in person, Congress was fulfilling after the fact Henry Laurens' oft-repeated, but to that point patently rhetorical lament, that it had been compelled to "descend" into the minutia of day-to-day military management.[13] To have spelled out in binding detail what it wanted the committee to accomplish, before its members had a chance to examine at firsthand the particulars of the crisis which had compelled its creation, would have been unrealistic. In view of the size and diversity of the group it would have been unnecessarily constraining, and perhaps even productive of parliamentary or legalistic paralysis.

Instead, the delegates elected in effect to divide Congress itself into two bodies. One would attempt to oversee the reorganization of the Continental establishment's military arm, within the bounds of a loosely drawn statement of concerns and priorities containing at most an imprecise specification of advisory and executive authority. The other, meanwhile, would be freed to return its attention to the "great outlines of public business," of which many delegates were fond, and which some, including Henry Laurens, perceived to be their "regular sphere."[14] Final decisions which necessitated formal legislative action would await the consideration of the whole body. In the meantime, however, the committee's deliberations at Moore Hall would constitute the crucial forum for the transaction of the army's political business.



Horatio Gates (1729-1806)

Major General. Commander of the Northern Department.
President of the Board of War, November 1777-April 1778

"G___s has involved himself in his letters to
me, in the most absurd contradictions."

Courtesy of Independence National Historical Park

In the absence of more than a skeletal record of the daily proceedings of Congress, the letters of its members provide the best evidence of the generality, and where specific, the diversity of their expectations about the army's needs for reform, and thus about the mission on which the committee was being sent. The letters catch the members at what almost appears to have been a loss to explain the committee's purpose in any definitive or comprehensive terms. In the view of John Henry of it was only clear that the army was "to undergo a reformation," in consequence of which a committee had been "appointed on that Business."[15] Abraham Clark of New Jersey stressed a narrowly specific, if essentially undefined objective: "As the Reduction of the battallions is become necessary, a Committee of Congress...are going to the Army for that purpose."[16] Still other members combined broad and specific imperatives. "The Business of the Committee," Daniel Roberdeau of Pennsylvania observed, "are to reform the army by reducing the Regiments, and introducing discipline."[17] James Lovell of Massachusetts regarded the deletion from the committee of representatives of the Board of War as tantamount to destroying its effectiveness, concluding "In short I begin to think our army will not be properly reformed, thro' the winter, which is half gone already."[18] Henry Laurens, on the other hand, contemplating the same event, reported that the committee had been "stripped of all their intended Military Coajutors" without apparent dismay.[19]

The implicit potential conflict of purpose between civil and military interests seldom lay far below the surface of many members' concerns. John Witherspoon, whose view of the committee's mandate ranged toward the general ("A Committee of Congress is gone to Camp to regulate the Army...") perceived the chief obstacle to its success in a growing tendency toward insubordination on the part of some members of the army.[20] "Our Officers are infected with such a seizing Thirst for Rank and Pay," he grumbled, "and there is sometimes such a Want of Firmness in Congress that there is Danger of their throwing Things into Confusion."[21] Witherspoon condemned the disposition of officers to make their continued service contingent on prevailing in disputes over promotions, and boasted that he could have been placed on the committee himself, "but I postively refused it chiefly on Account of my Character and Reputation but not from any fear of encountering them or yielding to any unjust demand."[22] Addressing the same point, Henry Laurens arrived at a diametrically opposite conclusion. "Nine Brigadiers have made an humble Representation of injury which they feel from an undue promotion of Gen. Conway," he observed, "an humble Petition has also appeared from eight valuable meritorious Colonels complaining of the promotion of Lieutt. Colo. Wilkinson to the rank of Brigadier. Both are treated with the Contempt of lying on the Tables." "Such a display of Wisdom and Justice," he predicted dourly, "may provoke a resentment exceedingly detrimental to the service."[23]

Whatever the divided sentiments within the parent body, however, or the halting attempts to find a comprehensive statement of the committee's purpose, there was a palpable sense within Congress that its members were disposed to delegate to the group a considerable amount of initiative and discretion in carrying out the widely desired objective of reforming the army. Congress increasingly tended, as did Washington himself, to delay or eschew routine but noisome decisions, such as granting appointments and commissions to the ubiquitous foreign applicants, pleading the necessity of waiting for the result of the group's recommendations.[24] Henry Laurens depicted the imprecise but seemingly gathering authority vested in the committee for a doubtless grateful, if still somewhat politically innocent (in American terms, at least), Marquis de Lafayette. "The powers of this deputation," he observed dryly, "are ample. I will not say unlimited."[25]

This fact was not lost on Washington during the fortnight which elapsed between the committee's appointment and its arrival at camp. During that time he drove his small staff of aides in the task of "preparing and digesting matters for the Committee," in anticipation of its arrival.[26] If Congress was disposed to be somewhat tentative and general in its instructions to the group, Washington had no intention of relinquishing the implicit initiative which he had achieved with it, as the individual at whose insistence it had been established in the first place. The preparation consisted largely of collecting and abstracting data on the strength of the army, information on the state of its current and foreseeable material supplies, and recommendations for reform drawn from the memoranda taken from the

general officers. The tedious work was conducted to some degree at the expense of the transaction of routine business. Washington even found it necessary to acknowledge apologetically his belated response to a series of letters from the President of Congress, citing his immersion in preparations for the conference.[27] This concentration of energies would continue. Washington would pointedly decline to recommend actions to the New Jersey legislature, pending the outcome of the deliberations.[28]

The intensive preparation paid off early and handsomely, in the form of a detailed statement of concerns and recommendations which Washington was able to place before the committee at its second meeting. The document, which consisted of a thirty-eight page hand-written manuscript entitled "A Representation to the Committee of Congress," amounted to an agenda of topics for the impending conference.[29] By presenting the committee with a comprehensive account of the army's deficiencies as well as a series of recommendations for their removal, Washington placed himself in a position to influence, if not control, the overall course of their deliberations, and possibly thereby the substance of their decisions and recommendations.

The "Representation" was a carefully polished political tract, keyed to the concerns which Congress had articulated in its resolution establishing the group, incorporating enough hard evidence to resonate with the information which the members could informally gather for themselves by walking through the camp, and liberally sprinkled with ideas and opinions which Washington had thoughtfully extracted from his general and staff officers during the preceeding weeks. It was deferentially "submitted to consideration and I shall be happy, if they

[the proposals] are found conducive to remedying the Evils and inconveniences we are now subject to and putting the Army upon a more respectable footing."[30] Above all, however, Washington insisted, "Something must be done, important alterations must be made; necessity requires that our resources should be enlarged and our system improved."[31] He retreated slightly from his earlier rhetorical prediction that dissolution itself would necessarily follow from a failure of reform, but held out the unacceptable alternative that without it "[the army's] operations must infallibly be feeble, languid, and ineffectual."[32]

The first item on Washington's agenda addressed an issue which would become the most controversial point of contention between the military and political parts of the Continental establishment: a recommendation that the perennially disgruntled officer corps be more firmly attached to the service by bonds of material interest, through the adoption of a "half pay and pensionary establishment."[33] According to the plan, which had been under discussion within the army for months and before Congress itself since the beginning of the year, officers who agreed to remain in the service for the duration of the war would continue to receive half of their pay annually for the rest of their lives.[34] Their widows and orphans would receive pensions. The proposal also envisioned making commissions "valuable" by permitting their holders to sell them.[35] Washington recognized that the plan would arouse "capital objection[s]" on such grounds as the impropriety of committing an infant government to an open-minded expense, and especially from principled opponents of the concept of a "standing army," but he

stood ready to "oppose the necessity" of the measure on practical grounds.[36] He bewailed the "frequent resignations daily happening... from some officers of the greatest merit," and ascribed the "apathy, inattention, and neglect of duty, which pervade all ranks" to the financial insecurity which attended military service.[37] On a positive note, he pointed out that making commissions valuable would provide a means of exacting obedience from the officers, by holding over them the threat of dismissal from the service, which would entail the forfeiture of their proprietary interests in their ranks.[38] He ominously observed that "many Officers whom, upon every principle, we should wish to retain in the service are only waiting to see whether something of the kind will or will not take place to be determined in their resolutions either of staying in, or quitting it immediately...."[39]

In response to the perpetual difficulties which were thrust upon the army by the inability of the states to keep their regiments filled with enlisted men, Washington advocated more compulsion and less incentive than he was disposed to display toward the officers. He concluded that the country was "pretty well drained" of men willing to commit themselves to lengthy terms in the service, and proposed the abandonment of voluntary enlistments in favor of annual drafts from the militia of each state. After a year of compulsory service, he proposed that the draftees be encouraged to reenlist by means of bounties, with the drafting mechanism ready to replace whatever number declined to do so.[40]

The "Representation" outlined a new "establishment," or system of organization for the army as a whole. The scheme included the

abolition of the rank of colonel, since those officers had proved difficult to exchange when imprisoned for the want of an equivalent rank in the British army, and a complete reorganization and expansion of the cavalry service.[41] In deference to Congress' expressed wish that the awkward arrangement of unevenly "completed" units be "reduced" and made more uniform, Washington proposed recasting the current ninety-seven battalions into eighty new ones, and dividing them into uniform brigades and divisions, each of which would be "an epitome of the great whole, and move by similar Springs upon a smaller scale."[42] The new arrangement provided for the establishment of an office of Inspector General with assistants in each brigade to institute a uniform system of maneuvers, and included an expanded corps under a Grand Provost to "watch over the good order and regularity of the army."[43]

Washington described the "lavish distribution of rank," particularly among members of the staff departments, as one of the principle causes causes of dissatisfaction in the army. To mitigate it he suggested that all posts which required commissioned officers, such as Quarter Masters and Paymasters, be filled from the line, and that those officers base their claim to rank and promotion exclusively upon their place and performance in the line.[44] Commissaries, Forage Masters, and Wagon Masters, whose duties required no specific military skills, and whose posts were "looked upon as the money making part of the army," were to be drawn from civilian personnel, and hold no rank in the army itself.[45] Washington also described irregular promotions as a source of "infinite trouble and vexation" to himself, and proposed "some settled rule of

promotion, universally known and understood," but with sufficient flexibility to permit extraordinary advancement as a reward for exceptional merit or performance.[46]

The "Representation" concluded with expansive commentaries on each of the support departments, enumerating the particular disabilities which beset the operation of each one, and in a few instances their generally satisfactory performance.[47] These paragraphs varied in degree of specificity, but collectively they comprised a mine of idiosyncratic observations, illustrating the perception of various parts of the military mechanism from the Commander in Chief's viewpoint. From them the committee could have learned of such things as Washington's preference, all other things being equal, that his troops be discriminated by state by the color of their clothing, and by regiment by that of their collars and cuffs; of his vexation with a series of Wagon Masters who had been "apt to indulge fantastical notions of rank and importance," and whose deputies had become tainted with "absurd fancies of gentility"; of his opinion that the Commissary Department had been engaged in the "dangerous and visionary experiment" of attempting to provision the army on a "hand to mouth" basis; and of his apprehension about fighting a "defensive war" with a "young army," of which the "notions of implicit subordination, not being as yet, sufficiently, ingrafted among them, they are more apt to reason upon their rights, and readier to manifest their sensibility of any thing that has the appearance of injustice to them."[48]

The "Representation" provided the committee, in the absence of a detailed specification of its mandate from Congress, with a broad framework on which to base its inquiry. The formal record of the

group's deliberations is fragmentary, consisting principally of the sparse minutes which it kept, together with the official correspondence which it issued and the private letters of its members.[49] The committee made no comprehensive final report of its findings to Congress. Instead, it took actions and made recommendations on a piecemeal basis, both during its stay at camp and after its members had returned to York. This fragmented record weakens efforts to trace the chronology of the committee's work, or to discern patterns of influence, either between the army and the committee itself or between the committee and Congress.

Despite these problems of reconstruction, the strong influence of Washington's views is discernable in the tone and substance of the deliberations, if not always in the conclusions which the committee reached. The group made a fumbling start in its initial session, reaching a divided decision to recommend General Philip Schuyler for the vacant office of Quarter Master General, a nomination which would fail in Congress.[50] Nathaniel Folsom's objection to the choice was the only recorded dissent in the formal minutes of the conference, although some differences of opinion undoubtedly existed in later sessions.[51] After Washington's recommendations were formally received the consultations apparently proceeded more smoothly. The group plunged directly into the business of attempting to improve the functioning of the support agencies, delving into the deficiencies of the Commissary

Department. It only needed two days to determine that the problems in that organization extended from the top, if not necessarily to the bottom. Concluding that the department could not be regulated satisfactorily under its current head, William Buchanan, the committee recommended that Jeremiah Wadsworth of Connecticut be appointed Commissary General of Purchases in his stead.[52] Pursuing Washington's oblique criticism of the "extravagant rage of deputation, now too prevalent among us," the members resolved to review the entire personnel structure of each of the support departments. They ordered the heads of those organizations to submit lists of the numbers, names, stations, and salaries of their various assistants.[53]

The committee's initial sessions established a momentum which it was able to sustain through most of its first week in camp. At its third meeting it took under consideration Washington's detailed proposal for a new "arrangement" of the battalions and, in the terse language of the minutes, "settled it." From the brevity of its consideration of the question, and considering the relatively substantial latitude which Congress had given it on the point, it would appear that the committee was disposed to accept Washington's suggestions at something like face value, at least pending the review of Congress.[54] Perhaps feeling somewhat flushed with their own progress to that point, the members also placed the controversial "half-pay" proposal on the table the same day. With regard to this infinitely more delicate matter, however, it was known that there were strongly held and sharply divided sentiments in Congress. Whether Washington's own strong arguments on behalf of the measure elicited any debate or

objection from the committee is uncertain, but the matter was, again in the inexpressive language of the minutes, "not settled" that day.[55]

The relative expedition with which the first issues that the committee considered seem to have yielded to its mediations reflected in part the care with which the group's agenda had been prepared at Head Quarters in the weeks prior to its arrival at camp. It was also, however, largely a function of the nature of the issues themselves, and of the kinds of resolutions which were appropriate to them. Without exception, the problems with which the delegation dealt at the outset were amenable to the application of formal executive or recommendatory actions. The nomination of departmental officials, and the adoption, pending the approval of Congress, of a "paper" arrangement for the army, were among the enumerated tasks which the committee had been expected to undertake, and thus within its stated powers.[56] The group's confident assumption that it had "settled" such matters as the arrangement of the battalions would prove to have been somewhat premature. It could, nevertheless, fairly congratulate itself after four days of labor that, within the bounds of its resources and authority, it had moved quickly to gain at least a quasi-legislative grip on a variety of difficult problems, of which Congress itself had taken but passing notice for many months.

With this modest bouquet of formal organizational achievement under its belt, however, the committee moved rapidly to a set of related problems of a wholly different order of complexity and tractability. It was one thing to fill long vacant offices, or even to dismiss demonstrable incompetents and replace them with individuals

thought more adequate to their posts. It was even, for the moment at least, easy enough to ratify untried new arrangements among the divisions, brigades, regiments, and companies which constituted the army itself on paper. The principal business of the delegation, however, at least from the view point of the Commander in Chief, whose discontent with the status quo had brought it into being, would be more complicated and time-consuming. If the army had been able to subsist on magazines of flour or herds of cattle voted into existence with the summary ease and authority with which new arrangements of battalions could be decreed, or new staff positions created, the committee could have completed its work and return to York within a fortnight. Had this been the case, however, the paralyzing supply crisis which had staggered the army would never have materialized.

Instead, before it had completed its first week of work the group was forced to confront the fact that the underlying causes of the army's travail ran much deeper than it had been prepared to believe upon its arrival at Valley Forge, and that their amelioration would require more than the application of a few summary decisions. When the committee "took into cons[ideration] the scarcity of prov[isions]" on Saturday, January 31, it marked a significant point of departure in the uneasy relationship between Congress and the army.[57] It was only from that point that fully a fourth of Congress' members took leave of the rarified air of the "great outlines of public business," of which Henry Laurens had spoken for the whole body when he called it their "regular sphere." As they did so, a subtle but ultimately a powerful change began to take place in the intellectual chemistry of Congress as a whole.

The committee's introduction to the byzantine complexities of the logistical breakdown began with its examination of the lists of deputies and assistants which it had requested in response to Washington's complaint about the "rage of deputation" in the support departments. The committee spent an entire day poring over returns from the Commissary of Issues for the Middle Department and from the Forage Master General.[58] The minutes do not reveal its reaction to the documents. It is not difficult to infer, however, that it must have been one of surprised dismay, as the members of a legislative body totalling scarcely more than a score of men - one which prided itself, moreover, on its ability to decide public policy on a Continental scale - confronted graphic evidence of the existence, though hardly the full extent, of a sprawling entity numbering easily in the hundreds of persons, which was required merely to supply the military machine.

The committee adjourned over the Sabbath, its members perhaps not a little sobered for their glimpse at the dimensions of the task which they would confront in the ensuing weeks. Gouverneur Morris, probably the most reflective member of the group, chose to "improve" the rest day by unburdening himself in a melancholy letter to his friend John Jay in Paris. "Congress have sent me here in conjunction with some other gentlemen, to regulate their army," he mused, "and in truth not a little regulation hath become necessary. Our quarter-master and commissary departments are in a most lamentable situation."[59] Whether there even remained enough strength in the political foundation of the state to sustain the weaknesses in the military structure seemed to be a doubtful matter in Morris' mind. "The mighty Senate of

America is not what you have known it," he opined. "The Continental currency and Congress have both depreciated, but in the hands of the Almighty Architect of empires, the stone which the builders have rejected may easily become the head of the corner."[60]

Morris' emerging trepidations would provide a fit prologue for the committee's work. Throughout the month of February, a period during which the army's support departments faltered again, and for almost two weeks lurched through a supply trough which dwarfed all of its predecessors of the fall and winter, the group's proceedings played a restless counterpoint between measured consideration of issues of formal army organization, and direct intervention in the maintenance of the hemorrhaging logistical equilibrium. The delegates were treated to a display of the army's material shortcomings and vulnerabilities so dramatic and timely that a cynic among them might well have assumed that it had been especially arranged for their benefit, had it not been for its nearly disastrous consequences. From the Continental horse yard, situated immediately between the committee's outpost at Moore Hall and Head Quarters, the stench of the rotting carcasses of starved animals rose and wafted through the camp. In the camp, the fear of riot or worse hung almost as palpably in the air as the stench itself. The pitch and tone of letters emanating from the camp, both official and private, rose through progressive degrees of anxiety, until they bordered occasionally on outright hysteria.[61] Only the terse entries in the committee's minute book maintained their previous tenor; a tenor so relentlessly devoid of elaboration or



Gouverneur Morris (1752-1816)

Member of the Continental Congress during the Valley Forge winter. Member of the five person "Committee of Conference" sent to investigate conditions of the army.

"Congress have sent me here in conjunction with some other gentlemen, to regulate their army, and in truth not a little regulation hath become necessary."

Courtesy of Independence National Historical Park

urgency that it is necessary to resort to the occasional letters which its members produced to ascertain that the group even grasped, on a visceral level at least, the dimensions of the crisis.

The committee laboriously digested raw evidence of the debility of the supply departments, even as the latest emergency bore down on the army. On February 3 it summoned Ephraim Blaine, a Deputy Commissary General of Purchases, and questioned him on the "State of Provisions of the Army and recd. his Return of Meat purchased."[62] It also interviewed Nathanael Greene, and took returns of rations drawn, but its attention was still fixed on the December provisions crisis rather than the one which was even then beginning to mount on its doorstep.[63] The delegates received a series of proposals for the reorganization of the "Provisions Department" from Blaine on the fifth, and met with him again in person on the seventh, but it was not until the thirteenth, when they "Conferred upon the starving condition of the Army," that an awareness of the immediacy of the crisis crept into their official minutes.[64]

In this instance, however, the committee's spare minutes failed to do justice either to its concern or to its comprehension of the situation. In fact, after exhaustively examining Blaine, and minutely comparing what must literally have been reams of data concerning the army's consumption of food with evidence of the availability of supplies, the delegation was so disturbed by the pattern which it discerned that it wrote at length to alert Congress to the deteriorating situation. Both the genuineness and the depth of the members' alarm can be seen in the uncharacteristically self-accusatory

terms in which they phrased their report. From their initial understanding of the quantity of food issued by the commissaries, they observed somewhat contritely, "we had presumed that there must have been some mistake or Fraud, a detection of which would have enabled us to make a considerable saving."[65] Instead, after pursuing this suspicion through the available evidence, they were forced to conclude that "upon a scrutiny... we do not find any considerable difference - the large issues being satisfactorily accounted for, in the numbers of Continental Troops to be fed."[66]

With this transformation in its thinking on an issue of critical importance to the army's survival, the committee underwent a subtle but important alteration in its role and function, both in relation to the army itself, and within the broader Continental establishment. For at least the duration of the crisis, the delegation became as much an active participant in the operation of the military organization as an investigator, observer, or even a presumptive reformer. This shift fell within the implicit parameters established for the committee by Congress, which had charged it with an overlapping mixture of investigative, advisory, and executive powers and duties. The transformation, however, had important implications for the functioning of the group itself, and for the relationship between Congress and the army.

The most immediate implication was this decrease in the independence of the committee from the entity which it had been charged with regulating. As the shortage of provisions threatened to overwhelm the army, the delegates found themselves, like high-level passengers on a foundering

vessel, struggling side by side with the crew to stabilize the situation. Both collectively, on an official basis, and individually, on personal terms, they began communicating with officials in the neighboring state governments, urging them to expedite efforts to increase the supplies of food and forage to the army. The group requested Governor William Livingston of New Jersey to provide wagons to haul provisions to the camp, and all but pleaded with his counterpart Thomas Johnson of Maryland to ship whatever could be spared, informing him that "upon an early Transportation of large Quantities of Provisions to this camp from the State you preside over the very Existence of our Army depends."[67] Where private or personal influence seemed likely to avail it was brought to bear. Gouverneur Morris of New York appended a "half private, half public" appeal to the committee's official message to Governor George Clinton of that state, to inform him "that an American Army in the Bosom of America is about to disband for the want of somewhat to eat."[68] He realized, he assured Clinton, "that our state can furnish little or no Provisions but something or other may perhaps be done and if so let it be done."[69]

The effect of the committee's direct participation in the mechanics of the supply system is difficult to determine, measured in terms of its contribution to halting the army's apparently precipitous, headlong slide toward oblivion. The state of near-famine had substantially abated by February 20, before any of the group's anxious appeals could have reached their intended recipients, much less elicited a response. Once again, the confluence of a variety of factors, including another frantic episode of scouring through local environs thought be have been

long since stripped of resources, had kept the specter of dissolution in the realm of threat rather than reality. The effect of the emergency on the committee itself, and on its relationship with Congress and the army, while still a matter of inference rather than outright proof, seems clearer.

The crisis had a subtle but profound effect on the relationship between the committee and its parent body. The constantly enlarging gulf between the two groups in terms of access to reliable information about the state of the army decreased the implicit dependence of the delegation on the larger body, from which it derived its formal authority. Indeed, the relationship between the two was in some degree measurably reversed. The committee became increasingly wont to define its independence by taking issue with decisions emanating from York, while Congress found itself more dependent on its deputation for information which it could only get reliably from that source.

This evolving set of organizational relationships, implicit to some degree in the resolves under which the committee had been created, but deriving substantial momentum from the imperatives of the immediate emergency, spilled over into the "other" work upon which the members attempted to keep their attention focused: the formal reorganization of the army. The delegates struggled to maintain in their own view a distinction between their ad hoc intervention in the supply crisis and the particulars of the reorganization. The latter business was more explicitly embedded in their mandate, and, when they had time to analyze the situation at all, they treated the collapse of the supply system as a persistent, if critical interruption. In

appealing to the Governor of Maryland for aid the delegates characterized their mission in terms of broad army reformation, and lamented that "During the Progress of this important business the critical situation of the army on the score of Provisions hath filled our minds with Apprehension and Alarm."[70]

To Washington, of course - indeed to anyone who had viewed the progress of the war from the army's perspective - the supply crisis was anything but incidental to the larger problem at hand, and measures to permanently resolve it were a necessary prologue to more ambitious schemes for putting the war effort on a sound footing. This was a perception of the situation, however, which the committee members, and through them Congress as a whole, would only arrive at gradually. The opportunity to place their hands directly onto the machinery of supplying the army, in a circumstance of desperate necessity, contributed materially to their ability to do so. The sequence of events which dispelled their initial skepticism about the reality of the shortage of provisions reinforced Washington's credibility on a broad range of matters relating to the army and its needs.

The committee's deliberations proceeded apace, even as hunger and its concommittant discontent tore away at the fabric of the army itself. Between emergency conferences with harried commissary officers, and sessions devoted to drafting appeals to officials of neighboring states, the members managed to find time to consider a wide variety of points, in addition to the supply crisis. Only rarely did they allow more than two days to pass without acting on one or more issues of intermediate or long-range significance. Their decisions repeatedly reflected, and often plainly adhered to, Washington's views on the matters in question.

They accepted his arguments in favor of a draft to fill the regiments, and generally followed his thinking on the arrangement of the line.[71] They rejected an initiative from a faction in Congress, led by the Pennsylvania delegates, which would have forced on the army an immediate, full-scale expedition against the British stronghold in Philadelphia.[72] They resolved to recommend a complete reorganization of the Engineering Department "agreeable to the Genls. plan."[73] They addressed a forceful, if deferentially worded, dissent to Congress' decision to implement the Board of War's proposal for a mid-winter invasion of Canada, endorsing Washington's private views on the question.[74]

The committee also "settled" a new plan for the orderly promotion of officers, adopting its language verbatim from the "Representation."[75] It accepted Washington's view that the limitation of corporal punishment to one-hundred lashes, as specified in an Article of War, was "only insufficient."[76] It also joined with him in recommending that a contingent of Indians be employed in the army to "strike no small terror into the British and foreign troops."[77]

If the committee demonstrated an inclination to work harmoniously and effectively with Washington on a wide variety of questions, however, it by no means accepted a rubber stamp role. Its members brought their own viewpoints to bear on questions that came before them. They could also, however, when they felt called upon to do so, vigorously assert and advocate the prerogatives of Congress. In one instance in particular, where Washington and Congress disagreed strongly over the timing and substance of negotiations for a general exchange of war prisoners, the committee sided strongly with the latter.[78]

In general, however, the effect of the group's sojourn at Moore Hall was to effect a stronger basis for cooperation between the elected government and its military arm, by combining the unique perspectives of both. This was a function that the committee was in a singular position to perform, as a result of its increasing knowledge of the practical operation of the army's complex systems. In addition to the collection of a wealth of specific information the members were forging, especially through their involvement in combatting the supply crisis, an appreciation of the scope and complexity of the military enterprise which separated them from their fellow representatives in York. The effect of this process was nowhere more apparent than in the group's role in the reorganization of the Quarter Master's Department, which was unquestionably its signal specific achievement. The episode illustrates perhaps better than any other the degree to which the group was able to use its access to reliable information to effectively mediate between Congress' expectations and the army's needs. It also shows Washington's ability, as the provider and orchestrator of that information, to achieve a higher degree of leverage in influencing critical organizational decisions in the political sphere than he had previously enjoyed.

The committee found during the course of its investigation that the need for reorganization was all but universal throughout the army and its support structure. Its members realized, however, at least from the moment when they examined the personnel returns of the auxiliary departments and questioned the officers responsible for those departments, the centrality of the Quarter Master and his organization to the success of any reforms. They observed to Henry

Laurens that the department was the cog "on which not only the future success of your arms, but the present existence of your army immediately depends."[79] Any continuing dislocation of the army's logistical and housekeeping functions, they realized, would undermine if not destroy the performance of whatever military entity their efforts might produce. "The influence of this office is so diffusive through every part of your military system," they proclaimed, "that neither the wisdom of arrangement, the spirit of enterprise, or favourable opportunity will be of any avail, if this great wheel in the machine stops or moves heavily."[80]

As a result, no single piece of business occupied more of the committee's time and attention, except for its frantic intervention in the repair of the immediate supply rupture itself, than the search for a solution to the dysfunctions of the Quarter Master's Department. Its first halting attempt to bring the rudderless department under control, through the appointment of General Philip Schuyler to the vacant office of Quarter Master General in place of Thomas Mifflin, foundered in Congress almost without leaving a trace. The choice, which was made at the committee's first formal session, is difficult to explain. Schuyler was at the time under the cloud of allegations that he had been derelict in the performance of his duty during the events that had led to the fall of Fort Ticonderoga the year before, and was even then pressing Congress to order a formal court-martial to clear him of the charge.[81] The nomination provoked the only recorded instance of dissent within the committee when Nathaniel Folsom voted against it.[82]

Congress barely even deigned to take notice of the recommendation, recording in its Journal only that the committee had "represent[ed] the necessity of appointing, without delay, a quarter master general," but neglecting to enter Schuyler's name.[83]

The committee's choice of Schuyler could not, either as a matter of substance or of timing, have provided a less auspicious beginning for its efforts to reorganize the Quarter Master's Department. The day before receiving the recommendation Congress had entertained a proposal from the Board of War which profoundly threatened the integrity of the department itself. In its report the Board reviewed the "situation" of the department, emphasizing its financial weakness, and presented Congress with two alternative plans, either of which would have substantially increased its own influence, if not control, over this vital part of the military establishment. It argued that Congress should either appoint "an Officer of rank, Activity and well acquainted by experience, with the business of the department...with power to arrange the Department, with the approbation and concurrence of the Board of War," or else that the department should be divided into four parts.[84] Under the second plan, the Quarter Master General would be stripped of most of the supply and procurement functions that traditionally went with the office, and his activities confined to the "Military Line... which includes the regulating of marches, encampments, order of battle &c. &c., and a long retinue described in all the books of the profession."[85] He would handle little or no public money, and would share with the Board supervision of three subordinate officers, who would carry out most of the other functions traditionally under his jurisdiction,

including the procurement of military equipment, the provision of wagons to transport the army's goods, and the collection of forage for its horses.[86]

Congress postponed consideration of the measure, which bore every mark of a bold-faced attempt by the Board to expand its authority from a supportive role into the day-to-day operation of the army itself. The arrival the following day of news of the selection of Schuyler by the committee at camp, however, brought the proposal back into view. It was moved that the Board's first alternative - the immediate appointment of a Quarter Master General subject to its own approval - be adopted, with the provision that the nominee "be directed, in concurrence with the Board of War, to prepare a new arrangement for that department, to be laid before Congress for consideration." After the motion had been debated at some length, a decision was postponed.[87]

Congress took up the question again on February 5, and this time adopted the Board's second alternative, calling for the division of the department into four segments.[88] The decision sharply reduced the authority and independence of the new Quarter Master General. As a result of the elimination of his power to control the expenditure of public funds, that officer was reduced virtually to the status of a functionary of the Board. Indeed, under the arrangement the post could hardly have held enough attraction to induce an individual of even minimal energy or enterprise to accept it. The creation of subordinate officers to handle most of the department's transportation and procurement functions, who would be jointly responsible to the new Quarter Master General and to the Board, further weakened the department, and made its head effectively dependent on the Board for its management.

The implications of the measure extended considerably beyond their effect on the Quarter Master General. The plan gave the Board of War preponderant authority over all aspects of the department's operations, except for housekeeping functions pertaining to the immediate domain of the army itself. Through its presumptive control of the purse the Board was placed in a position to effectively annex a pivotal element of the army's field apparatus to its own designs. The army would henceforth be dependent on a daily basis on the operation of an agency over which its field commanders would have little if any direct authority. This dependency afforded the Board an implicit veto over the widest range of strategic decisions, and represented a shift in the equilibrium of political control over the army so dramatic and extensive as to amount virtually to a coup.

The Board's attempt to seize control of the Quarter Master's Department was anything but an isolated incident. Indeed, it represented the pivotal thrust in that organization's own political offensive, a drive which paralleled Washington's efforts to expand his influence over organizational decisions relating to the army, which were culminating in the Conference Committee's deliberations at Head Quarters. The Board, which was reorganizing under the new leadership of Washington's rival if not his outright enemy Horatio Gates, and his former Quarter Master General Thomas Mifflin, had embarked on an ambitious series of initiatives aimed at enlarging its imprecisely defined role in military affairs. Congress, in which was lodged the ultimate authority for both political and military matters, inevitably became the forum in which the contending efforts of Washington and the Board collided.

In mid-January the Board had secured from Congress broad powers to establish an independent network of provisions magazines for the use of the army, to appoint superintendents to administer a purchasing, processing, and transportation system based on those magazines, to set prices for such commodities as wheat and flour, to call on Washington for military assistance in support of its activities, and to investigate the efficacy of the state of Pennsylvania's supply efforts.[89] The result of these powers was to permit the Board to override the established Commissary Department of the army, and thereby to place it in effective control of the function of feeding the troops.[90] Congress had, in fact, specifically directed that the Board's magazines were to be "established without the interference of the commissary general, or his officers."[91]

The Board had followed this success by pushing through Congress its plan for a winter invasion, or "irruption" into Canada. The move indicated that its ambitions would not be limited to sharing responsibility for the army's support services, but rather that it intended to take part in overall strategic decision-making as well. If it could establish its prerogative to such a role it would interpose itself between the army and Congress, and significantly erode the authority of the Commander in Chief.[92]

The assault on the Quarter Master's Department was thus the third in a series of Board ventures aimed at expanding the scope of its functions within the Continental establishment. Its remarkable success in securing Congress' approval for these enterprises was the result of a number of converging phenomena. It was able, in the first

place, to manipulate Congress' perception of itself as on the brink of being overwhelmed by an apparently crushing workload. Henry Laurens' letters to various state officials alluding to that body's forced "descent" into the minutia of day to day military business illustrate its growing sense of loss of control over its affairs in light of the critical state of the army.[93] Its attending membership had been sharply reduced for a variety of reasons, not the least of which must have been the disinclination of many representatives to spend the winter in York, a town which was, to judge from the plaintive descriptions of those who did remain, a dismal, overcrowded place.[94]

The effect created in the minds of many members by Washington's own depictions of the plight of the army probably added to Congress' disposition to haphazardly delegate authority. He had been compelled, in order to take the political initiative and to exert whatever influence he could to force that body to attend to his critical situation, to abandon his reluctance to indulge in alarmist tactics. The "starve, dissolve, or disperse" ultimatum of late December had dislodged a real vein of fear in Congress and led, as Washington hoped it would, to the appointment of the Conference Committee. There was, however, no way of limiting its effects to that end alone. By unleashing upon an already hard-pressed Congress an accurate, but in some respects a strategically embellished portrait of an army confronting oblivion, Washington had deployed a many-edged weapon.

It can hardly have been surprising, in light of these circumstances, that Congress responded to the situation by repairing to its own arsenal, and availing itself of whatever weapons it found there. The Conference Committee was certainly the first of these,

but the Board of War was just as surely another. If only to foster a desperately needed division of administrative labor, Congress began to delegate wide responsibilities by referring problems, and with them authority, to the Board. The Board rapidly assumed the character of a super-committee, to which could be assigned any questions which bore, however obliquely, on military matters.

The inclinations, temperament, and especially the political ingenuity of the Board itself cannot be overlooked. That there existed a strong personal animosity between Washington and several of its members, notably Horatio Gates and Thomas Mifflin, has long been recognized. What should not be overlooked is the equally important role of organizational relationships. The Board, beginning its second incarnation under a less than specific mandate from Congress, was an entity very much on the make during the early winter of 1778.[95] As such, it was leaving few avenues unexplored in its search for a significant role in the Continental establishment.

In assembling their political initiatives the Board's members revealed themselves to be astute readers of the intricacies of navigating in troubled Congressional waters. Washington's late December assault on Congress' collective insecurities had shown in a general way the direction in which that body might be plundered of its prerogatives. The Board quickly discerned the truth that limited and specific thrusts might be more quickly productive. Washington's unexpected assault on the sensibilities of Congress had in fact itself exposed a series of discrete objectives which could be had, it appeared, almost for the asking. The establishment of an independent organization

of provisioning magazines under the Board's sponsorship and control was the first step toward realizing those objectives. If, by Washington's admission, the army was being starved to the point of dispersal or worse, Congress had in hand the justification to turn toward any seemingly reasonable scheme to mitigate the starvation. If the proffered solution entailed the risk of alienating the state of Pennsylvania, the state already stood convicted of failing to meet the needs of the army, and was in fact probably all but irrevocably alienated anyway. In either case, its three representatives who voted on the Board's provision proposal supported the measure unanimously.[96] If the plan violated the autonomy of the existing Commissary Department, it also stood convicted on the same grounds. If by authorizing the Board to set up a parallel and conflicting organization, Congress could be accused of combatting chaos with anarchy, the desperate circumstances under which it acted provided its own excuse.

On the strength of similar arguments, the Board was in a position to aggressively pursue other opportunities to enlarge its role in overall Continental decision-making. No episode better illustrates the degree to which Congress was willing to disarrange established institutional relationships, in its haste to fall upon some means of reversing a seemingly deteriorating situation, than its approval of the Board's proposal for an "irruption" into Canada. Despite its grudging acceptance of the conclusion of the committee which had visited Washington at Whitemarsh in early December, that the army was in no condition to undertake a full-scale winter campaign, Congress was determined to find some way of delivering a military blow to the enemy.[97] An opportunity for doing so offered in early January, in

the form of a series of petitions which began circulating among some citizens of Lancaster County, calling upon Pennsylvania authorities to exert their influence to press the army into attacking Philadelphia and driving the British out of the state.[98] Under pressure from the Pennsylvania delegates, Congress referred the question to the Conference Committee at Head Quarters, possibly hoping that the group would view the situation differently from its predecessor.[99]

The committee strongly recommended against any such enterprise, but the turn of events provided the Board of War with a convenient pretext to fill the vacuum with an initiative.[100] If a direct assault on the main British army was out of the question, Congress might be willing to settle for a lesser endeavor, as long as it put Americans on the offensive against the enemy. From the Board's point of view, sponsorship of such an enterprise entailed as many political and procedural benefits as military ones. By acting on the demonstrated immobility of the main army, and playing to Congress' impatience with a defensive military posture, the Board stood to establish a precedent for its more active involvement, on an ongoing basis, in strategic decision-making.

Of the series of initiatives which comprised the Board's drive to enlarge its role in Continental political and military affairs, however, none struck more <u>immediately</u> and <u>directly</u> at Washington's prerogatives than did its proposal for the division and reorganization of the Quarter Master's Department. The effect of the plan to set up a parallel and independent organization to supply provisions

to the army under the Board's control was immediate, but its implications were mitigated to some degree by the continued existence of the regular Commissary Department. The commissary officers were explicitly forbidden to interfere with the Board's superintendents and appointees, and in practice it was inevitable that the two organizations would conflict, probably to the detriment of both. At a minimum, however, there continued to exist within the regular army organization a mechanism for the procurement and distribution of its own food supplies.

The implications of the Canadian expedition went directly to the heart of Washington's prerogative, subject to Congressional approval, to ordain overall military strategy, and provided the Board with a precedent for further interference in that sphere. For a variety of reasons, however, the extent and consequence of that precedent would not be immediately determined. The expedition itself would be carried out in the Northern Department of the army, which by longstanding practice had operated on a semi-autonomous basis from the direct control of the Commander in Chief. Horatio Gates, moreover, in assuming his duties as President of the Board, had retained both his commission as a major general and his designation as the commanding officer of that department.[101] It thus remained at least implicitly the case that the Board had to that point only established its right to initiate strategic decisions for the execution of an auxiliary branch of the army, rather than for the whole, and then only with the expressed approval of Congress. It could even be argued that Gates was simply proposing, as head of the Board, an action for which he would retain principal responsibility as the Northern commander.[102]

Whether the initiative would translate into a viable precedent for more extensive Board involvement in strategic decision-making would be a question to be determined in the future.

The new plan for the Quarter Master's Department, on the other hand, had both direct and immediate implications for the political equilibrium of the Continental establishment. Unlike the provisioning plan it did not envision a parallel organization with duplicating functions and activities, but rather the direct control by the Board of the existing department's most pivotal responsibilities. Under the scheme the effective powers, though not the operating responsibilities, of the Quarter Master General, would devolve on the Board. Through Thomas Mifflin's experience and knowledge of the department's complexities, it would be in a strong position to exercise those powers in pursuit of its own purposes.

In dispatching the Conference Committee to Valley Forge with a broad mandate to initiate military reforms, and simultaneously delegating to the Board of War a series of widely ranging powers and responsibilities, many of which directly involved objects which the committee had been empowered to undertake, Congress had performed an act of seemingly remarkable self-contradiction. That it had done so under circumstances of genuine and understandable alarm, amid accumulating evidence that the war effort was rapidly threatening to unravel - indeed under the burden of Washington's own testimony that it was unravelling - does not lessen the consequences of the act. It does,

however, help to explain the evolution of a complex sequence of otherwise apparently disconnected events. Although deep divisions within Congress itself over philosophy, personalities, and considerations of sound policy all undoubtedly played a part in that body's apparently schizophrenic response to the emergency, that response can probably best be understood in less categorical terms.

As a body, Congress was comprised of barely more than a handful of poorly informed (in terms of reliable, current information) and undoubtedly by January of 1778, badly alarmed men. The evolution of the war had prepared its members for the possibility that the 1777 campaign would end uncertainly, if not unsuccessfully. It could not, however, have given them any reason to expect that it might end with the American army being swallowed whole, not by the enemy, but almost by the earth itself, in a country which they persisted in believing was a veritable bulging granary. Since as early as October 1777 they had received sporadic reports that the Commissary Department, which they had reorganized in June of that year, was badly malfunctioning, and that as a result the army was not being regularly supplied.[103] They had not, however, seriously contemplated the dimensions of the logistical breakdown until after Washington's blunt letters of late December had been laid before them. When they did, their belated efforts to comprehend and respond to the scope of the crisis assumed a disconnected, and in many ways, a self-defeating tone.

The most apt, and yet perhaps the most charitable explanation for Congress' approach to policy-making at this grave point is that it manifested considerable confusion, and that the members had become

susceptible to an unusually large degree of suggestion. At Washington's request they were willing to send a committee to confer with him on the reorganization of the army. Unable to agree on a comprehensive statement of its business, however, they failed to provide it with a clear mandate. If at the same time the Board of War had specific proposals to make they were disposed to experiment with them, even at the clear risk that they would conflict with the committee's efforts. Congress most of all was looking for results and, unsure of its own ability to get them, was hedging its bets with what amounted to risky abandon.

The Board of War shrewdly discerned this mood and creatively played to it in its efforts to carve out a prominent role in the military enterprise. In grasping for effective control of the Quarter Master's Department it made certain to touch a perennially exposed nerve in the Congressional sensibility by alluding to the question of fiscal prudence. "Large sums of money," it observed, "are immediately wanted, for the business of this Department."[104] The Board left it for Congress to decide whether those funds would be better entrusted to itself, or left in the hands of a heretofore wayward organization impeached at least of incompetence by Washington himself. The ingrained fear of profligate expenditure in a body battered by the rampaging inflation of the period had proved effective the year before in persuading Congress to reform the Commissary Department. The Board was not mistaken in assuming that it would be so again.[105]

While Congress competed its work on the Quarter Master's Department, the full brunt of the February provisions crisis at camp broke over the heads of the army and the Conference Committee alike. The members

turned their attention from decisions concerning which officers to recommend to head the various support departments, and increasingly involved themselves in emergency measures to increase the flow of supplies to the army. Both the committee and Washington worked in what amounted to blissful ignorance of the changing political situation in York, at least in regard to the issue of the Quarter Master's Department.[106] On February 7 Congress directed President Henry Laurens to notify the committee of the new arrangement for the department, and to request it to confer with Washington to provide a list of nominees for the "several departments" of which the revised organization would now be comprised.[107]

At this point a fortuitous circumstance interposed to ensure that the proceedings at York and at Head Quarters would at least temporarily proceed in isolation from each other. Rapidly deteriorating weather swelled the rivers and inundated the roads of southeastern Pennsylvania, effectively severing communications between the two points. The Susquehanna River became completely impassable between February 6 and 12, leaving Lauren's letter stranded between Congress and the camp.[108] The committee thus did not receive the news of Congress' decision to alter the organization of the department until the thirteenth.[109] During the interval, largely as a result of its experience with the provisions crisis, the committee began to reconsider its position on the condition of the army in general, and on the needs of the Quarter Master's Department in particular.

The weather was a principal agent in intensifying if not precipitating the nearly complete collapse of the army's logistical system. Even personal movement about the camp became problematical,

and the movement of bulky goods through the region, including food supplies, came to a complete halt. By the eleventh, travelling conditions were so poor that the committee saw fit to request Washington not to attempt the two-mile trip between his quarters and Moore Hall.[110] A day later the army was, by the independent reports of at least two brigadier generals, on the brink of breaking up.[111] The committee, concerned over the two-week silence from York on its nomination of Philip Schuyler for Quarter Master General, began to cast about for alternative candidates. The group summoned Nathanael Greene to its quarters and conferred with him about the appointment. Whether Greene was himself looked upon at that point as a candidate for the office, or was merely being sounded for his recommendations, is uncertain, but there is reason to suspect the former.[112] On the thirteenth the committee wrote to Colonel John Cox, a Deputy Quarter Master stationed at Reading. Throughout the protracted negotiations Greene insisted that he would only accept the office on the condition that Cox be appointed his first deputy.[113]

Greene had the same day been ordered by Washington to take command of a large foraging party which was going into Eastern Chester County to strip the countryside of resources in a desperate attempt to keep the army intact until the provisions equilibrium might hopefully stabilize once again.[114] He called upon the committee at Moore Hall on his way out of camp, and the conference, interrupted periodically while Greene dispatched instructions to subordinates in preparation for the expedition, can have settled little.[115] After meeting Greene the committee wrote to Congress in considerable agitation to urge it

to settle the Quarter Master situation. It attributed the delay to the possible miscarriage of its letter of January 28, but disclosed the concern that it might have resulted from some "disapprobation of this gentlemen [Schuyler]."[116] Depicting the melancholy scene in camp, where for want of horses "every species of...transportation is now performed by men, who without a murmur, patiently yoke themselves to little carriages of their own making, or load their wood and provisions on their backs," they implored the legislature to make up its mind.[117]

At a loss to explain the prolonged silence from York, the delegates were reduced to crediting unfounded rumors. They found it expedient to lecture Congress on the reasons why Deputy Quarter Master Henry Lutterloh, whom they had heard was under consideration to be head of the department, lacked the essential qualifications for the job. To reinforce their position, they informed it that "a character [i.e. Greene] has presented itself, which in great degree meets our approbation, judgement, and wishes. We have opened the subject to him, and it is now under his consideration."[118] They could not name their new candidate prior to receiving his consent, they noted, but hoped to be able to do so by the time Congress had decided about Schuyler.[119]

When it at last received notification of Congress' decision to divide the Quarter Master's Department on February 13, the committee chose to treat the matter as cavalierly as Congress had its nomination of Schuyler, recording its receipt in the minutes, but otherwise disregarding it.[120] This undoubtedly resulted in part from the desperate press of the supply situation, which reached its worst dimensions

between the twelfth and the fifteenth, but it may have reflected a calculated decision to play for time in the hope that the consequences of the decision could be averted. Laurens' message had potentially explosive implications. It is difficult if not impossible to imagine that Washington would have willingly remained at the head of the army under a circumstance in which Horatio Gates held effective control of such a pivotal part of the military establishment as the Quarter Master's Department.

The delegates drafted a response to Congress on the fourteenth which avoided the issue altogether, concentrating on the general plight of the army, and recommending James Varnum for the command of Continental forces in the state of Rhode Island.[121] If their initial reaction to the Board's plan was as negative as their ultimate conclusion would be, they had little upon which to rely but time itself. The interval provided by the weather-induced severance of communications with York had given them an opportunity to reconsider their politically inept decision to nominate Philip Schuyler. Congress would soon be in receipt of their tacit acknowledgement of error in the matter, and of the news that they were preparing another recommendation. Their new candidate, Nathanael Greene, who had probably made known to them his strong reluctance to accept the office together with his conditions for doing so, would not return to camp until February 22. This left them little to do but wait and hope.

In the meantime, the delegates resumed their contrapuntal round of considering questions both of long-range, organizational significance, and of immediate import to the supply emergency. In an attempt to concentrate on the latter, they passed a dispute over rank among several brigadiers to a board of their peers, preferring to use the time to compose a letter to New York Governor George Clinton "for aid in procur'g or transport'g Provision."[122] At Washington's request the group reviewed the instructions given by the Board of War to the superintendents appointed to operate one of its newly established provisions magazines, and a contract which had been awarded in consequence of those instructions. They "reported ag[ains]t." the transaction, terming it "unnecessary and unreasonable and exhorbitant."[123] The issue related only peripherally to the specific business of the committee. The group's response to the question, however, illustrated the members' deepening divergence from the sense of Congress as a whole in response to the multiple initiatives of the Board.

Congress, meanwhile, waited with mounting impatience for evidence of compliance with its request that the Conference Committee nominate persons to fill the four principle posts in the new Quarter Master's Department. On the twentieth it directed Henry Laurens to repeat the request, specifying that an answer should be returned "by the same express" which delivered the resolve to camp.[124] The following day it measurably softened the tone, if not the substance, of its position on the question. Spurred by "intelligence this day received from camp, that alarming consequences are likely to ensue from a longer delay of appointing proper persons to fill the several offices in the quarter master's department," it resolved the the Conference Committee be

authorized, in conjunction with Washington, to make the "proper appointments" for the department "forthwith."[125]

While the amended resolution made no mention of an intent to suspend the reorganization plan put forward by the Board and approved on February 5, it carried an implication of flexibility on the subject lacking in Congress' previous statements, especially its sharp order of the day before. In the interest of saving time in an emergency the committee was now empowered not merely to provide a list of names, but rather to fill the offices themselves, presumably still subject to Congress' right to approve its choices. The phrase "proper appointments," moreover, implicitly seemed to offer the committee a degree of discretion on the question absent from Congress' resolution of the fifth, which had specified four posts. If this was the intent, the committee had in effect been restored to the mandate which it had brought to camp, which had included the authority to choose officers in the support departments "until the pleasure of Congress can be known."[126]

The reversal had an ironic consequence, in addition to reinforcing the impression that Congress was continuing to stumble along the path of the "great outlines of public business" in a resolutely indecisive manner. Although it had been wrought in the belief that no more time should be lost on such formalities as recommendations or approvals, its effect was to provide the committee with the one resource which it needed most - time itself. This was of considerable importance because by February 20, prior to receiving news of Congress' latest actions, the delegates were feeling constrained by their stance of implicit obstruction, if not defiance, of that body's expressed

intent. Nathanael Greene had not returned to camp, and members has not been able to proceed toward the resolution of a plan to offer in opposition to the one already endorsed at York. Without such a plan there was little hope that Congress could be dissuaded from implementing the Board's proposal. Henry Laurens' request for a list of candidates with which to do just that was already two weeks old, and had been in hand for a week without response.

Anticipating Congress' growing impatience with their dilatory stance, the committee members sought to obtain another brief delay with still another noncommittal reply. Acknowledging the receipt of the resolve of the fifth, they observed obligingly that the subject was "very important." They "only wait[ed]," they explained, "for some further Information when we shall do ourselves the Honor of laying our Sentiments before Congress on the material Alteration proposed in this Office."[127] The response was remarkable, not in arrogating to the delegates the option of delaying an action already decided by Congress, but in treating a settled issue as if it was merely a proposal.

By the twenty-fourth the shift of the initiative into the hands of the committee had been confirmed by its receipt of news that Congress had decided to allow it to fill the department. The news left the members in a position to be magnanimous, by hesitating to exercise the "Powers which Congress have thought proper to intrust us with," without its informed concurrence.[128] Notwithstanding this piece of rhetorical deference, the committee informed Henry Laurens that it would make "all the necessary Arrangements... to put matters in such a Train as will produce desirable circumstances."[129] By this time the delegates

were laboring furiously, in concert with Washington, to convince a stubbornly reluctant Nathanael Greene to accept the appointment as Quarter Master General.[130] Greene was loath to relinquish his place in what he termed the "line of splendor" of an active field command, and as late as the middle of March he would continue to regard his acceptance of the Quarter Master Generalship as a conditional one.[131] He had allowed his name to be put forward as a possible candidate for the Rhode Island command for more than a month, and acknowledged that the latter assignment "would have been very agreeable to me." He realized, however, that he would be virtually compelled to accept the staff post for the sake of the army, if only as the last means of preventing the loss of its logistical functions to the Board of War.[132]

By February 25 the Conference Committee had exacted a sufficiently reliable commitment from Greene to propose his name to Congress for the post. Armed with a formidable candidate, and with its own recent, rueful experience of personal involvement in the task of keeping the army fed and otherwise supplied, the committee launched a deferentially phrased but nevertheless devastating critique of the Board's plan for dividing the department. Such an action, it argued, would involve the subordinate officers upon which it relied in "Interference with each other, infinite Confusion, & a Variety of Controversies, which must be terminated by the Commander in Chief."[133] The committee refrained from concluding that effective control of the department itself would devolve on the Board, and indeed predicted that "the General [Washington] would [himself] be, what he has been during the last Campaign, the Quarter Master General of the Army."[134]

However it riddled many of the arguments upon which the Board had relied, noting for example, that what it had chosen to label "petty expenses," for which small sums would be provided to the new Quarter Master General to cover "contingencies," actually amounted to enormous annual outlays.

Indeed, the committee neatly reversed some of the most persuasive points which the Board had made with the cost-conscious Congress. Far from saving money, it observed, the dispersal of spending authority among several officers rather than under one "controuling Chief," would ensure that "the Chance of Frauds, & Amount of Expenditures will be greatly increased... Add to this, that when any Abuses, &... any Deficiencies shall be felt, it will be easy for these Gentlemen to shift the Blame from one to the other, rendering it impracticable to detect either Ignorance, Indolence, or Iniquity."[135] Adverting to the "Administration of Affairs heretofore," the members neatly dissected the widespread malfeasance of the former department. They left it to the "Wisdom of Congress" to infer the probable consequences of a reorganization that would leave its successor's powers under an agency which included former Quarter Master General Thomas Mifflin.[136] "Upon reconsidering his Business in all its Connections," they darkly concluded, Congress would "see a Propriety in placing this very executive Department, under one controuling superintending Power, whose Activity, & Influence may regulate, pervade, & animate the whole System."[137]

Having demolished the underpinnings of the Board's proposal for reconstructing the department in its own image, and by implication, Congress' wisdom in acceding to it, the committee presented its own

plan, which it observed, in another oblique slap at the Board, would depend "upon the Character of Men principally, & not upon Paper Systems."[138] The department as envisioned by the committee would be managed by a Quarter Master General (Nathanael Greene), who would assume full responsibility for all of its traditional functions, and two deputies (John Cox and Charles Pettit), upon whose appointment Greene had insisted as a condition for his own acceptance.[139] The three would share a commission of one percent of the amount of their total expenditures by private agreement among themselves, in lieu of salaries or other compensation. Greene would be stationed with the army, and would handle the overall administrative responsibilities of the department, while Cox would manage its procurement activities, and Pettit would keep its financial accounts. Except for these men the committee proposed no other specific officers. A reliance on a "perfect Harmony and good Understanding" among them, it argued, would be the best assurance that the department would be managed well. The "disagreeable" experience of the recent past, it observed, would show the "great Abuses which have already prevailed from the multiplying of such offices."[140]

The committee departed from its overall aggressive stance to adopt a defensive tone on only two points. The members went to some lengths to justify their decision to use a fixed commission as a basis for compensating Greene and his deputies, in apparent response to the Board's arguments against placing financial autonomy within the department. The only "solid Basis of Security" against fraud, they observed, lay in the character of the appointees themselves, and in a constant watchfulness on the part of Congress.[141] The group also

took pains to explain the length of time it had required to complete its proposal, attributing it to the need to consult with the individuals whom it had recommended and to overcome their strong reservations about accepting the appointments. "Not a Moment hath been spent unnecessarily" it insisted, "and... in the opinion of your Committee their Researches have not been in vain."[142]

Congress lost no time acceding to the recommendations of the Conference Committee. On March 2 it resolved to withdraw its approval of the Board's Quarter Master scheme and to replace it with the one put forward by the committee. Greene was permitted to retain his rank in the army, and Thomas Mifflin was directed to "make out immediately and transmit to Congress and to Major General Greene... a state of the preparations for the next campaign in the quarter master general's department."[143] The reversal was a signal setback for the Board. With the abandonment of its intended annexation of the powers of the department its campaign for political influence over day-to-day military affairs was substantially impaired.

As had been the case with the evolution of the Board's offensive, its disintegration occurred simultaneously along a broad front. The state of Pennsylvania had resisted the act authorizing the Board to establish an independent organization for provisioning the army virtually from the time of its passage on January 15, claiming that the Board's agents would interfere with the prerogatives of the state and the liberties of its citizens.[144] While Congress stubbornly clung to the measure, it was forced to continually review its operation, and eventually to suspend three of the Board's designated superintendents for abuses of their authority.[145] Under

fire from the state, and burdened with the implicit disapproval of Washington and the military command, the Board itself was required to expend a considerable amount of its already fragmented time and energy on the enterprise. It divided its attention between attempts to organize the provision system in the first place, and to defend its agents against allegations of improper conduct. By mid-February, with the army desperately close to dissolution, the Board even saw fit to suspend these operations temporarily, possibly as a means of demonstrating their indispensability.[146]

While the Board remained embattled in its efforts to implement the first of its new powers, its second initiative, the Canadian "eruption," failed even more unequivocally. The Board had only minimal direct control over the operation, although it bore a heavy responsibility for its success or failure as the sponsor of the enterprise. When the Marquis de Lafayette, Congress' choice to lead the invasion, arrived in Albany in mid-February to assume command, he discovered an almost total lack of preparations for it.[147] The situation deteriorated from that point, and by March 2 Congress ordered the Board to suspend the project, acknowledging that it had been rendered "not only hazzardous in a high degree, but extremely imprudent."[148]

Congress' reversal of its stand on the reorganization of the Quarter Master's Department completed the demise of the Board's multiple effort to enlarge the sphere of its direct influence over military affairs. There is no evidence that it waged any effective battle on behalf of the measure after having proposed it and secured its initial passage. By the time that the proposal began to encounter resistance from the Conference Committee, Gates and his

allies were too preoccupied with attempting to salvage their independent commissary organization to defend their other newly achieved prerogatives. The Board's political offensive decayed largely as a result of its own inertia. It had been broadly but not very deeply conceived, as a result of its origin in the climate of institutional opportunism fostered by the convergence of a weak, hesitating Congress with an unexpected crisis which overwhelmed its established mechanisms and procedures. Washington's own efforts to exert influence with Congress had inadvertently but ineluctably paved the way for the initial success of the Board's initiatives. As those efforts matured, however, the Board's temporary ascendancy began to recede.

The truncation of the proposal to dismantle the Quarter Master's Department was ultimately the achievement of the Conference Committee. In light of the far reaching implications of the plan, it was the committee's most important concrete accomplishment, and the one which best illustrates both the signal importance of the group's work in the evolving relationship between Congress and the army, and Washington's acumen in choosing to direct his efforts through it. Armed with information about the state of the army from its extended residence in camp, and especially with an awareness of the fragility and interdependence of its supply and logistical services provided by its involvement in the February provisions crisis, the delegation was in a strong position to counter the arguments of the Board with credible ones of its own. It had displayed both political ingenuity and fortitude in delaying its reaction to Congress' decision to adopt the Board's plan until it could retreat with grace from the disastrous nomination of Schuyler through the recruitment of Greene. Washington's participation

in the specific evolvement of the committee's position on the department itself is uncertain. He almost certainly supported if he did not orchestrate its resistance to the concept of dividing the department and removing its functions from his overall control. He pressed Greene to accept the post of department head, undoubtedly realizing that no other outcome could better insure the withdrawal of the Board's plan.[149] The committee's deliberations were the constant focus of his attention from the moment of its arrival in camp until the arrangement of the Quarter Master's Department had been "settled" at the end of February. Following that decision Washington conspicuously withdrew from involvement in the committee's affairs, to concentrate his energies on the supervision of preparations for the approaching campaign.[150]

Washington's role in the Quarter Master decision was an extension of his involvement with the committee from the time of its appointment. He acted as a provider and an orchestrator of information, and as the self-appointedly humble submitter of recommendations. Beginning with the carefully thought out preparation of the "Representation" to the committee, he was continually ready to inform the members, to guide their perception of the problems which they undertook to solve, and to interpret for them the implications of those problems. His efforts had a decisive effect on the outcome of the group's work.

Some members of the committee remained in camp until early April, making specific arrangement and refining the decisions which they had arrived at earlier.[151] Many of its recommendations and proposals would not even be formally introduced before Congress until the summer of 1778, and some of them would not be acted upon by the end of the year.

In an important sense, however, the effect of the delegations's sojourn at camp would be immediate, if difficult to measure precisely. On their return, the members of the committee provided Congress with a transfusion of hard information on the state of the army, and with an enriched appreciation of the scope and complexity of the military enterprise itself. For at least the duration of the current session, Congress would be comprised of a membership fully a quarter of which were familiar with the army on a working basis.[152] These members would constitute a core for whom there could no longer be a credible basis for accepting an arbitrary division of public business into spheres designated as "broad outlines" and "particulars." The 1777 reorganization of the Commissary Department, which more than anything else had precipitated the dislocation of the army's supply system, had been an almost paradigmatic example of the kinds of public policy which resulted from such a division. The aborted sundering of the Quarter Master's Department, to which Congress had almost reflexively turned in an attempt to repair that dislocation, just narrowly missed becoming another such example.

V THE LORD'S TIME TO WORK

While the struggle to reshape the military establishment proceeded at Moore Hall and in the committee rooms of York, the army remained awkwardly and precariously arranged around the British stronghold in Philadelphia. The ongoing political machinations and the routines of camp life transpired in nearly sublime isolation from each other, connected only by the necessary and often fragmented involvement of Washington, his aides, and a handful of major generals and staff department heads in both spheres. Even a brigadier such as Jedediah Huntington found himself largely in the dark about the deliberations of the Conference Committee, and as dependent for information on the flourishing camp rumor mill as the lowliest private. He expressed to a friend in Connecticut the hope that the group would "do something clever," based more upon his assessment of the character of its members than on any hard news of their decisions.[1] The delegates from Congress were themselves generally more reliant on information provided by Washington or his designees for their knowledge of life in the huts, than on personal observation. Only in moments of profound exasperation

or disbelief were they apt to investigate matters for themselves. On one such occasion, Francis Dana reported that he had "mounted my horse & rode into camp & passed thro' several brigades... enquiring separately of the officers I know of different ranks." On that instance he discovered that while supplies of flour were generally adequate, "upon an average every regiment had been destitute of fish or flesh four days," and gravely predicted a mass mutiny unless the situation improved dramatically.[2]

Life in the camp was outwardly quiet at the beginning of February, a circumstance which reflected the situation along the lines between the army and Philadelphia. Both armies remained relatively inactive and only sporadically engaged, as they had been since the British had withdrawn from Derby in late December. An American officer observed at the end of January that the army was "still as yet. The enemy make small excursions of five or six miles, but do no mischeif."[3] These movements consisted mainly of small scouting and dragoon patrols, and were intended primarily for intelligence and security purposes. While American naval activity on the lower Delaware River, and the presence of William Smallwood's detachment at Wilmington, combined with ice floes to disrupt the importation of goods from England and New York to the city, the British garrison there remained relatively well-supplied. Its consumption of the food and other supplies stockpiled during the grand forage of Christmas week was balanced, if not actually exceeded, by the continuing ease with which civilian "market people" were able to elude the blockade east of the Schuylkill. A British lieutenant colonel informed his brother that their winter

quarters were "peaceable, and in some degree tolerable (?), at least in comparison with what might have been expected." Although prices seemed high, he observed that this fact had created a situation "so tempting that the enemy [i.e. Americans] cannot prevent the people's supplying the market." As a result, he reported, "Philadelphia is now full of every kind of merchandize."[4]

This circumstance was more than coincidentally related to the sluggishness, and occasional complete disruption of American supply efforts. The British officer drew the corollary inference that it was equally impossible to "prevent their [the rebels] getting supplies of all things they want" from the town and its hinterland, without adopting a more active posture than Howe was inclined to do.[5] The point was theoretically valid, but in practice it was attended with substantial if not insurmountable obstacles. From a geographic standpoint at least, the Continental army enjoyed equal or better access to the agricultural resources of Bucks, Philadelphia, and Chester Counties than its British counterpart. Its five month experience in Pennsylvania had demonstrated, moreover, that it could not survive without at least occasionally availing itself of those resources in large quantities. Its very need to do so, however, systematically operated to alienate it from the producers of the supplies themselves.

This unhappy fact was rooted in the realities of a political economy in which the flagging paper currency on which the army depended was badly outperformed by British specie payments.[6] To the extent that Continental supply and transport systems failed to procure enough

provisions from the states at large, it was necessary for the regiments to be fed with supplies obtained, voluntarily or otherwise, from the local community. The weakness of the revolutionary currency necessitated a reliance on coercive methods, and in the process reinforced the initial preference of the populace to trade with the British whenever possible. Once the cycle had been established it operated with gathering momentum to the advantage of the British and the detriment of the Americans. As long as the country people were willing to carry their goods to the city, whether to garner cash, elude seizure, or both, it was unnecessary for Howe to send his troops into the countryside. This at once lessened their exposure to hit-and-run guerilla attacks and, more importantly, reduced the likelihood that predictable incidents of soldierly excess would offset the advantages of a reliable treasury. The obverse of this deadly equation held true for the American army. As more marketeers swarmed onto the roads leading to the city, its operations shifted from a competitive to a preventive or even a punitive emphasis. Largely because of this disequilibrium between the currencies of the two sides, therefore, the Americans lost at the outset of the winter many of the implicit tactical advantages which might ordinarily have accrued, even among a relatively neutral population, between a native and an occupying force.

Washington recognized the dangers inherent in this process from the beginning of the Pennsylvania campaign, and struggled with decreasing success to prevent its establishment. Throughout the fall he hesitated to implement the martial prerogatives which Congress had granted him to seize provisions from the inhabitants, even after

it had become clear that such a policy contributed to the army's nutritional disadvantage, for fear of initiating just such a cycle of communal disaffection.[7] As the campaign evolved from a pitched contest between two concentrated armies into a dispersed regional struggle, however, it became more difficult to control the activities of the small, mobile detachments upon which Continental strategy came to rely. The dispersal of operations following the establishment of Head Quarters at Whitemarsh in November had resulted both from strategic and logistical imperatives. As a result of the progressive breakdown of the regular commissary organizations during the late fall, those detachments had of necessity subsisted largely on the diminishing resources of the local community.

When the army was temporarily reconcentrated at Valley Forge at the end of December, the almost total collapes of the support departments forced an open if fairly tacit resort to draconian measures to assure its survival. It was later acknowledged that the vicinity of the new camp had been subjected to a veritable state of "plunder" and "abuses" for "three miles in every direction" between December 26 and January 6.[8] Despite this attempt to delimit official liability, there is little doubt that after the beginning of the New Year, control over the frustrated, resentful, and increasingly vocally disenchanted army became more problematical and less successful. Once the camp had been established, strategic detachments were redeployed. From that point, control became less a question of official policy than of individual responsibility among an officer corps whose members were increasingly wont to

perceive in the local populace a menacing strain of indifference, if not outright antipathy, to their own welfare. Many of them were, verbally at least, unabashedly disposed to return that antipathy.

As early as the end of January, it was recognized at Head Quarters that the consequences of communal disaffection existed as much in the realm of present danger as of inherent possibility. Continental food supplies were momentarily stable, if only marginally adequate. It was understood, however, that the possibility of still another logistical breakdown was chronic, raising the possibility that the army would once again be thrown back to a complete reliance on local resources. Perhaps wishing to capitalize on the entrepreneurial spirit which had been aroused in the area's populace by the flourishing success of the British markets, and at the same time to provide an important supplementary source of provisions for the army, Washington decided to establish an emporium of his own. It would take the form of a travelling market, which would be rotated around the perimeter of the camp, close enough to its center to discourage wandering by the soldiery, but sufficiently removed to minimize security risks from possibly unfriendly tradespeople.[9]

In his proclamation notifying the "good people" of Pennsylvania and adjacent states of the opening of the market, Washington evinced an awareness of just how far the state of alienation between the army and its neighbors had proceeded. He found it necessary to assure prospective suppliers

> That the Clerks of the market are Inhabitants of this State, will attend on the respective days & at the places beforementioned Whose duty it will be to protect the Inhabitants from any kind of abuse or violence that may be offered to their persons or effects - and to see that they receive pay for their articles according to the prices hereafter mentioned...10

The advertisement further promised that "All persons coming to the markets... for the purpose of supplying them - or returning from the same - may depend their carriages and cattle shall not be impressed or otherwise detained."[11] In exchange for these assurances, traders were warned that their goods would be inspected to ensure their quality, and that they would be expressly forbidden to receive "any kind of cloathing or Military Stores in pay for their provision or upon any pretence whatever."[12]

The goodwill which Washington must have hoped to reap from the measure was largely aborted even before the contents of the proclamation had been widely circulated in local newspapers.[13] By the middle of February the collapse of the Commissary Department had forced another resort to the widespread seizure of provisions and other property, and sent new waves of farmers onto the roads in an attempt to get their goods into Philadelphia ahead of American foragers. In the face of starvation itself, and of the possible consequent disbandment of the army, local goodwill became the dispensable luxury which it had not seemed to be during the more limited crises of the previous fall. Washington found it necessary to at least temporarily abandon any pretense of mitigating the impact of the war on the inhabitants, by ordering Nathanael Greene to strip the countryside between the Schuylkill River and the Brandywine Creek for a distance of fifteen to twenty miles west of the Delaware. For the first time, the order omitted Washington's customary precaution against failing to leave residents with at least enough goods to sustain their own families.[14]

In effect the territory between the camp and the city west of the Schuylkill would be subjected to a state of total war, leaving its inhabitants no choice but to adhere to one side or the other, and in either case to face the probability of displacement.

Although the February crisis constituted a shared calamity for both the army and its civilian host population, for the former it carried a pair of perverse benefits which, if they did not lessen its immediate effects, at least in some degree compensated for them. Politically, the emergency proved little less than a godsend, by dramatically demonstrating to the Conference Committee the circumstances under which the army had been compelled to function. It hammered home the point, which the committee attempted to impress upon Congress, that the survival of a military entity could not be hazarded to the efficacy of "Paper Systems" alone. In the camp itself, the crisis cut a broad swath through the forest of personal and idiosyncratic discontents which had, since the abatement of the late December shortages, threatened to destroy the morale and unity which the army had sustained and even enlarged during the 1777 campaign. The traumatic "rupture" of the army's lifeline provided its members with an overriding target for those discontents. By necessitating a concerted, purposeful response to them, it offered a tangible focus for an effort at collective survival.

The period immediately preceeding the crisis witnessed a continuation of the rancorous spirit of the last half of January, nourished by a continuing sense of inaction, restlessness, and drift. In an atmosphere of bare material adequacy, individual distemper

and intra-army contention remained an apparently affordable luxury, if not even a preferred form of off-season recreational activity. The mood was simultaneously evident at all levels, but it ominously continued to emanate particularly from the higher ranks. By the beginning of February, dozens of officers either had their resignations pending or were contemplating leaving the service. Pleading with Robert Morris to take his seat in Congress and support the half-pay proposal, Tench Tilghman observed that after the army's arrival at Valley Forge, officers "came in crouds" seeking permission to resign.[15]

The discontent among the officers was reinforced by their realization that the fate of the army itself, as well as of their individual interests, hung in the balance in the deliberations of the Conference Committee, to which they had virtually no direct access, and from which they received little information. Even a stalwart such as Jedediah Huntington lamented a situation in which generals and privates alike were obliged to wait helplessly to learn what conclusions that delegation would reach. "It may be the Lord's time to work when we are at the weakest," he suggested, "I am sure, we seem to be doing but very little for ourselves."[16] This upward displacement of energy and attention reverberated through the camp. With many of the generals and veritable legions of their subordinates looking to the political domain for the resolution of individual or organizational problems, and as many more determined to withdraw from the enterprise altogether, there was an attenuation of leadership which affected every level of the army.

Some of the officers, unwilling to wait or hesitant to trust their interests to the deliberative process, elected to address themselves directly to Congress. Brigadiers Enoch Poor and John Patterson, who had been given to understand that charges against them stemming from the evacuation of Fort Ticonderoga would be settled "by some Resolve which may be recommended by the [Conference] Committee and pass'd in the House," wrote in anguish to Henry Laurens. They could not, they insisted, "be satisfied with any thing short of a Court Martial, the Result of which, to be published to the World."[17] Lachlan McIntosh of Georgia chose a similar method of protecting his interests, upon hearing that two members of that state's delegation to Congress had boasted of their intention of having him "Reduced," in the state's remodeled Continental roster. He reminded Laurens that these "two famous Delegates" had been "appointed in the Vigilance & heat of party, & by a Junto, with the declared Intention of... Reducing Some Officers of the... Regiments obnoxious to them."[18] Elections had since been held in Georgia, he observed, and he voiced the wistful hope that "other Men & Measures [may] have taken place."[19] McIntosh made bold to state openly what others in his predicament customarily left implicit when appealing for direct legislative assistance. "I have now no other acquaintances in Congress," he confided to Laurens," to watch the designs of my Cunning, Artful, & declared Enemys against me."[20]

If some officers had to make do with the patronage of the President of Congress, however, others could not even avail themselves of the friendship of a back bencher at York. Any individual

so unfortunately circumstanced would have been thought singularly reticent or unresourceful if he considered himself to be utterly without recourse in the ongoing struggle to expedite his interests, whether official or private, individual or collective. For the otherwise self-proclaimedly friendless officer, the Commander in Chief himself seems to have been regarded as much an object of first resort as of final appeal. Except in moments of profound vexation, Washington was almost tirelessly willing to entertain petitions and representations of fact or circumstance from members of the army. In his self-designated guise as the common protector of the rights of every man under his command, he was bombarded almost daily with requests for special consideration.

An officer who had rashly submitted his resignation under the pressure of a confluence of domestic calamities reconsidered his decision and lamely appealed to the Commander in Chief for reinstatement.[21] Another had absented himself from camp to recover from an illness, failing to obtain consent when he stopped at Head Quarters and found Washington closeted with the Conference Committee. The man bid fair to write to him several weeks later from his convalescent quarters to request permission to remain there indefinitely. His temporary lodgings, he hastened to add, were considerably worse than those which he had enjoyed at Valley Forge. While he had his attention, he saw fit to remind Washington of a previous petition seeking approval to raise an independent cavalry corps, and enclosed additional arguments on behalf of the plan which had occurred to him since taking to his sickbed.[22] An officer in the Quarter Master's Department, who had been directed to

enlist civilian drivers for the wagon service, and to return soldiers borrowed for that purpose to their regiments, petitioned Washington to overturn the order, or at least to grant an extension for complying with it.[23]

Entire units and groups of similarly circumstanced individuals likewise saw fit to take their petitions directly to Head Quarters The members of Moses Hazen's regiment, serving at Wilmington, appealed through an officer to be transferred to Albany to take part in the expedition which Congress had ordered against Canada. Observing that most of them were Canadians or New Englanders, their spokesman argued that the step would "give them new life," and possibly even "bring to birth numbers yet in Embryo."[24] A group from the 13th Virginia Regiment took a similar tack. Having been promised upon enlistment that their service would take place on the western side of the Appalachian Mountains, the regiment originally had been stationed at Fort Pitt. Eventually, however, part of the group had been "forced down here," and their families "forced into forts and [left] in poor condition at home." Upon hearing that a plan was on foot to reunite the unit, they appealed to Washington to lay these facts before Congress for consideration in deciding the disposition of their case.[25]

A group of artillery officers couched their own grievance in delicately balanced terms, adopting an alternately humble and brusquely implacable tone. They intruded upon Washington "with pain," they observed, because they realized that he had had many complainers of late, and they would rather suppress their uneasiness than grieve him further.[26] Notwithstanding this disclaimer, however, they made few

bones about announcing their unwillingness to forego relief. They wrote to protest the elevation of Captain Antoine Mauduit Duplessis, a French officer, over their heads to a vacant lieutenant colonelcy, as a reward for his conduct during the defense of the fort at Red Bank the previous fall. Complaining of the "little notice taken of officers," and the unavoidable implication of "Disgrace and Dishonor" carried by supersession, they flatly stated that the "whole Body of Officers feel Dissatisfied and Disgusted... [and they] Cannot think of Recognizing him a Lt. Col. in their corps or submitting to his command."[27] The group termed rank the "only honourable badge of distinction," and submitted the dispute to Washington's "superior wisdom" with the request that he interfere on their behalf.[28]

These petitions illustrate a variety of points, not the least important of which is the degree to which the expression of intra-army contention reverberated through the camp, and engendered further examples of its own kind. The artillery officers were bold enough to admit that they were following in a path already well trodden by their peers. They observed that they had seen the issue of supersession "Contended from the General Officers down to the subaltern[s]."[29] This disposition among members of the army to look directly to the top for the resolution of specific grievances greatly complicated the problems of its command. In effect, it required that Washington serve as his own ombudsman. The seriousness with which he took this responsibility is indicated by his self-description as the "common guardian" of every man's rights, in reference to the dispute over the division of spoils from the captured vessel at Wilmington.[30] On another occasion he agonized over

the fact that to "give to one part of the army is to take from another."[31]

Ultimately, Washington discovered that there was no compromising the unhappy truth of this equation. While he generally listened sympathetically to grievances ranging widely between pathetic seriousness and utter frivolity, the exigencies of the army's situation made it difficult to resolve more than a small percentage of them. Instead, he contrived to make the petitioning process itself into an important mechanism for the containment of organizational tensions and discontent. Even in refusing or otherwise disappointing the expectations of his petitioners he was often able to blunt the effects of their dissatisfaction, by acknowledging their general grounds for complaint while rejecting their proffered solutions, or else by emphasizing his overall commitment to fairness itself. He softened his refusal to overturn Duplessis' promotion by citing his efforts with the Conference Committee to promote plans to "render the condition of officers more desirable."[32] William Smallwood observed that Washington's portrayal of himself as the soldier's common guardian had had an "extraordinary effect" upon the disgruntled officers stationed at Wilmington. He reported that after he had gone before the men to read Washington's disclaimer of favoratism they had "most deeply regretted their indiscretion."[33] Smallwood had himself been unable to persuade his medical and staff officers to withdraw their own subsequent resignations, and he appeared to be in awe of Washington's ability to defuse such a knotty conflict of intra-army interests.[34]

By these and similar instances of receptivity to the expression of complaints, Washington used his office as a kind of buffer for the amelioration of dissatisfaction, and at the same time rather neatly

managed to keep himself personally removed from the line of fire. Even some of the more politically astute senior officers, who thought nothing of simultaneously lobbying at Head Quarters on behalf of their proposals and resorting to outside avenues of influence, went to elaborate lengths to avoid the implication of disparagement of the Commander in Chief. James Varnum, a Rhode Island brigadier of no particular influence in Councils of War, joined a controversy on behalf of his state's desire to detach one of its regiments from the main army for defensive service at home. He informed his governor that he had written to Washington on the subject but, doubting the weight which his own counsel would carry, he sought to involve his more influential fellow Rhode Islander Nathanael Greene in the scheme. Varnum drew an elaborate analogy between the present predicament of their state and that of ancient Rome, observing that the latter's soldiers, upon concluding that their home cities were not to be the beneficiaries of their sacrifices, "became turbulent, mutinous, and finally disbanded themselves."[35] He took care, however, to disclaim any implied criticism of Washington. To the contrary, he insisted, "next to God Almighty and my Country, I revere General Washington: and nothing fills me with so much Indignation as the Vilainy of some who dare speak disrespectfully of him!"[36]

It would be misleading to infer that all or most of the discourse within the army stemmed from clashes over individual or group interests. Even during the most rancorous periods, disinterested or altruistic behavior occupied as much time and energy as contentious manipulation. For every officer who probed the system in search of some perceived individual advantage, there were others who sought to politick on behalf of their fellows or subordinates. Indeed, many officers took

pains to intercede in the labyrinthine byways of the army's support network in support of their underlings, from motives both of humanity and of the wider good of the service itself. Arrearages of pay were a constant source of complaint throughout the army. They were particularly difficult for the officers to justify to their troops because cash, unlike provisions or other supplies which had to be procured from the states at large, was essentially an item of government issue. Rightly or wrongly, shortages of the commodity were likely to be interpreted as a sign of indifference on the part of the political establishment toward the welfare of the army. Washington complained to Henry Laurens that the distress for want of money was "not easily described."[37] George Weedon sought out the elusive Paymaster General William Palfrey in an effort to procure some funds to pay one of his regiments, which was about to complete its term of service and in need of money to return to Virginia. He made certain to couch his request to that beleaguered official in terms of the good of the service, pointing out that he wanted to leave them "perfectly satisfied, as [we] have hopes of their re-enlisting after a while provided they can be paid up to the time of their Dismission."[38]

The New Englanders for whom Jedediah Huntington took up his pen were in even worse straits than the Virginians whose plight Weedon espoused. Having joined the southern army from Peekskill the previous autumn, they had not received any ration money since that time.[39] Most New England regiments were similarly distressed, not having been paid for four or five months since arriving in Pennsylvania.[40] Huntington's troops had not only been required to forego part of their

salaries, however, but they even lacked a paymaster to keep their accounts current.[41] Still worse was the situation of a Maryland regiment bivouacked at Wilmington, whose commanding officer appealed directly to Washington. As a result of the negligence of a "former muster master," the unit's muster rolls, upon which payrolls were based, had been improperly prepared for a lengthy period. Unlike his counterparts at camp, the Wilmington paymaster had just received a "great quantity of money," but he refused to disburse it until the paperwork had been completed. The anguished officer requested Washington to intercede to "relieve the Affairs of the Regiment from their present state of Confusion and Irregularity."[42]

The most serious immediate consequence of the army's various material shortages and organizational deficiencies was the slow but steady depletion of the force itself. Morale problems could be checked, and incidents of strife and contention blunted on a case-by-case basis, but only at a steady cost expressed in terms of resignations, desertions, and individual decisions not to reenlist, or to prolong authorized absences from camp. Sporadic arrivals of one resource or another tended to abate specific causes of demoralization, but succeeding shortages broached different thresholds of discontent. Individuals who were willing to tolerate short rations might cavil at enduring nakedness, while those willing to go in rags might not put up with extended payless periods. By the beginning of February, the army was suffering from a slow but steady bleeding away of warm bodies, the one resource without which it absolutely could not continue to exist.

A British spy stationed on the Hudson River above New York City informed Henry Clinton that members of the southern army were crossing the river there every day "on furlough."[43] Dissatisfied New Englanders were not alone in their resolve to escape from the dual tribulations of deprivation and inaction. Pennsylvanians, "uneasy" about the scanty supplies of clothing which they were receiving, were deserting to the enemy "by the dozen" according to Jedediah Huntington.[44] James Varnum informed Alexander McDougall that despite the astonishing patience of many of his men the overall situation was "gloomy, as Desertion becomes very prevalent."[45] Huntington later observed that daily desertions were plaguing both armies, concluding "I don't know whether we or the Enemy have most to brag of."[46]

Desertion represented only the most visible and least honorable drain on the army's personnel resources. As difficult as it was to retain disgruntled individuals in the camp, it was perhaps even more of a problem to induce them to return once they had somehow contrived to get away. One regiment which had been hospitalized en masse in Lancaster lingered there for months, frustrating Washington's repeated efforts to have its convalescents marched back to camp by pleading the inadequacy of their shoes and clothing to the hardships of the trip.[47] Once furloughs had been obtained, sometimes under the threat of resignations, their holders frequently had to be berated or cajoled into returning. A Pennsylvania brigade became so strapped for junior officers as a result of self-granted extensions of leaves, that its commanding officer had to advertise in local newspapers, insisting upon their return under penalty of courts-martial.[48]

Recruiting drives to fill pressing vacancies were reduced to an almost laughable gesture. Lachlan McIntosh's son arrived at camp in mid-February and was immediately dispatched into the countryside to enlist officers. For the next month he traversed the state of New Jersey and much of eastern Pennsylvania without engaging a single man.[49] Indeed, the recruiting enterprise could be attended with ironic consequences which hovered between the tragic and the absurd. A captain to whom Washington had advanced $200 for the purpose of raising a company was unable to overcome the competition of excessive state bounties, and as a result fell short of a complete unit. Acknowledging failure, the officer agreed to return the money to Washington, who was thereby forced to order an already short-strength regiment to surrender four of the men who he had been able to enlist![50]

The collapse of the supply departments in mid-February thus descended on an army that was already reeling from the cumulative effects of earlier shortages, and one in which internal cohesion was being threatened, but not entirely subverted, by the proliferation of individual and collective efforts to satisfy pressing needs and protect vital interests. The "second Rupture," as one commissary officer evocatively termed it, emerged with a suddenness that must have stunned all but the handful of individuals who were in a position to know how tenuously and superficially the first breakdown had been papered over.[51] While the contours of the crisis were inherent in the organizational deficiencies of the Commissary and Quarter Master's Departments, the collapse itself seems to have been triggered by a sudden outbreak of bad weather which began during the first week of February

and continued for most of the month.[52] By February 5, the Schuylkill River had become impassable because of high water. The next day Washington informed Casimir Pulaski that provisions in camp were "nearly exhausted, and the army is reduced literally to a starving condition."[53] Having discovered that the cavalry companies stationed in New Jersey were diverting cattle from droves coming from New England, he ordered Pulaski to consider it "explicitly contrary to my Intention" that the practice continue.[54]

At about the same time the Conference Committee realized that the provisions "situation" which it was investigating was an ongoing emergency rather than an isolated past occurrence. Having "slightly touch'd" upon the subject in a previous report, the delegation concluded that it was "our indispensable duty" to inform Congress that "this army has been fed by daily supplies drawn from the country at large."[55] Unless those supplies were maintained, it warned, the troops would have to "disband, live upon every (?) Quaker in the country - or perish."[56]

This formulation amounted to an inelegant paraphrase of Washington's tripartite prophesy that the army might "starve, dissolve, or disperse." For his own part, Washington seemed to have narrowed the options to the single grim spectre of dissolution. He chastised his soon to be replaced, absentee Commissary General William Buchanan with the news that previously occasional deficiencies "seem now on the point of resolving themselves into this fatal Crisis, total want and dissolution of the Army."[57] He informed Henry Champion, an army purchaser in Connecticut, that the situation was the "most Melancholy that can be conceived."[58] Whereas supplies had previously been merely "very deficient and irregular,"

he reported, the "prospect now opens of absolute want, such as will make it impossible to keep the army much longer from absolute dissolving."[59] Washington warned Buchanan that the "spirit of desertion among the soldiery never before rose to such a threatening height as at the present time. The murmurs on account of provisions are become universal."[60] He spurred Champion to increase his efforts with the "alarming truth [that] no human efforts can keep the army from speedily disbanding."[61]

While the situation was certifiably grave by the end of the first week of February, there is reason to believe that Washington was to some extent indulging his penchant for graphic embellishment in order to stave off a full-fledged disaster. Between rhetorical sallies, his letters to both Buchanan and Champion suggested in fact that he believed that the army might hold out for at least another month.[62] For several days after this initial outburst, moreover, he returned his attention to a variety of routine matters, making no further mention of his letters of any "fatal crisis." On February 9 he wrote to General Benjamin Lincoln to request him to rejoin the army, adding almost casually that nothing "of importance" had taken place of late.[63] Almost incredibly, he took the time on the same day to write a long rambling letter to Horatio Gates, bitterly reviewing the dispute which they had been carrying on in minute detail.[64]

If Washington <u>was</u> embellishing the extent of the emergency somewhat at its outset, however, he was also being wildly optimistic in implying that it might not reach its full pitch for a month. The weather continued to worsen, and the movement of supplies in the area became all but impossible. By the twelfth, it appeared that the

worst fears which he had expressed the previous week would indeed be realized, and probably sooner rather than later. Almost resignedly, Jedediah Huntington and James Varnum scribbled their pessimistic conclusions on reports from the camp guards which they transmitted their respective major generals. "I have nothing to add, my Lord," Huntington sadly informed Lord Stirling, "but that the camp is in a melancholy condition for want of provisions, and that there is a great danger that the Famine will break up the army."[65] Varnum warned Nathanael Greene that "the situation of the camp is such that in all human probability the army must soon dissolve."[66]

The situation provoked a desperate flurry of activity to press whatever provisions could be found from the apparently already ravaged neighborhood of the camp. Washington ordered Nathanael Greene to join Anthony Wayne in stripping the area west of the Delaware between the Schuylkill River and the Brandywine Creek for a distance of fifteen to twenty miles inland.[67] Greene took with him between 1,500 and 2,000 men, which included most if not all of the fully clothed and otherwise ambulatory troops left in camp. It was understood, however, that even under the most favorable conceivable circumstances the result of this measure would fall short of the army's needs. It would also be necessary to drain the few meagre magazines which had been painstakingly established in the region against the opening of the spring campaign. Washington ordered Ephraim Blaine, a deputy commissary, to proceed to Head of Elk, the principal storage point for supplies coming from the southern states, to supervise the transportation of whatever goods were left in the magazine there to camp.[68]

This expedient amounted to a decision to mortgage the army's mid-term future to its immediate needs. The potentially deadly implications of the emergency made the measure unavoidable. Washington renewed his indulgence in the rhetoric of dissolution, by now with abundant corroborating testimony from the staff officers of the supply departments and other knowledgeable observers.[69] He notified Governor William Livingston of New Jersey that the army was "on the point of a dissolution for the second time this year."[70] Although he cannot have approved of the Board of War's intention to operate an independent provisioning organization in implicit competition with the regular Commissary Department, he pleaded with the superintendents which the Board had appointed for that purpose to expedite their efforts. Without their earliest relief, he exclaimed, "no address or authority will be sufficient to keep [the army] long together."[71]

The emergency measures entailed a serious disarrangement of the regional deployment of Continental forces which had been made in an attempt to contain the British army in Philadelphia. With the supply departments in disarray it was necessary to employ regular troops not only for foraging purposes, but also to transport provisions from area magazines to Valley Forge. Washington was forced to send Henry Lee, who with his corps had provided the backbone of the detached forces patrolling between the camp and the city west of the Schuylkill, into Delaware to seize supplies and to protect convoys coming from Head of Elk.[72] While the foraging party under Nathanael Greene in eastern Chester County would temporarily help to contain enemy activity there, it would withdraw from the area long before Lee returned. The result would be a

dangerous gap in the camp's security arrangements, and a virtual invitation to the area's inhabitants to carry any goods which they were able to conceal from Greene into the city.[73]

The effect of this disarrangement extended as well to the two wings of the army's sprawling deployment: the riverine anchoring points at Wilmington and Trenton. The garrisons in those places depended largely upon the very magazines which it had become necessary to strip for use at the main camp. The distress at Valley Forge was "beyond anything you can conceive," Washington informed William Smallwood, by way of notifying him that Henry Lee would soon arrive at Wilmington to "tap" the magazines at Dover and Head of Elk, "a general mutiny and dispersion is to be dreaded."[74] He consoled Smallwood on the hardships which the measure would place upon his detachment with the somewhat ingenuous observation that "you are in an abundant country, [and] I shall imagine you might furnish yourself from the resources of it."[75] The removal of Continental stores from Trenton and its vicinity would simultaneously undermine Casimir Pulaski's attempts to use that town as a base of operations in support of militia forces both in adjacent parts of Pennsylvania and in New Jersey.[76]

The flurry of activity which seized the army at the onset of the emergency stirred the area. Some friends of Pennsylvania's state government took it to signify the long-awaited inauguration of a new wave of military enterprise. A resident of Lancaster reported rumors circulating in that town that Greene was moving to join Smallwood, concluding "thus we see a new campaign opening."[77] This illusion was rapidly dispelled for anyone in direct communication with the army. John Laurens depicted for his father the

real implications of the movements: that they had narrowly pulled the army back from the "brink of ruin" itself. "By extraordinary exertions, by scraping from distant scanty magazines & collecting with parties," he reported on February 17, "we have obtained a temporary relief, and have hopes... [of] such further supplies as will save us from the disagreeable necessity of dividing the army into cantonments."[78]

Laurens' optimism that the crisis was over by that date seems to have been rather more hopeful than definitive. A day later a high-ranking commissary officer would express doubts about his personal safety among hungry and still clamorous troops, while another would forlornly decline to predict when it might be possible to "afford... a plentiful supply."[79] At least a thin trickle of provisions had begun to arrive in camp, however, and the direst period of total want had been abated.[80] By the twentieth, Jedediah Huntington could relievedly report that as a result of the efforts of the foraging parties "we begin to be in better supply."[81] A day later Washington would himself revert to the past tense, speaking of "a time when the army <u>was</u> nearly experiencing a famine."[82] Ephraim Blaine hopefully observed that "Col Jones has a good supply for the present and [I] hope it will continue until the middle of March."[83] Thomas Jones was characteristically less sanguine than Blaine. While he thought that the new supplies might "pass us on for a few days," he was already bracing for "our next cry." If provisions did not continue to arrive in timely fashion, he lamented, "we shall have the same jigg over again."[84]

The tenuous rescue of the army from the throes of starvation was effected at considerable cost to its mid-term well-being. By tightening the screws of oppression on the local populace by another degree, Washington was able to force it to yield small but crucially important amounts of supplies for use during the emergency. By emptying the carefully hoarded magazines of adjacent states, he secured a sufficient reserve to allow its support departments to wait out the weather-related disruption of their operations, and for their newly installed heads to attempt to impose more effective regulations on them. Civilian goodwill was further eroded by the seizures, despite attempts to guarantee payment to the owners of appropriated goods. Washington's efforts to curry favor with the army's balky neighbors through the establishment of a formal marketplace at the camp was at least temporarily aborted. The army's grip on the Delaware River at the distant flanks of its deployment was weakened by the removal of the magazines upon which they depended. The opening of the campaign in the spring was cast into doubt by the immediate consumption of the stores upon which it had been predicated. Before the foraging parties had even been recalled to camp from their farm-by-farm scouring of Chester County and Delaware, Washington found himself in the embarrassing position of having to appeal to the residents of the region to "exert themselves to prepare Cattle for the use of the Army during the months of May, June and July next," merely to replace what had already been expended.[85]

The effect of the crisis on the army itself defies easy characterization. In light of Washington's repeated expression of doubt about

whether he would be able to maintain control over the troops, it might well be wondered whether disorder became either incipient or even prevalent during the depths of the emergency between February 12 and 20. Considering his political involvements, and because of his penchant for rhetorically embellishing his correspondence on occasions when the vital interests of the army seemed to depend on it, his testimony might seem to require some corroboration. He had, after all, alerted Congress to the overnight eruption and suppression of a "dangerous mutiny" during the shortages of late December, an event which no other observers had seen fit to characterize as such.[86] During the February episode, however, such corroboration was abundant, albeit widely scattered. Officials of the crippled Commissary Department were particularly apprehensive, believing that they would be made to bear the brunt of the frustrations of the hungry troops. Thomas Jones, a timorous functionary with a colorfully expressive pen and a careful eye for minute fluctuations in collective mood, wrote repeatedly of his fears to his absent superior Charles Stewart. Almost daily, between the fifteenth and eighteenth, he bemoaned his chances of living until March 1, the date upon which he had repeatedly threatened to resign if he survived that long.[87]

Considering the sorry performance of the department, however, the trepidations of its officials might be attributed as much to the workings of their consciences as to the demeanor of the troops. Except for a few severe verbal floggings at the hands of some general officers, they managed to emerge from the crisis relatively unscathed.[88] More disinterested informants than themselves, however, expressed essentially

similar fears about the maintenance of order. When Francis Dana made his incredulous tour of the camp, seeking to confirm or refute the doleful testimony which the Conference Committee was receiving at Moore Hall, he beheld what he believed to be an army in the throes of incipient mutiny. The previous day, he reported, "Col. Brewer's regimt. rose in a body and proceeded to Gen: Patterson's Quart^{s}[and]... laid before him their complaints and threatened to quit the army."[89] Patterson had calmed them only by the "prudent conduct" of allowing them to "go out of camp to purchase meat as far as their money would answer," and to offer certificates for further goods, for which he would be personally answerable.[90]

John Laurens may have had the same episode in mind when he described to his father the "most alarming situation" in which the army had been. He observed that "the soldiers were scarcely restrained from mutiny by the eloquence and management of our Officers."[91] It bears noting, however, that neither of these accounts alleged anything more than occasions of severly strained decorum, and both emphasized the ultimate maintenance of order. There are quite simply no documented instances throughout this, the most strained period in the army's winter of hardship, of large-scale collective disorders. When Nathanael Greene returned to camp at the end of February, he used the same or a very similar incident to illustrate the "patience and moderation" which he believed the troops had "manifested under their sufferings [which] does the highest honor to the magnanimity of the American soldiers." Greene reported that a delegation of them had come "before their superior officers and told their sufferings in as respectful terms as if they had been humble petitioners for special favors. They added that it would be impossible to continue in camp any longer without support."[92]

If the army eschewed outright mutiny, the question remains whether any considerable number of its members used the crisis as a pretext for abandoning the service altogether. Jedediah Huntington reported a high incidence of desertion, and a commissary officer insisted that three-fourths of the army had "attempted several times to leave camp." Washington, however, in response to a specific inquiry, informed Nathanael Greene that there had been "no considerable desertion from this camp ... within a few days past."[93] Discrepancies of observation undoubtedly stemmed at least in part from difficulties in defining the phenomenon over short periods. If, as Francis Dana reported, any sizeable numbers of troops were given the de facto liberty of the neighborhood to provide for themselves, their exodus from the camp may have been characterized as criminal by observers who were unaware of the arrangement. Some officers, on the other hand, went to great lengths to acquit trusted subordinates of wrongdoing, whatever the appearance to the contrary, when they had reason to believe that the individuals in question merited the benefit of the doubt.[94]

The foregoing paragraphs should not be taken to discount blithely the possibility of substantial organizational disintegration within the army in response to the emergency, or to impugn observations of impending disorder. The degree of apprehension expressed by individuals in a position to report on the mood of the camp varied according to their perception of their own jeopardy. The failure of the troops to revolt or disband, moreover, is amenable to multiple interpretations, none of which need rely on images of cheerfully hungry patriots. It may have resulted either from the relative brevity of the period of

direst shortages, or from the debilitated condition of the undernourished and half-naked malcontents themselves. Only crazed or delirious individuals would have been likely to risk overland excursions in bad weather, without benefit of adequate food and clothing, through a disaffected, militarily disputed hinterland.[95] The healthiest, best clothed and equipped troops, who might otherwise have been the likeliest to spearhead disorderly outbreaks, were already serving on detachments, or had been marched into the countryside to forage on behalf of their less fortunate comrades. While in that status they would have abundant opportunities for straggling, as well as for venting their wrath on civilian targets.

On balance, the best picture which can be drawn of the collective temper of the army during this period is a mixed one. As had been the case during the shortages which accompanied its movement to Valley Forge in late December, there seems to have been at least a temporary attenuation of sharp internal conflict as the crisis reached its full pitch. This perhaps resulted from the concentration of individuals on the arduous business of avoiding starvation, with its attendant lack of opportunities for conducting ongoing disputes, or at least for committing them to paper. The notable exception to this generalization lies in the apprehension of a few commissary officers that they would become the scapegoats and possibly the sacrificial victims of the situation. The latter phenomenon perhaps suggests that as a result of the crisis a plethora of existing internal antagonisms were momentarily focused upon one relatively defenseless segment of the military community.

There also appears to have been a somewhat lower incidence of verbal antagonism expressed toward segments of the local community during this period than during the relatively better supplied period of late January. There were noticeably fewer instances of derogatory allusion to the state's ethnic and religious communities, and those which occurred seemed somewhat less vehement than on earlier occasions. Anthony Wayne begged Thomas Wharton to procure shirts for his regiments "if you strip the Dutchmen for them."[96] John Patterson colorfully but almost offhandedly mused that it would not be prudent to "expect great things from this Sanctified Quaking State."[97] If the relative silence of the documentary record in this regard accurately reflects the demeanor of the army, it may also be attributable to a lack of opportunities for the expression of hostility during the crisis, or perhaps merely to a short-term indifference to its possible sources. If the apprehensions of the commissary officials were grounded in fact, it might be inferred that the troops tended to turn on their own errant suppliers during acute periods of actual shortage, and only bothered to reflect on their external causes during intervals of better supply.

There was also, it appears, a discernable vein of benignity, if not outright benevolence, afoot within the army during the crisis. Some individuals were able to take an almost humorously philosophical view of their predicament. "The army you know," wrote a dragoon serving on detachment in New Jersey, "is the Vortex of small fortunes & wo betides him who makes no Provision for a wet Day - while we are under every disability, in the field, to take advantage of the times, or even to keep the old ground good." At least the sleighing was "exceeding fine,"

he observed, putting the best face on matters, "and we improve it."[98] Others managed to keep sight of the fact that the exigencies of the war bore as heavily upon civilian bystanders as on themselves. Forty-three officers of the Virginia line circulated a subscription during the depths of the crisis and collected fifty pounds for the support of a destitute widow from Philadelphia who, they understood, had assisted some bedraggled American prisoners there. "Any little matter that gentlemen chuse to contribute," they proclaimed, "cant fail of being acceptable and will be considered as a grateful acknowledgement on their part for the voluntary and benevolent part she has acted."[99]

While the troops at Valley Forge struggled collectively and individually with the consequences of the mid-winter famine, an increasingly violent conflict, which in its most extreme manifestations amounted almost to a civil war, spread through the region between the army's crescent-shaped arrangement and Philadelphia. Emergency efforts to supply the camp from the patchwork of communities among which it nestled like an unexpected, unruly, and by now thoroughly unwelcome neighbor, intensified the conflict, which largely represented a struggle for the control of the area's resources. Every instance which brought members of the military community into contact with the civilian population impinged on communal issues which went to the heart of what the war was about in the first place; such as the right to withhold or dispose of property, to move freely from place to place, or to associate, without reference to presumed loyalty to either side.

Of the principal zones in which American detachments operated, the garrison at Wilmington became relatively less involved in this aspect of the conflict than the others. As a "stationary detachment," it was intended to function in a more circumscribed manner than the rest, where constant movement was the prescribed routine. Its defensive and intelligence responsibilities required that it cleave closely to the Delaware River, anchoring the right wing of the Continental position. As a result of the provisions crisis, its auxiliary function of blocking British access to the

army's magazines at Head of Elk increased in importance. As the winter wore on, these largely passive imperatives combined to turn the post into a virtual microcosm of the camp at Valley Forge itself. It suffered from the same bleeding away of strength as a result of sickness, desertion, and endemic resignations; its officers wrangled among themselves over promotions, privileges, and material goods; and its privates chafed over missed paydays.[100] As in the main camp, its more enterprising members made bold to take their complaints and appeals directly to Washington himself.[101] Its functionaries in charge of supply and support services suffered from the same inability to carry out their responsibilities as did their brethren at Valley Forge, incurred for their trouble the same wrath from their dissatisfied charges, and not infrequently met the same unhappy fate.

A Mr. Huggins, the Deputy Commissary for the post, experienced a winter of travail comparable to that of Thomas Jones at Valley Forge. He apparently lacked the colorful literary bent with which Jones recorded the precarious life of a commissary officer at camp. If he bore his humiliation in comparative silence, however, his small host of detractors doggedly preserved his misfortunes for posterity. Governor George Read of Delaware sourly observed that while the man's credit had been low before the Wilmington garrison was established it had plummeted even further since. His purchasing certificates were so notoriously unworthy, Read complained, that suppliers had been "discouraged," making it necessary to resort to the dangerous, costly, and

politically unpopular method of confiscation to provision the post.[102] William Smallwood's assessment of Huggins' character was less tempered. "That knucklehead scoundrel," he railed, "will starve the horses here without he can forward supplies to us now and hereafter."[103] Complaints against him continued unabated, and at length Smallwood was able to secure his dismissal.[104]

Under these hard-pressed circumstances, the Wilmington detachment managed to fulfill its relatively limited responsibilities with as much efficiency as could have been expected. The strained personal relationship between Washington and Smallwood lingered, however, in the wake of the dispute over the division of the spoils of the prize ship Symmetry. Washington politely but coolly spurned two sets of matched pistols found in the ship, which Smallwood offered to him in an apparent gesture of tacit reconciliation.[105] The two men discovered a virtually inexhaustible trove of issues over which to disagree, bicker, or misunderstand each other. Smallwood attempted to establish a shoe factory within his garrison, claiming to do so on orders from Head Quarters. He only reluctantly abandoned the venture after a sharp rebuke from Washington charging that he had "intirely misconceived" his intention.[106] A more serious vein of tension ran barely beneath the surface of their colloquy over the removal of supplies from Maryland and Delaware magazines for diversion to the main army during the February famine. Although Smallwood obediently cooperated with the officers sent to carry out the operation, his correspondence made it plain that he felt his



William Smallwood (1732-1792)

Bridgadier General from Maryland. Commanded the large American detachment at Wilmington during the Valley Forge winter.

"That knucklehead scoundrel will starve the horses here, without he can forward supplies to us now and hereafter."

Courtesy of Independence National Historical Park

own troops were being made to shoulder a disproportionate share of the winter's hardships in order to mitigate their effects at camp. The two men sparred in almost comic fashion over whether the the expenses incurred to board a group of British officers' wives who had been captured aboard the Symmetry could be charged as a Continental expense.[107]

If the events at Wilmington injected an occasional element of grim comic relief into the winter's otherwise gloomy outlook, no similar mirth prevailed in the Pennsylvania countryside. In the area between the camp and the city, the face of war began to wear an unrelieved look of civil calamity. As the continuing demands of two armies for food, forage, and other goods reduced fixed stocks of those resources, prices mounted and competition over their disposal became less amicable and more violent. Increasingly, to live in the district between the contending armies was to be drawn, voluntarily or otherwise, into the conflict.

Until events associated with the provisions crisis forced him to modify his approach to the problem, Washington continued to adhere to the strategic division of the area into two spheres separated by the Schuylkill River, and to concentrate the use of Continental detachments on the west side. The river remained the principal axis of security for the camp at Valley Forge. In spite of Henry Lee's sporadic attempts to secure geographic intelligence for the area during January, the accuracy and reliability of that information remained a paramount concern at Head Quarters.

As late as the end of February, Washington found it expedient to recruit a team of surveyors from among the officers of the Pennsylvania line to provide him with a "General Draught of the Country in [the] Neighborhood of Camp."[108] Until he felt adequately informed of the geographic complexities of the area, he would resist overtures to expand the sphere of Continental responsibility.[109]

It remained a virtual article of faith within the army that the Continental detachments west of the river were performing their function of preventing trade between the city and its outskirts more effectively than their Pennsylvania militia counterparts on the other side. This assumption was vigorously disputed by Joseph Reed, the state's only delegate on the Conference Committee. On the contrary, Reed insisted, "Intercourse on this [west] side Schuylkill tho on acct. of the River more easy of Interruption is the greatest."[110] He belabored the Continental troops with the same derogatory bill of particulars which it had become customary to lay against the militia: that they were few in number, in constant need of refreshment, and "so corruptible that we should delude ourselves if we depended on their Exertions."[111] Reed wanted to place the entire business of blockading the city into the hands of the militia, which he noted "improves... every day."[112] He cautioned against crediting critical stories lodged against the state forces by Continental partisans. "It is fashionable to blame them," he observed, "and it is sometimes carried to a blameable length."[113]

It should be pointed out that Reed was in camp as an acknowledged advocate of the state's interests. The available evidence indicates that the truth of the matter lay somewhere between his subjective appraisal and the equally biased perception of Continental apologists. His testimony is worth noting, however, because it so strongly contradicts the prevalent cliché which contrasted supposedly effective Continental efforts with the notoriously laggard performance of the militia on the east side of the river. Nathanael Greene's observations as the head of the foraging expedition sent into eastern Chester County during mid-February are more damaging to this cliché than Reed's essentially political comments. Greene had, prior to the mission, been closely confined to the camp and deeply involved in the proceedings between the army and the Conference Committee. Because he therefore had held no direct responsibility for the maintenance of the embargo west of the Schuylkill, he had no immediate personal interest in the dispute.

Greene's reports conveyed a portrait of matters on the west side of the river that was inauspicious in every respect. In spite of the concentration of Continental energies in that district, he discovered that it was anything but pacified. The "face of the country," he observed "is strongly markt with poverty and distress," with the result that his initial attempts to collect supplies were "inconsiderable."[114] Whigs, he quickly learned, constituted but a small minority of the population, and lived in such fear of retaliation from their Tory neighbors that they were stubbornly reluctant to cooperate with the American army, or even to supply

him with information. A man named James had enlisted almost 100 local citizens into an impromptu Provincial corps, for the purpose of suppressing the few Whigs who remained in the area and protecting the marketeers. The latter, Greene ruefully noted, had already carried into the city "all the cattle and most of the best horses."[115]

Because of the emergency which existed at camp, Greene had neither the time for making fine distinctions among the attitudes of the local populace, nor the opportunity for the politically useful but time-consuming business of making new friends for the army or extending protection to its existing ones. From a careful reading of his observations, however, there emerges a more complex picture of the political and social fabric of the district than they convey on their surface. The countryside was apparently neither so absolutely drained of resources as it initially appeared to him, nor so sharply divided into dominant Tory and submissive Whig camps as his comments seemed to imply. Rather, there was a large and essentially self-interested middle group of inhabitants, whose guiding principal lay in the protection of their own lives and property. As a result of six months of intimate experience with the conflict, moreover, this group had become increasingly sophisticated at the business of doing just that, especially by concealing their goods from the intrusive attention of army foragers.[116]

In less desperate circumstances, the existence of this group might have presented a valuable opportunity for winning at least



Nathanael Greene (1742-1786)

Major General from Rhode Island. Became Quarter Master General in March 1778.

"We are almost ready to think sometimes that our armies are despisd and that our Country are determined we shall stroggle with cold and hunger without their aid. I am persuaded the sufferings of this Army is but little known."

Courtesy Independence National Historical Park

some of its members to the insurgent cause, by a discriminating application of armed force. Indeed, Henry Lee, who prior to the onset of the emergency had commanded the Continental detachments in the area, had experimented with just such a policy by bargaining with the farmers to provision his troops voluntarily, in exchange for the right to retain enough goods to sustain their own families.[117] Greene, however, was operating under the specter of an immediate famine at camp, and under the acknowledged probability that the army was in danger of collapsing. His instructions contained the explicit injunction to strip the area.[118] His discovery that in spite of Lee's presence in the area a brisk trade with the city had gone on constituted a rather implicit indictment of the failure of the more lenient policy. Under these circumstances a new approach was in order. Lee was dispatched to Delaware to assist in the removal of stores from that state's magazines, and to provide security for the increasingly important Continental supply line from the southern states.[119]

Greene, meanwhile, discovered that by cracking down on its residents he could squeeze significant amounts of supplies from what had initially appeared to be a barren terrain. "The Inhabitants cry out and beset me from all quarters," he reported, "but like Pharoh I harden my heart." Finding two women on the road, apparently intent on reaching the city with provisions, he "gave them one hundred [lashes] each by way of example." "I determine to forage the country very bare," he promised, "nothing shall be left unattempted."[120] The progress of the expedition was obstructed

at every step, however, by the seemingly ingenious ability of the inhabitants to conceal their property. Greene reported almost daily that the district had been gleaned, only to discover more goods in practically every defile and copse of trees that he came to. "our poor fellows are obliged to search all the woods and swamps after them," he complained, "and often without success."[121] In an attempt to forestall this frustrating game of hide and seek he began to invoke martial prerogatives of his own devising, by refusing to give receipts for goods found concealed, and in one instance by ordering the arrest of civilians discovered indulging in the practice.[122]

Although the uncooperative attitude of local residents substantially obstructed the expedition, it suffered as much from internal inefficiencies as from external problems. The operation was an improvised one in every respect, and its halting progress revealed errant planning and sloppy execution at every turn. The assumption that wagons would be available locally to haul supplies back to camp proved to be mistaken from the beginning. The subsequent inability of the army to furnish enough of its own prolonged the venture and gave the inhabitants more time to conceal their property or to rush it into the city. Greene bemoaned the lack of transportation in almost every report that he made to Head Quarters.[123] After five days in the field he had revised his initially gloomy estimate of the availability of forage, conceding that it was "really plentier than teams" with which to carry it off.[124] At the end of

the assigned duration of the mission he observed that there remained enough supplies in the area to make it "necessary for me to continue for a few days longer."[125] Two days later he plaintively noted that "we want nothing but Waggons to make a good forage."[126]

The lack of transportation was only the most evident of the obstacles to the success of the expedition. Because it was operating in a potentially contested district, the detachment had to be equipped and organized as much for its own defense as for the efficient collection of supplies. As it dispersed through the broad region between the Schuylkill River and the Brandywine Creek, its military and logistical imperatives began to interfere with each other. The original party of between 1,500 and 2,000 troops gradually fragmented into numerous smaller sub-detachments. Anthony Wayne broke off from the main group on February 17 with between 400 and 800 men to cross the Delaware at Wilmington and extend the foraging along the river in New Jersey opposite Philadelphia.[127] Smaller parties were also sent into Goshen Township in interior Chester County, and into the area between the forks of the Brandywine in search of cattle, which were unavailable nearer the Delaware.[128]

As the expedition fragmented and dispersed, its defensive needs changed. Although the British made no attempt to resist the forage, Greene found it expedient to detach some of his troops to annoy their piquets at the Middle Ferry on the Schuylkill near the city.[129] Each convoy of wagons loaded with collected provisions

had to be escorted back to camp with further detachments. Sickness and other physical disabilities also took a constant toll on the party. Despite Greene's attempts to keep its members healthy by lodging his men in neighboring houses, within three days after leaving camp he had been required to send home "great numbers... that have fallen sick and got foot sore a marching."[130] With its strength substantially depleted, the party's movement began to be retarded by the four field pieces which had been brought along to protect it. Finding the guns more of a temptation to enemy attack than a defensive asset, Greene decided to return two of them to the camp, although that required him to send along more troops to escort them back.[131]

The expedition was also plagued by constant inefficiencies which reflected the impromptu and emergency nature of its organization. Because of widespread illness and clothing deficiencies in camp, its members had necessarily been assembled primarily on the basis of their health and fitness for active duty, rather than for their aptitude for the intended assignment. The effects of this expedient showed up throughout the enterprise. Greene reported that he had been able to collect a "considerable number of Horses," but added in frustration that "the Officers in spight of everything I can say to them, will bring in many that are unfit for our purposes."[132] This resulted in the unnecessary annoyance and alienation of the owners of the rejected animals, and slowed the progress of the expedition by necessitating elaborate measures to

return them. Even more disconcerting than the ineptness of some of the officers, however, was the apparently dangerous unreliability of many of their subordinates. One party of twenty men was detached under the care of a "good officer," and for two days remained unaccounted for under suspicious circumstances.[133] Unable to believe that the group had been captured, since the enemy had not appeared in the area, Greene had soon half convinced himself that the officer had been arrested by his own men and carried into the city. Most of the members of the party, he lamented, had been "Virginia Convicts."[134]

Greene's observations during his twelve-day sojourn in lower Chester County provide an exceptionally revealing portrait of the civil context of the Valley Forge encampment during a critical period for the survival of the army. Despite the open concentration of Continental efforts in this limited sector during most of the winter it remained manifestly unsubdued, and unpropitiously disposed toward the welfare of the army. An increasingly militant Tory minority was apparently arming to subdue an already cowed and even smaller Whig minority, and in the process enhancing the ability of the self-interested middle group to act on its own behalf. Largely because of the economic disequilibrium reflected in the currencies of the Continental and British forces, the actions of this group inherently favored the latter.

Greene's reports sharply revealed the disadvantages under which the American army was operating. In the area which

Washington had chosen to dominate he was scarcely able to do so, and to the extent that he could, it was only by resorting to politically alienating measures. The confiscatory policy which Greene was attempting to implement made little if any distinction among members of the aforementioned groups. Goods which were seized were paid for with receipts that carried such little presumed credit that many of the army's unwilling suppliers blithely refused them, while those who accepted them experienced great difficulties in getting them redeemed.[135] Anything that could not be transported back to camp was destroyed in order to keep it out of enemy hands, again in exchange for the dubiously valuable receipts.[136]

Meanwhile, it became necessary to act as if the forestallers, most of whom probably belonged to the apolitical middle group, were in fact, to use Anthony Wayne's colorful phrase, "Toriestically inclined."[137] Persons found hiding contraband were refused certificates if they were fortunate, and arrested if they were not. Henry Lee's more discriminating policy, which entailed at least the hope of winning the confidence of civilians who had not chosen between the two sides, was abandoned under the pressure of the emergency. As for the area's nervous Whig minority, few measures for protecting its members from their reprisal-minded neighbors appear to have been considered, although Greene's reports revealed his sympathy for their plight.[138] Indeed, under the circumstances, it is difficult to imagine what realistically could have been done for them.

Instead, with Lee on an extended assignment in Delaware to protect the southern supply lines, and Greene's detachment back in camp by the end of February, the lower reaches of the district west

of the Schuylkill would be effectively abandoned to British control. Greene's last report from the area hopefully predicted that before he left it the district would be "pretty well gleaned."[139] In light of his initial assessment, however, that it had been barren at the outset of his expedition, and especially of his rueful observation of the ability of the inhabitants to conceal their property, his conviction in the matter must be questioned. Until the army's effective strength and fitness for field duty had been substantially rebuilt, Washington's policy toward the area would necessarily depend upon this dubiously optimistic assumption that it had been rendered militarily valueless by Greene's efforts. The region would continue to be an object of paramount concern for the security of the camp. For the moment, however, that concern would have to be met through sporadic intelligence surveys, detachments, and attempts to rush convalescent troops from Continental hospitals to establish piquet posts in the area.[140]

The withdrawal of concentrated Continental efforts from lower Chester County, in apparent abandonment of Washington's initial allocation of strategic priority, reflected a broader shift of military resources in response to the emergence of new threats to the army's security. The army was operating within a sharply constrained set of circumstances and, as the ravages of the winter reduced the pool of troops fit for active duty, its options for dealing with them were diminishing rather than increasing. Washington's

mournful reflection that to give resources to one part of the army was to deprive the rest applied as well to his ultimate resource, the army itself.[141] While troops sufficiently healthy and adequately equipped to function away from the camp were required to cover the country west of the Schuylkill, they were for the moment even more necessary to protect the army's principal supply lines from the northern and southern states. Indeed, with the temporary collapse of the Commissary and Quarter Master's Departments, they had to be pressed into service to operate those lines as well as to guard them. The effective cost of sending Henry Lee's corps to Delaware to drain the southern magazines, and to guard the route between Head of Elk and Valley Forge, was the temporary abandonment of the Continental mission of preventing trade with Philadelphia on the west side of the Schuylkill River. The British army did not find it necessary to make even a show of contesting Greene's foraging expedition through the district. William Howe doubtless realized that a latent effect of the operation would be to increase the flow of supplies into the city itself. Without a more massive and permanent occupation of the area than it was within Washington's power to contemplate, it was virtually a foregone conclusion that any goods which the residents there were able to secrete from Greene would eventually find their way into the Philadelphia markets.

Instead, Howe chose to sharply increase British support of the trading activities of the inhabitants on the east side of the

Schuylkill, where the Continental position was even more constrained. Before the end of February, the consequences of this development reached what Washington considered to be such an "alarming Height," that it resulted in an even more fundamental shift of Continental policy.[142] From the time that the army took up quarters at Valley Forge until the onset of the provisions crisis in mid-February, Washington had been content to adhere to his agreement with Thomas Wharton, specifying the division of responsibility between state and Continental forces along the Schuylkill River. He maintained this position even after it had become apparent that the Pennsylvania militia was too weak to keep its end of the bargain. Although a few Continental mounted companies had been kept on the east side to patrol the roads above Germantown, Washington for the most part confined his efforts to lectures to the state's authorities on the importance of strengthening the militia, and to injunctions to the militia officers themselves to do the best they could in the meantime.

By early February, this policy had borne disastrous fruit in the form of a virtually unimpeded flow of people and provisions between the city and its northern outskirts, particularly in Bucks County. Taking advantage of the lack of effective armed opposition in the area, the British army established a corps of Provincial troops composed of sympathetic civilians and, according to one report, American deserters, to subdue the countryside, succor its Tories, and supress its Whigs.[143] While Thomas Wharton and other

leaders of the Supreme Executive Council chafed under the knowledge that they had failed to carry out their agreement to keep 1,000 militia troops in the field, other members of the state's political establishment were less reticent about casting the blame for the situation on the army itself. Joseph Reed fumed that its political consequences would be even worse than its military ones. He warned that "no person conspicuous in civil or military life not with the army or at a great distance will be safe," unless the state was willing to counter terror with terror by enlisting a similar corps. If the enemy could not be effectively confined to the city, he concluded, "even good Whigs [will] begin to think Peace at some Experience desirable."[144] Reed made it clear that, in his own mind at least, regular army forces could not or would not do the job.

Under fire from the Conference Committee - undoubtedly at least partly at Reed's insistence - for the indifferent performance of the army at blockading the city, Washington began to search for ways of assisting the militia without removing Continental troops from other stations. His initial efforts to do so involved a series of rhetorical devices, organizational measures, and tactical decisions aimed at invigorating the mounted Continental detachments already operating east of the Schuylkill. Its officers were alerted to step up their efforts, and particularly requested to apprehend one or more "notorious offenders" among the market people, who could be subjected to exemplary punishments.[145] Complaining that he did not have enough troops to guard all of the roads in the area, Washington ordered John Jameson, who commanded those

patrols, to cooperate with the militia in disabling the mills on Pennypack, Frankford, and Wissahickon Creeks, to reduce the availability of flour in the district.[146]

As he investigated the causes of the ineffectiveness of the Continental patrols, however, Washington discovered that they only partially stemmed from problems of insufficient manpower. It began to appear that their shortcomings lay as much in the realm of quality as of quantity. A trusted officer foraging in the area pointed out that the

> length of time they [the patrols] have been on that station has made them too well acquainted with the girls and people from town, who I fear seduce and make them commit many things highly improper such as seizing flour etc. from one person and delivering it to their favorites.[147]

John Jameson arrived at a similar conclusion, and wrote independently to Casimir Pulaski at Trenton to request a "sett of fresh men."[148] These and similar reports convinced Washington that British successes in the area were flourishing in a climate of Continental abuse fostered by the development of "too intimate connexions between the Soldiery and Citizens" of the area.[149]

While this conclusion defined the problem, it did not readily suggest a solution to it which would at once minimize the abuses and increase the effectiveness of the patrols. If anything, it seemed to point toward the necessity of reducing the Continental presence in the area and increasing the reliance on militia forces, a step which would have been unacceptable to the state's executive leaders. As the evidence accumulated, it began to

appear that the abuses went beyond the mere incidence of ubiquitous wartime favoritism. Jameson complained that "it has not been in my power to prevent [trade] with the men that are on this side the River unless I could be with them day and night as they are a set of the greatest Villains I ever heard of."[150] In addition to opportunistic ladies' men, his miscreants apparently included thieves, bribe takers, and outright highwaymen. Having identified a pair of the latter, Jameson reported that he had "not as yet confined them as there are not three of the men that I could with any degree of safety trust my life with."[151]

Washington's response to the problem remained predominantly rhetorical, as he continued to emphasize the responsibility of the militia for the zone east of the Schuylkill. One Continental officer in the area was replaced as a result of the alleged abuses, and his successor began a more ambitious effort to apprehend marketeers.[152] No wholesale adjustments would be made, however, until the security of the main army itself was jeopardized by the British reaction to the weakness of the militia. In response to Jameson's plea for fresh men, Pulaski wrote to Head Quarters that three troops of New Jersey mounted militia were willing to cross the Delaware to serve on the lines north of Philadelphia.[153] Washington seized upon the idea as a relatively cheap solution to a seemingly intractable problem, and proposed to Governor Livingston that the state loan him the companies to replace the discredited Continental units.[154]

Washington meanwhile continued to press the Pennsylvania authorities to fulfill their commitment to cover the area. He lectured Thomas Wharton on the dependence of the joint military effort upon the state's effective participation. Not being acquainted with John Lacey, the third militia commander in less than six months, he refrained from directly criticizing him, but complained of the "fact that they [the militia] have by some means or other dwindled away to nothing, and there are no guards within twenty Miles of the City on the East Side of the Schuylkill."[155] He flatly discounted the ability of the Continental troops to take up the slack, and requested Wharton to furnish "some hundreds more" than the originally stipulated one thousand troops. "We find the Continental troops," he solemnly intoned, "(especially those who are not Natives) are very apt to desert from the piquets."[156]

The militia had indeed dwindled to the threshold of oblivion. Its condition had become so precarious, in fact, that it had virtually ceased to function as an even minimally effective military force. For most of the first half of February, Lacey's pathetic band numbered between 60 and 100 men.[157] New classes of recruits had been called out in four western counties, but none had arrived in his camp at Warwick in Bucks County. He lamented that he had been forced to collect them into a single party and bring them away from the city because more active duty was impossible in their "weak and scattered condition." Two-thirds of their time, he observed, had been taken up in foraging for their own subsistence.[158]

Although Lacey's conduct embarrassed Wharton, puzzled Washington, and infuriated the Continental officers serving east of the Schuylkill River, it was probably prudent. He was in essence keeping his own men under detention, although he must occasionally have wondered whether he was not himself the detainee. In a wretched letter thanking an apparent patron for the unexpected, and by now thoroughly unwanted honor of appointment to command the force, he painted a grim picture of the troop:

> I do by no means approve of the conduct of the militia. They ought to be men who govern their conduct by principal but unhappily for America and themselves they fall far short of that character, they are constantly stealing from the inhabitants and from one another, we dare not leave the least thing in their sight nor even in the care of the guards or we are sure to have it stolen, our disicipline is very bad and impossible to enforce it with the present officers, unless you form in them new ideas and new souls as their whole study is to be popular themselves and to keep in favor with the men, by joining with them and taking their part. Such conduct never fails to miss the desired object.[159]

As for their military utility, he lamented, "I am not able to do any good in proventing the intercorce between the city and Country. They come and go as they please."[160]

Lacey was neither exaggerating his own weakness, nor its effect on the communal and military situation in the district for the security of which he was responsible. The commander of a small Continental detachment, which had been stationed at Newtown in Bucks County to guard a fulling mill that had been seized for use of the army, watched helplessly as residents of the town traded openly with the British. "It is surprising what numbers of people pass to Philadelphia from this end and other places Daily," he forlornly observed.

"And am informed they carry on marketing little inferior to former times - there being no guards on the road between here and the city."[161]

With stoic tenacity but dubious conviction Washington pressed his efforts to urge the state to increase its efforts to stabilize the deteriorating situation. He hopefully informed Lacey that he understood a "considerable reinforcement" was coming to his aid, and cajoled him to make the men "more active in their duty."[162] So precarious had the situation become that he was even willing to avail himself of the spirit of brigandage which the militia had begun to evince, by authorizing its members to expropriate for their own use whatever goods they could seize from the market people. In return, he only required that militarily useful horses be sent to camp, for which the captors would be paid a just price, and that Lacey make certain that any forfeitures take place under the eye of a commissioned officer, to prevent the "privilege" from being construed as a pretext for stealing from innocent inhabitants.[163] Above all, however, he insisted that the state troops be required to "ramble through the woods and bye ways" as well as the "great roads," and to "fire upon... those gangs of mercenary wretches," who were trading with the enemy.[164] Increasingly, he looked to the use of deadly force to accomplish what insufficient numbers could not. He continued to call for subjects for exemplary discipline, and advertised in particular for the arrest of some "great offenders" who might be liable for capital punishment.[165]

This resort to a judicious combination of cajolery, reprisal, and material incentive proved ineffective in pumping life into the dispirited state force. As late as February 20, Lacey's troops had still not been enticed from their retreat in middle Bucks County. Reduced in strength, as he plaintively observed to Thomas Wharton, "to almost a sipher," he did not even feel "safe in our camp," much less on the treacherous back roads closer to the city.[166] Even when the long-promised reinforcements arrived on the nineteenth the situation did not immediately improve. Of 600 men then in camp, he reported, only 140 were armed, and he flatly refused to return to active patrolling until more weapons had been provided.[167]

The situation east of the Schuylkill, meanwhile, was rapidly assuming the character of a civil war. Encouraged by the collapse of armed resistance in the area, by the apparent immobility of most of the main army, and by the preoccupation of those Continental troops who were capable of maneuvering with foraging on the west side, the British began to actively ravage the district. The recently established Provincial corps which had worried Joseph Reed at the beginning of the month became the spearhead of the operation, which was openly designed as an assault on rebel civil authority in the now unprotected zone.

On the third, the corps marched out the Frankford Road to Oxford to support some Tory "peasants [who]... had informed us that they intended to seize and bring in to us a rebel colonel and captain , who were using considerable force to raise militia in this area if we would send them some 100 men."[168] On the fourteenth, a British foraging

expedition beyond Frankford was used to cover another assault on the local rebel heirarchy. Some of the Provincial dragoons "who know the country very well, pushed ahead on this occasion and seized several officers and other men who are active in the rebellion, namely a few lawyers and committeemen."[169] Meeting little resistance, the corps ominously began to include weak and exposed Continental positions among their prospective targets. On the nineteenth, the "new dragoons" broke off from yet another foraging expedition and fell upon the fulling mill at Newtown, imprisoning most of its small Continental guard, and seizing several tons of cloth being made into clothing for the main army.[170]

By the last week of February the corps abandoned the foraging ruse altogether and, turning its attention from weak and almost unresisting civil and militia objectives, began to prey openly on Continental targets. On the twenty-fourth, supported by a detachment of British regulars, the Provincials attacked a herd of cattle being driven across lower Bucks County on its way from New England to Valley Forge, dispersing its weakly armed convoy of commissaries and capturing 130 oxen.[171] As a result of the collapse of military force east of the Schuylkill, the principal northern supply line of the army was suddenly placed in direct jeopardy.

The eruption of British military activity in the countryside north and northwest of Philadelphia engendered surprise and consternation at the American Head Quarters. It resulted in a rapid

reappraisal, and eventually a sharp alteration of Continental policy toward the area. An aide to Washington sharply castigated John Jameson for the apparent inattention of the Continental mounted detachments east of the river to the outbreak. Washington was caught off-guard by the developments, and was groping in the dark for reliable intelligence. While he understood that British mounted parties had "ventured rather higher up the country than we supposed," he was uncertain of the import of the movements, and could only "conjecture they had some design of which we are entirely ignorant."[172] He demanded that Jameson report at least weekly on "what is Passing in your quarter."[173] Jameson remained unaccountably silent, but other sources fleshed out the gloomy picture. John Lacey bemoaned his complete impotence in the face of the flagrant enemy challenge. By the nineteenth, he reported, British parties were coming out of the city every night to seize provisions and local patriots alike, and returning in the morning. Upon receiving word of their attack upon the fulling mill at Newtown, Lacey had rushed the small fraction of his troops who were armed toward that place, but they had arrived too late to prevent the capture of the beleaguered detachment.[174]

From the Continental perspective, the most serious implication of the British incursions did not stem from the increased flow of supplies into the city, disturbing though that must have been, or even from the political consequences of unchecked enemy assaults on well-affected citizens. John Laurens, whose statements usually reflected Washington's views closely, implied that the latter

development was largely a "matter of civil cognizance."[175] Washington himself dismissed the kidnapping activities of the self-styled "Royal Refugees" with sympathy for their victims, but with no special alarm or apparent attempt to intervene in the matter.[176] The germ of a revised Continental policy toward the area east of the Schuylkill lay, rather, in the threat which the British outburst began to pose to the security of the supply line between the northern and eastern states and the main army. As a result of the provisions crisis the critical importance of this line to the well-being of the army began to play an increasingly central role in Washington's tactical thinking. When it began to come under attack by British and Provincial parties, he moved with alacrity to alter his approach to the regional distribution of Continental resources. In view of the practical disintegration of the militia, it would no longer be sufficient merely to sonorously lecture the state on the need to fulfill its obligations. Instead, regular army forces would have to be redeployed, whatever the cost elsewhere, to protect a vital army interest.[177]

The enemy attacks on the Continental detachment guarding the Newtown mill, and subsequent similar ventures, dramatically demonstrated how vulnerable the logistical link between the army and the north had become. A large convoy of wagons carrying salt provisions from New Jersey or New England had been lying over at the mill when the British raiders approached, and was only extricated through the timely action of several of its attendants. To avoid capture, the commissaries

had to retreat into New Jersey, proceed north along the Delaware, and cross that river again, following a circuitous route toward the camp through upper Bucks County. The delay of several days in the receipt of the provisions entailed by the maneuver, occurring as it did during the depths of the famine at camp, intensified the crisis. The subsequent loss of a large herd of cattle in the area the following week made it clear that the threat to the supply line was not an incidental consequence of random enemy probing, but rather that it constituted the gravest implication inherent in the emboldened British activity.[178]

The result was an abrupt bowing of the supply line in a northwesterly direction away from the city. Washington ordered riders north into New Jersey to meet an overdue shipment of clothing and directed it not to cross the Delaware River below Easton. If it had already reached the Pennsylvania side by one of the customary routes through Coryell's Ferry or below, he ordered that it "Strike up into the Country and take a circuitous route to Camp."[179] Anthony Wayne, who was bringing cattle collected on his foraging expedition through lower New Jersey, was authorized to take the quicker route through Coryell's Ferry under a heavy guard. Even he was warned, however, to "keep higher up the Country" once in Pennsylvania, in order to cross the Schuylkill near Pottsgrove and proceed to the rear of camp. Washington implored Wayne to maintain a "considerable guard" with the herd at all times, and to "keep a good look out between you and Philadelphia."[180] The enemy, he conceded, would have certain information of Wayne's movements from their "friends with which the Country abounds."[181]

Washington, who had struggled to maintain a diplomatic tone toward the civil authorities of Pennsylvania throughout the fall and winter, fired off a by now customary letter of tactful reproach to Thomas Wharton, to remind him once again of the critical situation east of the Schuylkill. The "insolence" of disaffected citizens in Bucks and Philadelphia Counties, he observed, had now "risen to a very alarming Height." Placing the civil consequence of the phenomenon squarely in the state's lap, he informed Wharton that a number of "respectable citizens" had been kidnapped from the area. More importantly, he noted that members of the army had also been captured, and that a quantity of clothing intended for a Pennsylvania regiment had been seized.[182]

At length, the jeopardy in which the British offensive placed the Continental supply line forced Washington to reformulate his policy toward securing the districts on the periphery of the city along its entire circumference. The new policy amounted to a change of tactical emphasis, and a reallocation of military resources, within a continuing overall strategic imperative. That imperative had and would continue to revolve around the security of the main army. The implicit commitment which Washington had made upon bringing the army to winter quarters at Valley Forge - to attempt to confine the British to as narrow a zone as possible around Philadelphia, and to protect Pennsylvania citizens from their depredations - had been and would continue to be a conditional one. Its performance (and, to this point, its overall failure) had depended upon the effective participation of the state's

militia. It would continue to do so. It had taken a secondary place in Washington's priorities to the army's security throughout the winter and, again, it would continue to do so.

As long as that security had seemed to depend primarily on the maintenance of a strong and active Continental presence on the west side of the Schuylkill, Washington had found it prudent to permit the state's forces to succeed or fail in their parallel operations on the east side according to their own efforts and resources. When the failure of those forces began to tempt opportunistic enemy detachments in the direction of the northern supply line, however, the axis of that security shifted dramatically. Where it had previously followed the river, it would now cleave to the supply line itself on both sides. Despairing of the possibility that continued rhetorical efforts would stiffen the effectiveness of the state's exertions, Washington took steps to extend Continental responsibility more directly to the east side.[183] He stated the thrust of the new policy explicitly in instructions to an officer sent across the river with a mounted company to bolster Continental efforts there. That the man's responsibility included cutting off intercourse between the city and its hinterland, he pointed out, did not need to be emphasized. The burden of his assignment, however, would be the protection of supply convoys in the area. The officer was to keep himself "in a position most convenient, for covering any supplies that may be coming to this army." If he encountered any unescorted supply details he was to "take it under your care and see it safely on its way."[184]

These measures prefaced a thorough reorganization of Continental efforts on the east side of the Schuylkill. By early March a new set of officers would be on duty in that area, in charge of implementing a broader and more mobile policy of making the area secure, if not for its own inhabitants, at least for the interests of the army itself. Their predecessors became the implicit scapegoats for what had in effect been an overall failure of policy. One officer removed from duty near Germantown would resign, partly because of "insinuations... thrown out at Head Quarters" concerning his performance on the lines.[185] John Jameson, who by his own account had his hands full merely maintaining order among his own men, was quietly reassigned to Virginia to purchase horses for the cavalry.[186]

The redistribution of Continental efforts across the Schuylkill would have at best a tangential effect upon the execution of Washington's conditional commitment to the state. While reinforced patrols in that area might increase the effectiveness of the blockade of the city on that side, it would necessarily come at the expense of similar measures on the west side, from where the new troops would have to be drawn. Unless the state could bolster the militia, the flow of supplies to the city marketplace promised to continue, and its citizens would remain precariously secure, if at all, from the retaliation and depredations of the British army and its refugee companies. The approach of spring, the return of convalescents, and the arrival of new recruits and clothing for temporarily disabled troops would eventually permit a more broadly conceived Continental strategy. For the moment, however, the

army was mired in a relentless cycle of strategic retrenchment, in which each relinquished objective, however necessary, threatened to precipitate new dysfunctions and require new concessions.

The consequences of this cycle were nowhere more evident during this period than in the state of New Jersey, through the band of communities which lay along the Delaware River from Trenton in the north to Salem in the south. The progress of the war in these communities lay in a kind of penumbra formed by simultaneous occurrences on the Pennsylvania side, which more directly affected the army's immediate interests, and therefore occupied more of its attention and energy. They nevertheless closely reflected developments in that sphere. The failure of the Continental cavalry to establish a viable base of operations at Trenton during January has been discussed in some detail previously, together with the local implications of that failure. During February those implications ramified unchecked into a weakened American military position in New Jersey, which mirrored and possibly exceeded that which existed in Pennsylvania east of the Schuylkill River.

By the end of January, Casimir Pulaski had all but given up on Trenton as a place in which to winter and train the cavalry. The surrounding countryside, he observed, had been "laid waste," and other Continental agencies such as the navy and the Hospital Department claimed the "right of first comers." He still had three regiments in the area but, wanting to train them, suggested that they be sent to Morristown.[187] Washington, still apparently skeptical that the area could be so barren, left the decision in Pulaski's hands.

He continued to express the desire that the corps be spared arduous exertions which would interfere with their training and thus reduce their value during the coming campaign. He had received reports that the horsemen were complaining of harder duty than they had at camp, and reminded Pulaski that rest and refreshment had been "two of the principal objects" of their removal to New Jersey.[188] Washington's correspondence with Pulaski suggests that he experienced considerable difficulty resolving in his own mind the conflicting imperatives into which the cavalry's detachment had placed it. He continued to insist that Trenton was a preferable post for it, but when Pulaski proposed establishing a magazine there so that the corps could return after its training in the early spring he cautioned against the move, lest the magazine remain vulnerable to British attacks in the interim.[189]

Ultimately, the shared inclination of both men to reserve the cavalry for the campaign prevailed. The three companies which had been temporarily lodged at Pennington and Flemington were withdrawn to Chatham, near Morristown, where they underwent extensive drilling and reorganization under their unit commanders.[190] Pulaski, in nominal command of the entire corps, remained at Trenton with a picked group of "lanceurs" to provide whatever security he could for that area, and selective assistance to the state's militia regiments, which struggled to enforce the embargo on trade with Philadelphia from the New Jersey side of the Delaware.[191]

The movement virtually guaranteed that both the Pennsylvania and New Jersey militia would be left essentially to their own devices in

executing the latter assignment. Joseph Ellis, like his Pennsylvania counterpart John Lacey a newly installed and inexperienced commander of the New Jersey troops, bore few if any illusions about his ability to accomplish great ends with the unsupported force at his disposal. His numbers were continually varying, he reported, but seldom exceeded 500 men. With this threadbare contingent he held nominal responsibility for an area fully as large as that guarded by both Continental and militia troops on the Pennsylvania side. As a result, he observed, large quantities of provisions were constantly being carried into Philadelphia. Under this circumstance the most that he could do was to patrol the roads sporadically to make spot arrests, and to discourage commerce with the city through a token show of force.[192]

Washington responded to the situation with a conservative realism, encouraging the state's officials to do their utmost in much the same manner as he did the Pennsylvania's authorities, and always keeping Continental interests in the forefront. Because security in the area could not be guaranteed, he ordered that all public boats be removed from the Delaware below the falls at Trenton, and carried up the river to Coryell's Ferry.[193] In conjunction with the widespread foraging carried out during the famine at camp, he attempted to remove as much of the agricultural produce from the lower part of the state as possible, in effect conceding the remainder to the enemy. The area received its first concerted Continental attention of the winter as a by-product of the February provisions crisis, when Anthony Wayne extended Nathanael

Greene's grand forage across the river from Salem to Trenton during the last ten days of February. Wayne discovered, as did Greene in Chester County, that the inhabitants of the state were either "supine" or "disaffected," and that they had virtually perfected the art of concealing their cattle, foodstuffs, and wagons. Like Greene, he concentrated on burning or destroying whatever he could not carry off for the army's use, with the realization that the British would help themselves to whatever remained.[194] Wayne's expedition, in fact, had the predictable if unhappy side effect of bringing a large detachment of British troops into the area to contest his progress, and to filter the residue from the waters that he had roiled. Finding hemself outnumbered by eight to one, he lamented that the enemy would be able to pass through the country "at pleasure," helping themselves to a "prodigious number" of cattle and a veritable wealth of other goods.[195]

VI. The CHAPTER OF EXPERIMENTS

The intermittent torrents of late February yielded invisibly to the unbroken deluge of early March. James Varnum observed sourly that:

> Here there is no distinction of seasons. The weather frequently changes five times in twenty four hours. The coldest I have perceived has been in this month. Snow falls, but falls only to produce mire & dirt. It is cold; it braces one only to produce a greater relaxation by the heat. It is hot, but hot only to give the [?]. Sometimes the weather is moderate, but that season gives time only to reflect upon gentle breases and cooling zephers, that the immediate extremes may excite greater pain. 1

Most individuals waxed less poetic. For James Bradford it was sufficient to report a disagreeable journey to camp, plagued by such "serious... bad weather" that even a nightly bottle of Madeira failed to provide more than a slender solace.[2] An officer struggling to contain enemy movements on the lines below Chestnut Hill forlornly complained that the weather was "much against" him.[3]

If the climate remained inauspicious, however, a pronounced shift of energy and attention in the cramped rooms at Head

Quarters suggested that the army would soon enough be back in the field, engaged in a campaign which many thought likely to prove decisive. With the resolution of the impasse over the Quarter Master's Department, Washington relaxed the almost unbroken concentration which he had given to broad political and organizational questions since the beginning of the year, to reflect on more immediately pressing military matters. For the resolution of the logistical problems upon which those matters would depend, he looked to the energy that newly installed officers such as Nathanael Greene and Jeremiah Wadsworth would hopefully soon infuse into their battered and demoralized support departments.[4]

For his own part, Greene continued to waver privately over whether or not he would even accept the office of Quarter Master General for a full two weeks after Washington and the Conference Committee assured themselves that he would. As late as the middle of March Greene insisted that he was "by no means determin'd yet" on the question, although by then his actions had begun to belie his rhetoric, as he was making arrangements with new subordinates and with retainees from the old establishment.[5] Greene's misgivings were founded in circumstances which fairly guaranteed the truth of his prediction that other members of the army would be "immortalising [themselves] in the golden pages of History" while he was "confin'd to a series of druggery to pave the way for it."[6] The Quarter Master's Department had been

all but shattered by Thomas Mifflin's neglect of it, by the ravages of the 1777 campaign, and by the subsequent strain of attempting to sustain the army in the field during the winter. The debilitating weather which had finally toppled the old logistical establishment, moreover, lingered to plague the infancy of the new. By the middle of March one member of Congress observed that there had been "no weather fit for any person to travel for two months past."[7] An army functionary stationed at Lancaster reported that"excessive rainy weather" had occurred there on the first seventeen days of the month, making indivudual movement on horseback - to say nothing of wagon transport - almost impossible.[8]

Notwithstanding these circumstances, and his own deep ambivalence about his new duties, Greene and his principal deputies moved with reasonable alacrity to invigorate the Quarter Master's Department. The department was caught in the same relentless cycle of retrenchment which characterized the rest of the army's operations. Unless animal forage could be delivered in timely fashion to the Continental yards on the western side of the camp, its few surviving horses would starve, assuring further shortages and still further disruptions.[9] The troops were themselves for the moment adequately supplied with provisions, in their by now customary "hand to mouth" fashion, as a result of the importation of supplies from area magazines during late February. The forage masters were operating on considerably thinner margins. Sensing their fortunes would hinge upon a ten-

day critical period, after which the area's roads would hopefully become passable, they attempted to reap whatever advantages they could from the swollen streams which accompanied the spring torrents.[11] By early March high water had swept the last ice floes from the area's larger rivers.[12] Forage Master Clement Biddle turned to the Schuylkill, assembling an impromptu navy of shallow-bottomed transport vessels to move loads of hay and other supplies from Reading and Pottsgrove down to the camp.[13]

Greene, meanwhile, brought a healthy sense of economic realism to his supervision of the supply functions. Convinced that the conflict would "terminate in a War of funds," in which he pessimistically concluded that the "longest purse will be triumphant," he was determined not to allow his own department to be impaled on the narrow spear of financial regularity. Greene professed to believe that his personal financial ruin had been guaranteed by his decision to remain in public service, and he searched for ways to harness the almost universal passion for private profits to public ends.[14] Caught between the fiscal caution of Congress and the difficulty of recruiting or retaining competent subordinates, he agreed to divide the fixed percentage compensation for his office with his deputies John Cox and Charles Pettit.[15]

In response to an early inquiry, Greene enunciated the doctrine which would characterize his stewardship of the business:

"I have no objection to Mr. Battes or any other gentleman belonging to the Department reaping any advantage from their honest industry... I am not solicitous about the profits of the office..., if the publick business is but well executed, that will be all that I shall be solicitous about."[16] The message was rapidly transmitted to lower level functionaries serving in the field. Charles Pettit gently chided a newly appointed deputy who had shown "a little of the Squeamishness I had on entering the Department about Prices."[17] Pettit found the sentiment "laudable and wish not to part with it all." He cautioned that "the Business however must be done, & generally done speedily till we get beforehand, you must therefore so far get over it as not to impede the service."[18] Promising to push for cost-controlling reforms once the department had been reorganized, Pettit observed in the meantime that "men who make a profit by it honestly are most likely to serve the public faithfully."[19]

Relieved of much of the day-to-day responsibility for logistical matters, Washington busied himself with planning for the upcoming campaign. He quickly drafted an ambitious plan which contained three alternative schemes for resuming the conflict. The first called for carrying the war to the enemy in Philadelphia, either by a massed assault on the fortifications north of the city, or by blockading the town and starving the British into retreat or submission. The second contemplated the detachment

of 6,000 troops from Pennsylvania to the Hudson River to cooperate with troops already stationed there, and with northern militia, for an assault on the enemy position in New York City. The third envisioned the army "lay[ing] quiet in a secure camp," training and disciplining for future operations.[20]

This plan, like the enigmatic "Intended Orders" for the abandoned Christmas assault on Philadelphia, defies easy analysis. Like the latter scheme, its more ambitious elements lay at apparent odds with the image of a crippled, half-starved army which considered itself well off when it could measure the distance between the wolf and the door in terms of weeks rather than days. The plan contained a request for "mature consideration" of each of its alternatives, and formed the basis for a series of questions which Washington placed before the general officers in late April.[21] Its disposition during the six weeks between its drafting and its submission to the generals, however, is uncertain. James Varnum outlined a possible operation against Philadelphia to Governor Nicholas Cooke of Rhode Island in early March, which adhered closely to the details of Washington's first alternative.[22] This suggests that the plan, or parts of it, may have been informally floated among senior members of the army from the outset. In at least the early stages, the plan probably formed a general

outline intended to spur individuals to whom it was communicated out of their mid-winter doldrums, to elicit their overall reactions, and to provide serious consideration of the possibilities for the coming summer.

The plan had as its central assumption the belief that the Continental army would be able to take the initiative by dictating the direction in which the campaign would move, as well as its preliminary character. It was widely recognized that the tenability of this asumption depended on strenuous exertions throughout the Continental establishment, and particularly from the states. A number of Congressman were apprehensive, if not openly doubtful, whether the latter would answer the call to fill their battalions rapidly enough to effect offensive plans of any kind.[23] Jonathan B. Smith of Pennsylvania warned Thomas Wharton that the army was "now arriving at an important period. The Campaign will probably open soon. Much depends on its being well reinforced. I hope this state will not fail to exert its utmost influence."[24] Cornelius Hartnett of North Carolina put the matter more bluntly: "unless the several states exert themselves to compleat their Batalions our Continental Army will cut a poor figure in the spring."[25] Other delegates were similarly cautious, and not a few of them were plainly discouraged.[26]

That hopes for carrying the war to the enemy rested on doubtful assumptions was nowhere better understood than in the

army itself. Washington worked obsessively to flog its far-flung support agencies into preparatory action. He momentarily became absorbed with the concentration of troops and of the material supplies necessary to maintain them.[27] He reminded the Board of War that the neighborhood of Philadelphia was the "place where the Army will rendezvous in the Spring."[28] He assumed that the states would take measures to furnish the quotas of troops which Congress had assigned to them. If they did, he warned that it would be a "mortifying and discouraging circumstance" to be unable to provide them with weapons and equipment.[29]

To avoid this consequence Washington bombarded outlying functionaries, officers at distant posts, and various state officials with requests to increase their efforts in anticipation of the campaign. He sparred with the Continental and Pennsylvania Navy Boards to get them to remove galleys, stores, and heavy guns from the Delaware River below Trenton before the enemy could seize them.[30] He dispatched several officers to Virginia to purchase horses to implement his plans for enlarging and refitting the Continental cavalry.[31] He pressured the Pennsylvania government to increase its support of the remodelled Quarter Master's Department by providing more wagons and teams. In the process he reopened on old argument with the state by cooly reminding Thomas Wharton that the army "seems to have a peculiar Claim to the Exertions of the Gentlemen of this State... as it was greatly owing to their Apprehensions and Anxieties, expressed in a Memorial to Congress, that the present position was had."[32]

Realizing the critical importance of the garrison in the Hudson Highlands for keeping open the supply routes from the New England states, Washington attempted to strengthen it. He expressed uncertainty as to how much direct authority Congress would give him over military affairs in the Northern Department.[33] While that body deliberated on the choice of a permanent commander for the department, however, he sent Alexander McDougall from Morristown to take command at Fishkill. McDougall replaced Israel Putnam, who Washington felt had been aloof and unresponsive all winter while alienating New York state officials. McDougall's instructions stressed the importance of completing the fortification of the Hudson at West Point to prevent a British incursion up that river which might jeopardize the link to the Eastern states.[34] Meanwhile, Washington pressed Samuel H. Parsons, who was temporarily acting as commander in Putnam's absence, to build transport boats to ferry troops, baggage, and stores over the river on the way to the army from New England.[35] He urged Henry Knox, who was at Boston inspecting artillery stores, to have arms collected, repaired, and forwarded to camp, and pressed the Board of War to lend its aid in the same enterprise.[36]

Nathanael Greene's grudging acceptance of the office of Quarter Master General allowed Washington to delegate much of the responsibility for that department's functions to Greene and his deputies. Until Jeremiah Wadsworth formally accepted the post of Commissary General, however, Washington had to pay anxious

personal attention to the problem of increasing the flow of provisions necessary to support an enlarging army. He implored Henry Champion to "persevere" in sending cattle from New England, and to cure as much salt provisions as possible to replace the quantities which had been drained from local magazines during the "late want" of mid-February.[37] He also interceded with Congress on behalf of Wadsworth and Champion, who had complained that price regulating laws which had been adopted in New England at that body's behest were drying up supplies of meat. Treading as lightly as possible on the cost-conscious sensibilities of the gentlemen at York, he implied that the army would "experience many advantages" if those laws were suspended until provisions were collected for the first months of the campaign.[38]

Washington's chief preoccupation, however, remained with increasing the flow of troops to the army. By his own estimate, his plans for attacking either Philadelphia or New York would require at least 15,000 troops in camp, healthy and fit for duty by no later than the beginning of June.[39] Available returns indicate that as late as the end of February barely half that number were on duty at Valley Forge.[40] It seemed only prudent, therefore, to scrape every barrel for any manpower that might be available locally. Washington redoubled his efforts to collect Continental troops from various regional pockets to which small numbers had been scattered during the winter. He ordered that companies guarding storehouses in Lancaster be made ready to

march to camp as soon as possible, directing their commander to call upon the state to muster militia to replace them.[41] He demanded the return of a group of North Carolina troops which had been loaned to the state for service in the galleys on the Delaware River at Trenton.[42] Having been authorized by Congress to employ up to 400 Indians, he wrote to Albany to request that a group of Oneidas be recruited and marched to camp.[43]

By the middle of March recruits were trickling into camp on a daily basis. These troops included some of the southern drafts marching by way of York.[44] As had been the case since the previous autumn, the sight of freshly mustered companies stepping through the streets of the temporary capital on their way to the army bolstered flagging spirits in Congress. Cornelius Hartnett, who two weeks earlier had worried that the army might "cut a poor figure" in the spring, wrote that it was now "hoped General Washington will be able to open the campaign with some vigorous exertions."[45] Washington himself continued to express optimism that the offensive inclinations which he incorporated into his plans for the campaign might be implemented. Urging the Board of War to rush artillery from New England to Pennsylvania, he observed that heavy armaments would be "of the greatest use to us... if we should take a post below the city" in accordance with his proposal to blockade Philadelphia.[46] He cut short a review of the hardships which the army had faced during the winter with the observation that "as our prospects begin to brighten, my complaint shall cease."[47]

Even as Washington wrote, however, messengers were racing toward camp with intelligence which cast into doubt whether the option of initiating the campaign would even fall to the American army. On March 20, observers in the Hudson Highlands and in central New Jersey transmitted reports that large numbers of British troops were embarking on transport ships in New York Harbor. Samuel H. Parsons conjectured from the Highlands that the troops were bound "eastward," while a militia officer in New Jersey passed along reports that their destination would be Philadelphia.[48] Washington had already concluded to his own satisfaction that there was "every reason short of absolute proof, to believe that General Howe is meditating a stroke against this army."[49] Transmitting the latest intelligence to Congress, he declared his apprehension of an early movement by the enemy, and observed that "our present situation at this advanced season is truely alarming."[50] He lobbied strongly for a speedy decision on the new establishment of the army which had been proposed by the Conference Committee, and pressed for reinforcements to be rushed to camp.[51]

As a result of the latest reports, the emphasis at camp shifted during the last ten days of March from formulating plans for launching the campaign offensively to hasty preparations for receiving an anticipated enemy blow. Almost daily Washington expressed his growing conviction that British reinforcements would enable Howe to attack before his own became

numerous enough to repel an assault.[52] By March 29 he was convinced that large numbers of new troops had reached Philadelphia.[53] The camp was put on what amounted to an immediate battle footing. The Commissary Department was ordered to keep hard bread on hand to be issued to detachments made "on any sudden Emergency."[54] The officers were enjoined to lighten their baggage to enable the army to move "with that ease and Celerity which are essential... to its own Security and defence."[55] Preparations were hurriedly made to complete the fortification of the camp, an operation which had lagged for more than three months as a result of the recurrence of crises during the winter and the difficulty of working frozen ground.[56] Plans were formulated to lay in large quantities of forage along routes which the army might need to take in three directions from Valley Forge.[57] Washington also ordered William Smallwood to prepare his division to "move at a moment's warning" to evacuate Wilmington and rejoin the main army.[58]

By the end of the month there was a generally diffused sentiment that the British had, or very shortly would, win the implicit contest between the two armies to concentrate their respective resources. It thus appeared to many observers that Howe rather than Washington would have the option of dictating the terms on which the campaign would open. Anthony Wayne warned Thomas Wharton of his fear that the enemy "will be too powerful for us in the field - unless great and speedy supplies are thrown in."[59] John Laurens predicted that the army could repel a direct

assault on its camp only by sacrificing its huts, in which case it would need to rely upon tents, an adequate supply of which seemed anything but certain.[60]

John Bannister, a newly elected member of Congress from Virginia who had recently arrived in York, captured the looming anxieties of that body on "this most critical occasion." In a letter to his home state he urged that its recruits be rushed forward to assist "in rescuing a sister state perhaps an army from ruin."[61] More experienced legislators realized, however, that repeated similar exhortations had been ineffective in producing reinforcements rapidly enough or in sufficient numbers. Washington's message that new enemy troops had reached Philadelphia was referred to the Board of War on April 1, and the Board's report was in turn handed to a special committee on the third. The next day Congress turned to the only alternative which seemed even remotely likely to strengthen the army rapidly. It voted to empower Washington to call at his own discretion on the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland for up to 5,000 militia troops to meet the emergency.[62]

Washington had in the meantime, however, begun to reevaluate the intelligence upon which this apprehension was largely based. On March 31 he informed Alexander McDougall that the collection of enemy forces in Philadelphia still left him with a choice between concentrating in response to oppose them there, or attempting to take advantage of their withdrawal of troops from

New York by attacking that city. Requesting McDougall's advice on the "practicability" of the latter enterprise, he indicated that his decision on removing troops from the Highlands would depend on that advice.[63] On the same day William Smallwood reported from Wilmington his discovery that the fleet which had been thought to have brought 2,500 British reinforcements from New York had in fact contained a much smaller number of troops.[64]

The following day Washington retreated from his flat assertion that he had "no doubt" about the arrival of enemy reinforcements. The fleet with 2,500 British troops, he informed Henry Laurens, "is not arrived; supposing they were bound to Philadelphia" in the first place.[65] By the first week of April considerable uncertainty prevailed in American councils concerning the strength and intentions of the enemy. Some staff members at Head Quarters had even reverted to the more optimistic outlook of early March. John Laurens informed his father of the apparent mistake concerning British movements and predicted that if "Mr. Howe opens the Campaign with his usual deliberation, and our Recruits and Draughts come in tolerably well, we shall be infinitely better prepared to meet him than ever we have been."[66] Adjutant General Alexander Scammell exulted to his brother that "our prospect at present under the smiles of Heaven is very promising." Scammell hoped that Congress would exert itself to "enable her great General to strike a fatal stroke upon the Enemy this Campaign."[67]

Washington resisted drawing any such euphoric conclusions. Instead, he seemed to be at a genuine loss to explain the apparent disappearance of the British reinforcements. "I know not certainly where they have gone," he reported to McDougall, but offered Charles Lee's guess that the troops had been sent to Rhode Island.[68] By April 10 he was forced to acknowledge to Congress that his alarmed reports of March 24 and 29 had been "founded on conjecture, and in some degree misinformation." He thanked Congress for the authority to call out militia reinforcements, but chided that body for its mistaken assumption that this measure had been the "great end" of his appeal. Rather, he noted, it had been to know the fate of the Conference Committee's reorganization proposals, which he testily pointed out would be virtually impossible to implement once "any convulsion happen[s] or movement take[s] place."[69] Warming to his point, Washington depicted the situation of the army as amounting to a state of suspended animation pending political decisions on its new organization. "My agreement with the [Conference] Com^{ee}," he observed, "entitled me to expect upwards of Forty thousand Continental troops... for the Service of the ensuing Campaign... Instead of these, what are my prospects?"[70]

The acknowledged "freedom" of Washington's message to Congress, for which he pointedly declined to apologize, reflected the agitation both at Head Quarters and throughout the Continental establishment about the uncertain circumstances under which the

campaign was approaching. Anxieties were multiplying and tempers flaring on all sides as fragmentary and contradictory information repeatedly failed to coincide with events. Congress was indeed liable to the implied charge that it was failing to act expeditiously on the new establishment, although its reasons were those of deep and genuine philosophical division rather than of indifference to the army's needs. By linking this charge to that of failing to provide reinforcements in timely fashion, however, Washington was delivering a gratuitous and politically counterproductive slap. Both collectively and individually the delegates had for over a month been urging the states to hurry forward their new recruits. Having done so, they could only wait with anxiety at least as great as Washington's while delays and bottlenecks at the state level were resolved.[71] In some members' minds, moreover, their situation at York was little less precarious than that of the army at Valley Forge. One delegate worried that "If General Washington is not soon reinforced, I fear he will be obliged to quit his ground and cross the Susquehanna; should that happen, the enemy will have the states of Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland in their possession, and Virginia must be our Assylum."[72]

For his own part, Washington continued to dread the prospect of having to take the field without sufficient reinforcements. He admitted to Henry Laurens that never since the beginning of the war had he "felt more painful sensations on account of delay than at present."[73] He hesitated to implement the authority to

call out 5,000 militia troops for fear of disrupting efforts to recruit regular state regiments, and because he doubted whether available provisions could support such an outpouring.[74] Nevertheless, he informed the civil authorities of the designated states of his power to do so, and reminded Congress that his hesitation should not be construed as a declination of the authority.[75] Instead, he notified William Smallwood of his decision to withdraw the garrison at Wilmington to camp as soon as possible. A day later, after considering the jeopardy into which such a move would cast the stores of Continental supplies being gathered at Head of Elk, he abruptly countermanded the order.[76]

In order to understand the sources of this confusion, indecision and anxiety in American councils, it is necessary to consider concurrent developments on the British side during March and early April of 1778. This was something that American planners were unable to do, of course, notwithstanding the periodic receipt of fragmentary and often contradictory intelligence. Briefly, Britain's principal field commanders in North America were waiting to return to England, each under varying degrees of implicit censure for their failure to conclude the war during the previous year. Simultaneously in London, the British Cabinet was completing a winter of anguished reappraisal of its overall policy with a series of decisions which would alter the character of the conflict as a whole.[77] Spurred by the defeat

at Saratoga the previous autumn, and by the probability of a treaty of alliance between France and America, the King's war planners had reluctantly concluded that the military reconquest of the rebellious colonies was no longer possible within the constraints of political, economic, and international considerations.[78] In order to be able to meet the threat of a "world" war with France, it had become necessary to scale down British objectives in North America, both politically and militarily.

The political result of this realization consisted of a decision to offer the rebels a settlement granting everything but an explicit acknowledgement of independence, including a formal renunciation of most forms of direct Parliamentary taxation. A peace commission would be sent to America to attempt to negotiate an end to the war on this basis. In the meantime the new formulation would have important and fairly immediate military concommitants. Whether or not Americans could be persuaded to terminate hostilities short of outright independence, Britain would have to reduce unilaterally its concentration of forces in the colonies to free them for possible use against France in Europe, Canada, and the Caribbean.[79]

The first comprehensive statement of the new strategy came in the Cabinet's spring instructions to Henry Clinton, who had been chosen to replace William Howe as Commander in Chief in America. Framed in early March, the instructions preceeded certain knowledge of the existence of a French alliance, which had been

secretly finalized a month before.[80] Nevertheless they fairly reeked with the presentiment of such an event. The document formally proclaimed the King's hope that his "generous terms" would satisfy the "generality" of his American subjects, but also acknowledged the need not to "slacken" preparations for continuing the war if necessary. Clinton was promised as many reinforcements as the crown could muster, but at the same time informed of the King's decision that the war must be "prosecuted upon a different plan" than before.[81]

The new formula emphasized the need to garrison and protect Canada, Nova Scotia, New Foundland, and the Floridas. The bulk of the reinforcements would therefore be sent to those places. Clinton was informed that if he could not bring Washington to a "general and decisive Action" at the beginning of the campaign he was to "relinquish the idea of carrying on Offensive Operations against the Rebels within land."[82] Instead, he was to embark as many troops as could be spared from garrison duty on transports to carry on summer operations against New England's coasts and seaports. These operations were to be aimed at harassing the local population, damaging the area's maritime economy by disrupting foreign imports, and especially preventing American naval depredations against British commerce. If necessary, Clinton was authorized to abandon Philadelphia in order to make troops available for the expedition.[83]

These operations were to be followed in the early fall by a concerted effort to subdue and occupy Georgia and the Carolinas. In the latter enterprise, heavy reliance would be placed on the assistance of Loyalist forces, large numbers of whom were presumed to be of a "disposition to return to their allegiance" with the support of regular British troops.[84] With the lower South occupied, depriving the rebel economy of much of the export crops which sustained its foreign credit, coastal areas of Virginia and Maryland were to be harassed in much the same manner as New England had been during the summer. The goal of the year's campaign would be the subjugation of all of the colonies "South of the Susquehanna." The northern provinces could then, it was hoped, be "left to their own feelings and distress, to bring them back to their duty."[85]

As radical a departure from previous British strategy as this plan seemed to represent, it was to be but an interim step in the evolution of a new policy.[86] Within days after it had been formulated, reliable news of France's decision to sign treaties of alliance with America forced the British Cabinet into a truly radical stance. Barely more than a fortnight after the first instructions had been transmitted a revised strategy was adopted. The King proclaimed his determination to "resent" the "unprovoked and unjust... aggression" implied in the treaties with an "immediate attack" on the West Indian island of St. Lucia.[87] Clinton was ordered to immediately detach 5,000 troops from Philadelphia for an expedition against that island. Three thousand more regulars

were to be sent to bolster British forces at St. Augustine and Pensacola in East and West Florida. When these detachments had been made, Clinton was to evacuate Philadelphia and retire to New York to await the issue of negotiations which British peace commissioners would propose to Congress. If the negotiations failed, or if New York seemed untenable with his reduced force, he was to withdraw at his own discretion to Rhode Island or Halifax.[88]

In a matter of weeks the long-term character of the war in North America had changed fundamentally. On that continent British military power would assume an essentially defensive posture. The Admiralty Board summarized the thrust of the new policy bluntly. "The object of the war being now changed," it advised Lord Richard Howe, "and the contest in America being a secondary consideration, our principal object must be distressing France and defending... His Majesties possessions."[89]

These new circumstances figured centrally in the evolving context of events under which the campaign of 1778 would open in America. Of themselves, however, they do not explain either British military behavior during the early spring or resulting American confusions. The first tentative indication of the Cabinet's strategic reappraisal did not reach Philadelphia until the end of March, and the formal instructions of March 8 and 21 were not placed into Henry Clinton's hands until he arrived in that city in early May to assume command of the army.[90]

Rather, British actions of March and early April reflected the predicaments and perceptions of the field commanders themselves as they waited for positive orders from Whitehall. Clinton, to whom it would fall to execute the Cabinet's decisions, was anxiously waiting to learn whether his request to return to England would be granted. He felt, however, that William Howe should open the campaign in an aggressive fashion. "These people," he remarked, referring to Americans in general, "are certainly hard pressed. Whether from the little appearance of support from France, or from the great and spirited preparations making by us they are extremely drove to try dangerous experiments."[91] Clinton believed that a vigorous military exertion should be explicitly linked to serious peace initiatives. "Now is the time to press them hard," he argued, "and offer them terms... If something is not now done, I shall have still greater reason to lament that the Com^{r} in Chief took from me last Nov^{r} 4000 men at the greatest risk to this place."[92] He pointedly observed that Washington was reported to have "not 6000 men and S.[ir] W.[illiam Howe] at least 18,000."[93]

This logic of events did not appear nearly as evident to Howe in Philadelphia as it did to Clinton in New York. By mid-April Howe was in receipt of the King's permission to resign his command, and was as a result in anything but an offensive mood. The American army, he observed, had indeed been diminished during the winter both by desertions and detachments. However,

possibly foreseeing the expectation that he would attempt to take advantage of this fact to close his American service triumphantly, he took care to point out the reasons why he considered it impracticable to do so. "The want of green forage does not yet permit me to take the Field," he noted, "and [the enemy's] situation is too strong to hazard an attack with a prospect of success which might put an end to the Rebellion."[94] Nor did Howe share Clinton's view of the proper relationship between political and military initiatives. "A check at this Period," he warned, "would probably counteract His Majesty's intentions of preparing the way for the return of Peace by the Bills proposed."[95] Howe planned to await Clinton's arrival in Philadelphia, where upon he would brief him and embark for England.

Washington's apprehension, then, of an imminent enemy offensive, lay at odds not only with central British strategic planning, but also with the circumstances and intentions of Britain's field commanders. In reviewing the evidence upon which he based his increasingly shrill warnings to Congress of the jeopardy in which the army seemed to lie, it seems clear that he drew conclusions which were nowhere implicit in the information which was available to him.[96] Merely to state this fact, however, is by no means to explain Washington's understanding of that information, or his subsequent behavior. A number of plausible interpretations exist. The first of these involves the problem of hindsight itself. As has been mentioned previously, neither

Washington nor anyone on the American side had access to the information cited in preceeding pages to qualify British behavior during the weeks when they were anxiously attempting to discern a pattern in that behavior. Lacking such information, Washington was doing little more or less than availing himself of the commander's traditional preogative of assuming the worst possible consequences from potentially unfavorable circumstances, however questionable. Indeed, his culpability would have been only the greater had he chosen to ignore any reports and the army suffered by it.

If Washington was exaggerating the significance and apparent consistency of what in reality were a handful of disconnected reports of enemy movements, moreover, he was only following a pattern of indulgence in this prerogative which he had adhered to with few exceptions throughout the winter. This was especially the case in his correspondence with political figures, and nowhere more so than with Congress itself. At least as early as December of 1777 he seems to have concluded that that body would act expeditiously only under circumstances of genuine alarm. In this context, Washington's treatment of the alleged enemy buildup in Philadelphia appears to have been a direct extension of his handli..g of the provisions crises of December and February. While his own information in all of these situations was at best partial and often contradictory, he usually had, or could be presumed to have, more and better information than anyone else. Throughout the winter he displayed a consistent inclination to manipulate

this presumption in support of the broad organizational and strategic ends toward which he was striving.[97]

From Washington's viewpoint, the result of this process had been gratifying but hardly conclusive. The reforms initiated in the army's support and logistical departments, accomplished through his work with the Conference Committee, had provided him with important tools for controlling the flow of material and supplies to the army. They had been effected, moreover, in the face of a concerted challenge from the Board of War for control of these very agencies and functions. Congress, however, remained the great engine for mustering the army itself. Unless it kept up its exertions with its constituent states, the control of auxiliary military functions would constitute an empty achievement. However the campaign opened, it was critical that Congress maintain, if not increase, its support of its military arm. It was toward this end that Washington directed his persuasive skills, and the manipulation of prevalent anxieties about the consequences of a setback was far from the least of these skills.

An even more specific motive underlay Washington's continued indulgence in alarmist political tactics during the early spring. The reforms carried out within the support departments had been effected with relatively little resistance once the Board of War's ambitious initiatives had been thwarted. There was little dispute over the assertion - indeed there was a broad consensus within the Continental establishment - that those departments had to be

strengthened and made more efficient. What controversy those reforms had engendered had focused on the proper location for the control over those departments which the measures implied. Having convinced the Conference Committee that that control belonged in the province of the Commander in Chief, Washington had carried his point rather handily in Congress.

The deliberations of the committee, however, had spawned other issues and recommendations of infinitely greater political sensitivity. Proposals for quieting the discontent of the officer corps through the creation of a half-pay pensionary establishment, which Washington considered vital to the success of the reorganization effort, collided with deeply rooted apprehensions in the Anglo-American political culture about the dangers to liberty inherent in a "standing army." Other measures, which looked toward the reorganization of the state contingents and other parts of the Continental military establishment, touched less radical nerves. They nevertheless impinged on questions of state and local, as well as Continental, interest and prerogative.

It was resistance in Congress to the implementation of some of these reforms, and especially to the half-pay proposal, which Washington was apparently attempting to overcome by confronting the delegates with the image of a campaign descending upon an army caught between the abandonment of an old and the adoption of a new system of organization. As early as the last week in March, before the proposals had even been formally introduced at York,

he expressed apprehension over the consequences of delay in their adoption.[98] In order to further the prospects of the measures, Francis Dana and Nathaniel Folsom of the committee returned to York to introduce them personally into Congress.[99] Washington's warnings of the apparent arrival of enemy reinforcements in Philadelphia, and of Howe's presumed intent to use them to launch an attack on the army, seem to have been at least partly intended to support Dana and Folsom's efforts by adding a note of urgency to Congress' deliberations.

The resolutions were referred to a committee of the whole which debated them sporadically during the last week of March, after which Congress voted on April 2 to postpone any decision indefinitely.[100] By that time implacable opponents of the half-pay scheme, lacking the votes to defeat it outright, had conceived of the strategy of referring it to the states as a way of delaying, if not destroying, the measure.[101] Washington continued to lobby for the proposals, indeed he intensified his argument even after he found it necessary to concede the chimerical quality of the British reinforcements.[102] Despite his alternately artful and heavy-handed advocacy, however, Congress remained seriously divided on the question. The debate itself would languish and flare until the middle of May.[103] The less controversial but nevertheless contingent proposals for remodelling the state battalions, as well as other articles of the new establishment, would not even be taken up until the half-pay argument had been settled. They

would not be formally approved until the end of May. As a result, Washington was forced to undertake what he would continue to characterize as folly itself: the preparation of the army for a new campaign in the absence of final decisions on its organization.

The centerpiece of this preparation - the introduction into the ranks of a new system of field drill and maneuver - had in fact been underway since late March. The task was entrusted to Friedrich von Steuben, another of the seemingly ubiquitous foreign "volunteers" who found their way into the American service. Steuben, a veteran of European wars under Frederick the Great, arrived in America in late 1777 and immediately corresponded with Washington seeking a place in the army. Washington referred him to Congress which, despite having by that time contracted an almost allergic sensitivity to the pretensions of foreigners "cheerfully" voted to accept his offer of service and directed him to repair as soon as convenient to Valley Forge.[104] Transmitting the order, President Henry Laurens warned Steuben that, while he would receive the best accommodations available at camp, they would "be only tolerable in your soldierly character." Washington himself, Laurens observed, "lives... in a Hut, that is a little temporary cabin such as one inhabited by the poorest Boors."[105] With this incentive Steuben found it convenient to delay his arrival in camp for more than a month.

The Prussian arrived at Valley Forge during the depths of the great provisions crisis in the third week of February, carrying a warm letter of introduction from Henry Laurens to his son John.[106] Despite the pressures of the emergency Steuben was warmly received at Head Quarters, and accorded several long interviews with John Laurens. Laurens found Steuben "a man profound in the Science of war," and thought that he might ably fill the military, but not the civil, functions of Quarter Master General. He would, Laurens observed, be the "properest" candidate for Inspector General. He noted that the newcomer "seems to be perfectly aware of the disadvantages the Army has labored under... seems to understand what our Soldiers are capable of, and is not so starch a Systematist as to be averse from adapting established forms to stubborn Circumstances."[107]

Notwithstanding Laurens' glowing effusions, the specific character of Steuben's service was not immediately determined. The two men exchanged long memoranda which compared, to adopt Lauren's phrase, the "established forms" with which Steuben was familiar with the "stubborn circumstances" under which the American army operated.[108] Steuben was sent on a tour of the camp to inspect its fortifications and made recommendations for their completion and improvement.[109] This provided him with an opportunity to distinguish himself from other foreign volunteers, whose expertise had often proved limited to abstract generalizations. By the middle of March the newcomer had established enough rapport

and credibility with Washington to be given the task of supervising the reform of the army's discipline. Withholding his uneasiness over being asked to suspend his request for a commission as a major general until the Conference Committee had made its recommendations, Steuben proclaimed his willingness to serve as a volunteer. He only wanted to "be useful to the United States," he proclaimed, "and to participate in the Glory of your Armies. My only Ambition is to reap Lawrels in your Fields."[110]

Steuben's contribution would be infinitely more useful than glorious. Such laurels as it offered, moreover, would initially be won on the parade grounds at camp, rather than the battlefield. Borrowing a suggestion from the by now thoroughly discredited Thomas Conway, Washington decided to introduce the new system of field drill to a small group before attempting to impose it on the army as a whole.[111] This model unit consisted of Washington's own Corps of Guards, to which, since it was comprised entirely of Virginians, were annexed one hundred "chosen men" from the other state lines.[112] Meanwhile, a heirarchy of sub or assistant Inspectors and Brigade Inspectors was established to oversee the introduction of the new system throughout the army.[113] As a preliminary step the brigade and regimental commanders were asked to discontinue the informal exercising and maneuvering which many of them had undertaken with their men during the winter.[114]

The drilling began on March 24, with each regiment working on its own parade beginning at nine o'clock in the morning, and again in the afternoon between four and five.[115] The maneuvers drew a favorable reaction from the officers almost from the first day. John Laurens attributed this fact to Steuben's own demeanor and conduct. The Baron, he observed, "discovers the greatest zeal and activity which is hardly to be expected at his years... he sets... an example in descending to the functions of a drill-Sergeant."[116] There seems also to have been a genuine appreciation of the efficacy and substance of the new drills themselves. One colonel found them "more agreeable to the dictates of Reason and common sense than any mode I have before seen." Of the drills he observed: "we are first taught to march without musick but the time of march is given us. Slow Time is a Medium between what was in our service Slow and Quicke Time, Quicke Time about as Quicke as a Common Country Dance."[117]

There was a sense in many quarters that the new system would be of more than short-term utility. The officer quoted above was a self-described malcontent who boasted of his intention of retiring from the service. He was however, "determine[d] to Continue here untill I have learnt the New Discipline as I would not chuse to be ignorant of it."[118] A lieutenant colonel notified his regiment that uniformity and regularity in discipline were "so highly necessary, and the present mode adopted so perfectly easy and natural, that it will be considered a disgrace for an officer

to be unacquainted with it, especially since he can make himself a perfect master of it with so little trouble."[119] The officer ordered five of his subordinates to join Washington's guard every day in rotation, "paying the strictest attention to the different instructions that may be given from time to time, and the manner of their being performed."[120]

By the first of April John Laurens was able to report that Steuben was "making a sensible progress with our Soldiers." "It would enchant you," he informed his father, "to see the enlivened scene of our Campus Martius."[121] By this time at least some of the exercises had been shifted from the individual brigade grounds to the large common parade in the center of camp. A Brigade Inspector was designated to "command" the parade each day in rotation, while Steuben gave close attention to the exercises of a different unit every day.[122]

Washington supported the exercises with an increased emphasis on overall discipline. Noting the irregular arrival of brigades on their parade grounds, he insisted that "greater punctuality... be observed in future with respect to time." He was willing to attribute past tardiness to the prevailing "difference in Watches." Henceforth, however, he ordered that all watches in camp be regulated "by the Clock at Head Quarters," to which the Adjutant General would adjust his own timepiece each day.[123] Increased attention was also given to inspecting the appearance of the troops and the state of their arms and equipment. Brigade



Friedrich Steuben (1730-1794)

Major General and first Inspector General of the American army. Drilled the army rigorously during the spring of 1778.

"Some... will enquire, 'Who is that Man who meddles with our discipline; On what Authority does he introduce Such or Such Thing?'"

Courtesy of Independence National Historical Park

adjutants were notified of their responsibility for this matter, and threatened with arrest for negligence of it. "Want of Uniformity in the soldiers cloathing and its indifferent quality," Washington intoned, "so far from excusing Slovenliness and unsoldierly neglect in other respects ought rather to excite each man to compensate those blemishes by redoubled attention to the means which he has in his power."[124] Non-commissioned officers were subjected to reduction in rank for failure to maintain "a conduct and example which ought to distinguish them from privates, [and to] endeavor to preserve order, regularity and obedience."[125] The new marching regime was immediately translated from the parade grounds to the field. The informal practice of marching men in single file in small parties on detachment was condemned for its "unmilitary appearance." Henceforth, even small groups in camp or on detachment were to be "march'd by divisions," and officers were enjoined to "see that [their] men march properly."[126]

Steuben continued to display a keen sensitivity about his still-unofficial status in the army. The "Service of Lieu^{t} I am now obliged to make," he observed to Henry Laurens, "is become Strange Enough to me after forty years."[127] Nevertheless, he said, he would "cheerfully consent" to serve on whatever terms necessary to accomplish his ends. "Some... will enquire," he warned, "Who is that Man who meddles with our Discipline; On what Authority does he introduce Such or Such Thing?" In such a case, Steuben averred, he would leave his "Vindication" to Congress. He reported

that he had encountered nothing but good will at the hands of the common soldiers and most of the officers.[128] Laurens hastened to assure his guileful correspondent that his service would not go unacknowledged by Congress. Washington would probably soon announce his "conditionary appointment," he predicted, and promised Steuben his own best efforts "consistenly with [the honor] of these infant states."[129]

John Laurens adopted Steuben's own metaphor to depict the salutary effect of the latter's ambitions and anxieties. He is "exerting himself like a Lieutenant anxious for promotion," Laurens reported to his father, "and the good effects of his labours are visible."[130] Laurens surmised that Washington was only waiting to assess the feelings of the brigadiers before recommending an official appointment for Steuben. He offered his own judgement that "everyone is convinced of his Zeal and abilities, and thinks him deserving of the Grade which he asks for."[131] Other observers approvingly noted the positive results of Steuben's exertions. Samuel Ward, a newcomer from Rhode Island, informed his wife that the Prussian had "obligingly undertaken to discipline the army and is very indefatigable in his charge."[132] Henry Knox, who had recently returned to camp after two months in New England, observed that the army was "improving in discipline and increasing in numbers every day."[133]

More will be said about Steuben in the next chapter. In the meantime, however, his role and accomplishments present an interpretive problem which call for at least a few comments here. In the

popular literature of the Revolution, Steuben has generally been cast as one of at most a handful of unvarnished individual heroes of the army's Valley Forge ordeal. He has been credited, with varying degrees of qualification, with turning an awkward, poorly trained rabble into a relatively polished, effective fighting force in little more than two months.[134] This study has taken consistent issue with the first image: of the army in 1778 as a still-inefficient aggregation of spirited amateurs. Any assessment of the accuracy of the second image would extend well beyond the temporal boundaries of this work. It is worth noting, however, that with the exception of the inconclusive engagement of Monmouth in June of 1778, the army would have few if any large scale opportunities for several years to prove or disprove assertions about the improvement of its fighting abilities.

Having reiterated the first point and tentatively suggested the second, how can Steuben's contribution be assessed based on the first six weeks of his tenure as de facto Inspector General? The documentary evidence on the subject is impressive in its nearly unanimous acknowledgement of a positive effect on the performance of the troops which he undertook to train. It is far from insignificant, moreover, to find such testimony at all coming from a group of individuals such as the American officer corps; men who were so collectively ready to resent intrusions on their entrenched prerogatives, or to resist interference with their functions. More impressive than the approval is the manifest absence of dissent.

Later in the spring there would be evidence of friction between Steuben and some of his fellow officers. In the first months of his tenure, however, a generous accord appears to have prevailed.

The point is relatively amenable to an explanation, albeit a speculative one. The training function was, quite simply, a difficult one: specialized, tedious and in no way glamorous. Whatever their jealousies, moreover, it must have occurred to most of the officers that a well drilled and disciplined army would be easier to command, both on a daily basis and in combat, than an untrained one. The observations of individuals from major generals down to field officers fairly ring with praise for the overall virtues of the troops under their command, tempered by a recognition of the want of what John Laurens called a "little more discipline" in large scale operations.[135] Any steps which seemed likely to infuse the latter quality, whatever their source, stood a fair chance of being accepted.

Washington's handling of Steuben's introduction, moreover, undoubtedly contributed to his effectiveness. By withholding a formal commission, emphasizing Steuben's voluntary status, and in effect forcing him to prove the worth of his contribution, Washington held jealousies in check while the newcomer's compatibility was judged. There is more. Ironically, Steuben's acceptance in the army may actually have been facilitated rather than hindered by the prevalent resentment of foreigners. In function, if not in formal commission, after all, he was superseding and indeed replacing Thomas Conway - the individual who had carved for himself a niche as the pluperfect interloping foreigner - rather

than a "native" American. By implicitly undercutting the man upon whom many of the American officers had focused their resentments, Steuben probably unknowingly diffused much of the jealousy which might otherwise have descended upon himself.

The larger point remains to be addressed. If the testimony of members of a potentially hostile group of informants to the positive results of Steuben's efforts is accepted, what does this signify about the army itself at the outset of his tenure? Does it support the popular conception of the army as a veritable rabble: "not a national army at all but merely a collection of detachments from the various colonies," or a "group of devoted but minimally trained, loosely organized, poorly equipped and highly individualistic men?"[136] Intuitively, the answer would have to be that it does not. For one thing, it hardly seems conceivable that any system or individual, however brilliant or charismatic, could have effected much of a transformation with such a raw material in so short a span of time. Notwithstanding Thomas Conway's claim to have seen 200,000 recruits trained in three months, it would be giving inordinate credit to European military genius or to American adaptability to pose the credibility of such a transformation.[137] Rather, evidence of visible results in a matter of weeks would seem to support the claims of John Laurens and others: that the pre-Steuben army was already at an organizational crystalization point, needing only a knowledgeable, patient and pragmatic individual with the authority and credibility to translate its latent discipline into increased functional effectiveness.

Concerted efforts to train the army coincided with, if they did not precipitate, a gradual but noticeable improvement in its overall mood as spring ended the worst episodes of material deprivation. During Steuben's first weeks in camp that mood remained sullen and contentious in the wake of the dire shortages of February. When supplies again began to be marginally adequate, individuals found their voices, as they had after the abatement of the December crisis, to express discontents which had been suppressed during the emergency itself.

As before, those discontents focused on a mixture of internal and external targets. Massachusetts troops looked on in amazement as other states' regiments were gradually re-clothed, and wondered why their own did not make similar efforts on their behalf.[138] An officer from that state accused its citizens of having "Lost all Bowles of Compassion if they Ever had any" for their neglect of the needs of his men. They had "Lost all there Publick Spirit," he railed, "I would Beg of them to Rouse from there stupedity and Put on some humanity and stir themselves Before it is too late."[139] Enoch Poor notified Governor Weare of New Hampshire that supplies sent from that state were "very acceptable, though inadquate to our wants." Poor conjectured that the state's officials had credited reports of the roads being "crowded with teams carrying clothing to army." Lest they concluded that the shortages were over, he transmitted returns showing that the new supplies had provided for only a small fraction of the troops, and observed "our army still remains in their ragged suffering situation."[140]

If the states at large continued to feel the sting of their troops' resentment for "not fulfilling their engagements," however, the choicest epithets still tended to be reserved for Pennsylvania, and for its increasingly maligned inhabitants. In the aftermath of the February famine, Isaac Gibbs registered a by now familiar disparagement of the local populace:

> the country to be sure is good, but the Inhabitants are chiefly what we call quakers, & I believe are the far greater part of them. No friends to the Cause we are engaged in but on the Contrary which causes us to suffer much on account of Provisions that sometimes we have been obliged to go out and take their Provisions by force... Thus we suffer for want of the Common Necessaries of Life. 141

James Varnum remained the undisputed laureate of the army's discontent, and the most eloquent expressor of its intermittent bitterness toward its neighbors. "In short," he exclaimed:

> ...Toryism rules the roost, & ugliness, in nameless forms, usurps the Throne of Beauty. But for the virtuous few of the army, I am persuaded that this country must long before this have been destroyed. It is saved for our sakes; & its salvation ought to cause Repentence in us for all our Sins, if evil and Misery are the Consequences of Iniquity. For my own part, I believe they are; And expect by this Pennance, to emerge into the World, after leaving this place, with all accounts fully ballanced. I shall then take care how I sin again, ever having a retrospect to its Consequences. 142

To a friend, Varnum confided:

> My fear is that of dying in a heathenish Land, depriv'd of a Christian Burial. Should that befall me, how can by Body be found by those who are conversant only in holy places and with good Beings? You are well acquainted that a man must die when his time comes; & should mine approach while confined in Pennsylvania, how can my soul find its way thro' this Tory Labyrinth, to a pure Ether, congenial to its own Nature? 143

Varnum's flights of scornful fantasy can be attributed to his relative youth and to his consistently irascible disposition. His outbursts were faintly tempered, if at all, however, by their enclosure in the same packet with the reflections of his older, more settled neighbor and sometime mentor Nathanael Greene. Reviewing his sacrifices on behalf of the American cause, Greene acknowledged:

> It is true I shall have the consolation of exerting my small abilities in support of the Liberties of my Country, but that is but poor food to subsist a family upon in old Age - And publick gratitude you know would be a novelty in modern politics. [144]

Greene was glad to know that there were "some few who sympathise with the Army in their distress," but observed:

> We are almost ready to think sometimes that our armies are despisd and that our Country are determined we shall struggle with cold and hunger without their aid - I am persuaded the sufferings of this Army is but little known - or else every sentiment of humanity, private virtue, and publick spirit have left the States. [145]

Epistles of similarly angry and mournful tenor flowed from the camp - and especially from the pens of self-proclaimedly displaced New Englanders - during the last weeks of the winter. John Sullivan confessed himself to be so "full of gloomy darkness" that not even an assignment to command the American forces in Rhode Island could wholly cheer him. [146] So negative and unabating did remonstrances to New England become that Jedediah Huntington - himself an artful and abrasive complainer on occasion - found it necessary to refute rumors circulating in that region that the

army had fallen out internally. There was, he assured his friend Jeremiah Wadsworth, "no Party, as you have heard, in the army." Overstating his case, Huntington reported that "the General and Subordinate Officers were never better agreed in this or I believe in any Army in the world."[147]

Notwithstanding Huntingdon's disclaimer, there remained serious, though certainly not critical, pockets of heated disunity within the army. One of these was in the division of artillery, a wilful, fractious, self-designatedly elite unit of specialists who inhabited their own camp-within-a-camp (or "Park" as they called it), where they refined the arts of contention to an exemplary degree. Isolated by routine and function, as well as location, from the rest of the army, the division squabbled throughout the winter in blithe imitation of its peers, although generally over issues confined to its own situation. When Henry Knox left the camp in February on a mission to New England, the division split along the lines of a clash among several of his subordinates. The dispute developed into a sustained internecine conflict which became so heated during Knox's lengthy absence that it continued well into the spring.[148] By the end of March Colonels Thomas Proctor and John Crane, two of the principal contestants for day-to-day control of the division, were described by a subordinate as being "near Daggers points."[149]

Throughout most of the rest of the army rancor, contention, and grievances tended to be less sharply focused than in the largely self-contained hotbed of the Artillery Park, and their resolution remained

essentially idiosyncratic. Almost every day dissatisfied individuals from regular army units and support departments resigned, deserted, complained, remonstrated or lobbied to be assigned elsewhere.[150] Inevitably, some of this discontent yielded to the increasing tempo of camp life as the army began to prepare to take the field. The slowly improving climate, and the increase of naturally available food, mitigated some material sources of dissatisfaction, and made others at least more tolerable.[151] The increasing emphasis from Head Quarters on the enforcement of discipline, and especially Washington's blunt threat to break disorderly non-commissioned officers, raised the threshold of tolerance at the critical organizational juncture between field officers and privates.[152] For holders of commissions, the impending reduction of regiments and the consequent probability that troublesome or unruly officers would be declared "supernumerary" had a similarly sobering effect.[153]

For these reasons and others, the prevailing cynical mood began to be alloyed with thin streaks of optimism and good temper as March turned into April. Members of the army at large - including generals and higher level field officers - were not caught up in the rapid swings of euphoria and despair which swept through Head Quarters depending on the latest intelligence reports. Individuals not directly involved in campaign planning instead shared in the general perception that the organizational metabolism was quickening. Their reactions and expectations depended largely upon the things which they were in a position to witness from day to day. For many observers in this group the only variable of consequence seemed to be the timeliness and efficacy of Continental efforts.

The arrival of reinforcements and supplies, and the overall strength of the army itself, became the critical yardsticks by which to measure the prospects for the campaign ahead.

Jedediah Huntington declared that he could "hardly wish Gen. Howe in a more convenient situation to attack than he is now in, had we but our compliment of troops." Huntington hoped that "every nerve will be exerted to make our army formidable," and boasted that if every state had "done like Connecticut," Howe would probably have shared Burgoyne's fate.[154] Alexander Scammell hoped that the states would "pour in Reinforcements to enable [us] to coope up our bloodthirsty unnatural foes in Philadelphia."[155] Anthony Wayne, who remained embarrassed well into the spring by laggard material support from his own state, was nevertheless optimistic. Passing along to Thomas Wharton reports that British officers in Philadelphia were calling for Howe's removal, Wayne added that he hoped it would not occur "untill we have an opportunity to Burgoyne him."[156]

Whether these expectations were being, or would be, fulfilled remained largely a matter of individual perception. An event could be viewed as an auspicious sign from one point of view, and as a perfect example of too little, too late, from another. Camp surgeons could take comfort as well as satisfaction from the improvement of the army's health, on the undisputed ground that a private retrieved from the sick list was as valuable as a new recruit. A Rhode Island physician reported with relief that the last division to undergo smallpox inoculations

was finally recovering from that arduous treatment. Almost 4,000 men, he observed, had been brought through the process with only a handful of fatalities, and the army was finally generally healthy. He noted that the coming campaign was "big with the Fates of Britain and America," and promised to "cheerfully submit to all the Hardships... of a military life," the worst of which, he whimsically observed, was a shortage of grog.[157] Another surgeon decided to see out the campaign on similar grounds. The army, he reported, "tho' small, is tolerable healthy, better clothed and on a much more respectable footing than ever before."[158] Others drew encouragement from a variety of circumstances. A major from Virginia predicted that the army was "likely to be on a respectable footing before next fall," if the intervening campaign did not disrupt it. While he expected the fighting season to "be a very warm one," he was pleased to reflect that the army was "50 times in better order this spring than we were last to receive the Enemy."[159]

To the optimistic, army life and the world in general began to wear a more hopeful tint. During April, letters from camp began to be sprinkled with comments which would have seemed anomalous if not ludicrous during the darker days of mid-winter. One officer even managed to find promotions "very rapid in the army at this time." Having been a major only six months he learned that there was already a vacancy for a lieutenant colonel, to which he expected to be appointed by mid-summer.[160] Another sought to

persuade a friend in Massachusetts that the camp "affords much better quarters than you would imagine, if you consider the materials, season, & hurry in which it was built."[161] As the warmer and drier weather repaired some of the ecological havoc which the encampment had inevitably wrought on the local landscape, a more benign perception of the area emerged. "The fertile ground which has long laid covered in snow," one officer remarked, "seems to be renew'd by the breases of the south, and the warm shining of the sun."[162] A late arrival from Rhode Island, reporting to his wife on "two agreeable walks over the Schuylkill this day," commented that "the meadows on each side that beautiful River begin to look charmingly."[163]

A stubborn and seemingly ineradicable skepticism, however, continued to manifest itself. Nathanael Greene, an impregnable pillar of hope during the crises of the winter, had become by early spring perhaps the devil's best advocate. His previously intrepid temper seemed to flag during March as he shouldered the complex problems of the crippled Quarter Master's Department, without relinquishing his role as a close advisor to Washington. By April it fell to Greene to question whether the apparent improvement in the army's situation was based on substantive gains or only reflected wishful thinking. Greene was impatient with the rate at which reinforcements arrived from the states. He privately expressed the opinion that the enemy's defeat at Saratoga the previous fall had made the people "too sanguine" about the course of the war, and reluctant to sacrifice private interest for the public good.[164] Undoubtedly in closer touch than many others with Washington's intermittent anxieties about a possible enemy offensive, Greene continued

to worry about the army's strength. While other observers duly noted the periodic arrival of reinforcements and concluded that the army was now "respectable in point of numbers," Greene held tenaciously to his opinion that "the army recruits slow."[165]

Nor was Greene a lonely Jeremiah. William Bradford, a Deputy Muster Master General, whose responsibility it was to monitor the army's strength, was if anything even more pessimistic about the slow arrival of reinforcements. Bradford shared Greene's view of the effects of the victory at Saratoga, which he thought had "operated as an opiate & lull'd us to sleep." His only consolation lay in the belief that the enemy was similarly quiescent and "content to remain unmolested" in Philadelphia. On the whole, Bradford thought it "Strange that such powers as Britian & America, contending for such objects as Dominion & Freedom, should have such contemptible armies in the field."[166] Samuel Ward was shocked at the situation which he discovered at Valley Forge. "All our preparations here look rather defensive than offensive," he informed his wife, "it would hardly be possible to act in our present situation."[167] Ward, who would shortly soften his judgement in response to Steuben's work with the troops, stated the conundrum in awkward but telling terms: "We are not the strength of the country but much depends upon us. Yet between you and I much will not be done."[168]

Nathanael Greene's reservations about the army's prospects began with but extended far beyond the alarmingly slow effort to

bring the state regiments up to the quotas assigned by Congress. He shared Washington's frustration with the seemingly endless delays on the political resolution of the army's new establishment. The best hopes of even optimists for the coming campaign were predicated upon the assumption that Congress would approve the half-pay proposal, and thereby encourage experienced officers to remain in the army.[169] By the middle of April there was a growing restiveness in camp about the continuing silence from York.[170] Greene was convinced that "Great jealousies prevail in Congress respecting the army." Its members, he believed, "think we despise them and are exceedingly vext about it." When he learned that the half-pay question would probably "end in a reference to the states," he predicted "there it will dye and sink into forgetfulness." "We are not yet happy enough," he gloomily concluded, "to get to the end of the chapter of experiments - the prospect before me looks languid and sickly."[171]

By the middle of April, then, the mood of the army was characterized by a fragile balance between the cautiously growing optimism of many of its members and the persistent skepticism and occasional outright gloom of at least a few. The whole was fraught, moreover, with the underlying anxieties of those individuals whose responsibilities required them to be concerned with British aims and intentions. This diversity of views was sustained both by the scarcity of reliable information about events occurring beyond the camp, and by the inconsistency of what little information was available.

At every level from Head Quarters down to the Provost Guard's detention cells, portents were as common and as diverse as the individual imagination, while hard knowledge was sparse.

In such an environment, whatever reliable intelligence became available had a magnified impact. On April 17 Washington was handed a paper which provided the first hint of the reappraisal of British policy that had taken place during the winter. It was a draft of the Conciliation Bills that the Cabinet had presented to Parliament in February, which were intended to test the prospects for peace by making concessions to the Americans short of actual independence. While Washington permitted himself the brief luxury of thinking that the bills might be a contrivance formulated in Philadelphia, he recognized that they could in any case have a "malignant influence" by dividing adherents to the American cause. He therefore asked Congress to investigate the matter and "expose, in the most striking manner, the injustice, delusion and fraud it contains."[172]

Within two days Washington was convinced of the authenticity of the bills. He continued to press Congress and attempted to encourage a political response to the bills.[173] He suggested the passage of a bill to offer Tories full pardons if they submitted to Congressional authority within a specified period.[174] Washington's immediate responsibility, however, lay in mitigating the impact of the proposals on the army itself. Within a few days of their arrival at Head Quarters, rumors of their contents had

sown some consternation within the camp.[175] The clearest and most immediate means of demonstrating that the war would not be abandoned lay in vigorous measures for continuing to prosecute it. It was therefore decided to formally present to the general officers the alternative plans for opening the campaign which had been formulated the month before. Washington remained convinced that the enemy would proceed with plans for continuing the war. The Conciliation Bills themselves, however, suggested that British policy was "founded in the despair of [that] Nation of succeeding against us."[176] This raised the possibility that Howe would await the American reaction to the peace proposal, and in the process yield the short-term military initiative.

The presentation to the American generals took the form of three questions which summarized the proposals Washington had outlined the month before. Washington withheld his own comments on the alternatives, leaving it to the generals to "fully weigh every circumstance" and give their views on each option upon "the result of mature deliberation."[177] Within five days twelve of them returned detailed replies. On reviewing them Washington discovered, if he was not already aware of it, that his general officers were deeply, and indeed almost evenly, divided on the question of how the campaign should be opened. Most of them qualified their opinions, either by commenting favorably on more than one option or else by predicating their choices on various external assumptions. With the exception of Lafayette, however,

all finally indicated discrete preferences. When the responses were tallied, four generals recommended an attempt against Philadelphia, four opted for transferring the "seat of war" northward through an expedition against New York, and three expressed a preference for keeping the army in a secure, fortified camp.[178]

A few general themes developed from the responses. Nearly all of the generals cited the need for at least 25,000 troops to blockade Philadelphia; many commented favorably on the support which could be expected from the New Engalnd militia for an expedition against New York; and a few demurred on the northern alternative on grounds of geographic ignorance. Ultimately, however, such patterns as emerged seem to have inhered more in the attributes of the respondents themselves than in the reasons which they offered. There was a geographic denominator of uncertain significance in the choice between Philadelphia and New York. Of the four generals preferring to move against Philadelphia, three (William Maxwell, Lord Stirling, and Anthony Wayne) were residents of New Jersey or Pennsylvania, while the fourth (John Patterson) came from Massachusetts. Of four choosing to transfer the campaign to New York, on the other hand, three (James Varnum, Henry Knox, and Enoch Poor) were New Englanders, while the fourth (Peter Muhlenberg) was a Virginian.

Any attempt to interpret the opinions as indicative of significant regional blocks, however, should be weighed cautiously. The New Englanders were, it is true, generally open in their eagerness to rely upon the militia of their native region, who they

FIGURE I

Opinions on the Opening of the Campaign
Solicited April 20, 1778

Name Rank State	#1: Attack or Besiege Philadelphia	#2: Transfer Campaign to New York	#3: Remain in Secure Camp	Attended**** Council of War May 8, 1778
John Patterson Brigadier General Massachusetts	X*			No
William Maxwell Brigadier General New Jersey	X			No
Anthony Wayne Brigadier General New Jersey	X			No
Lord Stirling Major General New Jersey	X	**		Yes
James Varnum Brigadier General Rhode Island		X		No
Enoch Poor Brigadier General New Hampshire		X		No
Henry Knox Brigadier General Massachusetts		X		Yes
Peter Muhlenberg Brigadier General Virginia		X		No
Nathanael Greene Major General Rhode Island			X	Yes
Friedrich Steuben Major General Prussia			X	Yes
Louis Duportail Brigadier General France			X	Yes
Marquis de Lafayette Major General France	***			Yes

* "X" indicates preferred alternative

** Stirling preferred executing a New York expedition in combination with the movement against Philadelphia, which was his first choice.

*** Lafayette did not firmly commit himself to any of the three alternatives.

**** Other members of the May 8 Council of War were Horatio Gates and Thomas Mifflin of the Board of War, General John Armstrong of the Pennsylvania militia, and Major General Johan de Kalb.

felt had distinguished themselves at Saratoga while those of the middle states proved unreliable during the 1777 Philadelphia campaign. The group preferring Philadelphia, however, displayed less unanimity of viewpoint. It included one New Englander (Patterson) who rejected a New York expedition out of hand. Two of its number (Wayne and Stirling), on the other hand, approved of New York as a second choice. It is not clear, moreover, whether the choice between the two alternatives can be viewed as indicating a middle state bias by natives of that region, especially in the case of the Jerseyans. The most that can be suggested is that the geographic pattern emerged, weakly and inarticulately, and that no other explanation seems more persuasive in this instance.

The choice of remaining in a secure camp elicited a different pattern of response. This option was clearly the least popular of the three. It was not mentioned as anyone's second choice; was rejected out of hand more frequently than any of the other options; and indeed, except for its three advocates, elicited only one even lukewarm favorable comment. Its support came from a diverse trio consisting of Nathanael Greene, Friedrich Steuben, and Louis Duportail. The three advanced arguments which showed less convergence of viewpoint than the advocates of either of the other alternatives. Only Duportail flatly contended that the American army was not, and was not soon likely to be, a match for its British counterpart. Greene and Steuben, on the other hand, wanted to use the security of a fortified camp as a possible base for an eventual transition to one of the other two options. Greene believed that it could eventually

be used in support of a New York expedition, while Steuben advocated keeping the army behind entrenchments while looking for an opportunity to strike a "daring blow" against the enemy in Philadelphia.

What these men did have in common, in addition to their advocacy of the third alternative, were certain broad similarities of role and function in the reorganizing Continental military establishment. All three were, in their own ways, rising stars in auxiliary parts of that establishment. In each instance their new responsibilities would be facilitated by the adoption of the third alternative, and hindered, disrupted or obviated altogether by the choice of either of the other two. For Greene, the task of rebuilding the Quarter Master's Department figured to be difficult enough if the army stayed put, and well-nigh impossible if it did not. He had obligingly given Washington an ambitious plan for stockpiling large quantities of forage along routes which the army might take. The correspondence of his deputies, however, persuasively indicates the strain which the department was experiencing in anticipation of any sudden movement.[179] Steuben and Duportail were in similar if not exactly parallel circumstances. Indeed, their recommendations were virtually prefigured in the wording of the third alternative itself. Given Steuben's responsibility for training the army, and Duportail's for overseeing its engineering functions, their support for a proposal for "remaining quiet, in a secure fortified camp, disciplining and arranging the army" was almost a foregone conclusion.

From Washington's point of view the immediate and crucially important point lay less in the reasons behind the preferences than in the fact of the division itself. When second choices and off-hand opinions, favorable and unfavorable, were considered, the plan for transferring the campaign toward New York held a marginal, but by no means decisive, edge over the others. Washington's own opinion figured to weigh heavily in any final decision, of course. While he had specifically declined to offer it when submitting the questions to the generals, he had provided some rough indications of his thinking in the original "Thoughts Upon A Plan of Operation." The Philadelphia expedition, he reflected, was "undoubtedly the most desirable... if within reach of possibility"; the New York effort "also an important one, if practicable." On the other hand, he warned that the alternative of remaining quiet might "be a means of disgusting our own People by our apparent inactivity."[180]

It should be observed that the solicitation of written opinions from the generals did not constitute a final or formal vote on the question of how the campaign should be opened. Indeed, Congress had authorized Washington to call a general Council of War to discuss the question fully, to which it took the liberty of inviting Horatio Gates and Thomas Mifflin of the Board of War.[181] For the moment, the collection of recommendations served a variety of interim functions. It helped to reinforce the momentum which Washington had been struggling to instill into the army since

the beginning of March. It also acted as a counter to the rumors of a negotiated settlement in the wake of the British conciliation proposals.

While energy and attention at Valley Forge gradually shifted from keeping the army intact to preparing it for the campaign, the conflict continued unabated in the area between the camp and the city. Military life in the detached districts was characterized, as it had been throughout the winter, by long periods of tedium, deprivation and chronic anxiety, punctuated by occasional alarms and brief violent encounters with British patrols.[182] William Howe continued his encouragement of Tory violence against supporters of the revolutionary cause (his "kidnapping plan," as one member of Congress called it), if too sporadically to gain a decisive military advantage, then at least concertedly enough to bear out Joseph Reed's fears for the security of unprotected Whigs.[183] As Reed had predicted, individuals known to have had contact with the American army discovered the hazards of traveling unescorted between the camp and their homes.[184] Even patrols of militia and regular army troops came to believe that their movements were constantly watched by local inhabitants and immediately reported to the enemy.[185] As a result it was considered imprudent for detachments to linger more than one night in the same vicinity, while parties operating within five miles of the British lines often found it advisable to travel under cover of darkness.[186] Officers below the Head Quarters level were denied the prerogative of sending scouting parties from camp.[187] In some places the

situation became so precarious that the desertion of a single dragoon was thought to compromise the security of a piquet post.[188]

Smallwood's garrison at Wilmington continued to play only a peripheral role in these activities. The post remained a buffer between Philadelphia and the southern supply terminus at Head of Elk, an intelligence station for watching enemy river traffic, and a potential support base for Continental forays into New Jersey. Smallwood and Washington repaired their breach over the Symmetry affair, and relations between the outpost and Head Quarters proceeded more amicably.[189] By the middle of March, however, the garrison was suffering from the consequence of the diversion of supplies from Maryland and Delaware to the main army which Smallwood had predicted the month before. Its commissaries, having been forced to slaughter their own scrawny and diseased herd, were reduced to scavenging the lower parts of Delaware for small droves of cattle rumored to be available there. Smallwood complained that those areas were "intirely drained," and expressed the fear that the army's commissaries would ignore his needs unless they were enjoined by Head Quarters to assist him.[190]

The garrison soon became so constrained for food, forage, and wagons that Smallwood was forced to refuse requests to provide guards and transportation for the movement of goods between the head of the Chesapeake and Valley Forge.[191] Instead, he confined his efforts to watching the river for enemy shipping, removing hay from its banks between Wilmington and Chester, and retrieving

the cargoes from several British vessels captured in the vicinity.[192] At Congress' request Smallwood also detached a party to arrest politically questionable citizens in anticipation of an enemy invasion of the state of Delaware.[193]

By early April Washington had begun to weigh the utility of these functions against the value of the garrison as a reservoir of manpower for the main army itself. When it appeared that the campaign would open suddenly he briefly decided to recall Smallwood's division to camp, and almost immediately overruled himself.[194] For the remainder of the spring the detachment waited anxiously, poised to withdraw "at a moment's warning."[195] An officer depicted the division's plight as "still... fatiguing, critical and alarming." Its members had, he observed, done four times as much duty during the winter as during the preceeding campaign, and erected more extensive fortifications than had the entire army during its stay at Wilmington the previous September. Until the campaign began they would lie behind those fortifications, exposed to attacks by land and water, dependent for provisions on seizures from Tories and market people, anxiously watching for the "visit" from William Howe which they had expected all winter.[196]

In Pennsylvania the army struggled with little more success than it had had earlier in the winter to prevent communication and trade between Philadelphia and the countryside. By the early spring the division of that countryside into administrative districts east and west of the Schuylkill River had become little

more than a convenient fiction. After the February provisions crisis Washington found it almost constantly necessary to employ Continental troops on both sides of the river to secure the army's supply lines and to keep disaffected civilians in check, if not actually under control. The return of convalescents from area military hospitals and the arrival of reinforcements and clothing from the states slowly increased the number of troops available for this duty, but hardly at a pace equal to the demand. By the end of March, Washington bitterly complained to John Armstrong that "instead of relaxation [the troops] have been upon fatigue the whole winter."[197]

Coverage of the area west of the Schuylkill had been reduced during February and early March by the withdrawal of Henry Lee from the district for a foraging mission to Delaware. On Lee's return to camp in mid-March, the Conference Committee recommended him for promotion to the rank of major and asked him to form a new corps of dragoons for independent service during the coming campaign.[198] Lee politely declined an appointment as an aide-de-camp to Washington, preferring to remain in active service.[199] The Commander in Chief enthusiastically recommended him to Congress for the promotion.[200] In the meantime, however, the loss of an experienced skirmisher familiar with the territory between the camp and the city west of the Schuylkill hampered efforts to secure that district. It became necessary to rebuild the parties operating in the area virtually from scratch.[201] Reinforcements were drawn from Continental units which had been assigned to guard the military storehouses in Lancaster.[202]

These troops were attached to the corps stationed at the piquet post near the Radnor Meeting House, about five miles in front of the camp's outer line.[203]

This post supported Continental detachments throughout the district. Its members patrolled the roads, intercepting market people wherever possible, but were primarily important as a defensive screen for the camp on the west side of the river. The lower part of the district, adjacent to the British lines opposite the city, remained out of the zone of American control after Nathanael Greene left it supposedly barren in February. As a result it continued to provide a supplementary source of goods to the enemy, and possibly of recruits for the Provincial corps. The Radnor piquet launched occasional preemptive raids into the area, carrying off provisions, and on at least one occasion, according to British accounts, burning the houses of suspected inhabitants. The small number of American troops in the district, however, rendered these missions vulnerable to British counterattack. Having gained relatively uncontested access to the countryside in the area, Howe acted aggressively to protect the security of Tories, who now constituted the preponderance of its remaining population.[204]

The rush to complete the fortification of the camp in early April resulted as much from this thinning of Continental forces on the west side of the Schuylkill as it did from Washington's concerns about the enemy opening the campaign early. While he continued to discount warnings that his camp might be vulnerable

to attack, Washington's messages to Congress and his actions to some degree betrayed his disclaimers.[205] By the end of March he expressed his anxious desire to get the "interior line of defense completed," and directed the brigadiers to meet and assign each brigade a portion of the line to labor on.[206] The work began immediately, and within three weeks some finishing touches, including the sodding of redoubts and the erection of palisades, were being attended to.[207] The surveying of the countryside around the camp, an additional security measure designed to make up for a lack of troops on the west side, continued as well. One surveyor submitted a report on the progress of the work. He requested an increased expense allowance to subsist his ten man party, which was "traveling thro' a country where the inhabitants vie with each other in extortion."[208]

If circumstances west of the Schuylkill had thus settled into an uneasy stalemate, the situation on the east side of that river reflected an almost complete breakdown of American control. In questioning John Lacey about the latest enemy assaults on the army's supply line, Washington conceded that he was out of ideas as to how to control the movement of civilians between the city and its hinterland. He once again placed the matter in the state's lap.[209] Lacey replied with another apology for the weak and badly armed state of his force. Discerning the battering which his own reputation was taking in the matter, he also bombarded members of the state's civil and military establishments with poignant descriptions of his plight.[210]

The credibility of Lacey's appeals, and the accuracy of his observations that he had been left "crually off" in a "stupid situation" cannot be doubted.[211] There is also evidence, however, to corroborate Thomas Wharton's assessment of him as a capable officer who was simply too young and inexperienced to function effectively without more Continental assistance than Washington was able to provide.[212] Although Lacey was a native of Bucks County, his limited mobility and difficulty even controlling his own men had rendered him ignorant of much of the territory within ten miles of the British lines. As a result, he found himself dependent upon a hostile populace whose members refused to furnish information, as he lamented to Washington, "even [of] the direction of the Roads."[213] Lacey had managed, moreover, to incite a "clammor" against himself among some of his neighbors of Whig persuasion. They accused him of displaying partiality toward residents of those parts of Bucks County where he had friends and relatives. Lacey denied the charges and, as far as the record reveals, nothing came of them.[214] The mere fact that they were circulating, however, among residents who had influential relations of their own in the state's government, can have done nothing to facilitate his mission of helping to pacify the neighborhood.[215] In any case, Lacey had good reason for regarding himself as a man adrift in an unfriendly sea. He reported to an aide that he was taunted daily with threats that the British dragoons or Provincials would capture him within a week.[216]

As a result of the militia's persistent weakness, Washington reluctantly increased the deployment of Continental troops east of the Schuylkill, but on far too limited a basis to effectively check civilian movement in the area. Instead, he used regular troops for specific assignments to control key roads for limited periods of time, to guard shipments of supplies moving toward camp, and to remove militarily useful goods from exposed areas. The newly assigned officers patrolling the roads adjacent to the river reported some success in disrupting trade in the area. Even they, however, were constrained by the smallness of their parties, and by the aggressiveness of enemy patrols in contesting their presence. One officer, who had retreated from Chestnut Hill before a superior British force, returned the next morning to find that the enemy detachment had smashed in the doors and windows of a number of houses to discourage their use as lodging for American troops.[217]

The situation might have lapsed into a state of complete civil anarchy had Howe chosen to maintain pressure in the area through a systematic continuation of the raiding which he had inaugurated during the February emergency. Instead, Howe redirected the focus of that pressure toward New Jersey in response to the upheavals which had broken out when Anthony Wayne entered that state to forage in late February. The result was a slight relaxation of enemy efforts north and northwest of Philadelphia, which briefly allowed American forces in the area to maintain some semblance

of order, if not outright control. For several weeks the British limited their forays into the district to the weekly market days, when they sent out detachments to protect civilians on their way to the city. On those occasions Continental officers reported that the inhabitants had no difficulty eluding them and reaching the town.[218]

This circumstance permitted some stabilization of military security in Bucks and Philadelphia Counties. Lacey was quick to claim his share of the credit for the temporary lull. On March 20 he informed Thomas Wharton that for the previous three weeks he had "been such a terror to the enemies Light Horse, that they have not Dar'd to shew their heads without their lines."[219] A week later he claimed that his efforts to prevent British depredations in the area had been "attended with tollerable success," but conceded that preventing civilian marketing was impossible.[220] Washington attempted with mixed success to concert the activities of army and militia forces. Anthony Wayne promised to join Lacey in foraging in lower Bucks County on his way back to camp from New Jersey.[221] Too often, however, Continental and militia detachments attempting to work together simply failed to connect rapidly enough in the sprawling district which they were attempting to cover.[222] Washington's attempts to fill the interstices in the defensive network east of the Schuylkill without weakening his own position were mostly futile. His efforts to borrow a troop of New Jersey dragoons for temporary service on the lines foundered in a series of misunderstandings, qualifications, and delays.[223]

Instead, Washington chose to make Continental detachments across the Schuylkill on missions of assigned duration with limited objectives.[224] Wherever possible he requested the militia to support or cooperate with these detachments. His sense of minimal control over the state troops was indicated, however, by his request to William Howe to send all flags and messengers to camp by routes on the west side of the river. In this way, he explained, they would avoid "accidents" with the militia, for which he declined to be held responsible.[225]

This new emphasis of increased but limited Continental responsibility for the east side of the Schuylkill was underlined by the choice of Lachlan McIntosh to lead one of the detachments sent into the area.[226] It marked the first instance since the army had come to Valley Forge in which a general officer had been ordered across the river. McIntosh was not, however, given any overall responsibility for operations in the area. Instead, he was to meet a large drove of cattle thought to be coming through the district, and to fend off a British detachment reported to be on the way to intercept it. He was also directed to support the militia in interfering with the movements of Quakers traveling to Philadelphia for their annual meeting. McIntosh eventually located the cattle, after sifting through conflicting reports and probing a neighborhood in which he concluded that the population was both aware of and inimicably disposed toward his presence.[227] Despite Lacey's threats to fire upon Quakers seeking to enter the city, enough of them managed to elude his grasp to enable the group to convene its annual meeting.[228]

McIntosh and Lacey conferred at Newtown on March 23. From their meeting a remarkable proposal emerged, one which testified eloquently to the futility which individuals charged with imposing martial control over the area felt about their mission. Lacey proposed to Washington that the entire district between the British lines and his own east of the Schuylkill be depopulated, by requiring its inhabitants to "move Back into the Country" for a distance of fifteen miles. He had been considering the idea for several weeks, and had even tried it out by ordering his detachments to spread the word that the residents would have to leave the area. In return, he had been visited by a delegation of protesting Quakers who demanded to know his "Reasons for ordering them to Quit their habitations." Caught in a storm of complaint, Lacey belatedly sought approval of the plan from Head Quarters.[229]

Washington rejected the proposal, but not before deeming it "rather [more] desirable then practicable," and remarking on "however little consideration the Majority of the parties concerned may deserve from us." Ultimately, his unwillingness to contemplate the "horror of depopulating a whole district" prevailed over his belief that the plan would "undoubtedly put an end to the pernicious illicit Commerce which at present subsists."[230] Instead the Continental and militia officers in the area were directed to continue their laborious mission of roving patrols and selective intimidation. Washington abandoned his earlier attempts to pressure Pennsylvania's authorities to keep their quota of troops in the area. He continued

to insist, however, that the civil consequences of local criminality would be left to the state unless there was a pressing Continental interest in the matter. While he retained the authority to do so, he would support the military trial and punishment of "notorious Characters" seized by the state troops.[231] When that authority expired in April he ordered dangerous offenders sent to the state, and those of good character or who had reputable friends in the area released with the warning that they would be hung for a second offense.[232] Deprived of the legal authority to punish recalcitrant civilians, Washington advised a county militia lieutenant to begin "shooting some of the most notorious offenders wherever they can be found in flagrante delicto."[233]

Well into the spring the district east of the Schuylkill continued to be at best marginally within the sphere of American control. While John Lacy struggled to impose order on its inhabitants, he faced no inconsiderable difficulties merely maintaining control over his own men.[234] The militia continued to tread warily, if at all, in the vicinity of the city. Instead of serving as a visible symbol and enforcer of revolutionary authority, its members learned to act covertly, because the area was so full of disaffected people that movements by large parties were considered certain to attract the enemy.[235] While the militia thus sought personal security in anonymity, "strolling parties" composed of furloughed soldiers and would-be brigand inhabitants readily embraced their identity, as a disguise with which to commit "villanous roberys" on unwary travelers.[236]

Under these circumstances it is small wonder that Washington continued to insist that supply convoys approaching the camp from the north cross the Delaware River at Easton and proceed through the high country to avoid the area altogether.[237] The continued deterioration of the militia threatened to render even this bit of circuitry insufficient. An official at Allentown reported that Tories in that area were "collecting together arm'd," and that they had attacked a Continental artificer post on the assumption that they could, if pursued, flee to Philadelphia through the thinly stretched militia blockade.[238]

For his own part John Lacey continued to bewail his situation. No sooner did he notice an improvement in the effectiveness of his patrols, than expiring enlistments compelled him to lament that he would soon be "left again in a manner almost helpless."[239] He conceded to Washington that he had "not the least hope, or incouragement to believe [that the inhabitants] will refrain from their evil ways."[240] He reported to the Supreme Executive Council the loss of a scouting party, observing that five of its members had been "in humainly butchard" after surrendering to a British detachment.[241] It was to his predecessor John Armstrong, however, that Lacey made his summary apology. In a pathetic letter to the retired general he enclosed returns showing that his strength had steadily declined from a high of 450 men in mid-February to barely more than 50 by late April. By his own estimate the area which he had been assigned to cover required at least 2,000 men.[242] Lacey had apparently never even

been apprised of the state's agreement to maintain his force at half of that level. When he had at length learned of it, it had only been as a result of an inadvertent statement from Washington himself![243]

Lacey's problems, and Washington's inability or unwillingness to take more than token steps to resolve them, epitomized many of the difficulties inherent in conducting the dispersed operations which the situations of both armies necessitated. Simply stated, a mid-winter demi-war in a communal environment characterized by complex social divisions and dubious allegiances was a difficult thing to manage. Given the size of the armies, and the constraints of eighteenth century technology and communications, this would have been the case even if there had existed an explicit doctrine of insurgent or counter-insurgent warfare. Because there was no such thing, the complexities of the situation were magnified, as both sides attempted to exploit opportunities which they had few means of predicting, and to control reactions which they had difficulty discerning or identifying, much less interpreting.

Some of the finer implications of these problems were wrought in lower New Jersey across the Delaware River from Philadelphia, rather than in Pennsylvania. Throughout the winter New Jersey had constituted a sideshow or a backwater to events occurring west of the Delaware. If Washington had been routinely content to treat the district east of the Schuylkill as an zone of secondary consideration - an area to be intervened in only when the security of the Continental army seemed to depend on it - he had been all

but compelled to ignore New Jersey altogether. While the inhabitants of Burlington, Gloucester, and Salem Counties were just as adjacent to Philadelphia as those of Bucks, Philadelphia, and Chester - their farms just as exposed, their families just as vulnerable - Continental resources simply did not permit even the rhetorical commitment to their security which had been extracted from Washington by the Pennsylvania government.

As a result, New Jersey's ragged militia force under Joseph Ellis endured a winter of hardship and intermittent terror every bit as severe, if less publicized, as did Pennsylvania's. Comprised during its best weeks of the same 500 men which John Lacey considered himself fortunate to be able to muster, the New Jersey militia covered an area larger than did its Pennsylvania counterpart, without even the occasional assistance of Continental reinforcements.

The February provisions crisis at camp, however, generated consequences which altered the status of the war in New Jersey, and which continued to reverberate there long after the hungry days had passed on Valley Creek. When Anthony Wayne crossed the Delaware at Wilmington to forage along the east bank of that river, the effect on New Jersey was like that of a man dragging a flaming coattail into a tinder-dry cornfield. Within six days of Wayne's arrival the British landed about 4,000 troops in two large contingents at Billingsport and Gloucester to harass his movements, protect Loyalist inhabitants, and collect supplies for themselves.[244]

Almost immediately Wayne reported that the enemy detachments were in substantial control of the area between Salem and Haddonfield. Although Wayne received and executed orders to resist these incursions, he found himself badly outnumbered. In addition, his principal mission was to collect as many provisions as he could and return to camp as quickly as possible. Moving northward along the heads of the creeks flowing into the Delaware, and sending out foraging and skirmishing detachments, he advanced toward Trenton.[245] Casimir Pulaski had been ordered to lead dragoons from that town to support Wayne's party. Keeping ahead of the British forces as he moved northward, Wayne carried on rear guard skirmishing with Pulaski's assistance, and forced local residents to move goods inland to keep them out of British hands.[246]

By the middle of March, Wayne had pushed his troops as far north as Burlington and was ready to evacuate the state and return to camp. The conflict itself, however, would remain behind. Having begun to meddle seriously in New Jersey in reaction to Wayne's expedition, the British found the result much to their liking, and saw no reason to discontinue the practice. Even as Wayne was withdrawing, Howe ordered three more regiments of British regular infantry and a provincial unit to move down the Delaware to Salem County.[247]

The ensuing conflagration presented Washington with a serious problem, the military complexities of which were magnified by their political implications. In a real sense, Wayne's expedition itself

had ignited the upheaval in New Jersey. The state's civil authorities were thus not being unreasonable in expecting Continental assistance in dealing with the problem. Washington discovered that a regular army presence in the state was necessary to prevent the complete collapse of the militia. Less than a week after Wayne's withdrawal, therefore, he had to send Israel Shreve back across the Delaware with a regiment of New Jersey regulars.[248]

Washington informed Governor William Livingston that he hoped the state's militia would now "resort to Colo. Shreve with... alacrity," and predicted that if they did the latest British expedition would be "repulsed."[249] Instead, the situation continued to deteriorate, bringing still more pressure on Washington for a decisive response. The presence of regular British troops in the state encouraged its large and increasingly militant Tory population to turn in wrath upon their Whig neighbors. Indeed, British tactics seem to have been rather explicitly intended to to capitalize upon this situation. The latest detachments from Philadelphia quickly focused their efforts on undermining or destroying the structure of the local militia organizations, the integrity of which consitituted the only guarantee of security for the Whig community. Several militia companies were overrun by larger British parties and, according to their commanders, bayonetted after surrendering.[250] Colonel Charles Mawhood, the commander of the expedition, held the threat of concerted terror over opponents of British supremacy in the area. Mawhood circulated a proclamation offering to withdraw his troops from the state if

its militia relinquished their arms. "If on the contrary the Militia should be so far deluded and blind to their true Interest and Happiness," he announced:

> he will put the Arms which he has brought with him into the hands of the Inhabitants well affected called Tories & will attack all such of the Militia as remain in Arms, burn & destroy their houses & other Property & reduce them, their unfortunate Wives & Children to Beggary & Distress. 251

The offer was categorically rejected by state militia leaders, but the bloody acts upon which it was predicated had immediate and visible results. Salem and Gloucester county militia crumbled and fled before the prospect of butchery, while replacements refused to leave their own homes to take up collective defense.[252] Israel Shreve's impending arrival was held out as offering a prospect of relief, but New Jersey authorities were already pressuring Washington to increase the Continental commitment to the area. Observing that the state's lower counties were "miserably infected with Tories," Governor Livingston urged Washington to consider sending more troops.[253] He conceded that the state was partly responsible for the reluctance of the militia to serve, as a result of delays in paying its members. He nevertheless appealed for the entire New Jersey Continental battalion to be returned to the state.[254]

Shreve's initial reports conveyed a similarly dismal message. He confirmed Wayne's observation that the district between Salem and Haddonfield was firmly under enemy control, and hesitated to

advance beyond the latter town without reinforcements. A group of Tories had taken up arms and begun to fortify the old Continental works at Billingsport with the assistance of some British marines. Armed gangs of Tories were seizing militia members in their homes and carrying them into Philadelphia, while a few of the latter were retaliating by destroying the property of suspected Tories. Shreve admitted that his regiment was too weak to cope with the situation and endorsed Livingston's request that the whole New Jersey brigade be sent to his aid.[255]

These requests, which were supported by petitions from local inhabitants and by a formal appeal from the state's assembly to Congress, presented Washington with formidable political as well as military problems.[256] Even had he been inclined to look favorably on the prospect of a wider zone of Continental involvement (which he was not), the state's remonstrances could hardly have come at a more inauspicious time. He was simultaneously contemplating intelligence reports which suggested that the British might soon attack Valley Forge itself. To turn deaf ears to the state's appeals, on the other hand, could have serious long-term consequences. A decision to transfer the "seat of war" toward New York during the next campaign would make the army as dependent on the goodwill of New Jersey authorities as it currently was on that of Pennsylvania's. Washington had, moreover, maintained a cordial and even a friendly relationship with Livingston throughout the winter, a relationship which contrasted strikingly with his

frequently acrimonious exchanges with Thomas Wharton. Finally, it cannot have escaped his notice that New Jersey's plight had been largely, if inadvertently, thrust upon the state by the exigencies of Continental needs.

Ultimately it fell to Washington to handle the state's needs as realistically and as diplomatically as possible. He expressed to Livingston his concern that it was out of his power "to afford further aid for checking the incursions of the Enemy in Jersey," but insisted that the "situation of this Army will not admit the smallest detachments to be made from it."[257] He sent the same message to Israel Shreve, urging him to adapt to his predicament as best he could.[258] Shreve assisted a party of militia in harassing the Tories at Billingsport, and narrowly avoided being trapped by a fresh detachment of troops from Philadelphia. The "Spirit of Burning," he reported, "prevails still among those Miserable Villons at billingsport." Small parties from that post, he noted, had come at night to Woodbury "in a Skulking Manner and Burnt two Whig houses and ordered other famalys to move out in a few days or they would Burn them in them."[259] Finding his detachment too small to accomplish any objectives by by force, and the militia too scattered even to protect effectively, Shreve announced his intention of dividing the regiment into small scouting parties to patrol the roads and disrupt commerce with the enemy.[260] At length Livingston and Washington arrived at an uneasy accommodation on the amount of Continental assistance which the state could realistically expect. Transmitting still another

petition for protection from inhabitants of the lower counties, Livingston asserted that he would understand if Washington found it impracticable to act upon it.[261]

In disappointing Livingston's hopes for more aid, Washington stepped back from the press of specific decisions to reflect on the subtler implications of the problem at hand. It was one of the few times during the winter that he recorded his thoughts on the subject. Announcing his intention, if reinforcements permitted, to dispatch a second regiment of New Jersey regulars to assist Shreve, Washington expressed his concern about the probable consequences of the move. He conceded that:

> A few hundred Continental Troops quiet the minds and give satisfaction to the people of the Country, but considered in the true light, they rather do more harm than good. They draw over the attention of the Enemy, and not being able to resist them, are obliged to fly and leave the Country at the Mercy of the foe. But, as I said before, the people do not view things in the same light, and therefore they must be indulged, tho' to their detriment.[262]

Washington did not enlarge upon the point. If he had, however, he might have concluded that it went to the heart of one of the serious and almost intractable problems which he faced during the winter. In a communal environment fragmented by mixed amd often mercurial loyalties, neither army could make the unequivocal claim to being the protector of the populace, nor could either be undeniably painted as the invader or oppressor of that populace.

This is not to say that the claims or charges could not be entered. Indeed they were on both sides during the winter, as they had been and would continue to be throughout the war. It is merely to acknowledge that their application and effect would be subject to dispute, and to definition by the circumstances of the moment.

Both sides could and did recognize their responsibilities to the civilians who claimed their protection, or on whose behalf they claimed to act, in one situation, and ignore or evade those responsibilities in another. When the vital interests of either seemed to require it, moreover, both could and did act in ways that explicitly distressed or abused their own civil adherents. For the large middle group, who either proclaimed neutrality or were tacitly recognized as being partisans of neither side, this ambiguity was all the greater. This segment of the population, itself internally diverse, was utterly subject to the vicissitudes of the fluctuating day-to-day situation. Would-be neutral inhabitants who did not make instant decisions to sell their produce to one side or the other on the best terms they could get often found themselves compelled to contribute to both.[263] There are even instances of isolated farmsteads being descended upon by armed foraging parties of both armies in succession.[264]

Such circumstances placed an absolute premium on prudence, but as one historian of the Revolution has observed, the "sheer busyness" of the conflict - its rapid movement in space and its

dizzying fluctuations of fortune - "made it difficult to know how to be prudent."[265] The observation pertained to the population at large, but it seems equally if not more applicable to the military managers of the war. British and American commanders readily made both rhetorical and pragmatic use of such concepts as "well affected" and "disaffected" citizens when they suited the needs of the moment. When they warily paused to gauge the real implications of the civil environment in which they were operating, however, both sides recognized the perilous consequences of relying too literally on those concepts. If it was difficult to know how to be prudent, it was easier to know how not to be. In a combat situation which relied on small detachments dispersed over large, imperfectly charted areas, to stake too much on glib assurances of the exploitability of civil divisions was recognizable as the essence of imprudence.[266]

It was this recognition, as much as considerations of personnel, material shortage, or logistical difficulty, which accounted for Washington's persistent caution when confronted with demands to expand the scope of Continental responsibility beyond his conservative estimate of what was realistically feasible and militarily or politically necessary. Even concentrated in a partially fortified camp, the army was potentially at risk from the wrath of a restive populace. Beyond the camp and its close periphery, the patchwork of farm townships and crossroads communities from which it was occasionally compelled to forcibly extract the means of

subsistence, could be viewed as so many caches of social dynamite. If that dynamite was detonated by the intervention of either side, the American army stood to reap more of the consequences than its opponent. The latter at least had the benefit of several miles of heavily fortified lines to remain behind, and a riverine link to supplies. To the extent that the state and Continental political considerations made it possible to negotiate away responsibility for maintaining order in a significant part of the region, therefore, Washington had every reason to conclude and adhere to the bargain. Simply stated, it was preferable to assume the risk of allowing the militia to do the job badly than to expose the army to the hazards of attempting to do it well.

The British were somewhat more inclined to yield to the temptations of fishing in the troubled waters that Washington preferred to avoid. They nevertheless did so circumspectly, and in a halting, experimental fashion which suggests the absence of any calculated policy. The Cabinet's plan for the 1778 campaign contained an explicit place for armed loyalism and for the systematic exploitation of communal divisions. By the end of 1778 and for several years thereafter, British strategy would be framed upon a deliberate, if sometimes sloppily thought out, consideration of the role of the civilian population; especially that segment of the Loyalist community willing to take up arms for the preservation of the King's rule.[267] Those plans, however, played no part in British tactics around Philadelphia during the winter and spring

of 1778. Howe's meddling in communal antagonisms was instead opportunistic, conceived as a means of reaping short-term advantages from specific situations which occasionally arose. As a result, his overtures did not converge to dictate or even to shape the character of the winter campaign. Instead, they were just concerted enough to force Washington to make a series of judgments about whether the episodes in question broached the thresholds of feasibility or necessity in order to determine a response.

These points can best be discerned through a comparison between two instances in which the British attempted to exploit the possibilities of armed loyalism. In response to the collapse of the Pennsylvania militia in February, Howe began using his newly recruited Provincial corps to spearhead a series of raids into the countryside north and northwest of Philadelphia east of the Schuylkill River. These probes were frequently supported, but usually not led, by regular British army detachments. They initially concentrated on the harassment and disruption of militia recruiting efforts, and on the capture of local civil leaders and prominent Whig citizens. They shortly began to impinge, however, on the Continental supply line across lower Bucks County toward Valley Forge. Confronted with this situation, Washington took steps to extend regular army protection to the supply line, but he resisted any temptation to widen the definition of Continental responsibility or interest to include the security of local inhabitants in the area. The increase in the frequency of Continental patrols occasionally had some imcidental effect in improving that security, but any concerted responsibility for the problem was left to the state.



James M. Varnum (1748-1789)

Brigadier General from Rhode Island.

"You are well acqqainted that a man must die when his time comes; & should mine approach while confined in Pennsylvania, how can my soul find its way thro' this Tory Labyrinth, to a pure ether, congenial to its own Nature."

Courtesy Independence National Historical Park

In March, when British attention turned toward New Jersey, the pattern of British incursions was different; indeed in many ways it was opposite. Beginning with the deployment of regular army units to contest Wayne's expedition through the state, British tactics rapidly turned toward the use of concerted terrorism aimed at the local militia, and at the Whig community in which it was rooted. The result was civil calamity, and a surge of pressure for the extention of Continental protection to a district even more remote from the army's base than that between the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers. If the pattern of incidence was different, however, the pattern of American response was similar, although not precisely parallel. While the distance from the camp, the lack of a supply line to sharply delineate the functional boundaries of state and Continental interests, and political considerations, required a more general and long-term commitment to New Jersey than had been the case in Pennsylvania, Washington set limits on the degree of Continental response. When the demand for assistance from the regular army threatened to become bottomless, he stepped back from a continuously enlarging commitment.

Ultimately, Washington may have been able to find some redeeming comfort from the seemingly dismal turn of events in New Jersey. Because of his relatively amicable working relationship with Governor William Livingston, he was able to sustain his decision to limit aid to that state at minimal political cost. The result in Pennsylvania of Howe's thrust into the troubled civil waters of New Jersey was a brief easing of pressure east

of the Schuylkill. If only temporarily, even John Lacey was able to depict himself as a "terror" to his antagonists, instead of a relentlessly stalked victim.[268] By late March most British regular units had returned to Pennsylvania, having ignited a civil conflagration which would continue intensely enough to require Shreve's regiment to remain in New Jersey for the rest of the spring.[269] In April the Provincial corps and regular troops were again probing into lower Bucks County to disperse militia patrols and disrupt recruiting activities.[270] The brief hiatus, however, stabilized the situation in the American army's back yard during a month when reinforcements trickled in and the recovery of innoculated troops slowly improved its ability to respond to the renewed challenge.

The measure of this benefit can be taken primarily from a consideration of what might otherwise have happened. Had British tactics proceeded from a coherent policy toward the advantages to be reaped from the exploitation of civil political differences - and especially from the systematic encouragement of armed Loyalism - Howe might have deployed his resources more effectively. He might have chosen to concentrate on the aggravation of communal antipathies in a single location, in hopes of igniting a conflict which Washington would have been unable to finesse or ignore. Following up on the havoc which had been wrought in Bucks County during February, he might have increased the pressure in that district, until even the maintenance of the Continental supply line became impossible without a large commitment from the regular American army east of the Schuylkill. Instead of

merely forcing Lacey's troops to hover pathetically on the fringe of the conflict in central Bucks and Philadelphia Counties, he might have used the Pennsylvania partisan forces to drive the militia even higher into the country, and thereby encouraged outbreaks among the restive Tories of lower Northampton County. Such an event would have threatened the American army with effective isolation from the assistance, and especially the supplies, of the northern states.

These are, of course, speculative considerations, but not entirely idle ones. Howe had invaded Pennsylvania, among other things, on the strength of the belief that his army would benefit from operating in the midst of a favorably disposed population. Given the physical and social geography of the region, the state of the American army, and the disposition of its commander, it is difficult to imagine a place where that belief could have been more profitably tested than in the district between the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers. What was lacking was a coherent policy or stragegy for doing so. Even as British detachments probed for soft spots on the periphery of Philadelphia, British strategists in London were attempting to formulate such a policy, and to decide where best to implement it. For the moment, however, the hope of manipulating civil support on behalf of British war aims was largely an unarticulated one. As such, its employment was intermittent, experimental and essentially unfocused: a few raids in Bucks County, a few more in New Jersey, followed by still a few more back in Bucks.

The result of all of this activity, from the Continental viewpoint, was a series of annoying situations, attended with some internal friction and political embarrassment stemming from the inability of the army to respond to the satisfaction of all interested parties. Beyond this, however, the effect was minimal. Too often, the British found that the only really substantial fruits of their occasional forays into the local community consisted of the "little plunder" which often concluded their visits. At some level, perhaps subconsciously, Washington must have realized that he was the gainer by refusing to be drawn too deeply into a dispersed regional conflict. If it had occurred to him to consider the effect which Charles Mawhood's terroristic threats might have had if they had been issued from Newtown, Pennsylvania, instead of Salem, New Jersey, he might well have concluded that the commitment of a Continental regiment to the latter state's peace of mind was cheap insurance indeed.

VII. AS THE FINE SEASON APPROACHES

May 1 brought unofficial but reliable news to camp of the Treaties of Alliance which had been concluded almost three months before between the United States and France. Washington withheld a formal announcement of the event to the army until he had been officially notified by Congress. He was, however, unable to resist "mention[ing] the matter" to officers stopping at Head Quarters on official business. The news spread rapidly through the camp, causing Washington to observe that "no event was ever received with a more heartfelt joy."[1]

Congress rapidly approved the treaties.[2] On receiving official notice, Washington requested formal permission to announce and celebrate the news. "I will only say," he noted, "that the army are anxious to manifest their joy upon the occasion."[3] The announcement was made in a postscript to General Orders for May 5, and the celebration was set for the following morning. The news provided the army with a timely opportunity to demonstrate the results of its six weeks of intense immersion in the basics of European field drill technique. According to the elaborate ceremony which Washington prescribed, the troops were to march by brigades to the Grand Parade in the center of the camp. After forming into two long lines, they were then to present a feu de joie, or series of running musket fires, punctuated with "Huzzas" in salute to the "King of France," to the "friendly European powers," and to the "American States."[4]

The event, ripe with the possibility of awkward maneuver and embarrassment for the army, proceeded to the satisfaction of all observers. The morning began with the formal pardoning of two soldiers sentenced to hang for desertion, an act designed to symbolize Washington's desire to "reclaim [rather] than punish Offenders."[5] The feu de joie itself was effected, John Laurens noted, "with as much splendor as the short notice would allow." The ceremony was "executed to perfection," Laurens observed, which he attributed to Friedrich Steuben's "unwearied attention, and to the visible progress which the troops have already made under his discipline."[6] The Marquis de Lafayette characterized the day as "one of the most agreeable... I have passed here."[7] Waxing more hyperbolic, Philip van Cortlandt of New York called it the "greatest Day Ever yet Experienced in Our Independent World of Liberty."[8]

The ceremony was followed by an outdoor reception for the officer corps at which, according to Laurens, "Triumph beamed in every countenance."[9] Most if not all of those present understood, however, that the day marked but a brief respite from the furious activity still necessary to prepare the army for the campaign ahead. Even in congratulating officers at distant posts on the happy news from France, Washington displayed a deep concern that it might result in a fatal relaxation of Continental efforts and initiative.[10] He understood that the campaign itself, rather than impressive ceremonies or inflamed

rhetoric, would test the practical value of the alliance. If the American contribution on the battlefield disappointed the expectations upon which it had been predicated, the treaty might prove at best a temporary palliative for morale, and at worst a profound source of disillusionment.

There remained a long agenda of things to be accomplished before the army could be presumed ready to take the field on anything more than an emergency basis. Although the trickle of drafts, recruits and troops returning from furloughs and hospitals had increased by May to a fairly steady flow, there was a continuing concern about the army's raw strength levels.[11] While Steuben's exercises had born impressive fruit in the feu de joie, few observers were prepared to equate that ceremony with the precision that would be necessary in a combat situation similar to the one which the army had faced at Brandywine the previous summer. The functioning of the support departments had conspicuously improved since February under the aegis of new department heads such as Nathanael Greene and retainees such as Ephraim Blaine. Those officials remained apprehensive, however, about the prospect of soon having to serve a moving rather than a stationary army. Crucial political questions about the army's organization remained unsettled, moreover, while Congress wrestled with its ambivalence toward such issues as half-pay and the reduction of state battalions.

From the perspective of the high command, however, the most important business immediately at hand was that of reaching a decision about how the campaign itself should be opened. When the British failed to settle the question by opening it themselves, after sporadic alarms during late March and April, it became evident that at least a contingency plan would be necessary. The opinions collected from the general officers in April had demonstrated how deeply divided that group was over Washington's three proffered alternatives.[12] A Council of War had been called to debate the question to a conclusion in a face-to-face forum. The mere fact of its sitting would serve as the best possible notice to the army that its future would depend more on military exertions than on diplomatic achievements or political decisions. The date of the council waited only the arrival of Horatio Gates and Thomas Mifflin from the Board of War.[13]

Washington was at length able to convene the council on May 8. In his instructions to the group he abandoned the formula of offering three specific strategic alternatives. Instead, he merely informed the participants of the best available intelligence of British and American strength, and of the state of foreseeable reinforcements on both sides. The enemy, he observed, had approximately 10,000 troops in Philadelphia, 4,000 in New York, and 2,000 in Rhode Island. If any, he thought their reinforcements would "probably, not be very large nor very early."[14] American strength, he estimated, would not exceed

20,000 Continental troops, with little prospect of significant militia reinforcements. He also reported that he had attempted to ascertain the Commissary Department's ability to supply provisions, but had been unable to extract a precise commitment.[15]

With these preliminaries, Washington yielded the floor to his generals, asking them to provide written recommendations "on some general plan, which, considering all circumstances, ought to be adopted for the operations of the next campaign."[16] The council's response was an interesting one, especially in light of the written opinions which had been collected less than three weeks before. In the first place, the group arrived at a unanimous decision. In the second, it recommended that the army should "remain on the defensive and wait events."[17] This was a decision consistent in substance, if not specific language, with the least supported alternative considered in the earlier opinions.

In seeking to understand this apparent reversal, it is first necessary to consider the overlapping, but far from convergent, personalities involved on the two occasions. The solicitation of opinions in April had apparently extended to whatever generals had been available in camp at the time. Invitations to the formal Council of War, on the other hand, were more closely restricted to senior military figures. In a word, the participants in the second forum were with two

exceptions all major generals. The exceptions, Henry Knox and Louis Duportail, were brigadiers whose involvement was undoubtedly in consequence of their special responsibilities and expertise as heads, respectively, of the artillery and engineering services.

Of the dozen individuals who had divided so evenly on the question of attacking Philadelphia or New York, or of keeping the army in a secure camp, therefore, only six were involved in the final decision. Of this group in turn, only Knox, who had favored attacking New York, and Lord Stirling, who had recommended moving against Philadelphia, represented either of the aggressive options which Washington had posed earlier in the spring. All three proponents of keeping the army on the defensive, on the other hand (Greene, Steuben, and Duportail), were in attendance at the final council.[18]

There is no evidence that invitations to the council were manipulated to exclude or suppress any existing viewpoints. Washington's opening statement to its members did not even make reference to his earlier proposals, although the recommendation of the group indicates that all three alternatives were considered.[19] Instead, it is probable that the limitation of the forum to senior military officials stemmed from broad considerations of army policy and protocol. There can be little doubt, however, that the skewing of attendance toward advocates of the defensive option influenced the group's final decision.

The juxtaposition of the council's decision with the April recommendations does point out a pattern of division among the latter which had not been previously apparent; the influence of rank itself. The preference for attacking either Philadelphia or New York in April had been predominantly an enthusiasm among the brigadiers. Of the major generals who responded on the earlier occasion, only Lord Stirling had favored an aggressive course of action. Greene and Steuben had voted to remain in a secure camp, while Lafayette had resisted being pinned down on the issue.[20] From this consideration, it might be argued that the generals divided along lines of experience and responsibility. When the question had been raised in a hypothetical way, a group weighted heavily with brigadiers had split more over where, rather than whether, to place the army on the offensive. When a more senior group of advisors had been asked to make a concrete decision, on the other hand, cooler heads and clearer eyes had apparently prevailed.

This argument is interesting, but it does not conclusively explain the event in question. As important as it is to know who from the April group was left out of the council, it is no less important to know who was added. The latter group included Horatio Gates and Thomas Mifflin of the Board of War, General John Armstrong of the Pennsylvania militia, and Johan de Kalb.[21] It is possible to speculate almost indefinitely

on the effect of these additions, but not much hard information can be gleaned. All held rank of major general. As Pennsylvanians, Mifflin and Armstrong may have been especially sensitive to the security advantages which that state still hoped to reap from the use of the army as a defensive screen against British incursions rather than as a battering ram. On the other hand, they must have been no less aware of the state's interest in seeing the military stalemate broken, and itself relieved of the obligation of playing host to the "seat of war." The implications of Horatio Gates' still unresolved differences with Washington might similarly be probed for their influence on the council's decision.

That such structural and circumstantial considerations need to be entertained at all is a measure of the relative silence of the documentary record in elucidating the council's deliberations. Washington, perhaps anticipating the kind of division on the issue which had characterized the April debate, requested that "each member would furnish him with his sentiments in writing."[22] Instead, the council reached a consensus on a single proposal. The document in which its members recorded their concurrence gives little evidence, if any, of a diversity of views over which broad language had to be stretched. The participants flatly proclaimed their belief that the army should remain on the defensive and use the time until the enemy moved for provisioning and training. Phila-

delphia, they argued, could neither be taken by storm, nor successfully blockaded with 20,000 troops which Washington estimated might be available. Stripped of the New Englanders who had touted the reliability of the eastern militia, moreover, the group was unable to persuade itself that an outpouring of irregulars from that region would provide the critical difference between a risky and a fairly certain thrust against New York.[23]

If any new element emerged in the thinking of the council it was perhaps the impact of the French alliance. The generals agreed, for example, that a successful venture against New York would generate great advantages. If it failed, however, they feared that it might dislocate the goodwill of their newly won European allies. Considering arguments in favor or remaining on the defensive, on the other hand, they reasoned that the incipient entry of France into the war might itself hasten the departure of the British army from the North American mainland. In either event, they observed, by adopting the defensive option nothing would be risked, while the army would continue to grow strength and effectiveness for a joint campaign.[24] The international factor thus appears to have raised the stakes perceived to depend on the decision, and in the process to have reinforced a vein of strategic conservatism which carried the day with the council.

In the camp, meanwhile, May brought the most frenetic level of physical and organizational activity since the period of

initial construction in December and early January. Even as the army prepared to abandon its winter ground the camp's physical facilities had to be expanded to accommodate the growing numbers of men and amounts of material being assembled in preparation for the campaign. The fortification of the position itself continued well into May.[25] The work had been hindered throughout the winter by the hardness of the ground, and by the difficulty of mustering work details from the ranks of hungry, ragged, and sickly troops. By May the fortification crews had to compete with other departments for the use of wagons, tools, and other resources. With reinforcements finally streaming into camp in numbers sufficient to blunt the reservations of doubters like Greene, more huts had to be built to house them. The increasing numbers of troops, in turn, necessitated an expansion of the facilities devoted to the support departments.[26]

In order to accommodate this increase in the army's activity a lengthening of the working day was required. As late as May 5 Samuel Ward, an officer from Rhode Island, could depict for his wife a "specimen" day that was hardly calculated to make his friends at home shudder at the thought of the army's plight:

> I rise with the sun, after adjusting my Dress, we begin our excercises at 6 O'Clock which last till 8 - then we breakfast upon Tea or Coffee - and then I write, read, ride or play, till Dinner time when we get a piece of good Beef or Pork tho' generally of both - and have as good Bread as I ever eat - the afternoon is also ours till 5 O'Clock when we begin our excercises and leave off with the setting sun...so that we live <u>uncommonly</u> well for Camp.27

By the middle of the month the tempo of life had markedly increased. After the sixteenth the army was required to be under arms and ready for exercises by five A. M. instead of six.[28] With signs pointing toward the imminent evacuation of Philadelphia, every hour which a regiment or brigade spent on the parade ground seemed likely to constitute its last formal training for the season.

For Friedrich Steuben, May brought a series of triumphs and satisfactions as well as pressing responsibilities. Washington at length saw fit to formally recommend that Congress officially appoint Steuben Inspector General to the army and grant his request for a commission as major general.[29] The French alliance celebration was regarded at Head Quarters as a personal triumph for Steuben, and provided a pretext for the announcement of his appointment to the army three days later.[30] Steuben responded with a promise to redouble his efforts, and congratulated Congress on the cooperation which he had received from the troops. It had made possible, he observed, "a more rapid Progress than any other Army would have made in so Short a time."[31] Visitors to the camp tended to confirm this observation.[32]

The Commissary Department, meanwhile, suffered its third and final crisis since the army arrived in camp during May. Like the emergencies of December and February, the situation had a common denominator in the continuing organizational deficiencies which existed in the department. Once again, however, it was triggered by a

set of unique circumstances. The December emergency had been set in motion primarily by the disruption of supply links caused by the movement of the army from Whitemarsh to Valley Forge. The February episode had stemmed from cumulative transportation shortages aggravated by an uninterrupted spell of bad weather. The May crisis began when the growth of the army threatened to outstrip the gradual improvement in the Commissary Department's ability to deliver provisions. While that improvement had been evident since the roads hardened in March, it had been slow and at best intermittent. When the similarly sporadic influx of reinforcements swelled during May, the camp's commissaries braced for the "next cry" which Thomas Jones had predicted three months before.[33]

The crisis was not a general one, as shortages were confined mostly to supplies of beef.[34] Of the three principal episodes of the year, moreover, it was easily the least severe. It bore, in fact, many signs of a hue and cry of anticipation rather than of outright want. Having been caught short twice before, Commissary officials were quick to warn their outlying superiors when they saw the prospect of being straitened once again. The sense of urgency seems to have been confined mostly within the department's organizational boundaries. Although he was still anxiously waiting for Congress to complete its work on the army reorganization measures, Washington found in the episode no materials for a cautionary depiction of a restless or disbanding

soldiery. He was nevertheless forced to balance his desire to have the militia of Pennsylvania and adjacent states available on short notice against his realization that the Commissary Department was as yet unprepared to provision any great outpouring of troops.[35]

The situation was attended with the customary flights of rhetorical interplay between the department's officials. On May 10 Ephraim Blaine informed his new superior Jeremiah Wadsworth that he was once again "kept from hand to Mouth respecting Beef Cattle."[36] Blaine made it clear that his apprehension extended more to future deficiencies than to currently empty storehouses. He reminded Wadsworth, who had come briefly to Pennsylvania in March and then hurried back to Connecticut to coordinate matters at the point of purchase, of the army's growth in the intervening months. They would, he predicted, soon "have a very great army and... we will find it difficult to feed them with Meat" without strenuous exertions. However precautionary Blaine's warnings may have been, he indicated that the situation was already beginning to impinge on strategic planning. The commissaries had been questioned about their prospects for feeding the army in anticipation of the Council of War, he reported, and had been forced to give "our former answer."[37]

Within a fortnight the situation had tightened still more. John Chaloner notified his own chief Charles Stewart that

"we have been reduced to the disagreeable necessity of issuing the last Pound of meat and fish." They had been, he observed, "this day impowered to prevent complaint [only] by receiving a Drove from [Henry] Champion." Chaloner was so apprehensive about being subjected to the kind of harsh interrogation which had characterized the February crisis that he even hesitated to show his face at Head Quarters.[38] Notwithstanding this discomfiture, however, the situation never approached the critical proportions which it had assumed during December and February. Wadsworth's efforts in Connecticut were availing, and their manifestation - Champion's saving droves - continued to reach camp regularly enough to keep the army fed if not fat.[39]

Indeed, although Samuel Ward's impression of culinary plenty was probably as idiosyncratic as his description of a typical day in camp, there is no real evidence of hungry soldiers during May. This stemmed from a variety of circumstances, probably including a lack of opportunities for individuals to report brief shortages as a result of the press of daily activities. By the end of the month, moreover, the old practice of informal local requisitioning which had periodically supplemented the army's diet the previous fall had probably been revived. A Hessian diarist noted in April that the fields and gardens around Philadelphia were "being fenced in again and sown and cultivated."[40] By the beginning of June even the relatively better fed British troops were helping themselves to some of the

early produce of these efforts.[41] It is likely that Americans were doing the same. There is also some evidence that the nutritional balance of power in the neighboring countryside may have been responding to subtle changes in the political climate. One officer noticed a "great... change in this state since the news from France - the Tories All turned Whigs." "They begin," he observed, "mercenary wretches, to be as eager for Continental Money now as they were a few weeks ago for gold."[42] If this observation was accurate, the new attitude may have translated into an increased attendance at the army's local markets, and helped to relieve any shortages which resulted from the problems of the Commissary Department.

There was also during May conspicuously less evidence of the rancorous acrimony which had infested the camp during the winter. The increasing activity necessary to prepare the army for the field undoubtedly relieved some of the plain boredom which had earlier permitted isolated discontents and grievances to fester into bitter disputes. The improvement of the climate and - notwithstanding the periodic apprehension of support department officials - the stabilization of supply flows, tempered many of the causes of internal contention. Disparagement of the local civilian population all but disappeared from the army's discourse. Samuel Ward, whose accounts of army life during the spring played an upbeat counterpoint to the earlier, bitter jeremiads of his fellow officers, observed "We have Milk and Sugar in plenty... Our Regiment begins to grow healthy, as the fine season approaches."[43]

Ward was not, of course, the army's official spokesman. Inevitably, pockets of outright deprivation and discontent continued to exist. Anthony Wayne remained bitterly unreconciled to the poorly clad and sickly condition of his own brigade. Admitting that he was "not fond of Danger," he announced that he would "most Chearfully agree to enter into action once every week in place of visiting each hutt in my Encampment - where objects perpetually strike my eye and ear whose wretched condition cannot well be worsted."[44] An officer from Massachusetts assailed that state's civil authorities for similar neglect of its troops clothing needs. "The Gentleman of this Army who cannot purchase from his country, what he wants, at Prices as reasonable as the Wages he has consented to receive for his Services in the Army," he warned, "will reasonably suppose his obligation to his country, in that Way, are at an end."[45]

The very press of activity which allowed some individuals to overlook or defer existing discontents in some instances provoked new grievances. One ensign lodged a complaint against his regimental adjutant over being "ordered upon duty out of my tour."[46] The Artillery Park remained a focal point of this kind of intramural bickering. Disputes over rank had become endemic within the camp during the winter, and the Corps of Artillery had witnessed some of the most bitter of these. Unlike most state brigades, moreover, the corps was physically divided, with several of its companies in service on the Hudson River. Washington and Henry Knox had therefore been reluctant to make even interim settlements



Henry Knox (1750-1806)

Brigadier General from Massachusetts
Commander of the Division of Artillery

[General Knox]"... is indeed very complasant and is got into the [Artillery] park to live and with great familiarity takes a game of ball every day."

Courtesy of Independence National Historical Park

until the corps could be reunited at the beginning of the campaign. Instead, Knox attempted to mollify his officers with broad promises of an eventual settlement to the satisfaction of all. Despite one officer's assurance that the promises "keep[s] us all Quiet," another insisted that the "new fangled preposterous Arraingement" which was in prospect had driven a deep wedge between contending groups of claimants to rank.[47]

The most prevalent source of disquietude, however, united the officer corps, in terms of interest if not expectation. Congress continued to debate the proposal for the adoption of half-pay pensions for the officers during the early weeks of May. Various amendments designed to define the terms of eligibility were considered, and a final attempt to thwart the measure by referring it to the states was defeated.[48] At camp, meanwhile, a 'Confused noise" prevailed among the officers, according to one of their number, over the likelihood of its passage. "There is a Continual Contrast," the man reported, "some for Resigning, others say you are a D___d fool, It shall take place by g__d."[49]

Some officers saw fit to move from debate to direct action as the best means of making their feelings on the matter known. Earlier in the winter resignation had constituted the only alternative to patiently waiting for the adoption of the pension scheme. In late April, however, Congress inadvertently provided for an indirect referendum on the issue, by linking its operation to the willingness of the officers to affirm their allegiance to the United States.[50] This raised the possibility

of a form of protest that would carry the full implication of soldierly dissatisfaction with political foot dragging, without exposing its participants to being caught out of the army in the event that a favorable resolution took place.

By the time copies of the oath had been transmitted to camp, and the cumbersome machinery for its administration put in motion, it became clear that some officers intended to exercise this option. Resistance to the oaths occurred in at least three brigades. The officers in question proffered a series of reasons for refusing to sign, including the fear that doing so might compromise their positions in disputes over rank and promotion, and demanded a period of time to consider the matter.[51] Washington and the generals were loathe to use compulsion, but it was clear to them that the half-pay issue was the sticking point, and they attempted to dissuade the dissidents.[52] While the controversy swirled, several generals proposed alternative schemes to the half-pay resolve which might prove acceptable both to Congress and to members of the army, including exemptions from certain taxes, the sale of land for the benefit of veterans, as well as lotteries, subscriptions, and loans.[53]

The tempest inherent in the incident was resolved before its possible implications - of affront to civil authority if not outright insubordination - could fully manifest themselves. Even as the potentially embarrassing situation was playing itself out at camp, Congress was completing its approval of a modified plan of half-pay pensions. The plan limited the duration of the pensions

to a term of seven years after the conclusion of the war. It required eligibles to continue in the service until the war ended. It prohibited recipients from holding offices of profit under the states or the central government. It was also made contingent upon submission to the oath of allegiance. In deference to objections that the original proposal discriminated against enlisted men, non-commissioned officers and privates who met the same criteria were promised flat payments of $80 at the end of the war.[54] The passage of the measure was announced to the army in General Orders on May 18. Washington's hope that it would suppress discontent among the officers was at least partly realized. A noticeable increase in the incidence of oath taking was reported in several of the recalcitrant brigades in the aftermath of the news.[55]

The resolution of the issue removed one of the last sources of systematic discontent from the sphere in which the army operated. Remaining grievances over rank would await the final settlement of the new military establishment, to which Congress would at last turn its full attention. In the meantime, however, even a denizen of that quintessential bastion of dissonance, the Artillery Park, conceded that "joy sparkles in the Eyes of our whole Army" at the prospect of a renewed campaign.[56] Travelers arriving from the camp in distant towns began to be quoted in newspapers to the effect that the army was now in "grand spirits."[57] The news even reached the army's northern outposts on the Hudson River, where one officer who had successfully lobbied to have his

regiment transferred northward during January recanted and denounced his decision. Finding himself "removed from the grand army, at the first period when the term could be used with propriety," the man pronounced himself "sufficiently punished for believing too credulously and for judging too rashly." "May some indulgent Angel," he reflected, "put it into the head of his Excellency to dispose of me otherwise."[58]

Washington would doubtless have been flattered to learn of the desire of a prodigal officer to return to the fold, although he might have taken issue with the man's prediction that he [Washington] would now be "enabled to unfetter his genius."[59] From his own perspective, the reforms up to and including the half-pay resolution were prerequisite to, but not sufficient for, a successful campaign. The broader issue of the new army establishment had to be settled rapidly. In fact, in Washington's view, it was almost already too late. The "moving state," which he had repeatedly warned would make it impossible to fully implement any changes which Congress might require, was about to descend upon the army. Although he had displayed a constant interest throughout the winter in the particulars of the reorganization proposals, his immediate responsibility for preparing the army for the field precluded any further direct advocacy. Instead, he confined his efforts to privately imploring Gouverneur Morris to "urge the absolute necessity of this measure with all your might."[60]

The Council of War had no sooner decided to keep the army in a defensive posture and to wait for the British to move than strong indications suggested that just such an event was in the immediate offing. Henry Clinton arrived in Philadelphia to assume command of the British army on May 7, the day before the council met.[61] On his arrival, Clinton was presented with the King's instructions of March 21, requiring him to make large detachments to the West Indies, Florida, and Canada, and then to withdraw the rest of the army to New York. After consulting with Lord Richard Howe, however, he concluded that the British fleet was too dispersed to effect the detachments and the withdrawal to New York simultaneously. He decided that the detachments could be more safely made from New York after the army had been removed there as a unit.[62] In the meantime, Clinton ordered the army's baggage to be packed and prepared for loading on ships, and its large artillery pieces to be removed from the lines north of the city and replaced with field pieces.[63] In order to keep the Americans confused about British intentions, and to forestall panic among the city's residents, William Howe directed that large parties immediately begin work extending the town's fortifications.[64]

The ruse achieved neither objective. John Laurens correctly interpreted the fortification work as an indication of the enemy's intent to evacuate the city, despite a "shew... of a design to remain."[65] When American intelligence reported that heavy stores

were being transferred to the city wharfs, the British decision to abandon Philadelphia became an open secret. From May 15 until they left the city more than a month later, the camp at Valley Forge buzzed with almost daily reports that they were about to do so.[66] Washington ordered staff and department heads to make immediate plans for the army's movement, and notified civil and military officials in the various states of the developments. Informing Congress of his preparations, he warned that "such have been the derangements and disorders in [the support departments] that we must be greatly embarrassed for a considerable time yet."[67]

Incoming reports brought a constant stream of corroborating intelligence: of stores being loaded on the Delaware, of houses being prepared in New York for the receipt of British troops and boats being readied to transport those troops across New York Harbor, of inhabitants leaving Philadelphia with news of the enemy's impending departure.[68] The Commissary and Quarter Master's Departments strained to lay in supplies of provisions and forage along routes through New Jersey toward the Hudson River.[69] The officers were reminded of the earlier injunction to lighten their baggage, and the army as a whole was warned to prepare "for an immediate and sudden Movement." Officers were forbidden to let their men be absent from the camp "on any Pretence." Finally on May 28, in a penultimate gesture of preparedness, all military exercises were suspended.[70]

Thus for the last two weeks of May the army waited expectantly for the signal to move. The "grand fact" of the enemy's intention to evacuate was considered certain at Head Quarters, although a high degree of doubt prevailed over the particulars and especially the import of the impending event.[71] Intelligence observers anxiously watched ship movements on the Delaware in an effort to learn whether the withdrawal would take place by land or water.[72] Linked to this question was an argument over whether or not to expect a thrust against Valley Forge in conjunction with any movement. Henry Laurens warned his son that the enemy's behavior might reflect a "strategem" to lure the army off its guard, and Washington acknowledged that many in the army held similar concerns.[73] An officer from Massachusetts informed his wife that he expected soon to be able to write her from nearer home, but he anticipated an action in the interim. The enemy, he observed, "seem to be like a wounded Dog, as malicious as ever."[74] No less an observer than Henry Knox expected to inform his brother of "a battle at Valley Forge, for the Enemy threaten hard to fight bloodily before they depart."[75]

Washington hesitated to commit himself to any of the prevailing views on either question. He conceded that some signs "justif[y] a report that...they will aim a blow at this army before they go off," and he worried about the meaning of continued British fortification work. Elsewhere, however, he dismissed the

same events as "merely calculated to deceive and mask their design."[76] He wanted to believe that "if they move at all by land,... it will be across Jersey," because if that were the case it would allow him to make large detachments to that state to harass the British retreat. Clinton's and Howe's deceptions, however, had created enough ambiguity to sharply limit his ability to trust any such assumptions.[77]

Attempting to hedge both bets, Washington determined to hold his ground at Valley Forge, while shifting detached forces back and forth according to the best available intelligence in order to gain offensive and defensive advantages. He ordered William Smallwood to withdraw from Wilmington as soon as militia forces were able to protect the stores at Head of Elk, and to take a post halfway between the Delaware River and the camp.[78] To further bolster the security of the army he briefly ordered three regiments of cavalry to return from New Jersey. Four days later he countermanded the order, and instead sent two more regiments of Continental infantry to New Jersey to assist in the harassment of the enemy's march.[79]

The awkward situation in which the American army found itself stemmed largely from the decision to allow the enemy's movements to determine its own and, in turn, from the delays which the British were experiencing putting their plans into motion. However humiliating Henry Clinton found it to be forced to withdraw before an opponent which he considered inferior, he felt that he was stretching his orders to the limit merely by postponing the

Caribbean and Canadian detachments until he could reach New York.[80] Notwithstanding his proclaimed intent to "chearfully and zealously" execute those orders, however, Clinton found the process of disentangling his army from its garrison of nine months to be a difficult and time-consuming task. The process of packing, moving, and loading tons of stores, baggage, and heavy ordnance itself required days. The complex and emotionally difficult transfer of authority between William Howe and Clinton further delayed the business.[81]

An additional obstacle to the rapid completion of the British withdrawal was resistance from the Philadelphia Loyalist community, particularly from that segment of it which had formed the civil apparatus through which the army had governed the town. Rightfully fearing that their positions in their native city would become untenable with a resumption of rebel control, and their lives quite possibly jeopardized, individuals who had cooperated with the occupation struggled to overturn the decision to abandon the city.[82] The decision, made in London on the broadest considerations of the interests of empire, was of course not reversible. The field commanders to whom it fell to implement it, however, could not afford to completely overlook the plight of their civil subordinates. On the eve of his departure, William Howe advised prominent Philadelphia Loyalists to attempt to make private arrangements with the rebel leaders.[83] Clinton, however, refused to permit negotiations to be opened on the subject, both for fear of discouraging loyal inhabitants of New York, and of

interfering with the imminent peace negotiations. It was therefore necessary to offer those "Friends of Government" who felt jeopardized by the withdrawal of the army transportation to New York.[84] This expedient immeasurably complicated the logistical problems of the retreat, lengthened the process, and possibly tipped the balance in favor of an overland route.

As had been the case throughout the winter, the situation between the lines reflected as well as influenced these developments at the Head Quarters of the two armies. The desire of the British both to conceal and to prepare the way for their retreat to New York, and the increasing ability of the expanding American army to operate in the field, combined to enlarge the scope, if not to increase the frequency, of armed contacts between the two sides. As this conflict intensified, the blurring of the distinct zones of territorial responsibility which had characterized the American war effort all winter continued. While the process had been underway since at least early March, it became more evident as the campaign approached.

This was especially the case with respect to the division of Continental and militia spheres along the Schuylkill River. If by April that division had become largely a convenient fiction, by May even the fiction had been all but dispensed with. After a brief respite in March while British attentions focused in New

Jersey, April brought renewed pressure from enemy raiders north and west of Philadelphia.[85] These maneuvers probed Continental and militia positions alike, but they fell particularly heavily on the latter. The offensive culminated on May 1 with a devastating pre-dawn attack, spearheaded by Robert Simcoe's Corps of Queen's American Rangers, on John Lacey's overnight encampment near the Crooked Billet. The raid sharply revealed many of the handicaps which Lacey had operated under all winter, including inaccurate intelligence, careless sentries, and especially inexperienced, unreliable, and at best partially committed troops. It also cost him perhaps half of his already meagre force and, ultimately, his command.[86]

Although Simcoe himself accounted the mission in large part a failure, it effectively broke the back of the Pennsylvania militia for the season.[87] Most of the ambushed party - three-fourths of whom were newly mustered troops who had arrived in the camp the evening before - received their first taste of combat that morning.[88] Even for a partisan war the event constituted an unusually brutal initiation. Accounts from both sides agreed that some of the victims were burned to death, while American witnesses insisted that wounded men were mulitated with bayonets and thrown into heaps of burning straw.[89] Those survivors who did not simply flee the scene not to return were rendered into an even more timid and ineffective force than the state had fielded earlier in the winter. Simcoe, who did not take notice of the alleged attrocities, acknowledged that the mission had

"had its full effect, of intimidating the militia, as they never afterwards appeared, but in small parties, and like robbers."[90]

The attack, which Washington had dreaded all winter, left him with little choice but to continue the expansion of Continental responsibility east of the Schuylkill. On May 7 he sent a detachment under Brigadier General William Maxwell across the river. Unlike the party sent into the area during March under Lachlan McIntosh to cover an incoming drove of cattle, the detachment had a generalized mission, and Maxwell an implicit degree of authority over the militia. Maxwell was ordered to provide for the security of the main camp, to disrupt communications between Philadelphia and the countryside, to gather intelligence, and to work with the militia to suppress enemy scouting patrols, cover the market people and harass any large British parties which might come out. He was also ordered to inquire into the catastrophe which the militia had suffered, to guard against similar surprises to his own party, and to restrain his troops from abusing local citizens.[91]

Washington worked to implement changes designed to prevent the complete collapse of the militia. While he had urged John Armstrong to come out of retirement to resume the command which he had given up the previous fall, he was pleased enough when Armstrong's deputy James Potter agreed to take the field.[92] In relieving Lacy of his command, Washington consoled him with the acknowledgement

that his task "must have been fatiguing, considering the smallness of your numbers, and the constant motion which you have consequently been obliged to be in...." He requested Lacey to remain in the field briefly to acquaint Potter with the locality, and with reliable guides and intelligence sources.[93] He also again raised with Pennsylvania authorities the question of their commitment to maintain militia troops east of the Schuylkill, an effort which he had all but abandoned in earlier months. Yielding to the reality of the state's weak position, he now asked it to maintain not less than 400 men in the district, rather than 1,000. These he promised to assist with Continental detachments.[94]

Throughout the winter Continental involvement east of the Schuylkill had involved the unavoidable corollary of a reduction in the protection of the army on the more vulnerable west side of that river. As a result Washington avoided it as much as possible, even when confronted with the dismal performance of the militia in that sector. When it had been unavoidable, he had carefully tailored its scope and duration to the security needs of the army. Troops had been kept constantly along the roads paralleling the Schuylkill, and sent into the interior only to forage or gather supplies and to protect the northern supply line.

The trade-off continued to exist by May, but in diminished degree. The arrival of reinforcements, the improvement of the army's health, and the stabilization of its clothing situation

made it possible to keep more troops on detachment. The progress of the fortification work and of Steuben's exercises made the camp a more formidable bastion. The revitalization of the Quarter Master's Department, however partial, improved the army's ability to withdraw if necessary before an attacking foe. The geographic ignorance which had made Washington reluctant to disperse his forces had been reduced by the winter-long surveying and mapping carried out at his behest.[95] The network of small mobile parties operating on the west side of the Schuylkill between the camp and the city, anchored by Daniel Morgan's corps of riflemen, kept the area under observation but not actually pacified. The lower or eastern part of Chester County remained, at least for Whigs, a kind of no man's land. A county militia lieutenant informed the state government that the district's Tories were well armed and "learning the military exercise."[96]

In late May, when the apprehension loomed that the British might move against the camp, Washington ordered the garrison at Wilmington to move into the area to bolster the defensive screen.[97] In the meantime, however, it became clear that the principal arena of contention would be north and northwest of Philadelphia. On May 7 a battalion of British light infantry moved by boat up the Delaware River to attack state and Continental shipping on both sides of that river between Bristol and Bordentown.[98] Maxwell's detachment had been directed to interfere with such movements. Washington was astonished to learn that Maxwell had

neglected to take any artillery with him, and was thus unable to provide any effective resistance.[99] The raid destroyed at least forty vessels and resulted in the burning of a number of houses and storage buildings at Bordentown. Its overall military impact, however, was slight. For the local population the episode merely added another item to the catalogue of upheavals and alarms which the erratically shifting conflict imposed.[100]

The expedition did, however, distort and weaken the distribution of American forces east of the Schuylkill, producing a chain of consequences that briefly jeopardized a significant detachment of Continental troops. The alarm on the Delaware drew Maxwell's detachment toward that river, along with some of the parties which had been patrolling the roads near Germantown and Chestnut Hill.[101] The result was a gap in the army's security network adjacent to the Schuylkill, which the militia, wallowing in the trauma of the Crooked Billet episode, was unable to fill.[102]

It was necessary to commit more Continental troops to the east side. On May 18, Washington ordered Lafayette to lead a detachment of between 2,000 and 3,000 troops across the Schuylkill, with instructions similar to those which Maxwell had been given. Lafayette was warned that the force he led was a "very valuable one," the loss of which would constitute a "severe blow" to the army. He was therefore instructed

to keep the party in motion, and to constantly leave a way open to rejoin the army if either it or the detachment were attacked.[103]

The occasion offered the young general his first independent field command since arriving in America, and an opportunity to recoup some of the honors which had slipped away when the Canadian expedition had been aborted in February. On reaching Barren Hill just northwest of Chestnut Hill, however, Lafayette evinced an alarming lack of familiarity with the area and its inhabitants. Having been given temporary command of all Continental troops east of the river, he wisely called on Allen McLane, the most experienced officer in the area, for information. He wanted to know whether local residents believed there would be a market the next day, and whether people living near the British lines were aware that his detachment had entered the area.[104]

If the inhabitants did not know, William Howe did. In order to protect the Meschianza being held that day from expected American attempts to disrupt it, Howe had bolstered his patrols along all roads leading to the city. As a result, American movements were an open secret at British Head Quarters.[105] Lafayette had ignored Washington's injunction against taking a stationary post. On reaching Barren Hill he halted his force and sent scouting parties toward the city. On the evening of May 19 Howe detached between 5,000 and 6,000 of his own troops under the command of Major General James Grant. The party was

instructed to march north along Old York Road and then northwest, in an effort to get behind Lafayette's detachment. Early the next morning Howe followed with almost 6,000 more troops, proceeding directly up the Germantown Road with the intention of trapping Lafayette's party between two overwhelmingly superior British forces.[106]

The event foundered chiefly on the difficulty of moving such a large part of the British army under cover of darkness with any degree of secrecy. Lafayette's scouts spread the alarm before Grant's column could encircle the American detachment, and well before Howe could get close enough to contest the American retreat. Lafayette extricated his party by wading it back over the Schuylkill at Matson's Ford. The alarm guns were fired at Valley Forge, and a small force was pushed across Sullivan's Bridge to serve either as a diversion, or as the van of a rescue party had Lafayette become trapped.[107]

Evaluations of the episode varied rather predictably according to the source. American observers spoke of a "brilliant," a "glorious," or at least a "timely and handsome" retreat on Lafayette's part.[108] British sources, on the other hand, attributed the outcome to the desertion of several soldiers with a warning of the movement, to Grant's "overly cautious" manuevering, to the difficulty of discerning roads in the darkness, and finally, in plain frustration, to Washington's "usual good fortune."[109]
A Hessian officer described the American retreat at

one point as "certain as it was quick," and at another as confused and fatiguing.[110]

Ultimately the incident merely added to the list of intriguing "might-have-beens" which the Valley Forge winter, like any military episode, inevitably accumulated. Had Lafayette been trapped, Washington would almost certainly have been faced with having to decide between accepting the loss of a significant part of his effective force, or risking a general action under hazardous circumstances. The affair nicely illustrated the dilemma which frustrated American efforts to cover the sprawling periphery of the city throughout the winter. Small, mobile parties tended to be successful in avoiding traps like the one which Lafayette narrowly escaped, but they were ineffective for pacifying the hinterland or enforcing revolutionary authority. Larger and more heavily armed forces might effect the latter objective, but they were unwieldy, vulnerable, and presented virtually irresistable targets for enemy attack.

In the aftermath of Barren Hill, Washington reverted to the policy which he had pursued throughout the winter, of limiting the scope of Continental activity to the use of small, mobile parties for patrol and intelligence purposes.[111] William Maxwell remained east of the Schuylkill after the return of the British expedition from Bordentown. His orders, however, reiterated the injunction to keep his troops in motion along the roads leading to Philadelphia, and stressed the object of avoiding surprise or ambush.[112] A party

of Continental cavalry which had been sent from Trenton to cooperate with Lafayette was directed to remain to assist Allen McLane.[113] In response to an alarm on May 23 of yet another impending British excursion, Charles Scott became the fourth general officer to cross the Schuylkill. Although Scott may have brought a small party to McLane's assistance, Lafayette's aborted mission was the last significant Continental venture into the treacherous district east of the Schuylkill prior to the departure of the army from Valley Forge.[114]

While Continental involvement east of the Schuylkill was intermittent and hesitating, in New Jersey it became progressive after the beginning of May. Although the British army turned its attention back toward Pennsylvania in April, the conflict which had broken out in New Jersey continued to flare sporadically. Howe periodically sent detachments across the Delaware to seize supplies or terrorize Whigs. The result was invariably a resumption of Tory violence, and renewed calls for Continental protection.[115] The landing of two English regiments at Cooper's Ferry in early May initiated the process once more. Israel Shreve quickly found his detachment outmatched and asked Washington to send another brigade of regular troops.[116] The Bordentown raids aggravated the alarm in New Jersey and impelled Washington to listen sympathetically to Shreve's appeal. He ordered another regiment of Jersey Continentals to cross the Delaware, and promised the state's militia commander further assistance as soon as his own reinforcements permitted.[117]

Thereafter the Continental and militia forces in New Jersey were for the most part able to hold their own against scattered outbreaks of British marauding, and indeed, in a few instances, to drive back enemy thrusts. From vantage points along the Delaware, moreover, they were in better position to watch British preparations to evacuate the city than other American observers.[118] Washington contrived to reinforce the Continental regiments there by permitting Shreve to annex recruits from West Jersey passing through the area on their way to camp. By late May Shreve reported that the situation was again substantially in hand. The British had ceased night patrols, and had drawn their piquets in toward their redoubts near Cooper's Ferry.[119] In apparent response to this contraction, the Tories near Billingsport were going over to local civil authority, and trade with the city, which had begun to slacken early in the month, had nearly ceased altogether.[120]

By this time Washington had come to view the presence of a strong Continental force in New Jersey as a potentially valuable impediment to the impending enemy retreat. He regretted that circumstances rendered it imprudent to detach a large part of the army to that state to contest the British withdrawal.[121] All that remained possible was the redeployment of forces already detached. When intelligence became fairly persuasive that Clinton would take an overland route to New York, Washington ordered William Maxwell to take his two regiments from Bucks County to

Coryell's Ferry to cross the Delaware and join Shreve.[122] Taking command of Continental forces in the state, Maxwell was to rally the militia to retard the British retreat by "hanging on their flanks and rear, breaking down the Bridges over the Creeks in their route, blocking up the roads by falling trees and by every other method, that can be devised."[123]

Thus the desire of New Jersey's civil authorities to have the state's entire brigade of Continental troops returned to its defense was fulfilled, however belatedly. In point of fact, this seemingly disparate sequence of movements and counter-movements - of thrusts, shifts and withdrawals of troops through the region - converged into a discernable pattern. It was a pattern, however, which was nowhere articulated as such in the records of the event, and one which can be characterized only by reference to the one portrayed in earlier chapters. The crescent-shaped configuration of American deployments described in Chapter III remained essentially intact until the very eve of the British march from Philadelphia in mid-June. The movements depicted in the preceeding pages can be viewed as a kind of stuttering rotation of that configuration around an axis centered in Philadelphia.[124] The left wing of the crescent, which in January had hinged to the Delaware River at Trenton, was by late May anchored by Shreve's regiment (and then by Maxwell's brigade) between Mount Holly and Haddonfield, New Jersey. Its center was still roughly described by the camp at Valley Forge, and its shifting area of operations on either side of the Schuylkill River.

The ultimate effect of this rotation was to tear the crescent from its southern anchor on the Delaware River at Wilmington. To an extent, the area of Continental coverage was expandable in proportion to the growth of the army's strength and the improvement of the field-worthiness of its troops. At some point, however, the army's resources could simply not be stretched any further, and a redefinition of strategic priorities was required. This point was reached in conjunction with the growing belief that the enemy would withdraw from Philadelphia by an overland route through New Jersey. As early as May 17, Washington expressed a desire to recall the Maryland division from Wilmington in order to be in a position to "act according to conjunctures." The return of the division's troops to the army would provide him with a "large compact body of regulars," and offset the increasing numbers being sent east of the Schuylkill and to New Jersey.[125]

The sticking point continued to be the security of Continental stores at Head of Elk. Smallwood was ordered to request militia reinforcements from Maryland Governor Thomas Johnson, and to have the stores inventoried to determine the need for Continental guards.[126] Johnson responded with a favorable estimate of the state's ability to secure the stores, and Washington directed Smallwood to offer whatever aid he could in removing the goods to a safer place.[127] Simultaneous intelligence reaching Wilmington and Valley Forge was interpreted to indicate a British threat to the former post.[128] Fearing that the enemy would cross the Schuylkill and cut Smallwood

off from the camp, Washington directed him to fall back several miles into the country and to be ready to make a hurried march to Valley Forge. Two days later he ordered that one brigade be sent directly to camp, while Smallwood proceeded with the second to the neighborhood of Chadds Ford, from where he could cover Head of Elk or rejoin the army within a day.[129]

With this decision the army's five month old anchor on the Delaware below Philadelphia was severed, and the rotation of the Continental defensive configuration nearly completed. Smallwood delayed complying with the order for several days in order to complete the removal of stores and to observe British ship movements on the Delaware. By May 29 he had withdrawn his division to Pennsboro Township in Chester County, about a mile behind Chadds Ford. This placed the Maryland division squarely astride the supply line between Head of Elk and Valley Forge, approximately equidistant from both places.[130]

Thus poised, the army waited for more than a fortnight for the final signal to march. The departure was regularly reported to be imminent, often on an "hourly" basis.[131] The situation rapidly degenerated into what John Laurens characterized as a "most tiresome time of inactivity and Suspense."[132] Officers and enlisted men alike sought diversion by arguing and speculating about the duration and meaning of the delay. Notwithstanding Washington's well-known prohibition of gaming in the ranks, a series of pools and private wagers rather predictably sprung

up, with large sums of money and many fine "Beaver Hatts" reportedly hanging on the date of the British departure.[133]

This informal lottery reflected a more serious dialogue which continued at Head Quarters and at the highest levels of the officer corps over the enemy's intentions. The debate continued to revolve around the related questions of whether the British would leave Philadelphia by land or sea, and whether or not to expect an attack before they left.[134] Several members of Congress joined the discourse in support of Henry Laurens' view that "flimsy assurances" of a British retreat should not be lightly relied upon.[135] Washington increasingly tended to believe that Henry Clinton would withdraw his army overland without a fight. As late as June 15, however, he acknowledged that the contrary opinion was "worthy of attention," and prudently declined to become committed to any course of action. Even on the morning of the final British evacuation, Washington conceded that there still existed a "variety of Opinions" about the enemy's intended plans.[136]

American anxieties about the mode of the British withdrawal and the possible threat which it posed were in fact largely groundless. The principal reason for the delay was the arrival in Philadelphia on June 6 of the peace commissioners who had left London in April to present Congress with the terms of the Conciliation Bills which Parliament had passed in February.[137]

Notwithstanding Henry Clinton's chagrin over his "mortifying" fate at being forced to retreat, he had every intention of obeying his orders. He had decided to proceed by land because he believed that only by doing so could he ensure the security of New York. Although he expected to encounter some American resistance in New Jersey, he thought he could reach that city within ten days after leaving Philadelphia, while a sea route might delay his army indefinitely. The date of the British departure would depend entirely upon the period required for the peace commission to present its proposals to Congress and await a reply.[138]

The delay, although productive of anxiety and irritation, was from the American viewpoint not a wholly untimely occurrence. Preparations continued frantically until the very eve of the march northward; preparations which could be much more easily performed from a stationary camp than on the road. It was not even ascertained that each soldier would enter the campaign with as much as a musket until a shipment of 2,000 stands of arms arrived from New England on June 6, after which there were still severe shortages of ammunition cannisters. As late as the eve of the march, clothiers were scrambling to find enough shoes to furnish some of the regiments.[139] In addition, each day brought more recruits and drafts to fill under-strength units. Although Washington remained dissatisfied with the pace of reinforcement, the influx of troops continued to strain the capacity of the support departments to provide for them.[140] One commissary

officer, struggling to supply enough beef to avert another outcry, exclaimed that he wished the "Devil had blown [the enemy] to California rather than Jersey."[141]

The arrival on June 9 of the first brigade of Maryland troops from Wilmington, and the anticipated arrival of the second, effectively burst the bounds of the camp.[142] The growth of the army, and the cumulative environmental damage of six months of intensive occupation, spurred a decision to abandon the ground and to move the troops into tents at an adjacent location.[143] In addition to safeguarding the army's precariously restored health, the move provided a graduated transition from a stationary to a field status. It was accomplished with relatively little difficulty on June 10, with the troops marching across Sullivan's Bridge and setting up tents approximately one mile beyond the Schuylkill in Providence Township.[144] Work parties were ordered to return to the old camp to clean the area and bury debris, while functionaries such as the Paymaster and the Auditor were directed to move their offices into abandoned huts in order to remain convenient to the troops.[145]

Perhaps the most important consequence of the delayed British departure was that it afforded Washington a brief interval in which to confront the problems presented by Congress' last minute approval of a series of resolves concerning the army's new "establishment" or organizational structure. After the approval of the half-pay resolve, the delegates at York proceeded with

reasonable alacrity to finish work on the establishment, the final fruit of the Conference Committee's tenure at Valley Forge. Following some alternately desultory and intense debate on the subject, they maintained what even a severe critic of Congressional lethargy was forced to characterize as a "charming rapidity" in their deliberations.[146]

The resolutions, passed between May 27 and June 2, regularized the size and structure of units in the infantry, artillery, and cavalry, provided rules for the selection of individuals for staff department positions, and attacked the longstanding problem of officers' rations.[147] These measures constituted an important step forward in the regularization of the conditions of army service, although they amounted to a far from complete agenda of needed reforms. Washington reserved the prerogative of recommending further regulations. He was, however, doubtless glad to get any response at all from Congress, after a winter of cajolery, wheedling and pressure which occasionally had verged on outright threat.[148] The chief problem lay in the lack of time to implement the measures fully before the resumption of the campaign. Washington's repeated warnings that little could be done once the army resumed the field would be immediately tested.

The resolves were published verbatim in General Orders, and the members of the army were enjoined to become familar with their provisions and govern themselves accordingly. Saying so, alas, would not make it so. This fact was tacitly recognized by the

temporary suspension of several of the provisions in the announcement of the resolves itself.[149] Congress attempted to mitigate the problem by dispatching Joseph Reed and Francis Dana of the original Conference Committee to Valley Forge to advise and assist Washington in effecting the reforms.[150] As a practical matter, however, little more could be done than to make improvised solutions to specific problems as they arose and hope for the best.

The troublesome consequences of adhering to this approach were demonstrated almost immediately. Having received neither Congressional approval nor disapproval of his recommendation that three lieutenant generals be appointed, Washington designated the three most senior major generals to act in that capacity during marches or in battle. In all other situations the regular divisional structure would be maintained.[151] This arrangement, made in response to a series of "Misunderstandings" among the major generals, brought an aggrieved remonstrance from newly-restored divisional commander Charles Lee, who objected to the practice of shifting commands as detrimental to good military order.[152] The occasion gave Washington an opportunity both to put Lee in his place and to record his own frustration at the difficulty of implementing piecemeal reforms. Agreeing with Lee in principal, Washington observed that:

> Heaven and my own Letters to Congress can Witness, on the one hand, how ardently I have laboured to effect these points during the past Winter and Spring. The Army on the other, bear witness to the effect. Suspended between the old and new establishment, I could govern myself by neither, with propriety. 153

Washington concluded with the cool assertion that the expedient, which he had adopted as a "kind of medium course," would remain in effect.[154]

An even more serious problem arising from the lack of a completed establishment was that of defining the role of Friedrich Steuben in a campaigning rather than a wintering army. Steuben's reception into the army, it has been noted, was a remarkably amicable one considering the disposition of his fellow officers to assert and defend their prerogatives. This was undoubtedly in consequence of the clear need for training among the troops, and the lack of anyone else with the skills and temperament for dealing with this tedious and exacting task. As the spring progressed and Steuben's star ascended in the army's hierarchy, however, signs of jealousy began to appear. As early as the beginning of May caustic references to the "prussand general" emerged.[155] There was no serious question about the efficacy of Steuben's work with the regiments. Indeed, two individuals who had been in camp during the winter and then absent during April and May, commented approvingly on returning in June on the newly "respectable" appearance which they observed in the troops' discipline.[156]

Rather, it was a question of the role which the newly designated Inspector and major general would play in the field. Attempting to head off the jealousies which he could see were "too apparently... arising" among the general officers on the subject, Washington issued a complex directive which sought to

delineate the powers of the Inspectorship from those of the field officers.[157] This brought a strong protest from Steuben himself, who complained of untoward restrictions on his authority.[158] Treating Steuben somewhat more warmly than he had Lee, Washington permitted him to go to York to confer with Congress in an effort to reach a solution.[159] The case raised delicate questions and Washington was prudent to defer the matter to a higher political authority. After uniting in opposition to the pretensions of Thomas Conway and in support of their beleaguered Commander in Chief, the general officers had constituted a relative bedrock of stability throughout the winter, on which the fragile unity of the rest of the army had been delicately erected. The Steuben and Lee episodes revealed, on the threshold of the campaign itself, the beginnings of fine lines of fracture in that stability. Had those lines widened into open breaches, the costs of reform would have rapidly begun to outweigh the benefits.

That Washington was forced to enter the 1778 campaign with an army juggling as many organizational questions as answers, is a measure of the partial success of his winter-long efforts to elicit reforms, and a testimony to the accuracy of his warnings of the consequences. His simultaneously vexed and anguished apologia to Charles Lee illustrated the shape of the problem at the end of the winter as aptly as did his letters to Congress the previous December. In terms of reorganization, June of 1778 constituted an indeterminate fund of borrowed time. Even as

Washington struggled to devise interim solutions to unpredictable problems, Congress had turned its attention momentarily from reorganization to the problem of how best to reject the new British peace terms. That rejection would provide the signal for the campaign to begin, and in the process close for the season the realistic prospect of reform.

Even before the arrival of the British peace commissioners, Henry Clinton attempted to proceed with the formality of offering the Cabinet's terms to Congress. His request to send an officer to Valley Forge with the proposals was rebuffed as unnecessary and improper. Washington countered with an offer to transmit any messages to York by courier, and informed Congress of his action.[160] The arrival of the commissioners produced a repetition of the sequence. Dr. Adam Ferguson, the Secretary of that body, journeyed toward Valley Forge to request a passport to proceed to York, where he would personally deliver the proposals to Congress.[161] Ferguson was intercepted on the road near Radnor by members of Morgan's riflemen and turned back to Philadelphia. Washington informed Clinton that he could not grant a passport without approval from Congress, and again offered to transmit written messages to York.[162]

These maneuverings were more a matter of protocol than of substance. Congress had received reliable printed copies of the Conciliation Bills in mid-April, and the only real debate was over the manner in which they should be rebuffed.[163] Bowing to American

unwillingness to give even the appearance of entering face-to-face negotiations, the commissioners transmitted to Radnor a packet containing the bills and a letter to Congress. Upon receipt of the materials, Congress resolved to have the letter read aloud by President Henry Laurens, and then reversed itself and referred the matter to a committee.[164] The issue dragged on to its virtually foregone conclusion on June 17. On that day, after three days of deliberation over the specific language of the measure, the delegates unanimously adopted a reply calling the proposals "inadmissable...[and] derogatory to the honor of an independent nation," and reaffirming the position that only an "explicit acknowledgement" of independence, or a withdrawal of British troops, could lead to peace.[165]

The British commissioners did not even remain in Philadelphia to receive the formal rejection of their efforts. Both armies used the interval to make final preparations for taking the field. Every night wagonloads of baggage and supplies were loaded on flat-bottomed boats and ferried across the Delaware River to a British staging area at Cooper's Point in New Jersey. By day various regiments were similarly embarked and transported across the river.[166] The British army made a final expedition beyond the city's redoubts on June 11, when a large detachment set out on a uncontested procession to Germantown accompanied by the peace commissioners.[167] Three days later all of the army's horses were sent to New Jersey.[168] By the sixteenth, Clinton reported that nothing but the rear guard of his "noble little army" remained in the city.[169] On the following morning its sentries were sent to the redoubts for the final time, with the injunction not to "look upon the city any longer as their cantonment."[170]

On the American side of the lines, meanwhile, an increasingly buoyant if somewhat chaotic tone marked the occasion. State and Continental officials alike descended upon Valley Forge in anticipation of an early opportunity to reenter the city.[171] They found themselves in the company of large numbers of displaced Philadelphians who had begun "hovering around the camp" with similar expectations.[172] The latter group, in turn, mixed uneasily with swarms of "Country Refugees" who had remained in or fled to Philadelphia during the winter. These individuals, whose actions had marked them as politically suspect, had come out, notwithstanding Clinton's prohibition, to sue for private terms of peace.[173]

This diverse multitude did not provide ideally conducive conditions for the arrangement of the army for its march. It did, however, pointedly underline the fact that while the army would shortly leave Pennsylvania, the military arm of the Continental establishment would play a transitional role in the restoration of civil authority to the area. As early as the end of May the state government called Washington's attention to the danger of severe disorders in Philadelphia once Continental forces reentered the city.[174] Washington promised to take measures to ensure order, and directed officers commanding detachments to forbid their troops to set foot in the town. At the same time he urged the state authorities to reestablish their control in the city as rapidly as possible.[175]

Once they began, the evacuation of Philadelphia and the American departure from Valley Forge proceeded rapidly. On the morning after the departure of the British commissioners on June 16, Washington reissued orders for the army's march toward the Hudson River. Three of its divisions would cross the Delaware at Coryell's Ferry, one slightly higher at Sherard's Ferry, and the last at Easton.[176] On the same day he convened a final Council of War to determine a course of action. Summarizing the situation of both armies, he conjectured that the enemy might still move toward New York by land or sea, and acknowledged the possibility of an attack before they left. In response, Washington offered a series of options including an immediate attack on Philadelphia, a movement either toward that city or the Delaware, waiting until the British moved, further detachments to New Jersey, and an attempt to overtake and attack the enemy if they marched through that state.[177] The Council offered a diversity of opinions, but strong majorities formed in favor of allowing the enemy to move first, and offering only cautious annoyance to their march through New Jersey.[178]

On June 18 Washington received intelligence, first informally and then officially, that the British had completed their evacuation.[179] He ordered the first two divisions, consisting of six brigades, to march toward the Delaware that afternoon. The rest of the army was to follow the next day.[180] Benedict Arnold was directed to proceed to Philadelphia to take

command of a small occupying force, which would consist primarily of troops who had performed detached duty along the lines around the city. Arnold was warned of his responsibility for preserving order until civil authority could be restored.[181] Support Department officials were ordered to send agents into the town to seize abandoned enemy supplies and to establish public stores.[182]

At dawn on June 19, exactly six months after the army arrived at Valley Forge, its last three divisions marched away from the camp on the road toward the Delaware River. Coryell's Ferry, where the army had entered Pennsylvania eleven months before, and where the largest part of it would leave the state, lay three days away. A sharp but inconclusive clash with the enemy at Monmouth Court House hovered a week in the distance. Beyond that, although it might not have been credited at the time, the war itself stretched for five years into the future. Behind it the army left a wearly populace, a devastated terrain, a site that would serve as a military hospital, temporary prisoner internment compound and logistical support facility for several years, a fund of memories of indeterminate quality, and seemingly few enduring local attachments. In later years an officer or two would correspond with acquaintances made during the encampment.[183] Washington himself would pay a lonely visit to the "old cantonment" almost a decade later, laconically recording the event without elaborate comment.[184]

CHAPTER I THE CAMPAIGN FOR PENNSYLVANIA

1. George Washington to the President of Congress, 15 August 1777, John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington (Washington D.C., 1931-1944) volume IX, pp. 69-70; see copy transmitted by Congress to the Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council, Frame 0793, Reel 12, PA, PHMC.

2. Supreme Executive Council to the state's delegates in Congress, 20 August 1777, Frame 0831, Reel 12, PA, PHMC.

3. George Weedon to John Page, 23 August 1777, Weedon Papers, ChiHS.

4. Ibid.

5. Washington to George Baylor, 25 August 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 131.

6. Supreme Executive Council to the county militia lieutenants, 6 September 1777, Frames 0988-0990, Reel 12, PA, PHMC.

7. Ibid.

8. Elias Boudinot to William Atlee, 11 August 1777, Elias Boudinot Letterbook, SHSW; William Atlee to John Hay, 23 August 1777, Manuscript Collection, RUL; John Hancock to Washington, 22 August 1777, Papers of the Continental Congress (PCC), RG 93. M-247, Roll 23, NA.

9. Ibid.

10. Richard Peters to Thomas Wharton, 30 August 1777, Frame 0916, Reel 12, PA, PHMC.

11. Ibid.; John Hancock to Washington, 1 September 1777, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 23, NA.

12. Benjamin Marshall to Christopher Marshall, 3 August 1777, Andre de Coppet Collection, PUL.

13. James Hutchinson to Israel Pemberton, 23 September 1777, James Hutchinson Papers, APS.

14. Large numbers of Quakers and other presumably dissenting individuals, for example, were rounded up by the state government at the behest of Congress, and sent to Virginia for internment during the emergency.

15. See John F. Reed, Campaign to Valley Forge: July 1 to December 19, 1777 (Philadelphia, 1963), pp. 71-76. Reed's work is the best extant comprehensive study of the Philadelphia campaign, and can be usefully resorted to for further detail on most episodes.

16. Willaim Howe to Lord George Germain, 30 August 1777 (extract), Sackville-Germain Papers, WLC.

17. Charles Gray to ? , 28 November 1777, André de Coppet Collection, PUL.

18. Nathanael Greene to his wife, 10 September 1777, André deCoppet Collection, PUL.

19. Ibid.

20. Reed, Campaign to Valley Forge, pp. 112-13.

21. Ibid., pp. 128-29.

22. Anonymous British officer, "Memoire, Battle of Brandywine, 11th September, 1777," Sol Feinstone Collection, APS.

23. Quoted in Reed, Campaign to Valley Forge, p. 128.

24. Ibid., 131-34.

25. "Memoire, Battle of Brandywine," Sol Feinstone Collection, APS.

26. Lafayette was seriously wounded attempting to reform the American position. He remained hospitalized through much of the fall campaign, but his performance impressed Washington and many of the other American officers, and his place in the army was secured.

27. Reed, Campaign to Valley Forge, pp. 135-36.

28. Ibid, p. 139.

29. Washington to the President of Congress, 11 September 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 207-8.

30. Timothy Pickering, "Journal," September 1777, Pickering Papers, Essex Institute.

31. "Sketch and Memorial of Brandywine Battle," Weedon Papers, ChiHS.

32. Nathanael Greene to his wife, 14 September 1777, Andre deCoppet Collection, PUL.

33. Ibid.

34. Thomas Conway to Robert Morris, 9 August 1777, Sol Feinstone Collection, APS.

35. "Sketch and Memorial of Brandywine Battle," Weedon Papers, ChiHS.

36. John Hancock to Philemon Dickenson, 12 September 1777, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 23, NA; John Hancock to William Smallwood, same date and collection.

37. Washington to Alexander McDougall, 19 September 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 239-40.

38. Benjamin Marshall to "Sally," 12 September 1777, Andre deCoppet Collection, PUL.

39. Washington to the President of Congress, 23 September 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 257-60; Washington to John Hazlewood, 23 September 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 255-56; Washington to Samuel Smith, 23 September 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 260-61.

40. Supreme Executive Council to Colonel William Bradford, 12 September 1777, Frame 1043, Reel 12, PA, PHMC.

41. Benjamin Marshall to "Sally," 12 September 1777, Andre deCoppet Collection, PUL.

42. Washington to John Sullivan, 20 September 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 242. The problem of the Delaware River defenses was a continuing source of simmering friction between the state and Continental establishments during the campaign. For a comprehensive account of the subject see John W. Jackson, The Pennsylvania Navy: The Defense of the Delaware, 1775-1783 (New Brunswick, NJ, 1974).

43. Reed, Campaign to Valley Forge, pp. 154-55.

44. Ibid., p. 156.

45. See Bernhard A. Uhlendorf, ed., Revolution in America: Confidential Letters and Journals, 1776-1784, of Adjutant General Major Baurmeister of the Hessian Forces (New Brunswick, NJ, 1957), p. 115 (hereafter Baurmeister, "Journal").

46. James Hutchinson to Israel Pemberton, 17 September 1777, James Hutchinson Papers, APS.

47. John Hancock to John Armstrong, 18 September 1777, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 23, NA.

48. John Hancock to Washington, 17 September 1777, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 23, NA.

49. Ibid.; See Worthington C. Ford, ed., Journals of the Continental Congress (Washington, DC, 1904-1914), volume IX, pp. 752-53 for these resolves.

50. Reed, Campaign to Valley Forge, pp. 164-65.

51. Washington to William Smallwood, 19 September 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 240.

52. See William Smallwood to Governor Thomas Johnson, 23 September 1777, MS Group 1875, MdHS.

53. J. Read to "Sukey," 21 September 1777, André deCoppet Collection, PUL.

54. The choice was seemingly deliberate, not lightly made, and perhaps not unanimously arrived at. See Elias Boudinot to his wife, 23 September 1777, Manuscript Division, PUL.

55. Howe's Commissary General, Daniel Wier, reported that the army subsisted from the countryside between Head of Elk and Philadelphia, actually arriving at the latter place with several days' more provisions than it had started with. See Daniel Weir to John Robinson, Esq., 25 October 1777, Daniel Weir Letterbook, p. 45, HSP.

56. James Hutchinson to Israel Pemberton, 22 September 1777, James Hutchinson Papers, APS.

57. James Hutchinson to Israel Pemberton, 23 September 1777, James Hutchinson Papers, APS.

58. Washington to Israel Putnam, 23 September 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 253-54.

59. Ibid.

60. Reed, Campaign to Valley Forge, p. 185.

61. Washington to Lord Stirling, 24 September 1777, Schoff Collection, WLC.

62. Ibid.

63. Washington to Alexander McDougall, 25 September 1777, W. Wright Hawkes Collection, Union College Library.

64. The Supreme Executive Council even sought to transfer militia troops from exposed frontier outposts such as Fort Augusta, contrary to longstanding practice and in the face of strong backcountry opposition. See Samuel Hunter to James Potter, 26 September 1777, Potter Papers, Centre County (Pennsylvania) Historical Society.

65. Washington to Samuel Kennedy, 26 September 1777, Berks County (Pennsylvania) Historical Society.

66. See Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Smith to Washington, 26, 27 September 1777, Samuel Smith Letterbook, MdHS.

67. "Council of War," 28 September 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 277-79.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. Jedediah Huntington to Colonel Williams, 29 September 1777, Williams Papers, CHS.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. Samuel Holden Parsons to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 30 September 1777, André deCoppet Collection, PUL.

75. Ibid.

76. Henry Marchant to Governor Nicholas Cooke, 30 September 1777, Letters, vol. 2, RISA; see also Elbridge Gerry to Colonel Trumbull, 2 October 1777, Governor Joseph Trumbull Collection, CSL.

77. John Armstrong to Thomas Wharton, 2 October 1777, Valley Forge Historical Society.

78. Ibid.

79. See John S. Pancake, 1777: Year of the Hangman (University, Ala., 1977) pp. 179-99.

80. Washington, "General Orders," 3 October 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 305.

81. See map.

82. Ernst Kipping and Samuel Stelle Smith, translated, At General Howe's Side, 1776-1778: The Diary of General William Howe's Aid de Camp, Captain Friedrich von Muenchhausen (Monmouth Beach, NJ, 1974), p. 38 (hereafter, Muenchhausen, "Diary").

83. Washington, "General Orders," 3 October 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 307-8.

84. Ibid.

85. See Timothy Pickering, "Journal," Pickering Papers, Essex Institute.

86. See John Armstrong to Thomas Wharton, 5 October 1777, Gratz Collection, Case 4, Box 11, HSP.

87. George Weedon to ? , 4 October 1777, Weedon Papers, ChiHS.

88. Lord Stirling to ? , 5 October 1777, Dealer's Catalogue, American Art Association, 1926.

89. Ibid.

90. Benjamin Talmadge to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 5 October 1777, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers: Correspondence, CHS.

91. Willaim Beatty to his father, 6 October 1777, RG 15, M-804, Roll 1561, NA.

92. Jonathan Todd to his father, 6 October 1777, RG 15, M-804, Roll 1561, NA.

93. Charles Stewart to Samuel Gray, 7 October 1777, Samuel Gray Collection, vol. 2, CHS.

94. Ibid.

95. Eliphalet Dyer to Joseph Trumbull, 8 October 1777, Joseph Trumbull Papers, CHS.

96. George Weedon to ? , 8 October 1777, Weedon Papers, ChiHS.

97. Ibid.

98. Washington to Governor Thomas McKean, 10 October 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 346-47.

99. Mordecai Gist to John McClure, 10 October 1777, Gist Family Papers, Maryland Hall of Records. Modesty was not an entirely inappropriate sentiment in this instance, inasmuch as the Maryland militia, having taken the wrong road the night before, never really entered the battle itself.

100. Jedediah Huntington to Joshua Huntington, 11 October 1777, Jedediah Huntington Letters, CHS.

101. Jedediah Huntington to Joseph Trumbull, 12 October 1777, Joseph Trumbull Letters, CHS.

102. Henry Knox to Joseph Trumbull, 19 October 1777, Joseph Trumbull Letters, CHS.

103. Jedediah Huntington to Joseph Trumbull, 12 October 1777, Joseph Trumbull Letters, CHS.

104. William Beatty to his father, 12 October 1777, MS Group 1202, MdHS.

105. Henry Knox to Joseph Trumbull, 19 October 1777, Joseph Trumbull Letters, CHS.

106. Thomas McKean to Caeser Rodney, 15 October 1777, John Reed Collection.

107. Thomas Wharton to Robert Morris, 18 October 1777, John Reed Collection. Armstrong had informed Wharton that "as to another attack it is undoubtedly in contemplation, the consequences of which must probably be very important." 14 October 1777, Gratz Collection, HSP.

108. Jedediah Huntington to Andrew Huntington, 12-18 October 1777, Jedediah Huntington Letters, CHS; Jeremiah Talbot to his wife, 12-18 October 1777, Manuscript Division, PUL.

109. John Reed, Campaign to Valley Forge, pp. 249-53, 262-63.

110. Washington to the President of Congress, 16 October 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 381-83.

111. Fitzpatrick, X: 113; Charles Stewart to Samuel Gray, 7 October 1777, Samuel Gray Papers, CHS.

112. Washington to George Clinton, 15 October 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 372-74.

113. Washington to the President of Congress, 16 October 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 381-83.

114. Jeremiah Talbot to his wife, 12-18 October 1777, Manuscript Division, PUL.

115. William Howe to Henry Clinton, 8 October 1777, Clinton Papers, WLC.

116. William Howe to Henry Clinton, 9 October 1777, Clinton Papers, WLC.

117. John Montressor, "Journals of Captain John Montressor, 1777-1778," Collections of the New York Historical Society, Publication Fund Series (New York, 1881), vol. 14, p. 129 (hereafter, Montressor, "Journal").

118. Reed, Campaign to Valley Forge, p. 180; John Hancock to Washington, 12 October 1777, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 23, NA. This allegation was not proved.

119. Montressor, "Journal," p. 129.

120. Nathanael Greene to his wife, 2 November 1777, Manuscript Division, PUL.

121. Washington, "Circular to the General Officers," 26 October 1777, IX: 441-42; "Council of War," 8 November 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 23-24.

122. John Armstrong to Thomas Wharton, 14 October 1777, Gratz Collection, HSP.

123. Reed, Campaign to Valley Forge, p. 242.

124. John Armstrong to Thomas Wharton, 14 October 1777, Gratz Collection, HSP.

125. See William Howe to Lord George Germain, 23 October 1777, Germain Papers, WLC.

126. For a comprehensive treatment of American supply and logistical difficulties, see vol. 2 of this study: Jacqueline Thibaut, This Fatal Crisis: Logistics, Supply and the Continental Army at Valley Forge, 1777-1778.

127. Thomas Jones to Charles Stewart, 6 October 1777, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

128. For the frequent ignorance of the whereabouts of important support department officials, even by their close associates and subordinates, see Robert Dill to Charles Stewart, 4 October 1777, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

129. Thomas Jones to Charles Stewart, 10 October 1777, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

130. Robert Dill to Charles Stewart, 12 October 1777, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

131. Washington to the President of Congress, 13 October 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 364-68.

132. JCC, IX: 799.

133. John Hancock, Circular Letter to the States, 17 October 1777, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 23, NA.

134. Board of War to President Thomas Wharton, 18 October 1777, Reel 12, Frames 1264-65, PA, PHMC.

135. Thomas Stewart to Charles Stewart, 22 October 1777, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

136. Washington to James Potter, 18, 20, 21 October 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 391-92, 405-6, 408-9.

137. Supreme Executive Council to the militia lieutenant of Chester County, 24 October 1777, Frame 1278, Reel 12, PA, PHMC.

138. Supreme Executive Countil to the county militia lieutenants, 23 October 1777, Frame 1278, Reel 12, PA, PHMC.

139. Ibid.

140. Jedediah Huntington to his father, 24 October 1777, Jedediah Huntington Letters, CHS.

141. Reed, Campaign to Valley Forge, pp. 312-19.

142. Jedediah Huntington to his father, 12 October 1777, John Reed Collection. British supply and logistical problems, while considerably less severe than those of the Americans, were persistent and irritating. They stemmed principally from the continuing blockade of the Delaware River below Philadelphia. For a comprehensive treatment of the subject see R. Arthur Bowler, Logistics and the Failure of the British Army in America, 1775-1783 (Princeton, N.J., 1975).

143. Pennsylvania Evening Post, 13 January 1778.

144. Jedediah Huntington to his father, 12 October 1777, John Reed Collection.

145. Washington to James M. Varnum, 28 October 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 455-57.

146. Washington to James Potter, 31 October 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 474-75.

147. Jedediah Huntington to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 9 November 1777, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, LC.

148. Washington to James Potter, 31 October 1777, Fitzpatrick, IX: 474-75.

149. George Weedon to John Page, 31 October 1777, Weedon Papers, ChiHS.

150. Mathew Irwin to Colonel Trumbull, 28 October 1777, Joseph Trumbull Collection, CHS.

151. Jediah Huntington to Colonel Trumbull, 27 October 1777, Joseph Trumbull Collection, CHS.

152. Ibid.; John Eccleston to Major Joseph Richardson, October-November 1777, Special Collections, RUL.

153. John Eccleston to Major Joseph Richardson, October-November, 1777, Special Collections, RUL.

154. Washington to James Potter, 7 November 1777, University of Virginia Library.

155. Ibid.

156. Washington to James Potter, 11 November 1777, John Reed Collection.

157. Thomas Jones to Charles Stewart, 29 October 1777, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

158. For the British operations against the forts, see Reed, Campaign to Valley Forge, pp. 320-50; Jackson, The Pennsylvania Navy, pp. 225-81; Samuel Smith Letterbook, September-November 1777, MdHS.

159. Benjamin Talmadge to Colonel Jeremiah Wadsworth, 11 November 1777, John Reed Collection.

160. See Clement Biddle to President Thomas Wharton, 3 November 1777, Frame 15, Reel 13, PA, PHMC: Jedediah Huntington to Jabez Huntington, Jedediah Huntington Letters, CHS.

161. Ephraim Blaine to Colonel John Patton, 3 November 1777, Society Collection, HSP.

162. Ibid.

163. Pennsylvania Council of Safety to William Buchanan, 5 November 1777, Frame 1224-5, Reel 12, PA, PHMC; Supreme Executive Council to Congress, 3 November 1777, Frame 0008-9, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

164. Ephraim Blaine to Colonel John Patton, 3 November 1777, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

165. Thomas Jones to Charles Stewart, 16 November 1777, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

166. Ibid.

167. Daniel Brodhead to Benedict Arnold, 7 November 1777, MSS 3305 B, Western Reserve Historical Society.

168. Joseph Ward to James Bowdoin, 12 November 1777, Bowdoin-Temple Papers, MHS.

169. Ibid.

170. Jedediah Huntington to his father, 11 November 1777, Jedediah Huntington Letters, CHS.

171. John Armstrong to Thomas Wharton, 14 October 1777, Gratz Collection, HSP.

172. Samuel Hay to William Irvine, 14 November 1777, Draper MSS, series AA, Irvine Papers, SHSW.

173. Mordecai Gist to "John," 19 November 1777, Force Transcripts, series 7-E, LC.

174. Supreme Executive Council to Congress, 3 November 1777, Frame 008, Reel 13, PA, PHMC; Board of War to Supreme Executive Council, 7 November 1777, Frame 0038, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

175. Arthur St. Clair to Robert Morris, 13 November 1777, Early Ohio Political Leaders, Arthur St. Clair Papers, Ohio Historical Society.

176. Ibid.

177. Samuel Hay to William Irvine, 14 November 1777, Draper MSS, series AA, Irvine Papers, SHSW.

178. Anthony Wayne to Thomas Wharton, 22 November 1777, Dreer Collection, Generals of the American Revolution, HSP.

179. Henry Laurens to William Palfrey, 14 November 1777, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 23, NA. Laurens succeeded John Hancock as President of Congress on November 1. JCC, IX: 854.

180. Ibid.

181. Jedediah Huntington to Colonel Williams, 10 November 1777, Dreer Collection, Generals of the American Revolution, HSP; Board of War to the Supreme Executive Council, 7 November 1777, Frame 0038, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

182. Thomas Jones to John Magee, 23 November 1777, Frame 0142, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

183. See Reed, Campaign to Valley Forge, pp. 305-211; Jackson, The Pennsylvania Navy, pp. 225-81.

184. Charles Scott to "Frankey," 15 November 1777, John Reed Collection.

185. Washington to Generals St. Clair, DeKalb, and Knox, 17 November 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 77-78.

186. Washington to John Glover or Officer Commanding his Brigade, 19 November 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 83-84; Washington to James M. Varnum, Fitzpatrick, X: 84-85.

187. John Armstrong to Thomas Wharton, 23, 29 November 1777, Gratz Collection, HSP.

188. Nathanael Greene to his wife, 21 November 1777, Andre deCoppet Collection, PUL.

189. Elias Boudinot to his wife, 30 November 1777, Manuscript Division, PUL.

190. Major General Charles Gray to ?, 28 November 1777, Andre deCoppet Collection, PUL; see also Samuel Hay to William Irvine, 14 November 1777, Draper MSS, series AA, Irvine Papers, SHSW.

191. Samuel Hay to William Irvine, 14 November 1777, Draper MSS, series AA, Irvine Papers, SHSW; John Eccleston to Major Joseph Richardson, 15 November 1777, Special Collections, RUL; Joseph Ward to James Bowdoin, 12 November 1777, Bowdoin-Temple Papers, MHS.

192. See Thomas Conway to Robert Morris, 9 August 1777, Sol Feinstone Collection, APS.

193. Samuel Hay to William Irvine, 14 November 1777, Draper MSS, series AA, Irvine Papers, SHSW.

194. Joseph Ward to James Bowdoin, 12 November 1777, Bowdoin-Temple Papers, MHS.

195. Louis Lebeque Duportail to St. Germaine, 12 November 1777, (copy), Andre deCoppet Collection, PUL.

196. Mordecai Gist to Washington, 30 November 1777 (typescript), Gist Family Papers, Maryland Hall of Records.

197. Supreme Executive Council to Congress, 28 November 1777, Frame 0140, Reel 13, PA, PHMC; see also Elias Boudinot to Joshua Mersereau, 14 December 1777, Elias Boudinot Letterbook, SHSW.

198. Jedediah Huntington to his father, 11 November 1777, Jedediah Huntington Letters, CHS.

199. See Anthony Wayne to Richard Peters, 18 November 1777, Wayne MSS, vol. 4, HSP; Cortlandt Skinner to Major Sheriff, 7 November 1777, Clinton Papers, WLC.

200. Supreme Executive Council, "Remonstrance of Council and Assembly to Congress, 1777," in Samuel Hazard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives (Philadelphia, 1853), series 1, vol. 6, pp. 104-5.

201. For this interpretation of Congress' relationship with the Pennsylvania government, see Royer, "The Role of the Continental Congress in the Prosecution of the American Revolution in Pennsylvania," unpublished PhD. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1960.

202. JCC, IX: 972.

203. Washington to Joseph Reed, 2 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 133-34.

204. Ibid.

205. Ibid.

206. JCC, IX: 972.

207. John Armstrong to Thomas Wharton, 4 December 1777, Gratz Collection, HSP; anonymous British intelligence report, 3 December 1777, Clinton Papers, WLC; for a detailed account of the maneuvers see Reed, Campaign to Valley Forge, pp. 371-78.

208. John Armstrong to Thomas Wharton, 7-9 December 1777 (typescript), Society Collection, HSP; William Howe to Henry Clinton, 12 December 1777, Clinton Papers, WLC; William Howe to Lord George Germain, 13 December 1777, Germain Papers, WLC.

209. Benjamin Talmadge to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 9 December 1777, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers: Correspondence, CHS.

210. Jedediah Huntington to Joshua Huntington, 9 December 1777, Jedediah Huntington Letters, CHS; Jedediah Huntington to Joseph Trumbull, 10 December 1777, Joseph Trumbull Papers, CHS.

211. John Steel Tyler to ? 10 December 1777, John Reed Collection.

212. Benjamin Talmadge to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 9 December 1777, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers: Correspondence, CHS.

213. Elbridge Gerry to John Adams, 3 December 1777, Elbridge Gerry Papers, LC.

214. Ibid.

215. Ibid.

216. Elbridge Gerry to John Adams, 8 December 1777, Elbridge Gerry Papers, LC.

217. The committee issued its report to Congress on January 5, JCC, X: 18-21. This was actually a special delegation appointed to consider the original group's letters to Washington of December 10.

218. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 3 December 1777, (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

219. Anthony Wayne to Washington, 4 December 1777, Wayne Manuscripts, vol. IV, HSP.

220. JCC, IX: 1036.

221. Thomas Wharton to Elias Boudinot, 13 December 1777, Frame 0258, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

222. James Young to Thomas Wharton, December 1777, Frame 0201, Reel 13, PA, PHMC; see also Thomas Wharton to ? , 13 December 1777, Frame 0254, Reel 13, PA, PHMC; Thomas Wharton to James Potter, Frame 0263, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

223. John Armstrong to Thomas Wharton, 7 December 1777, (typescript), Society Collection, HSP. Fitzpatrick, however, points out that Armstrong voted to winter the army at Wilmington (X: 133). It is difficult to reconcile this point with his implication that he was working to favor the state's position.

224. Baurmeister, "Journal," pp. 138-39.

225. Washington, "General Orders," 19 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X.

226. Thomas Jones to Thomas Wharton, 19 December 1777, Frame 0302, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

227. John C. Miller, The Triumph of Freedom: 1775-1783 (Boston. 1948), p. 221.

228. Joseph Ward to Samuel Adams, 17 December 1777, (typescript), ChiHS (original in the New York Public Library). Congress had ordained December 18 as a day of public celebration of Thanksgiving throughout the American states. JCC, IX: 851, 954-85, 873.

CHAPTER II "STARVE, DISSOLVE, OR DISPERSE"

1. Thomas Jones to Thomas Wharton, 19 December 1777, Frame 0302, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

2. John Bull to the Supreme Executive Council, 24 December 1777, Frame 0343, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

3. Reed, Campaign to Valley Forge, pp. 159-63.

4. Baurmeister, "Journal," pp. 115-16.

5. See, for example, "Sufferings of Friends," Minutes of the Radnor Monthly Meeting, 1778 (microfilm), Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.

6. John Armstrong to Washington, 19 December 1777, George Washington Papers, series 4, Reel 46, LC (hereafter, GWP, LC. Unless otherwise specified, all such citations are to series 4, Reels 46-49). For the weather see John Morton to James Pemberton, 19 December 1777, Pemberton Papers, HSP.

7. Determining the number of Pennsylvania militia troops actually in the field at any given time is a difficult task. The issue of how many the state would maintain during the winter was the subject of a protracted triangular correspondence among Washington, Armstrong, and the Pennsylvania authorities. Washington requested that the state continue to maintain as many troops as it had during the campaign itself, which he generously estimated at 2,000. Armstrong, who was having trouble provisioning the troops he already had, thought half that number would suffice. The state was concerned over the problems of constant recruiting. It concurred in the lower estimate, and Washington finally agreed to it. See John Armstrong to Washington, 29 December 1777, GWP, LC; Armstrong to Washington, 30 December 1777, GWP, LC; Washington to Thomas Wharton, 1 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 246-47; and Thomas Wharton to Washington, 3 January 1778, GWP, LC. See also James Potter to Thomas Wharton, 28 December 1777, Gratz Collection, HSP.

8. John Armstrong to Washington, 19 December 1777, GWP, LC.

9. Ibid.

10. Washington to James Potter, 21 December 1777, Fitzpatrick. X: 182.

11. See Lord Stirling to Washington, 23 December 1777, GWP, LC.

12. Ibid.

13. The troops were no strangers to the task of building inpromptu field shelters. Rumors of a hut city had circulated through the army during the first half of December. See Jedediah Huntington to Joseph Trumbull, 10 December 1777, Joseph Trumbull Collection, CHS; Mordecai Gist to John McClure (typescript), Gist Family Papers, Folder 23, Maryland Hall of Records.

14. Washington, "General Orders," 20 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 180-91.

15. Ibid.

16. Quoted in Douglas S. Freeman, George Washington: Leader of the Revolution (New York, 1951), p. 571.

17. Washington to George Read, 19 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 174-75.

18. Washington to William Smallwood, 19 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 171-72.

19. Washington to George Read, 19 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 174-75.

20. Washington to William Smallwood, 19 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 171-72.

21. Washington, "General Orders," 20 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 180-81.

22. Anthony Wayne to Washington, 26 December 1777, GWP, LC.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. John Clark to Washington, 30 December 1777, GWP, LC.

26. Ibid.

27. Henry Lutterloh to Washington, memorandum on the regulation of the wagon department, 25 December 1777, GWP, LC.

28. John Armstrong, surveying the territory east of the Schuylkill River, informed Washington of "several good waggons" lying on one former army campsite, and "between ten and fifteen waggons of entrenching tools" on another. John Armstrong to Washington, 19 December 1777, GWP, LC.

29. See, for example, Benjamin Talmadge to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 30 December 1777, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers: Correspondence, CHS.

30. Washington, "General Orders," 20, 25, 26, 27, 29 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 180-81, 205-7, 214-15, 225.

31. John Armstrong to Washington, 19 December 1777, GWP, LC. The phrase "crowd upon me" apparently refers to the demands of pro-rebel inhabitants for protection, probably more from their Tory neighbors than from British regulars.

32. John Armstrong to Washington, 23 December 1777, GWP, LC.

33. Washington to Thomas Wharton, 1 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 246-47.

34. Washington to John Jameson, 24 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 199.

35. John Jameson to Washington, 31 December 1777, GWP, LC.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.; see also Lord Stirling to Washington, 26 December 1777, GWP, LC.

38. Benjamin Talmadge to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 30 December 1777, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers: Correspondence, CHS.

39. John Clark to Washington, 19 December 1777, GWP, LC.

40. John Clark to Washington, 20 December 1777, GWP, LC.

41. Ibid.

42. John Clark to Washington, 19 December 1777, GWP, LC.

43. Ibid.

44. Bowler, Logistics and the Failure of the British Army, pp. 113-19.

45. Ibid., pp. 265-67, "Appendix: British Army Food Reserves, 1775-1783."

46. Ibid.

47. This message was transmitted to Clark by Washington's aide-de-camp, Tench Tilghman: Tilghman to Clark, 21 December 1777, GWP, LC.

48. John Clark to Washington, 21 December 1777, GWP, LC.

49. Jedediah Huntington to Timothy Pickering, 22 December 1777, Laurens Papers (typescript), LIHS.

50. Ibid.

51. James Varnum to Washington, 22 December 1777, Laurens Papers (typescript), LIHS.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Washington to the President of Congress, 22 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 183-88.

56. Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 46.

57. Ibid.

58. Montressor, "Journal," p. 480. Montressor places the number of troops which accompanied Howe to Derby at 7,000.

59. See John Clark to Washington (two letters), 22 December 1777, GWP, LC; James Potter to Washington (four letters), 23 December 1777, GWP, LC.

60. See Washington to the President of Congress, 23 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 192-98.

61. Washington, "General Orders," 22 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 189-92.

62. Ibid.

63. Daniel Morgan to Washington, 23 December 1777, GWP, LC.

64. Ibid.

65. James Potter to Washington, 23 December 1777, GWP, LC.

66. Ibid.; The essentially improvisational nature of the operations along the city periphery bears emphasis. Morgan's and Potter's apparent spurning of Washington's tattered gift horse should be seen in this context. Detached patrol work was an individualistic enterprise to its core. Responsibilities shifted mercurially, and involved parties took whatever tasks came along. Thus, Potter and Morgan became intelligence officers malgre lui, while John Clark, the spy chief, lusted for cavalry when the opportunity for falling on stray British parties presented itself. Clashes of purpose and understanding inevitably ensued. For a colorful account of one such episode, see John Clark to Washington, 18 December 1777, GWP, LC.

67. James Potter to Washington, 23 December 1777, GWP, LC.

68. Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 46.

69. Daniel Morgan to Washington, 23 December 1777, GWP, LC.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.; For other accounts of this incident see Henry Lee to Washington, 23 December 1777, GWP, LC; Lord Stirling to Washington, 24 December 1777, GWP, LC; James Potter to Washington, GWP, LC; Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 46.

73. Daniel Morgan to Washington, 23 December 1777, GWP, LC.

74. For the collection of cattle east of the Schuylkill River for the use of the army at this time, see John Armstrong to Washington (two letters), 23 December 1777, GWP, LC.

75. Lord Stirling to Washington, 24 December 1777, GWP, LC.

76. Lord Stirling to Washington, 23 December 1777, GWP, LC. Washington had repeatedly ordered the long grass on these islands, which had historically provided for the hay and grazing needs of Philadelphia, burned during the fall. See Washington to James Potter, 21 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 182. See James T. Lemon, The Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania (Baltimore, 1972), p. 175.

77. Lord Stirling to Washington, 24 December 1777, GWP, LC; Daniel Morgan to Washington, 24 December 1777, GWP, LC: William Smallwood to Washington, 25 December 1777, GWP, LC.

78. Lord Stirling to Washington, 24 December 1777, GWP, LC. Washington had created special commissary parties when he ordered the extraordinary detachments, on the same basis, by drafts from the brigades. Stirling may have been referring to these parties. See Washington, "General Orders," 22 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 192.

79. Ibid.

80. Under the pressure of the emergency Washington was already casting off this sensitivity. He had placed an order with a printer for three hundred copies of a proclamation to local inhabitants ordering them to thresh grain by March 1 or have it seized. See Tench Tilghman to Mr. Dunlop, 22 December 1777, GWP, LC. For his authority to do so, see JCC, IX: 1015.

81. Washington, "General Orders," 25 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 205-7.

82. Tench Tilghman to Lord Stirling, 25 December 1777, GWP, LC.

83. Ibid.

84. Washington, "General Orders," 25 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 205.

85. John Clark to Washington, 25 December 1777, GWP, LC.

86. Lord Stirling to Washington, 25 December, GWP, LC. British sources tend to corroborate this analysis. See Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 46.

87. John Armstrong to Washington, 26 December 1777, GWP, LC.

88. Ibid.

89. John Clark to Washington, 26 December 1777, GWP, LC.

90. Lord Stirling to Washington, 26 December 1777, GWP, LC.

91. John Clark to Washington, 26 December 1777, GWP, LC.

92. Lord Stirling to Washington, 26 December 1777, (7 P.M.), GWP, LC.

93. John Clark to Washington, 26 December 1777, GWP, LC.

94. Lord Stirling to Washington, 26 December 1777, (7 P.M.), GWP, LC.

95. John Clark to Washington, 25, 26 December 1777, GWP, LC; Lord Stirling to Washington, 26, 28 December 1777, GWP, LC.

96. Ibid.; John Clark to Washington, 28 December 1777, GWP, LC.

97. Meunchhausen, "Diary," 28 December 1777, p. 46.

98. Montressor, "Journal," 28 December 1777, p. 480. John Laurens attributed the British excursion to Derby to reports that they had "imprudently packed their former plunder of hay before it was thoroughly dry," which he said had ruined it and reduced them to a "4 days' allowance." John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 1 January 1778, (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

99. Montressor, "Journal," 28 December 1777, p. 480.

100. Ibid.; Pennsylvania Evening Post, 3 January 1778.

101. Washington to Lord Stirling, 28 December 1777, Autograph Letters of George Washington, Pierpont Morgan Library.

102. James Potter to Thomas Wharton, 28 December 1777, Gratz Collection, HSP.

103. Ibid.

104. John Clark to Washington, 28, 30 December 1777, GWP, LC.

105. Washington to the President of Congress, 2 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, Fitzpatrick, X: 250; JCC, X: 250.

106. See, for example, Abraham Clark to Lord Stirling, 20 December 1777, Dreer Collection, Members of the Old Congress, vol. 1, HSP.

107. JCC, IX: 1035-36; for the Pennsylvania remonstrance see Samuel Hazzard, ed., Pennsylvania Archives, series 1, volume VI, pp. 104-5.

108. Ibid.

109. As conveyed in the report of the committee sent to Whitemarsh, JCC, IX: 1029-31.

110. This latter criticism is by no means entirely unjustified. Much of the ill feeling on this issue stemmed from the widespread belief, based on the known sentiments of some officers and Washington's own ambiguous comments, that the army would leave Pennsylvania for Wilmington. The state might never have drawn up its remonstrance, which Washington correctly perceived as insulting, had it known that Valley Forge would be the army's winter quarters. In Washington's defense, he probably resorted to secrecy as a means of getting a decision made at all, in a political context which had become all but paralyzed by the debate itself. See Washington to Joseph Reed, 2 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 133-34.

111. Washington to the President of Congress, 22 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 183.

112. Ibid., p. 184.

113. Henry Laurens to Washington, 20 December 1777, PCC RG 93, M-247, Roll 23, NA.

114. Washington to the President of Congress, 22 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 186.

115. Ibid.

116. Washington to the President of Congress, 23 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 192-98.

117. Ibid. , p. 192.

118. Ibid., p. 193.

119. Ibid.

120. Ibid.

121. Ibid., p. 193-94.

122. Ibid., p. 194.

123. Ibid.

124. Ibid., p. 195.

125. Ibid., p. 196.

126. Ibid., p. 197-98.

127. See, for example, Alfred Hoyt Bill, Valley Forge: The Making of an Army (New York, 1952), pp. 98-99. Also, Noel F. Bush, Winter Quarters: George Washington and the Continental Army at Valley Forge (New York, 1974), pp. 44-45; James Thomas Flexner,

George Washington in the American Revolution 1775-1783 (Boston, 1967, 1968), pp. 261-62; Douglas Southall Freeman, George Washington: Leader of the Revolution (New York, 1952), p. 568; John F. Reed, Valley Forge: Crucible of Victory (Monmouth Beach, NJ, 1969), pp. 9-11; John B. B. Trussell, Birthplace of an Army: A Study of the Valley Forge Encampment (Harrisburg, PA, 1976), p. 17.

128. These are, of course, themselves circularly causal phenomena. The more often the document is uncritically cited, the more it establishes a basis for its own further credibility.

129. Lord Stirling to Washington, 23 December 1777, GWP, LC; John Armstrong to Washington (two letters), GWP, LC.

130. See Washington to the President of Congress, 22 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 183-88.

131. Washington to the President of Congress, 23 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 192-98.

132. Washington's sources for this statement were apparently the reports of brigadiers Jedediah Huntington and James Varnum of December 22, alluding to discontent, and asserting their inability to mobilize their brigades (see above, notes 49-51). Traditional accounts of the first days at Valley Forge, based on the printed diary of Albingence Waldo (PMHB, XXI: 299-323, especially 308-15), prominently feature expressions of derisive vocal discontent. Of contemporary observers, however, only Washington seems to have seen fit to characterize them as openly mutinous, and then only in this report to Congress.

133. Washington to the President of Congress, 22 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 183-88.

134. Washington to Elbridge Gerry, 25 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 200-1. Gerry had been a member of the committee which had met at Whitemarsh, and had apparently suggested the desirability of further consultation. Washington couched his appeal to him in terms of agreement with that suggestion.

135. Washington to Governor Richard Caswell of North Carolina, 25 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 201-2; Washington to Governor Patrick Henry of Virginia, 27 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 208-10.

136. "Intended Orders for a Move That Was Intended Ag^{t} Phil^{a} By Way of Surprize," 25 December 1777, GWP, LC. Written in Washington's own hand, printed in Fitzpatrick, X: 202-5, spelling slightly changed. This unsigned fragment constitutes almost all of the documentary basis for this episode. There are a handful of circumstantially corroborating letters, cited below.

137. Ibid.

138. Ibid.

139. Ibid.

140. Ibid.

141. Ibid.

142. Ibid.

143. John Sullivan to Washington, 27 December 1777, GWP, LC.

144. John Sullivan to Washington, 26 December 1777, GWP, LC.

145. Ibid.

146. Ibid.

147. Ibid.

148. Ibid.

149. Lord Stirling to Washington, 24, 26 December 1777, GWP, LC.

150. Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 149; Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 46.

151. See John Bull's description of a small harassing raid on the redoubts north of Philadelphia. John Bull to Thomas Wharton, 25 December 1777, Frame 0358, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

CHAPTER III TRUBLESUM TIMES FOR US ALL BUT WORS FOR THE SOLDERS

1. Daniel Roberdeau to Thomas Wharton, 26 December 1777, Frame 0364, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. JCC, IX: 1052-54. The members of the first committee were Elbridge Gerry, Jonathan B. Smith, and John Witherspoon. Those of the second were Witherspoon, William Duer, and John Harvie.

5. Ibid., p. 1065. This delegation consisted of, in addition to the Board of War, Gerry, Cornelius Hartnett, and Abraham Clark.

6. Daniel Roberdeau to Vice President George Bryan, 29 December 1777, Frame 0393, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

7. Francis Lightfoot Lee to Thomas Wharton, 30 December 1777, Autographs of Signers of the Declaration, Pierpont Morgan Library.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. JCC, IX: 1067-68.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., p. 1073.

13. Washington, "Circular to the States," 29 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 221-25; John Johnson to Washington, 30 December 1777, GWP, LC.

14. See, for example, Thoedoric Bland to Washington, December 1777; Henry Lutterloh to Washington, 25 December 1777, Thomas Conway to Washington, 29 December 1777; Casimir Pulaski to Washington, 29 December 1777; George Weedon to Washington, 29 December 1777; Daniel Brodhead to Washington, 30 December 1777; Jedediah Huntington to Washington, 1 January 1778; Henry Knox to Washington, 3 January 1778; James Varnum to Washington, 3 January 1778; Arthur St. Clair to Washington, 5 January 1778; Charles Scott to Washington, 14 January 1778, all in GWP, LC.

15. On the cost and scarcity of horses in eastern Pennsylvania, see: Jedediah Huntington to Maj. Gen. Huntington, 20 December 1777, Jedediah Huntington Letters, CHS; Benjamin Talmadge to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 12 January 1778, Jeremiah Wadsworth Letters: Correspondence, CHS.

16. Washington, "Instructions to Count Pulaski," 31 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 234-36.

17. William Smallwood to Washington, 27 December 1777, GWP, LC.

18. Washington to William Smallwood, 29 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 219-20.

19. Ibid.

20. Jedediah Huntington to Washington, 27 December 1777, GWP, LC; Richard Platt to Alexander McDougall, 29 December 1777, Philip S. and A. S. W. Rosenbach Foundation; George Weedon to Patrick Henry, 4 January 1778, Weedon Papers, Anne Marie Brown Library, Brown University.

21. Jedediah Huntington to Washington, 27 December 1777, GWP, LC.

22. Washington to John Armstrong, 28 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 215-17.

23. Ibid.

24. Washington to Henry Lutterloh, 27 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 213-14; Washington to Clement Biddle, 28 December 1777, GWP, LC; Washington to William Buchanan, 28 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 217.

25. ? to Col. Lutterloh, 28 December 1777, GWP, LC.

26. The surplus was artificial in that the army continued to be plagued by the resignation of officers, many of whom found that they could better protect if not enhance their fortunes outside of the service. Washington went to great lengths to dissuade those whose service he valued from leaving the army. While the troops remained confined to camp at sharply reduced activity levels, however, many units could make do with fewer junior officers than were available. It was from these ranks that individuals were chosen for spot assignments away from the army. See JCC, IX: 1073; Washington to Richard Caswell, 25 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 201-2; Washington to Nicholas Cooke, 31 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 234.

27. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 29 December 1777, GWP, LC; Washington to Major Samuel Blagden, 30 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 229-30; Lachlan McIntosh to Henry Laurens, 8 January 1778, Laurens Papers (typescript), LIHS.

28. Washington to the Board of War, 30 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 226.

29. Washington to the President of Congress, 1 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 243-46. As early as December 27, Washington had indicated that he "expected" a committee from Congress to arrive in camp shortly, from which he hoped to extract specific reorganization measures. Washington to Robert Livingston, 27 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 210-11.

30. Washington to the President of Congress, 1 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 243-46. Washington did note the names of four men who had been favorably mentioned to him for Quarter Master General, including that of Alexander Scammell, whom Congress eventually chose for the position.

31. Ibid.

32. Henry Laurens to Washington, 1 January 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 23, NA.

33. Henry Laurens to William Livingston, 30 December 1777, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 23, NA.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.; Laurens asserted that Congress had in fact "for some time past" so descended. His prolonged confinement with a painful attack of gout, and his consequent non-attendance at Congress, however, had undoubtedly misled him about the degree to which that body had contented itself with broad policy matters, to the neglect of the specific circumstances of the army.

37. Ibid.

38. Henry Laurens to Washington, 3 January 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 23, NA.

39. Jedediah Huntington to Mathew Irwin, 20 January 1778, Society Collection, HSP.

40. Richard Platt to Alexander McDougall, 29 December 1777, Manuscript Collection, Philip S. and A. S. W. Rosenbach Foundation.

41. John Armstrong to Washington, 23, 24, 26 December 1777, GWP, LC.

42. Lord Stirling to Washington, 26 December 1777, GWP, LC; John Jameson to Washington, 31 December 1777, GWP, LC.

43. Thibaut, This Fatal Crisis, pp. 86-88.

44. Jedediah Huntington to Governor Trumbull, 13 January 1778, Trumbull Papers, vol. 8, No. 45, CSL.

45. John Brooks to ? , 5 January 1778, Miscellaneous Collection, MHS.

46. John Buss to his parents, 2 January 1778, Knollenberg Collection, YUL.

47. Jedediah Huntington to his father, 7 January 1778, John Reed Collection.

48. Washington to the Board of War, 2-3 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 250-54.

49. See JCC, IX: 1026.

50. Washington to Thomas Conway, 30 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 226-28.

51. Richard Platt to Alexander McDougall, 24 January 1778, Manuscript Division, Philip S. and A. S. W. Rosenbach Foundation.

52. "Draft of a Representation by Nine General Officers to Congress," 6 January 1778, McDougall Papers, NYHS.

53. George Weedon to Henry Laurens, 26 December 1777, Weedon Military Correspondence, APS.

54. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 1, 3 January 1778, Laurens Papers (typescript), LIHS.

55. John Sullivan to Washington, 2 January 1778, GWP, LC.

56. "Draft of a Representation...to Congress," 6 January 1778, McDougall Papers, NYHS.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. Lachlan McIntosh to Henry Laurens, 8 January 1778, Laurens Papers (typescript), LIHS.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. See Thomas Conway to John Sullivan, 3 January 1778, in Otis G. Hammond, ed., Letters and Papers of Major General John Sullivan, Continental Army, Vol. 2, 1778-79 (Concord, NH, Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society, vol. 14, 1931), p. 2.

63. John Clark to Nathanael Greene, 10 January 1778, Greene Papers, WLC.

64. Ibid.

65. Abraham Clark to Lord Stirling, 15 January 1778, in Edmund G. Burnett, ed., Letters of Members of the Continental Congress (Gloucester, MA, 1963, originally published Washington, DC, 1921-1936, 8 volumes), vol. III, pp. 39-40.

66. Generals Maxwell, McIntosh, Patterson, Varnum, Scott, and Poor to Washington, 5 January 1778, GWP, LC.

67. Washington to William Smallwood, 7 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 274-5; several officers at Wilmington to Washington, 10 January 1778, GWP, LC; William Smallwood to Washington, 10 January 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to Henry Laurens, 12 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 294-95; Washington to William Smallwood, 12, 13, 23 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 291-94, 302, 338-40.

68. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 1 January 1778, GWP, LC.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. John Buss to his parents, 2 January 1778, Knollenberg Collection, YUL.

72. Washington, "General Orders," 1 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 242-43.

73. Washington to William Smallwood, 7 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 274-75.

74. William Gifford to Benjamin Holme, 24 January 1778, Revolutionary Era Documents, no. 50, NJHS.

75. John McDowell to Colonel David Grier, 16 January 1778, Toner Collection, Box 257, LC.

76. George Fleming to Major Sebastian Bauman, 21 January 1778, Sebastian Bauman Papers, NYHS.

77. Henry B. Livingston to Washington, 12 January 1778, GWP, LC.

78. Jedediah Huntington to his father, 7 January 1778, John Reed Collection.

79. John Brooks to ? , 5 January 1778, Miscellaneous Collection, MHS.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. Anonymous, 7 January 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS.

83. Ibid.

84. For evidence of this unfamiliarity with Pennsylvania's pluralistic religious community, see especially, A. Chapman to Theodore Woodbridge, 1 February 1778, Woodbridge Papers, CHS;

Isaac Gibbs to his brother, 5 March 1778, photostat copy on file at Valley Forge National Historical Park (original archive unknown). For the alienation of Quakers from what some of them derisively termed the "Army under George Washington, Commonly Called the American Army," see "Sufferings of Friends: Minutes of the Radnor Monthly Meeting, 1777-1778," microfilm deposited in the Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.

85. Jedediah Huntington to his father, 7 January 1778, John Reed Collection.

86. John Clark to Nathanael Greene, 10 January 1778, Nathanael Greene Papers, WLC.

87. John Brooks to ? , 5 January 1778, Miscellaneous Collection, MHS.

88. Washington to Thomas Wharton, 18 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 317-19.

89. Richard Butler to Colonel James Wilson, 22 January 1778, Gratz Collection, Case 4, Box 11, HSP.

90. William Gifford to Benjamin Holme, 24 January 1778, Revolutionary Era Documents, no. 50, NJHS.

91. John Brooks to ? , 5 January 1778, Miscellaneous Collection, MHS.

92. Ibid.

93. Enoch Poor to Mesech Weare, 21 January 1778, Force MSS, series 7-E New Hampshire Council, LC.

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

96. Jedediah Hungtington to his brother, 19-20 January 1778, Jedediah Huntington Letters, CHS.

97. Quoted in John Brooks to ? , 5 January 1778, Miscellaneous Collection, MHS.

98. Ichabod Ward to Abraham Pierson, 19 January 1778, Pierson and Sargeant Family Papers, CSL.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid.

102. Elias Boudinot to Thomas Peters, 2 March 1778, Elias Boudinot Letterbook, SHSW. Gordon's Ford is the site of present day Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, approximately three miles northwest of Valley Forge.

103. William Palfrey to Washington, 14 January 1778, GWP, LC.

104. Jedediah Huntington to Governor Jonathan Trumbull, 13 January 1778, Trumbull Papers, vol. 8, no. 45, CSL.

105. Richard Butler to Colonel James Wilson, 22 January 1778, Gratz Collection, Case 4, Box 11, HSP.

106. John Brooks to ? , 5 January 1778, Miscellaneous Collection, MHS.

107. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 23 January 1778, Laurens Papers (typescript), LIHS.

108. See, for example, John B. B. Trussell, Jr., Birthplace of an Army: A Study of the Valley Forge Encampment (Harrisburg, PA, 1976), p. 15.

109. Thomas Conway to Washington, 29 December 1777, GWP, LC.

110. Washington to Thomas Conway, 30 December 1777, Fitzpatrick, X: 226-28.

111. Thomas Conway to Washington, 31 December 1777, GWP, LC.

112. Richard Platt to Alexander McDougall, 24 January 1778, Manuscript Collection, Philip S. and A. S. W. Rosenbach Foundation.

113. Washington increasingly tended to delay important decisions or defer opportunities as January passed, on the frankly stated assumption that the time and energy required to prepare for the expected congressional committee precluded them, or that they would depend on the committee's determinations. See Washington to Casimir Pulaski, 14 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 304-5; Washington to William Livingston, 2 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 415-16.

114. George Weedon to John Page, 25 January 1778, document no. 22954a, VSL.

115. John Eccleston to Major Richardson, 20 January 1778, Revolutionary War Letters, RUL.

116. Ibid. William Smallwood, the commander of the Wilmington garrison, attributed the high desertion rate there to the same

reason. William Smallwood to Washington, 26 January 1778, GWP, LC. Perhaps the most graphic evidence of the disinclination of troops to contentedly "hut it" for months on end is provided by Moses Hazen's regiment. The men, originally posted at Wilmington, upon learning that they were being considered for inclusion in the Board of War's proposed invasion of Canada, enthusiastically petitioned to be sent north to fight. See John Taylor to Washington, 26 January 1778, GWP, LC.

117. See map 3

118. William Smallwood to Washington, 27 December 1777, GWP, LC.

119. Ibid.; William Smallwood to Washington, 29 December 1777, GWP, LC.

120. William Smallwood to Washington, 1 January 1778, GWP, LC.

121. Henry Lee to Washington, 4 January 1778, GWP, LC.

122. Ibid.; Lee to Washington, 9 January 1778, GWP, LC; Richard Kidder Meade to Henry Lee, 9 January 1778, GWP, LC.

123. See, for example, Lord Stirling to Washington, 26 December 1777, GWP, LC; John Jameson to Washington, 31 December 1777, GWP, LC.

124. Henry Lee to Washington, 4 Janaury 1778, GWP, LC.

125. Henry Lee to Washington, 9 January 1778, GWP, LC. For the apparently increasing flow of civilians and produce to Philadelphia at this time, see Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 150.

126. Henry Lee to Washington, 14 January 1778, GWP, LC.

127. Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 150; Muenchhausen, "Diary," pp. 46-47.

128. Henry Lee to Washington, 18 January 1778, GWP, LC; Robert H. Harrison to Washington, 18 January 1778, GWP, LC.

129. Henry Lee to Washington, 9 January 1778, GWP, LC.

130. Henry Lee to Washington (two letters), 20 January 1778, GWP, LC; Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 47.

131. Washington, "General Orders," 20 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 321-22; Washington to Henry Lee, 20 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 322.

132. See John Lacey to Thomas Wharton, 24 January 1778, Gratz Collection, Case 4, Box 12, HSP; Supreme Executive Council to the Lieutenants of Bucks and Philadelphia Counties, 9 January 1778, Frame 0485, Reel 13, PA, PHMC: Thomas Wharton to James Potter, 9 January 1778, Frame 0487, Reel 13, PA, PHMC; Thomas Wharton to John Lacey, 9 January 1778, Frame 0495, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

133. Richard Kidder Meade to John Jameson, 1 January 1778, GWP, LC.

134. Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 150; another Hessian, however, Captain Johann Ewald, perceived the situation in the countryside at this period in diametrically opposite terms as did Baurmeister, and indeed Washington's own officers. According to Ewald, Washington's dragoons were making the highways "so dangerous" that the country people were afraid to travel to the city. He also noted higher prices in consequence of this circumstance. See Joseph P. Tustin, trans. and ed., Diary of the American War, A Hessian Journal (New Haven, CN, 1979), p. 117. It is impossible to reconcile these contrasting perceptions. The weight of the evidence, however, seems to favor Baurmeister's view.

135. Walter Stewart to Washington, 18 January 1778, GWP, LC.

136. Ibid.

137. Ibid.

138. Washington to Walter Stewart, 22 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 336-37.

139. James Potter to Washington, 11 January 1778, GWP, LC.

140. Ibid.

141. John Fitzgerald to John Jameson, 12 February 1778, GWP, LC.

142. Charles Craig to Washington, 15 February 1778, GWP, LC.

143. Ibid.

144. Ibid.

145. John Lacey to Thomas Wharton, 24 January 1778, Gratz Collection, Case 4, Box 12, HSP.

146. Washington to James Potter, 12 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 295-96.

147. Ibid.; John Fitzgerald to John Jameson, 12 January 1778, GWP, LC.

148. John Fitzgerald to Walter Stewart, 29 January 1778, GWP, LC.

149. Washington to Israel Putnam, 22 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 334.

150. JCC, IX: 1036; Henry Laurens to Washington, 20 December 1777, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 23, NA.

151. See John Armstrong to Washington, 19 December 1777, GWP, LC.

152. Richard Kidder Meade to John Jameson, 1 January 1778, GWP, LC.

153. William Clayton, et al., to Washington, 1 January 1778, GWP, LC.

154. Charles Pettit to Elias Boudinot, 1 January 1778, Manuscript Division, PUL.

155. Washington to William Clayton, et al., 6 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 270-71.

156. Casimir Pulaski to Washington, 9 January 1778, GWP, LC.

157. Ibid.

158. Benjamin Talmadge to Washington, 12 January 1778, GWP, LC.

159. Benjamin Talmadge to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 12 January 1778, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, CHS.

160. Washington to Casimir Pulaski, 14 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 304-5.

161. Ibid.

162. Casimir Pulaski to Washington, 20 January 1778, GWP, LC.

163. For efforts to circumscribe intercourse with the city on the New Jersey side of the Delaware, see: Joseph Ellis to Washington, 15 January 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to Joseph Ellis, 18 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 315-16; Washington to William Livingston, 20 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 329.

164. For British problems in procuring firewood, see John McDowell to Colonel David Grier, 16 January 1778, Toner Collection, Box 257, LC; L. Fleury to Colonel John Laurens, 20 January 1778, GWP, LC; Pennsylvania Evening Post, 13 January 1778, p. 17.

165. See William Livingston to Washington, 9, 12, 14, 15 January 1778, GWP, LC.

166. William Livingston to Washington, 9 January 1778, GWP, LC.

167. Washington to Joseph Ellis, 18 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 315-16; Washington to John Lacey, 23 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 340-41.

CHAPTER IV THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS HAVE REJECTED

1. Edmund C. Burnett, The Continental Congress (New York, 1941), p. 298.

2. Joseph Ward to Samuel Adams, 26 January 1778, Manuscript Collection, ChiHS (Typescript. Original in "New York Library.")

3. Ibid.; Governor Morris to Henry Laurens, 26 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 50-51.

4. JCC, X: 40.

5. Ibid.

6. JCC, X: 40-41.

7. JCC, X: 67. Carroll was eventually replaced by John Harvie of Virginia.

8. See Washington to Horatio Gates, 4 January and 9 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 263-65, 437-41, and Horatio Gates to Washington, 23 January 1778, Gates Papers, NYHS.

9. James Lovell to Samuel Adams, 22 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 45.

10. Richard Peters to Robert Morris, 21 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 45, fn. 6.

11. Jedediah Huntington to Joseph Trumbull, 31 January 1778, Governor Joseph Trumbull Collection, CSL.

12. James Lovell to Samuel Adams, 13 January 1778; Henry Laurens to George Clinton, 14 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 33, 35.

13, Henry Laurens to William Livingston, 30 December 1777; Henry Laurens to Nicholas Cooke, 3 January 1778; Henry Laurens to William Heath, 3 January 1778; Henry Laurens to Washington, 5 January 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 23, NA.

14. Ibid.

15. John Henry, Jr., to Thomas Johnson, 27 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 55.

16. Abraham Clark to Lord Stirling, 15 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 40.

17. Daniel Roberdeau to Thomas Wharton, 16 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 41.

18. James Lovell to Samuel Adams, 20 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 47.

19. Henry Laurens to the Marquis de Lafayette, 20 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 47.

20. John Witherspoon to William Churchill Houston, 27 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 58.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Henry Laurens to John Rutledge, 30 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 63-64.

24. Henry Laurens to the Chevalier de Laneuville, 27 January 1778; Henry Laurens to the Marquis de Lafayette, 7 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 56-57, 74.

25. Henry Laurens to the Marquis de Lafayette, 12 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 30.

26. Washington to Henry Laurens, 31 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 411-12.

27. Ibid.

28. Washington to William Livingston, 2 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 415-16.

29. Washington. "To The Committee of Congress with the Army," 29 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 362-403; The Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 29 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 62.

30. Washington, "To The Committee of Congress," 29 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 362.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., p. 363; Burnett, Continental Congress, p. 311; H. James Henderson, Party Politics in the Continental Congress (New York, 1974), pp. 120-24.

34. See JCC, X: 18-21.

35. Washington, "To the Committee of Congress," 29 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 364-65.

36. Ibid., p. 365.

37. Ibid., p. 364.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., p. 365.

40. Ibid., pp. 366-67.

41. Ibid., pp. 367-69.

42. Ibid., pp. 370-74.

43. Ibid., pp. 374-75.

44. Ibid., pp. 377-80.

45. Ibid., p. 379.

46. Ibid., pp. 380-82.

47. Ibid., pp. 382-400.

48. Ibid., pp. 386, 390, 392.

49. See the Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 28 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 61-62, et seq.

50. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 28 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 61-62; Committe of Conference to Henry Laurens, 28 January 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 40, NA.

51. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 28 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 61-62. Washington's role in this choice is uncertain. He had suggested Udney Hay, a Deputy Quarter Master in the Northern Department, several weeks before. In his "Representation" he professed to be "indifferent" on the matter, "provided [the nominee] be a fit person." See Washington to the President of Congress, 1 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 234-46.

52. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 29 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 62.

53. Ibid.; See Washington, "To The Committee of Congress," Fitzpatrick, X: 387.

54. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 30 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 65.

55. Ibid.; See Henderson, Party Politics, p. 123.

56. JCC, X: 40.

57. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 31 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 65.

58. Ibid.

59. Gouverneur Morris to John Jay, 1 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 66.

60. Ibid. For the temper of the committee, see also Joseph Reed to ? , 1 February 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS.

61. This episode is discussed more fully in the following chapter, and in Thibaut, This Fatal Crisis, pp. 162-91.

62. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 3 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 69.

63. Ibid.

64. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 5, 7, 13 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 71, 73, 83.

65. Committee of Conference to Henry Laurens, 6 February 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 94, NA.

66. Ibid.

67. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 14 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 86; Committee of Conference to Governor Thomas Johnson, 16 February 1778, document no. 4608-11, MHR.

68. Gouverneur Morris to George Clinton, 17 February 1778, Emmet Collection, no. 4190, NYPL.

69. Ibid.

70. Committee of Conference to Governor Thomas Johnson, 16 February 1778, document no. 4608-11, MHR.

71. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 2, 4, 6 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 68, 71, 73; Committee of Conference to Henry Laurens, 5 February 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 40, NA.

72. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 3 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 69; Committee of Conference to Henry Laurens, 3 February 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 40, NA.

73. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 10 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 80.

74. Committee of Conference, "Minutes, 11 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 80; Committee of Conference to Congress, 11 February 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 94, NA.

75. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 19 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 92.

76. Ibid.

77. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 20 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 92, fn. 10; see also Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 2 March 1778, Burnett Letters, III: 104, fn. 3, and Washington, "To the Committee of Congress," Fitzpatrick, X: 400.

78. JCC, X: 197-98; Committee of Conference to Washington, 11 February and 9 March 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 81, 115-20; see also Burnett, Continental Congress, pp. 299-310, for a discussion of this episode. Burnett attributes too much significance to this dispute, to which he devotes more than half of an otherwise cursory and badly skewed account of the committee's tenure in camp. There is no evidence to support his contention that the committee provoked, rather than merely joined, the debate between Washington and the Congress. Burnett otherwise all but ignores most of the issues to which the delegation devoted the bulk of its time and attention.

79. Committee of Conference to Henry Laurens, 12 February 1778, in William B. Reed, Life and Correspondence of Joseph Reed (Philadelphia, 1847), vol. 1, pp. 360-63.

80. Ibid.

81. See Martin H. Bush, Revolutionary Enigma: A Reappraisal of General Philip Schuyler of New York (Port Washington, NY, 1969), pp. 135-37; Committee of Conference to Henry Laurens, 28 January 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 40, NA. The delegation noted Schuyler's problem, and recognized that it might interfere with his appointment, but nevertheless made clear its preference for him.

82. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 28 January 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 61-62.

83. JCC, X: 103

84. JCC, X: 102.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid.

87. JCC, X: 103-4.

88. JCC, X: 126.

89. JCC, X: 53-56.

90. See Thibaut, This Fatal Crisis, pp. 139-43.

91. JCC, X: 55.

92. JCC, X: 84-85.

93. Henry Laurens to William Livingston, 30 December 1777; Henry Laurens to Nicholas Cooke, 3 January 1778; Henry Laurens to William Heath, 3 January 1778; Henry Laurens to Washington, 5 January 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 23, NA.

94. For descriptions of York by delegates to Congress, see: James Lovell to Samuel Adams, 6 February 1778; Thomas McKean to George Reed, 11-12 February 1778; James Forbes to Thomas Johnson, 24 March 1778; Thomas McKean to George Reed, 3 April 1778; James Lovell to Joseph Trumbull, 13 April 1778; Henry Laurens to Rawlins Lowndes, 1 May 1778; Samuel Adams to Joseph Warren, 25 May 1778; all in Burnett, Letters, III: 90-91, 142-43, 148-50, 166, 210, 263-64. For a more favorable assessment, see Oliver Wolcott to his wife, 18 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 90.

95. On October 17, 1778, Congress resolved to reorganize the Board, which had previously been one of its own committees, declaring that it should henceforth consist of "three persons not members of Congress." It assigned the new body a wide variety of duties, virtually all of them administrative in nature, such as receiving and maintaining military records, forwarding Congressional correspondence to the states, superintending recruitment, and caring for prisoners. The resolve gave the Board wide influence, but with a single exception confined it to a supportive rather than a directive role. The exception was a miscellaneous clause enabling the Board to "execute all such matters as they shall be directed and give their opinions on all such subjects as shall be referred to them by Congress; and in general to superintend the several branches of the military department; and if, at any time, they think a measure necessary for the public service, to which their powers are incompetent, they shall communicate the same to Congress for their direction therein." This clause, reminiscent in its ambiguity of Congress' charge to the Conference Committee itself, constituted an implicit invitation to the new Board to seek ways to expand its mandate. Indeed, the Board's initiatives of January and February of 1778 were apparently pressed under it. See JCC, IX: 818-19.

96. JCC, X: 53-54.

97. JCC, X: 84-85.

98. See Supreme Executive Council to Congress, 2 January 1778, Frame 0451, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

99. JCC, X: 59.

100. See Committee of Conference to Henry Laurens, 3 February 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 40, NA.

101. JCC, IX: 971-72.

102. On January 27, Washington thanked Gates for soliciting his "opinion" on the merits of the expedition, but rather cooly declined to pass judgment on it, observing that he did not know either its "extent or objects." He would later insist that he had never been "consulted" on the subject. Washington to the Board of War, 27 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 355-56; Washington to Robert R. Livingston, 12 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 69-70.

103. Peter Colt to John Hancock, 4 October 1777, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 93, NA; Elbridge Gerry to Colonel Trumbull, 2 October 1777, Governor Joseph Trumbull Collection, CSL.

104. JCC, X: 102-3.

105. One of the striking points about the Board's scheme for the reorganization of the Quarter Master's Department was its overall similarity to the reformation of the Commissary Department the previous year, which had failed disastrously. The commissary plan was considerably more elaborate and specific. The two were similar principally in their fragmentation of authortiy among several officials instead of one, and in their delegation of broad oversight powers to the Board of War. See JCC, IX: 433-48.

106. The committee was, however, aware of Congress' decision to proceed with the Canadian expedition, a decision to which it took strong, if polite exception. Committee of Congress to Henry Laurens, 11 February 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 94, NA.

107. JCC, X: 138.

108. John Fitzgerald to Washington, 16 February 1778, GWP, LC; James Forbes to Thomas Johnson, 13 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 84.

109. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 13 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 83.

110. Committee of Conference to Washington, 11 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 81.

111. Jedediah Huntington to Lord Stirling, 12 February 1778, GWP, LC; James Varnum to Nathanael Greene, 12 February 1778, GWP, LC.

112. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III:

113. Ibid.; Nathanael Greene to Joseph Reed, 9 March 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS.

114. Washington to Nathanael Greene, 12 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 454-55.

115. Ibid.

116. Committee of Congress to Henry Laurens, 12 February 1778, in Reed, Life of Reed, pp. 360-63.

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid.

119. Ibid.

120. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 13 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 83.

121. Committee of Conference to Henry Laurens, 14 February 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 94, NA.

122. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 17 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 89.

123. Committee of Conference, "Minutes," 17, 18 February 1778, Burnett, Letters, III: 89-90.

124. JCC, X: 185.

125. JCC, X: 186.

126. JCC, X: 40.

127. Committee of Conference to Henry Laurens, 20 February 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 40, NA.

128. Committee of Conference to Henry Laurens, 24 February 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 40, NA.

129. Ibid.

130. Nathanael Greene to ? , 26 February 1778, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Greene, NYHS.

131. Nathanael Greene to Joseph Reed, 9 March 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS.

132. Nathanael Greene to William Greene, 7 March 1778, Nathanael Greene Papers, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, D-834, RIHS.

133. Committee of Conference to Henry Laurens, 25 February 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 40, NA.

134. Ibid.

135. Ibid.

136. Ibid.

137. Ibid.

138. Ibid.

139. Ibid.; Nathanael Greene to Joseph Reed, 9 March 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS.

140. Committee of Conference to Henry Laurens, 25 February 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 40, NA.

141. Ibid.

142. Ibid.

143. JCC, X: 210-11.

144. Supreme Executive Council to the Pennsylvania Delegates to Congress, 7 February 1778, Frame 0695, Reel 13, PA, PHMC. See Thibaut, This Fatal Crisis, pp. 146-48.

145. JCC, X: 176-77.

146. Thibaut, This Fatal Crisis, pp. 184-88.

147. Marquis de Lafayette to Robert Morris, 23 February 1778, Lafayette Papers, LC.

148. JCC, X: 216-17.

149. Nathanael Greene to William Greene, Esq., 7 March 1778, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, D-834, RIHS.

150. Washington is recorded as having been "not present" at the committee's sessions on seven of fifteen days after the organization of the department had been "settled" on February 25. His attendance is recorded on only three occasions, while on five others no indication is given either way. See Committee of Conference, "Minutes," in Burnett, Letters, III.

151. The delegates returned to York in rather piecemeal fashion. John Harvie left the committee on February 19, and was back in Congress by the twenty-sixth ("Minutes," 19 February, Burnett, Letters, III: 91 and fn. 104/2). The minutes do not extend beyond March 12, but the committee continued in camp at least until the end of that month. Dana was present in York for a recorded vote as early as March 24 (JCC, X: 283). Folsom was appointed to another committee on March 26, and submitted a bill the following day for his expenses in returning from camp (JCC, X: 285, 289). Reed and Morris were still in camp as late as April 4 (see David Brearly to John Ellis, 4 April 1778, Israel Shreve Papers, RUL).

152. There would be a fairly rapid attrition from Congress among the five members of the committee. Of the group, only Folsom, Morris, and Dana were elected for 1779, and Dana did not attend. By 1780, only Folsom would still be active, and after that year

none of the members would sit in Congress until Dana and Reed returned in 1784, after the conclusion of the war. See Burnett, Letters, III, IV, V.

CHAPTER V THE LORD'S TIME TO WORK

1. Jedediah Huntington to Joseph Trumbull, 31 January - 4 February 1778, Joseph Trumbull Collection, CSL.

2. Francis Dana to ? , 16 February 1778, Dreer Collection, Members of the Old Congress, HSP.

3. Thomas Bradford to Elias Boudinot, 28 January 1778, Elias Boudinot Papers, LC; see also George Weedon to John Page, 25 January 1778, VSL; Gustavus B. Wallace to Captain Michael Wallace, 27 January 1778, MS no. 38-150, UVL; James Varnum to Governor Nicholas Cooke, 6 February 1778, Letters, vol. 12, RISA.

4. Richard Fitzpatrick to his brother, 31 January 1778, Richard Fitzpatrick Papers, LC.

5. Ibid.

6. For inflation and the economics of wartime Pennsylvania, see Ann Bezanson, Prices and Inflation During the American Revolution, Pennsylvania, 1770-1790 (Philadelphia, 1951), especially pp. 10-23, 31-39. Bezanson finds the overall inflation rate for early 1778 to have been "gradual." This, however, is in comparisoin with later upward spirals, and does not account for local fluctuations and brief spurts for scarce and militarily crucial commodities.

7. For the various emergency powers which Congress granted to Washington during the autumn of 1777, and for that body's impatience with Washington's reluctance to exercise them, see JCC, VIII: 752; IX: 784, 905, 1014-15, 1068.

8. Anonymous memorandum specifying criteria for honoring civilian claims for payment for goods seized by the army near Valley Forge, January, 1778, GWP, LC.

9. Washington, "Proclamation to the Inhabitants of the States of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware" (copy), 30 January 1778, Theodore Woodbridge Papers, CHS. The proclamation specified that the market would take place on alternating days at the Stone Chimney Piquet, a guard post southeast of the camp, on the east bank of the Schuylkill River near the new bridge, and in the rear of the camp near the quarters of the Adjutant General.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Pennsylvania Packet, 14 February 1778.

14. Washington to Nathanael Greene, 12 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 454-55.

15. Tench Tilghman to Robert Morris, 2 February 1778, John Reed Collection. See also Washington to John Glover, 18 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 477-78.

16. Jedediah Huntington to Joseph Trumbull, 31 January 1778, Joseph Trumbull Collection, CSL.

17. Enoch Poor and John Patterson to Henry Laurens, 2 February 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 180, NA.

18. Lachlan McIntosh to Henry Laurens, 4 February 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers LIHS.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid. For an account of the background of McIntosh's political problems, and of his personal relationship with Laurens, see Harvey H. Jackson, Lachlan McIntosh and the Politics of Revolutionary Georgia (Athens, GA, 1979), pp. 1-70.

21. George Slaughter to Washington, 1 February 1778, GWP, LC.

22. Henry B. Livingston to Washington, 10 February 1778, GWP, LC.

23. Henry Lutterloh to Washington, 30 January 1778, GWP, LC.

24. John Taylor to Washington, 25 January 1778, GWP, LC.

25. H. Russell to Washington, 24 February 1778, GWP, LC.

26. Officers of Artillery to Washington, 10 February 1778, GWP, LC.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Washington to William Smallwood, 13 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 302.

31. Washington to George Gibson, 21 February 1778, Fitzpatrick. X: 494-96.

32. Washington to the Board of Artillery Officers, 2 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 15-18.

33. William Smallwood to Washington, 25 January 1778, GWP, LC.

34. Ibid.

35. James Varnum to Governor Nicholas Cooke, 6 February 1778, Letters, vol. 12, RISA; James Varnum to Nathanael Greene, 1 February 1778, Letters, vol. 12, RISA.

36. James Varnum to Nathanael Greene, 1 February 1778, Letters, vol. 12, RISA.

37. Washington to Henry Laurens, 3 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 411-12. See Eliphalet Dyer to ? Williams, 17 February 1778, Force Collection, series 7-E, LC, for the continuing fiscal demands on the Treasury Department.

38. George Weedon to William Palfrey, 31 January 1778, John Reed Collection.

39. Jedediah Huntington to Joseph Trumbull, 31 January 1778, Joseph Trumbull Collection, CSL.

40. Washington to the President of Congress, 3 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 418.

41. Jedediah Huntington to Joseph Trumbull, 31 January 1778, Joseph Trumbull Collection, CSL.

42. Thomas Smythe to Washington, 25 January 1778, GWP, LC.

43. A. Emerick to Henry Clinton, 31 January 1778, Clinton Papers, WLC; for the application of New Englanders for furloughs, see Samuel Carlton to William Heath, 28 January 1778, Governor and Council Letters, MSA.

44. Jedediah Huntington to Joseph Trumbull, 31 January 1778, Joseph Trumbull Collection, CSL.

45. James Varnum to Alexander McDougall, 7 February 1778, McDougall Papers, NYHS.

46. Jedediah Huntington to Jabez Huntington, 20 February 1778, Jedidiah Huntington Papers, CHS.

47. John Tyler to Henry Jackson, 17 February and 4 March 1778, Sol Feinstone Collection, APS.

48. Pennsylvania Packet, 11 February 1778.

49. Major McIntosh to General Robert Howe, March, 1778, UGL.

50. Tench Tilghman to Lieutenant Colonel Burr, 30 January 1778, WRHS; on recruiting, see also Washington to Captains Scull, Patterson, and Wilson, 23 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 503, and Washington to Thomas Wharton, 23 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 503-5.

51. For a fuller account of this episode, concentrating on the organizational causes and consequences of the crisis, see Thibaut, This Fatal Crisis, pp. 162-91. This chapter focuses on the immediate effects of the crisis within the army itself.

52. For the weather, see Charles Marshall to Christopher Marshall, 5 February 1778, André deCoppet Collection, PUL; Marquis de Lafayette to Henry Laurens, 9 February 1778, Lafayette Papers, LC; Cornelius Hartnett to William Wilkinson, 10 February 1778, Southern Historical Collection, UNCL; Francis Dana to Washington, 11 February 1778, GWP, LC; Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 47; Ephraim Blaine to Thomas Wharton, 12 February 1778, Frame 0724, Reel 13, PA, PHMC: John Fitzgerald to Washington, 16 February 1778, GWP, LC; Thomas Seymour to the Board of War, 19 February 1778, Peters Papers, HSP; Tench Tilghman to Washington, 19 February 1778, GWP, LC; Elias Boudinot to Hugh Ferguson, 2 March 1778, Elias Boudinot Letterbook, SHSW.

53. Washington to Casimir Pulaski, 6 February 1778, GWP, LC.

54. Ibid.

55. Committee of Conference to Congress, 6 February 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 94, NA.

56. Ibid.

57. Washington to William Buchanan, 7 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 427-28.

58. Washington to Henry Champion, 7 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 425-27.

59. Ibid.

60. Washington to William Buchanan, 7 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 427-28.

61. Washington to Henry Champion, 7 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 425-27.

62. Ibid.; Washington to William Buchanan, 7 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 427-28.

63. Washington to Benjamin Lincoln, 9 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 441-42.

64. Washington to Horatio Gates, 9 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 437-41.

65. Jedediah Huntington to Lord Stirling, 12 February 1778, GWP, LC.

66. James Varnum to Nathanael Greene, 12 February 1778, GWP, LC.

67. Washington to Nathanael Greene, 12 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 454-55.

68. Ephraim Blaine to John Ladd Howell, 10 February 1778, André deCoppet Collection, PUL.

69. See Thomas Jones to Charles Stewart, 15, 16 February 1778, and Ephraim Blaine to Charles Stewart, 15 February 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

70. Washington to William Livingston, 14 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 459-60.

71. Washington to Robert L. Hooper, Nathaniel Falconer, and Robert Mifflin, 15 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 463-64.

72. Washington to Henry Lee, 16 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 467-68.

73. Washington attempted to bolster security in the area by transfering convalescent members of a regiment hospitalized at Lancaster to a point twelve miles in front of the camp and eleven miles from Philadelphia. The troops would not arrive on the lines, however, until early April. See John Tyler to Henry Jackson, 17 February 1778, and 4 March 1778, Sol Feinstone Collection, APS.

74. Washington to William Smallwood, 16 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 467.

75. Ibid.; Washington to William Smallwood, 25 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 511-12.

76. Washington to William Livingston, 16 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 471; Tench Tilghman to Washington, 19 February 1778, GWP, LC.

77. Jasper Yeates to James Burd, 15 February 1778, Shippen Family Papers, HSP.

78. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 17 February 1778, Laurens Papers (typescript), LIHS.

79. Thomas Jones to Charles Stewart, 18 February 1778; Ephraim Blaine to Charles Stewart, 18 February 1778. Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

80. Ibid.; Thomas Jones to Charles Stewart, 21 February 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

81. Jedediah Huntington to Governor Trumbull, 20 February 1778, Trumbull Papers, vol. 6, CSL.

82. Washington to George Gibson, 21 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 494-96 (italics added).

83. Ephraim Blaine to Charles Stewart, 21 February 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

84. Thomas Jones to Charles Stewart, 21 February 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

85. Washington, "Address to the Inhabitants of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia," 18 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 480-81; see also Jedediah Huntington to Jabez Huntington, 20 February, 1778, Jedediah Huntington Papers, CHS.

86. See Chapter II, p. 116.

87. Thomas Jones to Charles Stewart, 15, 16, 18 February 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

88. Ephraim Blaine to Charles Stewart, 16, 18, 21 February 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

89. Francis Dana to ? , 16 February 1778, Dreer Collection, Members of the Old Congress, HSP.

90. Ibid.

91. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 17 February 1778, Laurens Papers (typescript), LIHS.

92. Nathanael Greene to ? , 26 February 1778, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Greene, NYHS.

93. Jedediah Huntington to Jabez Huntington, 20 February 1778, Jedediah Huntington Papers, CHS; Thomas Jones to Charles Stewart,

18 February 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA; Washington to Nathanael Greene, 18 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 476.

94. See, for example, George Fleming to Major Bauman, 13 February 1778, Sebastian Bauman Papers, NYHS.

95. Describing the consequences of an earlier shortage at Wilmington, William Smallwood observed that desertion fell off during a brief meatless period, and that it was the best provisioned and clothed individuals who most frequently absented themselves. Richard Butler similarly reported that in his particularly disabled regiments, there were fewer desertions than in any he knew. William Smallwood to Washington, 26 January 1778, GWP, LC; Richard Butler to Thomas Wharton, 12 February 1778, Andre´ deCoppet Collection, PUL.

96. Anthony Wayne to Thomas Wharton, 10 February 1778, Wayne Papers, WLC.

97. John Patterson to Colonel Marshall, 23 February 1778, Ely Collection, NJHS.

98. Joseph Stoddard to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 21 February 1778, Wadsworth Family Papers, YUL.

99. Officers of the Virginia Line, 22 February 1778, Emmett Collection, no. 5904, NYPL.

100. William Smallwood to Washington, 26 January 1778, GWP, LC.

101. Thomas Smythe to Washington, 25 January 1778, GWP, LC; John Taylor to Washington, 26 January 1778, GWP, LC.

102. George Read to Washington, 5 February 1778, GWP, LC.

103. William Smallwood to Allen McLane, 11 February 1778, McLane Papers, NYHS.

104. William Smallwood to Washington, 21 February 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to William Smallwood, 25 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 511-13. Huggins seems to have clung to his post at least into April, however, and he may have eluded Smallwood's wrath altogether.

105. Washington to William Smallwood, 25 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 511-13.

106. William Smallwood to Washington, 10 February 1778, GWP, LC: Washington to William Smallwood, 21 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 487-89.

107. William Smallwood to Washington, 15, 21, 27 February 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to William Smallwood, 25 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 511-13, and 6 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 32-33.

108. William Gray et al., "Oath of the Officers Employed in Surveying the Roads," 27 February 1778, Society Miscellaneous Collection, HSP.

109. The degree to which Washington seriously believed the camp might come under an enemy attack in uncertain. James Varnum reported that Washington had been "in expectation of an attack," but Washington himself brushed off one warning of such an event by terming it "totally impracticable." James Varnum to Alexander McDougall, 7 February 1778, McDougall Papers, NYHS; William Duer to Washington, 16 February 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to William Duer, 21 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 497-98.

110. Joseph Reed to ? , 1 February 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS.

111. Ibid.

112. Ibid.

113. Ibid.

114. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 15, 16 February 1778, GWP, LC.

115. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 16, 18 February 1778, GWP, LC.

116. For a general discussion of the significance of this group for understanding the civil context of the war. see John Shy, "The Military Conflict Considered as A Revolutionary War," in John Shy, ed., A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence (New York, 1976), pp. 195-224, and especially pp. 213-14.

117. See Henry Lee to Washington, 4 January 1778, GWP, LC.

118. Washington to Nathanael Greene, 12 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 454-55.

119. Lee's reports from Delaware abounded in expressions of concern for civilian welfare, and for the importance of civilian attitudes to the army's operations. See Henry Lee to Washington, 19, 21, 22 February 1778, GWP, LC.

120. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 15 February 1778, GWP, LC.

121. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 17 February 1778, GWP, LC.

122. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 16, 17 February 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to Nathanael Greene, 16 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 466.

140. William Gray et al., "Oaths of the Officers Employed in Surveying the Roads," 27 February 1778, Society Miscellaneous Collection, HSP; John Tyler to Henry Jackson, 17 February 1778, Sol Feinstone Collection, APS.

141. See Washington to Colonel George Gibson, 21 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 494-96.

142. Washington to Thomas Wharton, 23 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 503-5.

143. Joseph Reed to ? , 1 February 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS; Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 47. According to Muenchhausen, the Provincial corps had been "accepting all deserters," a practice which William Howe abruptly terminated upon discovering that they were as wont to desert from the corps as they had been from the American side.

144. Joseph Reed to ? , 1 February 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS.

145. Washington to John Jameson, 1 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 412-13; Washington to Israel Angell, 1 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 412.

146. Washington to John Jameson, 1 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 412-13.

147. Walter Stewart to Washington, 29 January 1778, GWP, LC.

148. See John Fitzgerald to Walter Stewart, 29 January 1778, GWP, LC.

149. Ibid.

150. John Jameson to Washington, 2 February 1778, GWP, LC.

151. Ibid.

152. John Fitzgerald to Walter Stewart, 29 January 1778, GWP, LC; John Jameson to Washington, 2 February 1778, GWP, LC.

153. Casimir Pulaski to Washington, 29 January 1778, GWP, LC.

154. Washington to William Livingston, 4 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 420.

155. Washington to Thomas Wharton, 12 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 452-53.

156. Ibid.

157. John Lacey to Thomas Wharton, 2 February 1778, Gratz Collection, HSP; John Lacey to Washington, 11 February 1778, GWP, LC; John Lacey to Thomas Wharton, 15 February 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

158. John Lacey to Thomas Wharton, 2 February 1778, Gratz Collection, HSP.

123. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20 February 1778, GWP, LC.

124. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 17 February 1778, GWP, LC.

125. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 18 February 1778, GWP, LC.

126. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 20 February 1778, GWP, LC; See Henry Lutterloh to ? , 20 February 1778, Frame 0821, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

127. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 16, 17 February 1778, GWP, LC; See Frank H. Stewart, "Foraging for Valley Forge by General Anthony Wayne in Salem and Gloucester Counties, New Jersey, with Associated Happenings," Publication of the Gloucester County Historical Society (Woodbury, NJ, 1929), pp. 3-29.

128. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 17 February 1778, GWP, LC.

129. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 15, 17 February 1778, GWP, LC; Robert Ballard to Nathanael Greene, 11 February 1778 (misdated, probably 14 February), GWP, LC; Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 48. Muenchhausen mistakenly attributed this action to Anthony Wayne.

130. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 16 February 1778, GWP, LC.

131. Ibid.

132. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 17 February 1778, GWP, LC.

133. Ibid.

134. Ibid.; the party returned shortly after Greene reported the incident. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 18 February 1778, GWP, LC.

135. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 20 February 1778, GWP, LC; Alexander Scammell to John Laurens (?), 28 February 1778, GWP, LC.

136. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 17 February 1778, GWP, LC.

137. Anthony Wayne to Washington, 26 February 1778, GWP, LC. Wayne's reference was to New Jersey residents, but he was comparing them with their like-minded Pennsylvania counterparts.

138. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 17, 18 February 1778, GWP, LC. Washington did rather perfunctorily ask Greene to arrest the man reportedly raising a Tory corps in the area, but otherwise took no concrete actions.

139. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 20 February 1778, GWP, LC.

159. John Lacey to Colonel Joseph Hart, Esq., 11 February 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

160. Ibid.

161. Major Francis Murray to Washington, 13 February 1778, GWP, LC.

162. Washington to John Lacey, 18 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 478-79.

163. Ibid.

164. Ibid.

165. Washington to John Lacey, 21 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 492-93.

166. John Lacey to Thomas Wharton, 15 February 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

167. John Lacey to Washington, 19 February 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

168. Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 47. He reported that the people "kept their promise by bringing the two over to us." This incident occurred in what is now the Oxford Circle area of Northeast Philadelphia.

169. Ibid., pp. 47-48.

170. Ibid., p. 48; John Lacey to Washington, 19 February 1778, GWP, LC; see also Joseph Kirkbride to Thomas Wharton, 20 February 1778, Frame 0815, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

171. Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 48; Lachlan McIntosh to Henry Laurens, 26 February 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

172. Richard Kidder Meade to John Jameson, 15 February 1778, GPW, LC.

173. Ibid.

174. John Lacey to Washington, 19 February 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

175. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 17 February 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

176. Washington to Nathanael Greene, 18 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 476-77.

177. The supply line thus functioned as a kind of half-exposed Continental nerve. When it began to register the effects of enemy contact, rhetoric gave way to tactical change. Interestingly, the implications of this point were apparently observed in upper Bucks County before they were recognized at Valley Forge. See Robert L. Hooper and John Wetzel to John Lacey, 18 February 1778, WRHS.

178. J. Paxson to Charles Stewart, 20 February 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA; Lachlan McIntosh to Henry Laurens, 26 February 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS; John Lacey to Washington, 27 February 1778, GWP, LC; Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 48.

179. Washington to John Sullivan, 26 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 516-17.

180. Washington to Anthony Wayne, 28 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 524-25.

181. Ibid.

182. Washington to Thomas Wharton, 23 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 503-5.

183. Incredibly, instead of uniting to resist the British incursions, the small Continental detachments east of the Schuylkill and the militia chose this crisis as an opportunity to escalate their long simmering mutual animosities into an outright intramural conflict. See Washington to Thomas Wharton, 23 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 503-5.

184. Washington to Captain Chambers, 27 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 522-23.

185. Charles Craig to Washington, 5 March 1778, GWP, LC.

186. Washington to John Jameson, 7 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 37.

187. Casimir Pulaski to Washington, 25 January 1778, GWP, LC.

188. Washington to Casimir Pulaski, 26 January 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 352-53.

189. Ibid.; Casimir Pulaski to Washington, 25 January, 4 February 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to Casimir Pulaski, 4 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 419-20.

190. Benjamin Talmadge to Washington, 9 February 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to Benjamin Talmadge, 20 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 486.

191. Casimir Pulaski to Washington, 4 February 1778, GWP, LC.

192. Joseph Ellis to Washington, 9 February 1778, GWP, LC.

193. Alexander Hamilton to John Hazlewood, 5 February 1778, GWP, LC.

194. See Anthony Wayne to ? , 20 February 1778; Joseph Ellis to Anthony Wayne, 21 February 1778; Anthony Wayne to Lieutenant Colonel

Sherman, 22 February 1778; Anthony Wayne to Theodore Woodbridge, 23 February 1778; Anthony Wayne to Washington, 25, 26 February 1778, all GWP, LC; Anthony Wayne to Theodore Woodbridge, 22 February 1778, Woodbridge Papers, CHS; Washington to Anthony Wayne, 28 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 524-26; see also Frank H. Stewart, "Foraging for Valley Forge by General Anthony Wayne."

195. Anthony Wayne to Washington, 26 February 1778, GWP, LC.

CHAPTER VI THE CHAPTER OF EXPERIMENTS

1. James Varnum to (Mrs.?) William Greene, 7 March 1778. John Reed Collection.

2. James Bradford to Captain Thomas Wooster, 4 March 1778, John Reed Collection.

3. Colonel George Nagels to Washington, 4 March 1778, GWP, LC.

4. Washington to the Committee of Conference, 4 March 1778, GWP, LC.

5. Nathanael Greene to William Greene, Esq., 7 March 1778, Miscellaneous Manuscripts D 834, RIHS; Nathanael Greene to Joseph Reed, 9 March 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS; Nathanael Greene to William Smallwood, 16 March 1778, Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Greene, NYHS; Nathanael Greene to "Sir," 16 March 1778, NYSL.

6. Nathanael Greene to Alexander McDougall, 28 March 1778, Alexander McDougall Papers, NYHS.

7. Cornelius Hartnett to William Wilkinson, 18 March 1778, Cornelius Hartnett Papers, UNCL.

8. George Gibson to Washington, 19 March 1778, GWP, LC.

9. On the plight of the army's horses, see Washington to John Cadwalader, 20 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 117.

10. Joseph Reed to John Bayard, 7 March 1778, PCC, RG 93, M-247, Roll 38, NA.

11. Clement Biddle to Washington, 5 March 1778, GWP, LC.

12. William Howe to Sir Henry Clinton, 5 March 1778, Clinton Papers, WLC.

13. Clement Biddle to Washington, 5 March 1778, GWP, LC.

14. Nathanael Greene to William Greene, Esq., 7 March 1778, Miscellaneous Manuscripts D 834, RIHS; Nathanael Greene to William Smallwood, 16 March 1778, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Greene, NYHS; Nathanael Greene to "Sir," 16 March 1778, NYSL.

15. Nathanael Greene to Joseph Reed, 9 March 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS.

16. Nathanael Greene to "Sir," 16 March 1778, NYSL.

17. Charles Pettit to Moore Furman, 18 March 1778, NJBAH.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Washington, "Thoughts Upon a Plan of Operation for Campaign 1778," March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 185-94.

21. Washington to the General Officers, 20 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 282-83.

22. James Varnum to Governor Nicholas Cooke, 7 March 1778, Letters, vol. 12, RISA.

23. See JCC, X: 199-203.

24. Jonathan B. Smith to Thomas Wharton, 1 March 1778, Gratz Collection, HSP.

25. Cornelius Hartnett to William Wilkinson, 3 March 1778, Cornelius Hartnett Letters, no. 311, Southern Historical Collection, UNCL.

26. Eliphalet Dyer to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 10 March 1778; John Henry to Governor Thomas Johnson, 10 March 1778; Thomas Burke to Governor Richard Caswell, 12 March 1778; Virginia Delegates to Congress to Governor Patrick Henry, 23 March 1778, all in Burnett, Letters, vol. 3, pp. 163-64.

27. Washington to Henry Knox, 5 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI; 26-27; Washington to Samuel H. Parsons, 5 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI; 24-26; Washington to the Board of War, 6 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 33-34.

28. Washington to the Board of War, 6 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 33-34.

29. Ibid.

30. Washington to Francis Hopkinson and John Wharton, 1 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 7-8; Washington to the Pennsylvania Navy Board, 2 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 12-13; see also William Bradford to the Supreme Executive Council (copy), 5 March 1778, GWP, LC; Thomas Wharton to Washington, 11 March 1778, GWP, LC; William Bradford to Washington, 14 March 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to William Bradford, 15 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 88-89.

31. Washington to George Baylor, 4 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 22-23; Washington to John Jameson, 7 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 37.

32. Washington to Thomas Wharton, 7 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 45-48; see also Supreme Executive Council to Henry Laurens, 6 March 1778 (copy), GWP, LC; Thomas Wharton to Washington, 10 March 1778, GWP, LC.

33. Washington to Robert R. Livingston, 12 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 69-70.

34. Washington to Alexander McDougall, 16 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 95-97; see also Washington to Robert B. Livingston, 12 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 69-70; Washington to Israel Putnam, 16 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 94-95.

35. Washington to Samuel H. Parsons, 6 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 35-36.

36. Washington to Henry Knox, 5 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 26-27; Washington to the Board of War, 6 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 33-35.

37. Washington to Henry Champion, 9 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 54-55; see also Washington to Governor Thomas Johnson, 21 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 123-24.

38. Washington to the President of Congress, 12 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 72-73.

39. Washington, "Thoughts Upon a Plan of Operation...," March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 185-94. The figure was specified only for the plan for attacking Philadelphia, but seems to have been implicit throughout the discussion.

40. See Charles H. Lesser, ed., The Sinews of Independence: Monthly Strength Reports of the Continental Army (Chicago, 1976), p. 59.

41. Washington to George Gibson, 11 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 64-65; Washington to William Stephens Smith, 14 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 79, William Smith to Washington, 19 March 1778, GWP, LC.

42. Washington to William Bradford, 18 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 105; John Hazlewood to Washington, 4 February 1778, GWP, LC.

43. Washington to the Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 13 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 76-77; JCC, X: 221.

44. John Chaloner to Henry Champion, 17 March 1778, MS no. 69472, CHS; Washington to the Board of War, 20 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 111-13; Charles Pettit to Moore Furman, 18 March 1778, NJBAH. Pettit's expectation of a "strong reinforcement" from York may have been in reference to currency rather than troops.

45. Cornelius Hartnett to William Wilkinson, 18 March 1778, Cornelius Hartnett Letters, Southern Historical Collection, UNCL.

46. Washington to the Board of War, 20 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XK: 111-13.

47. Washington to John Cadwalader, 20 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 117-18.

48. Samuel H. Parsons to Washington, 20 March 1778, GWP, LC; Sylvanus Seely to Washington, 20 March 1778, GWP, LC.

49. Washington to John Cadwalader, 20 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 117-18.

50. Washington to the President of Congress, 24 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 137-40.

51. Ibid.

52. Washington to William Heath, 25 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 144-46; Washington to William Livingston, 25 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 149-50; Washington to Alexander McDougall, 25 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 146; Washington to John Armstrong, 27 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 157-59; Washington to William Smallwood, 28 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 166-67; Washington to Governor Richard Caswell, 28 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 169-70; Washington to President James Bowdoin, 31 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 180-81; Washington to Governor Jonathan Trumbull, 31 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 181-84.

York and Virginia, following his release from imprisonment at New York. Notwithstanding his conjecture, and the apparent disappearance of the British troops, Washington remained dubious about relying on assurances of enemy inactivity. See Washington to James Varnum, 9 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 229-30.

69. Washington to the President of Congress, 10 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 235-41.

70. Ibid.

71. JCC, X: 199-203.

72. Francis Lewis to Pierre Van Cortlandt, 10 April 1778, Burnett, Letters, volume 3, pp. 163-64.

73. Washington to the President of Congress, 10 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 235-41.

74. Ibid.; Washington to the President of Congress, 18 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 276-78.

75. Washington to William Livingston, 12 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 247-48; Washington to Thomas Wharton, 12 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 248; Washington to the President of Congress, 18 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 276-78.

76. Washington to William Smallwood, 12, 13 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 250-51, 254-55.

77. The discussion in the ensuing paragraphs draws heavily on Troyer S. Anderson, The Command of the Howe Brothers in the American Revolution (New York, 1936); Gerald S. Brown, The American Secretary: The Colonial Policy of Lord George Germain, 1775-1778 (Ann Arbor, MI, 1963); Weldon A. Brown, Empire or Independence: A Study in the Failure of Reconciliation, 1774-1783 (Revised ed., Port Washington, NY, 1966); Ira D. Gruber, The Howe Brothers in the American Revolution (New York, 1972); and Piers Mackesy, The War for America (Cambridge, MA, 1963).

78. For assessments of the impact of Saratoga on British politics and strategy, see Mackesy, pp. 146, 154; Weldon A. Brown, p. 183; Gerald S. Brown, p. 139; Gruber, p. 173; Jonathan R. Dull, The French Navy and American Independence: A Study of Arms, p. 99. For the impact of accelerating negotiations between America and France on British strategists, see especially Weldon A. Brown, pp. 169-205.

79. Mackesy, War for America, pp. 186-89.

53. Washington to the President of Congress, 29 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 171-72.

54. Washington, "General Orders," 24 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 140-42.

55. Washington, "General Orders," 28 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 161-62. Many of these orders, of course, were as appropriate to general preparations for a campaign as to a sudden emergency.

56. Ibid,; John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 28 March 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS; For an assessment of the adequacy of the camp's fortifications in early March, together with recommendations for their completion, see Friedrich Steuben, "A Few Observations, Made on My Reconnoitring the Camp," 5 March 1778, Steuben Papers, ChiHS. (Another copy of this document, in French, is in the American Antiquarian Society.)

57. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 31 March 1778, GWP, LC.

58. Washington to William Smallwood, 28 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 166-67.

59. Anthony Wayne to Thomas Wharton, 27 March 1778, Manuscript Division, PUL.

60. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 28 March 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

61. John Bannister to ? , 27 March 1778, Gratz Collection, HSP (italics in original). For Congress' anticipation of a British invasion of the state of Delaware, see JCC, X: 285.

62. JCC, X: 300, 305, 309-310.

63. Washington to Alexander McDougall, 31 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 178-79.

64. William Smallwood to Washington, 31 March 1778, GWP, LC.

65. Washington to the President of Congress, 1 April 1778, Fitpatrick, XI: 195-96.

66. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 1 April 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

67. Alexander Scammell to Dr. Samuel Scammell, 8 April 1778, Society Collection, HSP.

68. Washington to Alexander McDougall, 31 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 227-28. Lee had stopped briefly at Valley Forge on his way to

80. Gerald S. Brown, American Secretary, pp. 152-53.

81. Lord George Germain to Sir Henry Clinton, 8 March 1778, Secret Dispatch Book, Germain Papers, WLC.

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid. In the event that it became necessary to withdraw from Philadelphia, Clinton was directed to establish a small base on the lower Delaware River to deny its navigation to the Americans.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

86. Anderson calls this plan a "radical contraction" of British aims (Command of the Howe Brothers, pp. 306-7). This is a questionable claim. While the abandonment of northern campaigning, concentration on naval harassment of the coastline, and explicit emphasis on the use of loyalist forces are relative departures, there remained strong elements of continuity with the Howe's previous ideas. It might be more accurate to characterize the plan as a geographical relocation of an old strategy with some novel emphases. While land-based operations would be given up in the north, they would be carried on in the lower south. While the careful consideration of local sentiments and armed loyalism is impressive, it is no more than an articulation of one of Howe's motives for carrying the campaign to Pennsylvania in 1777. There is even a wistful trace of the old notion of severing the rebellion along a major river, with the Susquehanna replacing the Hudson as the river of choice. When this plan was shortly superceded by the King's March 21 instructions, however, (to be discussed below), the overall reformulation of strategy for 1778 can indeed be characterized as radical.

87. George III, "Secret Instructions for our Trusty and Welbeloved Sir Henry Clinton, K. B. and General & Commander in Chief of Our Forces in North America or the Commander in Chief of Our Forces for the time being," 21 March 1778, Clinton Papers, WLC.

88. Ibid. In an accompanying letter, Germain informed Clinton that the reinforcements promised in his instructions of March 8 would be detained in England, except for three regiments, which would be sent to Nova Scotia. See Germain to Sir Henry Clinton, 21 March 1778, Clinton Papers, WLC.

89. Admiralty Board to Lord Richard Howe, 22 March 1778, quoted in Mackesy, War for America, p. 186.

90. William Howe received Germain's sketchy instructions of February 19, which anticipated those given to Clinton on March 8,

on March 27. For Howe's reaction, see William Howe to Lord George Germain, 19 April 1778, Germain Papers, WLC; See also Mackesy, War For America, pp. 213-14.

91. Sir Henry Clinton to the Duke of Newcastle, 22 March 1778, Newcastle MSS, Nottingham University Library.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. William Howe to Lord George Germain (extract), 19 April 1778, Germain Papers, WLC.

95. Ibid.

96. For the chain of information leading to Washington's March 29 assertion to Congress that he had "no doubt" about the arrival of British reinforcements in Philadelphia, see: Samuel H. Parsons to Washington, 20 March 1778, GWP, LC; Sylvanus Seely to Washington, 20 March 1778, GWP, LC; William Smallwood to Washington, 20 and 28 March 1778, GWP, LC; James Lovell to Washington, 24 March 1778, GWP, LC; See also Washington to William Smallwood, 21 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 120; Washington to the President of Congress, 24 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 137-40; Washington to William Heath, 25 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 144-46; Washington to John Armstrong, Sr., 27 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 157-9; Washington to the President of Congress, 29 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 171-72.

97. See Washington to the President of Congress, 24 March, 10, 21 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 137-40, 235-41.

98. Washington to the President of Congress, 24 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 137-40.

99. JCC, X: 285-86; Elbridge Gerry to Jeremiah Powell, 28 March 1778, Burnett, Letters, vol. 3, pp. 145-46.

100. JCC, X: 285-86, 289, 292-93, 298-302.

101. H. James Henderson, Party Politics in the Continental Congress, (New York, 1974), p. 122; William Ellery to Governor Nicholas Cooke, 5 April 1778, Burnett, Letters, vol. 3, pp. 151-52; Gouverneur Morris to Washington, 18 April 1778, GWP, LC.

102. Washington to the President of Congress, 10 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 235-41; Washington to John Bannister, 21 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 284-93.

103. These debates can be followed in JCC, and comments found throughout the letters of the delegates in Burnett, Letters, III.

104. JCC, X: 50.

105. Henry Laurens to Baron de Steuben, 14 January 1778, Gratz Collection, HSP.

106. Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 18 February 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

107. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 28 February 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

108. John Laurens, "Reponses aux Questions de Monsier de Baron Steuben (de?) 1'ordre de Battaille et deux liques. Avec un Corps." February, 1778, Steuben Papers, ChiHS. Apparently a briefing paper, prepared at Washington's request, to give Steuben an idea of the army's size and organization at the outset of his stay in camp; Steuben, "Memorandum," March, 1778, Steuben Papers, ChiHS. Not formally titled. A long account of the organization and function of various military offices and departments in a European army. Probably prepared in exchange for the "Reponses."

109. Friedrich Steuben, "A Few Observations Made on my Reconnoitring the Camp," 5 March 1778, Steuben Papers, ChiHS.

110. Friedrich Steuben to Henry Laurens, 12 March 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

111. See Thomas Conway to Washington, 29, 31 December 1777, GWP, LC.

112. Washington, "General Orders," 17 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 98; See also Isaac Sherman, "Regimental Orders," 17 March 1778, Isaac Sherman Orderly Book, American Revolution: Journals and Orderly Books, Box III, CHS. The picked men were required to be "between 5'8" and 5'10", between twenty and thirty years of age and strong, robust limbs & of established character, sobriety & fidelity."

113. Washington, "General Orders," 21 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 119.

114. Washington, "General Orders," 22 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 132. For informal exercising of the troops on the regimental and brigade level, see Richard Platt to Alexander McDougall, 24 January 1778, Philip I. and A. S. W. Rosenbach Foundation.

115. Washington, "General Orders," 24 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 142-43.

116. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 25 March 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

117. Henry B. Livingston to Robert R. Livingston, 25 March 1778, Robert R. Livingston Papers, NYHS.

118. Ibid.

119. Isaac Sherman, "Regimental Orders," 28 March 1778, Isaac Sherman Orderly Book, American Revolution: Journals and Orderly Books, Box III, CHS.

120. Ibid., and 30 March 1778. To underscore the seriousness of his intention, Sherman threatened to reduce the rank of any non-commissioned officer not attending the exercises.

121. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 1 April 1778, Laurens Papers, LIHS.

122. Washington, "General Orders," 2 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 199-201.

123. Washington, "General Orders," 1 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 194-95.

124. Washington, "General Orders," 8 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 228-29.

125. Washington, "General Orders," 9 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 231.

126. Washington, "General Orders," 10 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 233.

127. Friedrich Steuben to Henry Laurens, 2 April 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

128. Ibid. One of the colorful elements of the Steuben legend concerns his alleged "refusal to accept, let alone demand, a commission," which supposedly "endeared him to [Washington, and] his brother officers," and enhanced his effectiveness with the troops. See Noel F. Busch, Winter Quarters: George Washington and the Continental Army at Valley Forge (New York, 1974), p. 87. In fact, as the correspondence cited in these paragraphs shows, Steuben politicked subtly but quite effectively in pursuit of an acceptable rank.

129. Henry Laurens to Friedrich Steuben, 4 April 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

130. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 18 April 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

131. Ibid.

132. Samuel Ward to Phoebe Ward, 28 April 1778, Ward Papers, RIHS.

133. Henry Knox to William Knox, 29 April 1778, Knox Papers, MHS. For a comment on the improvement of overall discipline, see Lieutenant B. Howe to Major Sebastian Bauman, 12 April 1778, Sebastain Bauman Papers, NYHS. Noting that there were then no prisoners under arrest (probably in his unit), Howe remarked that this was "a Little unusual but I hope 'tis growing out of fashion as arrests are considered in a more serious Light than heretofore."

134. Busch, Winter Quarters, p. 88; Trussell, Birthplace, p. 62; Donald Barr Chidsey, Valley Forge (New York, 1959), pp. 114-18, 122-24; Alfred Hoyt Bill, Valley Forge, pp. 148-52.

135. See Chapter III, pp. 164-67.

136. See Busch, Winter Quarters, p. 82; Trussell, Birthplace, p. 62.

137. Thomas Conway to Washington, 29 December 1777, GWP, LC.

138. Edward Mitchell to the Massachusetts General Court, 2 March 1778, Governor and Council Letters, MSA. (As reported by a resident of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, who had been in receipt of letters from Valley Forge.)

139. Joseph Hodgkins to Sarah Hodgkins, 22 February 1778. Printed in Herbert T. Wade and Robert A. Lively, This Glorious Cause: The Adventures of Two Company Officers in General Washington's Army (Princeton, NJ, 1958), pp. 235-56.

140. Enoch Poor to Mesech Weare, 4 March 1778, Force MSS, series 7-E, New Hampshire Miscellaneous, LC.

141. Isaac Gibbs to his brother, 5 March 1778, photostat copy on file at Valley Forge National Historical Park, original archive unknown.

142. James Varnum to (Mrs.) William Greene, 7 March 1778, John Reed Collection.

143. James Varnum to Colonel Nathan Miller, 7 March 1778, HUL.

144. Nathanael Greene to William Greene, Esq., 7 March 1778, Miscellaneous Manuscripts D 834, RIHS.

145. Ibid.

146. John Sullivan to William Palfrey, 11 March 1778, Sol Feinstone Collection, APS.

147. Jedediah Huntington to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 5 March 1778, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, CHS.

148. George Fleming to Sebastian Baumen, 26 March 1778, Sebastian Baumen Papers, NYHS.

149. Ibid.

150. James Bradford to Thomas Wooster, 4 March 1778, John Reed Collection; John Else to Samuel Gray, 4 March 1778, Samuel Gray Papers, CHS: Jonathan Flagg to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 4 March 1778, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, CHS.

151. One of the more colorful Valley Forge traditions concerns the allegedly fortuitous arrival of a large and early run of shad in the Schuylkill River, which one writer credits with having terminated the army's winter of famine (see Busch, Winter Quarters, pp. 88-89; Chidsey, Valley Forge, pp. 128-29). While the episode cannot be discounted, it is undocumentable. On the other hand, several sources discussed the advisability of importing fresh and cured fish to the camp, and at least three specifically mentioned the desirability of shad. See Horatio Gates to Henry Hollingsworth, 23 March 1778, Sol Feinstone Collection, APS; John Chaloner to Henry Champion, 1 April 1778, MS 69492, CHS; Horatio Gates to Henry Hollingsworth, 20 April 1778, Dreer Collection, HSP. John W. Jackson, in a recent study of the British occupation of Philadelphia, contends that the British troops obstructed the Schuylkill at Philadelphia to block the shad run. See Jackson, With The British Army in Philadelphia, 1777-1778 (San Rafael, CA, 1979), pp. 229-30.

152. Washington, "General Orders," 9 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 231.

153. See, for example, Gouverneur Morris to Governor George Clinton, 17 February 1778, Emmett Collection, #4190, MYPL.

154. Jedediah Huntington to Jabez Huntington, 13 March 1778, Jedediah Huntington Papers, CHS.

155. Alexander Scammell to Dr. Scammell, 8 April 1778, Society Collection, HSP.

156. Anthony Wayne to Thomas Wharton, 10 April 1778, Wayne Papers, WLC.

157. Dr. S. Tenny to Dr. Peter S. Turner, 22 March 1778, Dr. Peter Turner Papers, LC.

158. Ebenezer Crosby to Norton Quincy, 14 April 1778, HUL; On the general health of the army at this time, see Israel Angell to the Governor and Council of Rhode Island, 28 March 1778, Letters, vol. 12, RISA; Samuel Ward to Phoebe Ward, 28 April 1778, Ward Papers, RIHS.

159. Gustavus B. Wallace to Michael Wallace, 28 March 1778, UVL.

160. Ibid.

161. Ebenezer Crosby to Norton Quincy, 14 April 1778, HUL.

162. Lieutenant B. Howe to Major Sebastian Bauman, 23 April 1778, Sebastian Bauman Papers, NYHS; For regular weather observations during this period, see the Jonathan Clark Diary, 1 April - 1 July 1778, VSL.

163. Samuel Ward to Phoebe Ward, April 1778, Ward Papers, RIHS.

164. Nathanael Greene to William Smallwood, 16 March 1778, Miscellaneous Manuscripts Greene, NYHS.

165. Nathanael Greene to George Weedon, 27 April 1778, Lloyd W. Smith Collection, MNHP; Nathanael Greene to Alexander McDougall, 16 April 1778, McDougall Papers, NYHS; See also Lieutenant B. Howe to Sebastian Bauman, 23 April 1778, Sebastian Bauman Papers, NYHS; Sameul Ward to Phoebe Ward, 28 April 1778, Ward Papers, RIHS.

166. William Bradford to Richard Varick, 16 April 1778, Miscellaneous Collection, MHS.

167. Sameul Ward to Phoebe Ward, 19 April 1778, Ward Papers, RIHS.

168. Ibid.

169. See John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 28 February 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

170. James Varnum to Alexander McDougall, 10 April 1778, McDougall Papers, LIHS; John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 11 April 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS; Ebenezer Crosby to Norton Quincy, 14 April 1778, HUL; Samuel Ward to Phoebe Ward, 19 April 1778, Ward Papers, RIHS.

171. Nathanael Greene to Alexander McDougall, 16 April 1778, McDougall Papers, NYHS.

172. Washington to the President of Congress, 18 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 276-78.

173. Washington to the President of Congress, 20, 23, 25, 27 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 281-82, 300-2, 307-8, 313-14; Washington to William Livingston, 22 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 295-97; Washington to John Bannister, 22 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 287-88.

174. Washington to John Bannister, 21 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 292-93; JCC, X: 381-82.

175. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 18 April 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS; Samuel Ward to Phoebe Ward, 19 April 1778, Ward Papers, RIHS; Elias Boudinot to his wife, 20 April 1778, PUL; Henry Knox to his brother, 21 April 1778, Knox Papers, MHS.

176. Washington to William Livingston, 22 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 297.

177. Washington to the General Officers, 20 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 282-83.

178. Louis Duportail to Washington, 23 April 1778; William Maxwell to Washington, 23 April 1778; Peter Muhlenberg to Washington,

23 April 1778; Enoch Poor to Washington, 23 April 1778; Lord Stirling to Washington, 23 April 1778; James Varnum to Washington, 23 April 1778; Anthony Wayne to Washington, 23 April 1778; Nathanael Greene to Washington, 25 April 1778; Marquis de Lafayette to Washington, 25 April 1778; Friedrich Steuben to Washington, 25 April 1778; William Maxwell to Washington, 25 April 1778; Henry Knox to Washington, 23 April 1778. All GWP, LC; see Figure I, p. 364.

179. Nathanael Greene to Washington, 31 March 1778, GWP, LC; Charles Pettit to Moore Furman, 18 March, 16 April 1778, NJBAH; Nathanael Greene to James Abeel, 17 April 1778, Peck MSS (typescript), RIHS.

180. Washington, "Thoughts Upon a Plan of Operation," March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 185-94.

181. JCC, X: 364.

182. See Muenchhausen, "Diary," pp. 48-51; Baurmeister, "Journal," pp. 154-68.

183. William Ellery to ? , 2 March 1778, John Reed Collection.

184. Joseph Reed to ? , 1 February 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS. See also Gunning Bedford to Washington, 7 March 1778, GWP, LC.

185. John Lacey to Washington, 9 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS; Stephen Chambers to Washington, 23 March 1778, GWP, LC.

186. Stephen Chambers to Washington, 23 March 1778, GWP, LC.

187. Washington, "General Orders," 26 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 155.

188. John Laurens to Cornet White, 16 April 1778, GWP, LC.

189. Washington to William Smallwood, 6 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 32-33; William Smallwood to Washington, 9 March 1778, GWP, LC.

190. William Shannon to Henry Hollingsworth, 15 March 1778, Sol Feinstone Collection, APS; William Smallwood to Washington, 16 March 1778, GWP, LC.

191. William Smallwood to Henry Hollingsworth, 31 March 1778, WRHS; William Smallwood to Henry Hollingsworth, 5 April 1778, Sol Feinstone Collection, APS.

192. William Smallwood to Washington, 31 March 1778, GWP, LC.

193. JCC, X: 285; William Smallwood to Caesar Rodney, 31 March 1778, MS 1875, MdHS.

194. Washington to William Smallwood, 12, 13 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 250-51, 254-55.

195. Washington to William Smallwood, 28 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 167.

196. Anonymous to ? , 17 April 1778, André deCoppet Collection, PUL.

197. Washington to John Armstrong, 27 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 157-59.

198. Joseph Reed to Washington, 30 March 1778, GWP, LC.

199. Henry Lee to Washington, 31 March 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to Henry Lee, 1 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 198.

200. Washington to the President of Congress, 3 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 205-6; JCC, X: 315.

201. Alexander Hamilton to ? , 29 March 1778, Gratz Collection, HSP.

202. Washington to George Gibson, 11 March 1778, Fitzaptrick, XI: 64-65; William Smith to Washington, 18 March 1778, GWP, LC: George Gibson to Washington, 19 March 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to the Board of War, 29 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 112.

203. ? to Colonel Bigelow, 1 March 1778, GWP, LC; John Laurens to Cornet White, 16 April 1778, GWP, LC. Baurmeister mentions a "strong enemy outpost" at the "Gulph Ferry Mill," possibly the Radnor post. Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 157.

204. Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 49; Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 157.

205. For these disclaimers, see Washington to William Duer, 21 February 1778, Fitzpatrick, X: 497-98; Washington to the Board of War, 20 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 111-12.

206. Washington, "General Orders," 27 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 162.

207. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 28 March 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS; Lord Stirling to Charles Pettit, 13 April 1778, ChiHS; John Laurens to Lord Stirling, 15 April 1778, Dreer Collection, HSP; Lord Stirling to Charles Pettit, 16 April 1778, Dreer Collection, HSP; Louis Duportail to Washington, 6 April 1778, WRHS; Louis Duportail to Washington, 13 April 1778, GWP, LC: Ebenezer Crosby to Norton Quincy, 14 April 1778, HUL.

208. N. Scull to Tench Tilghman, 13 April 1778, GWP, LC.

209. Washington to John Lacey, 2 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 14-15.

210. John Lacey to Washington, 3 March 1778, GWP, LC; John Lacey to General John Armstrong, 4 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS; John Lacey to James Potter, 4 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS; John Lacey to Thomas Wharton, 4 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

211. John Lacey to James Potter, 4 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS; John Lacey to General John Armstrong, 4 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

212. Thomas Wharton to Washington, 2 March 1778, GWP, LC.

213. John Lacey to Washington, 9 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

214. John Lacey to Joseph Kirkbride, 10 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS; Joseph Kirkbride to John Lacey, 14 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

215. Joseph Kirkbride to John Lacey, 14 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS. Kirkbride had heard the allegations from the father-in-law of Colonel John Bayard, the Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly.

216. John Lacey to Joseph Kirkbride, 10 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

217. George Nagel to Washington, 3 March 1778, GWP, LC; Stephen Chambers to Washington, 12 March 1778, GWP, LC.

218. Ibid.; See also Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 157.

219. John Lacey to Thomas Wharton, 20 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

220. John Lacey to Thomas Wharton, 26 March 1778, Society Collection, HSP.

221. Anthony Wayne to John Lacey, 3 March 1778, Sol Feinstone Collection, APS; Joseph Kirkbride to John Lacey, 14 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS; Anthony Wayne to Washington, 14 March 1778, GWP, LC.

222. John Lacey to Washington, 11 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

223. See Chapter 5, pp. 296-98. William Livingston to Washington, 2 March 1778, GWP, LC; Jacob Arnold to (William Livingston?), 9 March 1778, GWP, LC; William Livingston to Washington, 14 March 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to William Livingston, 14 March, 11 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 79-80, 247.

224. Washington to Lachlan McIntosh, 21 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 120-21; Alexander Scammell to Allen McLane, 10 April 1778, McLane Papers, NYHS.

225. Washington to William Howe, 19 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 279-80.

226. Washington to Lachlan McIntosh, 21 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 120-21; See also Washington to John Lacey, 20 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 114.

227. Lachlan McIntosh to Washington, 23, 25 March 1778, GWP, LC; John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 28 March 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

228. John Lacey to Washington, 21 March 1778, GWP, LC; Lachlan McIntosh to Washington, 23 March 1778, GWP, LC; Nicholas Waln, "Epistle from the General Spring Meeting," 21-24 March 1778, John Reed Collection.

229. John Lacey to Washington, 29 March 1778, GWP, LC. There is a crossed out line in Lacey's letter of March 9 to Washington (Lacey Papers, NYHS), which seemingly prefigured his interest in depopulating the district. Lacey presented the proposal as a joint one on behalf of himself and McIntosh, and said that the latter would present it verbally to Washington at Head Quarters. There is, however, no independent evidence that this ever occurred.

230. Washington to John Lacey, 31 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 179.

231. Ibid.

232. Washington to John Lacey, 11 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 243-44.

233. Washington to Joseph Kirkbride, 20 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 283-84.

234. John Lacey, "General Orders," 19 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS; John Lacey,"Proceedings of Courts Martial," 6 April 1778, GWP, LC.

235. See, for example, George Emlen to John Lacey, 3 April 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS; Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 166.

236. John Lacey to Nathanael Greene, 27 April 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

237. John Chaloner to Henry Champion, 2 April 1778, MS 69492, CHS.

238. John Wetzel to John Lacey, 31 March 1778, WRHS.

239. John Lacey to Thomas Wharton, 20 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

240. John Lacey to Washington, 12 April 1778, GWP, LC.

241. John Lacey to the Supreme Executive Council, 13 April 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

242. John Lacey to John Armstrong, 28 April 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS; see also John Lacey to John Armstrong, 5 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

243. John Lacey to Thomas Wharton, 26 March 1778, Society Collection, HSP.

244. Anthony Wayne to Washington, 26 February 1778, GWP, LC.

245. Anthony Wayne to Washington, 20 February 1778, GWP, LC; Anthony Wayne to Lieutenant Colonel Sherman, 22 February 1778, GWP, LC; Anthony Wayne to Theodore Woodbridge, 23 February 1778, Woodbridge Papers, CHS; Washington to Casimir Pulaski, 1 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 6-7; Washington to Anthony Wayne, 2 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 13-4.

246. Anthony Wayne to Washington, 5, 14 March 1778, GWP, LC.

247. Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 48; Baurmeister, "Journal," pp. 155-56; Simcoe, "Journal of the Operations of the... Queen's Rangers," p. 60.

248. Washington to Israel Shreve, 19 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 109-10.

249. Washington to William Livingston, 19 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 110-11.

250. Elijah Hand to Colonel Charles Mawhood, 22 March 1778, GWP, LC.

251. Colonel Charles Mawhood, "Proclamation to the New Jersey Militia," undated copy enclosed in Elijah Hand and Benjamin Holme to William Livingston, 21 March 1778, GWP, LC.

252. Joseph Ellis to Washington, 23 March 1778, GWP, LC.

253. William Livingston to Washington, 21 March 1778, GWP, LC.

254. William Livingston to Washington, 23 March 1778, GWP, LC.

255. Israel Shreve to Washington, 28 March 1778, GWP, LC.

256. Civil and Military Officers of Cumberland County, "Petition" (to Governor William Livingston), 28 March 1778, GWP, LC. State Assembly of New Jersey to Congress (copy), 3 April 1778, GWP, LC.

257. Washington to William Livingston, 25 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 149-50.

258. Washington to Israel Shreve, 4, 6 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 209-10, 222-23.

259. Israel Shreve to Washington, 6, 7 April 1778, GWP, LC.

260. Israel Shreve to Washington, 10 April 1778, GWP, LC.

261. William Livingston to Washington, 9 April 1778, GWP, LC.

262. Washington to William Livingston, 14 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 256-57.

263. See John Hannum to the Supreme Executive Council, June 1778, Frame 0191, Roll 14, PA, PHMC.

264. See "Sufferings of Friends," Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.

265. John Shy, "The Military Conflict Considered...," p. 21.

266. See Stephen Moylan to Washington, 24 February 1778, GWP, LC, for one American officer's perception of this point.

267. John Shy, "The Military Conflict Considered...," pp. 209-14.

268. John Lacey to Thomas Wharton, 20 March 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

269. Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 49; Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 160.

270. Muenchhausen, "Diary," pp. 50-51; Baurmeister, "Journal," pp. 162, 165.

271. An example of British hesitation in implementing a civil-based war strategy can be found in Muenchhausen's account of his attempts to persuade William Howe to launch an expedition aimed at capturing some "topmost rebels" in the Dover, Delaware, vicinity during April, 1778 ("Diary," p. 51).

CHAPTER VII AS THE FINE SEASON APPROACHES

1. Washington to Alexander McDougall, 1 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 335; Washington to the President of Congress, 1 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 332.

2. JCC, XI: 457.

3. Washington to the President of Congress, 4 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 348.

4. Washington, "General Orders," 5 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 354-56.

5. Washington, "General Orders," 6 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 356.

6. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 7 May 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

7. Marquis de Lafayette to ? , 7 May 1778, John Reed Collection (trans. John Reed).

8. Philip van Cortlandt to Pierre van Cortlandt, 7 May 1778, Jacob Judd, ed., The Revolutionary War Memoir and Selected Letters of Philip van Cortlandt (Tarrytown, NY), pp. 124-26.

9. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 7 May 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

10. Washington to Israel Putnam, 5 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 348-49; Washington to William Heath, 5 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 349-51; Washington to Nathanael Greene, 5 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 351; Washington to Alexander McDougall, 5 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 351-53.

11. Lesser, The Sinews of Independence, pp. 68-69.

12. See Chapter VI, pp. 363-67.

13. Washington to Horatio Gates, 24 April 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 303-4.

14. Washington, "Council of War," 8 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 363-66.

15. Ibid.; see Ephraim Blaine to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 10 May 1778, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, CHS.

16. Washington, "Council of War," 8 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 363-66.

17. John Armstrong et al., "Summary of Opinions of the Council of War," 8 May 1778, GWP, LC.

18. See Figure I.

19. Washington, "Council of War," 8 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 363-66; John Armstrong et al., "Summary of Opinions of the Council of War," 8 May 1778, GWP, LC.

20. See Figure I.

21. Ibid.

22. Washington, "Council of War," 8 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 363-66.

23. John Armstrong et al., "Summary of Opinions of the Council of War," 8 May 1778, GWP, LC.

24. Ibid.

25. See Jacqueline Thibaut, In The True Rustic Order: Material Aspects of the Valley Forge Encampment, 1777-1778 (vol. 3, Valley Forge Historical Research Project, Final Report), pp. 45-60.

26. Ibid., p. 48; Caleb North to Lord Stirling, 2 May 1778, Mrs. Archibald Crossley Autograph Collection, LC; Peter Muhlenberg to Nathanael Greene, 8 May 1778, Gratz Collection, HSP; Charles Pettit to David Bevan, 12 May 1778, Weiss Papers, RG 15, M-804, Roll 2523, NA; Robert C. Bray and Paul E. Bushnell, eds., Diary of a Common Soldier in the American Revolution, 1775-1783, An Annotated Edition of the Military Journal of Jeremiah Greenman (DeKalb, IL, 1978), 29-30 May 1778, p. 119.

27. Samuel Ward to Phoebe Ward, 5 May 1778, Ward Papers, RIHS.

28. Washington, "General Orders," 16 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 399. The officially attributed reason for the earlier exercises was the advent of warmer weather.

29. Washington to the President of Congress, 1 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 328-331; see JCC, XI: 465.

30. Washington, "General Orders," 7, 9 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 362-63, 366.

31. Friedrich Steuben to Henry Laurens, 15 May 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

32. See, for example, William Drayton to Friedrich Steuben, 21 May 1778, Gratz Collection, HSP.

33. Thomas Jones to Charles Stewart, 21 February 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

34. Ephraim Blaine to Governor Thomas Johnson, 7 May 1778, Red Book, no. 4587-11, Maryland Hall of Records.

35. Washington to Thomas Wharton, 11 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 369-70; Washington to Thomas Johnson, 11 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 370-71; Washington to William Livingston, 12 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 377-79.

36. Ephraim Blaine to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 10 May 1778, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, CHS.

37. Ibid.

38. John Chaloner to Charles Stewart, 23 May 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

39. For a comprehensive account of the third commissary crisis, see Thibaut, This Fatal Crisis, pp. 219-27; See also, John Chaloner to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 26 May 1778, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, CHS; Thomas Jones to Charles Stewart, 29 May 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA; John Chaloner to Charles Stewart, 29 May 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

40. Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 162. An indication of the army's reliance on the local environment for dietary supplement is seen in Washington's warning against the use of seasonally poisonous Poke greens in June. See "General Orders," 13 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 54.

41. Anonymous, "A Journal of Sundry Matters happening during the stay of the enemy at Germantown, Philadelphia...by an Inhabitant of the former....," Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS.

42. George Fleming to Sebastian Bauman, 14 May 1778, Sebastian Bauman Papers, NYHS; for another account of the rising value of Continental currency at this time, see George Thomas to Richard Thomas, 14 June 1778, MS No. 1487, Chester County (PA) Historical Society.

43. Samuel Ward to Phoebe Ward, 5 May 1778, Ward Papers, RIHS.

44. Anthony Wayne to Richard Peters, 13 May 1778, Wayne Papers, HSP. Before the campaign opened, Wayne petitioned to Washington to be relieved of his division command and placed in a newly organized light corps. See Wayne to Washington, 30 May 1778, GWP, LC.

45. Colonel William Shepard to the Massachusetts Council, 18 May 1778, Governor and Council Letters, MSA.

46. Samuel Benjamin to Lieutenant Colonel Brooks, 18 May 1778, Samuel Benjamin Collection, YUL.

47. George Fleming to Sebastian Bauman, 14 May 1778, Sebastian Bauman Papers, NYHS; Lieutenant B. Howe to Sebastian Bauman, 16 May 1778, Sebastian Bauman Papers, NYHS.

48. For these debates, see JCC, XI: 482-83, 485, 491, 495-96, 502-3.

49. Abraham Tuckerman to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 8 May 1778, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, CHS. Rumors concerning the measure occasionally swept through the camp. In early May, Samuel Ward announced to his wife that he had "the pleasure of feeling myself in some degree independant" as a result of a premature report of the settlement of the half-pay issue. See Samuel Ward to Phoebe Ward, 5 May 1778, Ward Papers, RIHS.

50. Henry Laurens observed on April 26 that the half-pay measure had been made contingent upon an officer's willingness to swear the oaths. No such specific language appears in the Journals of Congress for that date, although it is noted that "sundry amendments were moved." The oaths had initially been required by Congress in early February, independent of the half-pay issue, but no specific steps appear to have been taken to implement them during the interim. See Henry Laurens to Washington, 27 April 1778, GWP, LC; JCC, X: 114-18, 394-97.

51. The brigades in question were Woodford's, Learned's, and Glover's. See Washington to the Marquis de Lafayette, 17 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 410-11; Johan De Kalb to Henry Laurens, 17 May 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

52. Ibid.

53. Lachlan McIntosh to Henry Laurens, 11 May 1778, Peter Force Collection, series 7-E, LC; Johan De Kalb to Henry Laruens, 17 May 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

54. JCC, XI: 502-3.

55. Washington, "General Orders," 18 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 412-13; Washington to the President of Congress, 18 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 415-17; Johan De Kalb to Henry Laurens, 19 May 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

56. George Fleming to Sebastian Bauman, 14 May 1778, Sebastian Bauman Papers, NYHS. A Hessian officer noticed a marked decline in the incidence of American desertion in the aftermath of the French alliance. See Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 52.

57. See Massachusetts Independent Chronicle, 21 May 1778.

58. John Taylor to William Woodford, 22 May 1778, John Taylor Miscellaneous Manuscripts, LC. Taylor, it will be remembered, was the officer stationed at Wilmington who lobbied during January to have his regiment included in the expedition to Canada.

59. Ibid.

60. Washington to Gouverneur Morris, 18 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 413-14. The Conference Committee had remained in semi-official existence after returning to York. Morris, who had emerged as its de facto leader, was apparently in effect managing its proposals on the floor of Congress.

61. Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 52, Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 170.

62. Sir Henry Clinton to Lord George Germain, 10 May 1778, summarized in Clinton to Germain, 24 May 1778, Clinton Papers, WLC; see also Henry Clinton, "Memorandum on evacuating Philadelphia," May, 1778, Clinton Papers, WLC.

63. Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 52; Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 173; See also Jackson, With the British Army, pp. 232, 255-56.

64. William Howe, "Orders," 11 May 1778, Clinton Papers, WLC. These were officially Howe's final orders. In them he thanked his troops and bid them good bye. However, Howe remained in Philadelphia for nearly two weeks thereafter, and assumed command of a large detachment of the army on May 20.

65. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 12 May 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

66. See Eleazer Oswald to John Lamb, 15 May 1778, Lamb Papers, NYHS; Gustavus B. Wallace to his brother, 16 May 1778, UVL; Lieutenant B. Howe to Sebastian Bauman, 16 May 1778, Sebastian Bauman Papers, NYHS; Lord Stirling to Gouverneur Morris, 16 May 1778, Manuscript Collection, Philip S. and A. S. W. Rosenbach Foundation; Clement Biddle to (Moore Furman?), 17 May 1778, NJBAH; John Chaloner to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 17 May 1778, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, CHS; Alexander Brackenridge to ? , 17 May 1778, Draper MSS, series QQ, SHSW. (For later dates see further citations below.)

67. Washington to Nathanael Greene, 16 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 397-98, 403-4; Washington to Ephraim Blaine, 17 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 408; Washington to Henry Knox, 17 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 407; Washington to William Smallwood, 17 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 406-7; Washington to Alexander McDougall, 17 May 1778, Fitzaptrick, XI: 405-6; Washington to Horatio Gates, 17, 18 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 401-3, 418; Washington to the President of Congress,

18 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 415-17; Washington to President Jeremiah Powell, 19 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 423-25; Washington to John Sullivan, 20 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 428-29.

68. Israel Shreve to Washington, 18 May 1778, GWP, LC; Philemon Dickenson to Washington, 19 May 1778, GWP, LC.

69. Clement Biddle to Moore Furman, 17, 18 May 1778, NJBAH; John Chaloner to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 17 May 1778, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, CHS; John Chaloner to Charles Stewart, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

70. Washington, "General Orders," 16, 18, 23, 28, 29 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 399, 412-13, 441-42, 463-67.

71. John Laurens to Allen McLane, 26 May 1778, Hamilton-McLane Papers, LC; John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 27 May 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

72. Ibid.; Philemon Dickenson to Washington, 27 May 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to Philemon Dickenson, 28 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 468-69; Washington to the President of Congress, 28 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 471-72; Washington to Governor George Clinton, 29 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 473-74.

73. Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 31 May 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS; Washington to Philemon Dickenson, 28 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 469.

74. Dudley Colman to his wife, 30 May 1778, Dudley Colman Papers, MHS.

75. Henry Knox to William Knox, 27 May 1778, Knox Papers, MHS.

76. Washington to Richard Henry Lee, 25 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 450-52; Washington to Philemon Dickinson, 28 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 469; Washington to the President of Congress, 28 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 471-72.

77. Washington to Horatio Gates, 25 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 447; Washington to Richard Henry Lee, 25 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI; 450-52.

78. Washington to William Smallwood, 22, 23, 25 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 434-36, 449-50.

79. Washington to Stephen Moylan, 24, 28 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 446, 469-70; Washington to William Maxwell, 25 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 448-49.

80. Henry Clinton to the Duke of Newcastle, 23 May 1778, Newcastle MSS, Nottingham University Library; Henry Clinton to ? , 6 June 1778, Clinton Papers, WLC.

81. For the elaborate ceremonies with which Howe was bid farewell by his officers, characterized by the organizers as a "Meschianza," see Baurmeister, "Journal," pp. 177-78; Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 52; Jackson, With the British Army, pp. 235-49.

82. See Edward H. Tatum, Jr., ed., The American Journal of Ambrose Serle: Secretary to Lord Howe, 1776-1778 (San Marino, CA, 1940), pp. 287-89, 292, 295-97; Baurmeister, "Journal," pp. 177-78; Muenchhausen, "Diary," pp. 173-74; Jackson, With the British Army, pp. 232-33, 251-52.

83. Jackson, With the British Army, p. 251-52; Serle, "Journal," p. 295.

84. Henry Clinton, "Minutes of Conversations with Lord Howe and Joseph Galloway," May, 1778, Clinton Papers, WLC.

85. Muenchhausen, "Diary," pp. 50-51; Baurmeister, "Journal," pp. 164-67.

86. John Lacey to Washington, 2 May 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS; John Lacey to Thomas Wharton, 4 May 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS. For British accounts, see Simcoe, "Journal of the...Queen's Rangers," pp. 56-60; Baurmeister, "Journal," pp. 168-69; Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 51.

87. Simcoe, "Journal of the...Queen's Rangers," p. 60.

88. John Lacey to Washington, 2 May 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS.

89. William Stayner, "Deposition," 14 May 1778, GWP, LC; F. Watts and Samuel Henry, "Deposition," 14 May 1778, GWP, LC; Thomas Craven, "Deposition," 15 May 1778, GWP, LC: Samuel Irwin, "Deposition," 15 May 1778, GWP, LC.

90. Simcoe, "Journal of the...Queen's Rangers," p. 60.

91. Washington to William Maxwell, 7 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 357-58.

92. Washington to John Armstrong, 27 March 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 157-59; Washington to John Lacey, 11 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 374.

93. Washington to John Lacey, 11 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 374. Lacey, however, remained with the militia for the remainder of the spring.

94. Washington to Thomas Wharton, 11 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, IX: 369-70. For the state's view of the situation, see Supreme Executive Council to Washington, 5 May 1778, Frame 1301, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

95. By May, Washington's surveyors had completed their work east of Valley Forge and were extending their activities westward to the Susquehanna River. See Richard Peters to Washington, 6, 9 May 1778, GWP, LC: Washington to the Board of War, 9 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 367-68.

96. Andrew Boyd to Timothy Matlack, 7 May 1778, Frame 1317, Reel 13, PA, PHMC.

97. Washington to William Smallwood, 25 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 449-50.

98. Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 174; Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 52.

99. Washington to William Maxwell, 7 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 357-58; Alexander Hamilton to William Maxwell, 10 May 1778, GWP, LC.

100. Stephen Moylan to Washington, 7-9 May 1778, GWP, LC; Philemon Dickenson to Washington, 9 May 1778, GWP, LC; Eleazer Oswald to John Lamb, 15 May 1778, John Lamb Papers, NYHS.

101. William Maxwell to John Lacey, 11 May 1778, Lacey Papers, NYHS; William Maxwell to Washington, 11 May 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to the President of Congress, 12 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 380-81; Washington to William Livingston, 12 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 378-79; Washington to Philemon Dickinson, 13 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 383-84.

102. There is evidence, for example, that some of Allen McLane's troops, who had provided the backbone of Continental security along the roads immediately east of the Schuylkill, were operating as far northeast as Bristol around the time of the raid. See unsigned memorandum of goods seized in Bristol Township, 9 May 1778, Allen McLane Papers, NYHS.

103. Washington to the Marquis de Lafayette, 18 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 418-20.

104. Marquis de Lafayette to Allen McLane, 18 May 1778, Allen McLane Papers, NYHS.

105. Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 52.

106. Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 175-76; Muenchhausen, "Diary," pp. 52-54; Jackson, With the British Army, pp. 227-28.

107. See Dudley Colman to his wife, 22 May 1778, Dudley Coleman Papers, MHS; John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 27 May 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

108. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 27 May 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS; Alexander Scammell to Allen McLane, 20 May 1778, Allen McLane Papers, NYHS; Washington to the President of Congress, 24 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 443.

109. Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 54; Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 176; Simcoe, "Journal of the...Queen's Rangers," pp. 60-61; Serle, "Journal," pp. 294-95.

110. Baurmeister, "Journal," pp. 176-77.

111. Richard K. Meade to Allen McLane, 23 May 1778, Allen McLane Papers, NYHS; John Fitzpatrick to Allen McLane, 24 May 1778, Allen McLane Papers, NYHS; John Laurens to Allen McLane, 26 May 1778, Hamilton-McLane Papers, LC; Washington to Allen McLane, 27 May 1778, GWP, LC; Alexander Scammell to Allen McLane, 28 May 1778, Allen McLane Papers, NYHS.

112. Tench Tilghman to William Maxwell, 13 May 1778, GWP, LC.

113. Robert H. Harrison to Stephen Moylan, 17 May 1778, GWP, LC; Allen McLane to Alexander Clough, 23 May 1778, GWP, LC.

114. Charles Scott to Allen McLane, 23 May 1778, Allen McLane Papers, NYHS; Allen Mclane to Alexander Clough, 23 May 1778, GWP, LC; Alexander Clough to Washington, 23 May 1778, GWP, LC.

115. Israel Shreve to Washington, 3 May 1778, GWP, LC; See Stephen Moylan to Washington, 7 May 1778, GWP, LC; Philemon Dickinson to Washington, 9 May 1778, GWP, LC.

116. Israel Shreve to Washington, 4 May 1778, GWP, LC; For the landing itself, which was principally in support of a Briitsh woodcutting expedition, see Muenchhausen, "Diary," pp. 51-52; Baurmeister, "Journal," pp. 169-70.

117. Washington to Israel Shreve, 7 May 1778, Fitzpatrick , XI: 358-59; Washington to Philemon Dickinson, 13 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 383-84; Alexander Hamilton to Lieutenant Colonel De Hart, 7 May 1778, GWP, LC.

118. Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 170; Muenchhausen, "Diary," p. 52; Philemon Dickenson to Washington, 17 May 1778, GWP, LC; Israel Shreve to Washington, 18 May 1778, GWP, LC.

119. Israel Shreve to Washington, 18 May 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to Israel Shreve, 23 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 436-37.

120. Israel Shreve to Washington, 25 May 1778, GWP, LC; See also Israel Shreve to Washington, 4 May 1778, GWP, LC.

121. Washington to Richard Henry Lee, 25 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 450-52; Washington to Philemon Dickenson, 28 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 468-69.

122. Washington to William Maxwell, 25 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 448-49.

123. Ibid.; Washington to William Maxwell (two letters), 29 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 478-79.

124. See map.

125. Washington to Governor Thomas Johnson, 17 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 404-5.

126. Washington to William Smallwood, 17 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 406-7.

127. Thomas Johnson to Washington, 20 May 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to William Smallwood, 22-23 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 434-36.

128. Washington to William Smallwood, 22-23 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 434-36; William Smallwood to Washington, 22 May 1778, GWP, LC.

129. Washington to William Smallwood, 22-23, 25 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 434-36; 449-50.

130. William Smallwood to Washington, 26 (two letters), 29 May 1778, GWP, LC.

131. See Henry Knox to John Lamb, 2 June 1778, John Lamb Papers, NYHS; Henry Knox to William Knox, 3 June 1778, Knox Papers, MHS; Dudley Colman to his wife, 5 June 1778, Dudley Colman Papers, MHS; Henry Knox to ? , 6 June 1778, Knox Papers, NYHS; Eleazer Oswald to John Lamb, 7 June 1778, John Lamb Papers, NYHS.

132. John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 15 June 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

133. Richard Mount to "Dear Bill," 7 June 1778, NYHS; Peter Grubb to Allen McLane, 10 June 1778 (misdated 10 May), Allen McLane Papers, NYHS.

134. Jedediah Huntington to Andrew Huntington, 2 June 1778, CHS; Henry Knox to William Knox, 3 June 1778, Knox Papers, MHS; Eleazer Osward to John Lamb, 7 June 1778, Lamb Papers, NYHS; John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 9 June 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS; John Chaloner to Charles Stewart, 9 June 1778, Charles Stewart Papers, NYSHA; John Eccleston to ? , 15 June 1778, Revolutionary War Letters - 1778, RUL; Elias Boudinot to his wife, 11 June 1778, PUL; Clement Biddle to ? , 15 June 1778, NJBAH; John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 16 June 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

135. Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 5, 7 June 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS; Abraham Clark to Elias Dayton, 8 June 1778, Bamberger Autograph Collection, NJHS.

136. Washington to Horatio Gates, 2 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 9-10; Washington to Charles Lee, 15 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 60-63;

Washington to the President of Congress, 18 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 82-83.

137. Baurmeister, "Journal," p. 179; Sir Henry Clinton to Lord George Germain, 5, 13 June 1778, Clinton Papers, WLC.

138. Sir Henry Clinton to ? , 6 June 1778, Clinton Papers, WLC: Sir Henry Clinton to the Duke of Newcastle, 16 June 1778, Newcastle MSS, Nottingham University Library.

139. Washington to the Board of War, 6 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 25-26; Richard K. Meade to Daniel Kemper, 18 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 81.

140. Jedediah Huntington to Andrew Huntington, 5 June 1778, CHS; Washington to Jonathan Lawrence, 6 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 26; Washington to John A. Washington, 10 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 41-43; Washington to Lachlan Mcintosh, 10 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 43-44; Washington to John Sullivan, 10 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 44-45; John Cox to James Abeel, 4 June 1778, John Cox Correspondence, NJHS; John Chaloner to Charles Stewart, 10 June 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA; Thoams Jones to Charles Stewart, 10 June 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

141. Ephraim Blaine to Charles Stewart, 10 June 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

142. John Chaloner to Charles Stewart, 10 June 1778, Charles Stewart Collection, NYSHA.

143. Washington to Nathanael Greene (two letters), 8 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 35-36; Washington, "General Orders," 9 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 40; John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 9 June 1778 (typescript), Laurens Papers, LIHS.

144. Dudley Colman to his wife, 12 June 1778, Dudley Colman Papers, MHS. Local tradition has usually placed the site of the new encampment on the west side of the Schuylkill River somewhere in front of the outer line entrenchments. The only piece of specific contemporary evidence, however, suggests that it was on the east side. See Bray and Bushnell, eds., Diary of a Common Soldier in the American Revolution (Jeremiah Greenman Journal), p. 120.

145. Washington, "General Orders," 13 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 53-54; Washington to William Palfrey, 13 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 57.

146. Gouverneur Morris to Washington, 21 May 1778, GWP, LC.

147. JCC, XI: 538-66.

166. Montressor, "Journal," pp. 497-99.

167. Anonymous, "Journal of Sundry Matters, Happening During the Stay of the Enemy at Germantown, Philadelphia ... by an Inhabitant of the Former...," 5 December 1777 - 18 June 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS.

168. Montressor, "Journal," pp. 498.

169. Sir Henry Clinton to the Duke of Newcastle, 16 June 1778, Newcastle MSS, Nottingham University Library.

170. Montressor, "Journal," p. 499.

171. John Bayard to George Bryan, 5 June 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS; Joseph Reed to his wife, 9 June 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS.

172. Joseph Reed to his wife, 9 June 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS.

173. Ibid.; Supreme Executive Council to Washington, 27 May 1778, Frame 0134, Reel 14, PA, PHMC.

174. Ibid.

175. Washington to George Bryan, 28 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 467-68; John Laurens to Daniel Morgan, 29 May 1778, GWP, LC; Washington to Allen McLane, 29 May 1778, GWP, LC.

176. Washington, "Order of March and Route of the Army from Valley Forge," 17 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 74-75; see the similarly worded "Arrangement of Army and Route of March to the North River," 28 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 465-67.

177. Washington, "Council of War," 17 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 75-78.

178. Fitzpatrick, XII: 75, fn. 38.

179. Washington to the President of Congress, 18 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 82-83.

180. Ibid.; "Order of March...from Valley Forge," 17 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 74-75.

148. Washington to the President of Congress, 7 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 27-28.

149. Washington, "General Orders," 7 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 29-35.

150. JCC, XI: 570; Washington to Francis Dana, 9 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 38; Joseph Reed to his wife, 9 June 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS.

151. Washington, "General Orders," 11 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 46-47; Washington to Charles Lee, 15 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 60-3.

152. Charles Lee to Washington, 15 June 1778, GWP, LC.

153. Washington to Charles Lee, 15 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 61.

154. Ibid.

155. See, for example, James Varnum to Washington, 5 May 1778, GWP, LC.

156. Joseph Reed to his wife, 9 June 1778, Joseph Reed Papers, NYHS; Jedediah Huntington to Jabez Huntington, 10 June 1778, CHS.

157. Washington, "General Orders," 15 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 66-68.

158. This letter is not found in Washington's papers, but is inferred from Washington to Steuben, 18 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII; 78-79.

159. Ibid.

160. Washington to Sir Henry Clinton, 31 May 1778, Fitzpatrick, XI: 496-97.

161. Baurmeister, "Journal," pp. 179-80; Montressor, "Journal," p. 497; Jedediah Huntington to Jabez Huntington, 10 June 1778, CHS.

162. Washington to Sir Henry Clinton, 9 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 39; Washington to Dr. Adam Ferguson, 9 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 39; Washington to the President of Congress, 9 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 39-39.

163. See Congress, "Circular Letter to the States," JCC, XI: 583-84; Henry Laurens to George Johnstone, 14 June 1778, WLC.

164. JCC, XI: 605-6.

165. JCC, XI: 609-11, 614-15.

181. Washington to Benedict Arnold, 19 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 94-95.

182. Ibid.; Washington to Jeremiah Wadsworth, 18 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 88-89; Washington to James Mease, 18 June 1778, Fitzpatrick, XII: 89.

183. See, for example Johan De Kalb to Mr. Stephens, 12 April 1780, Society Collection of Miscellaneous Letters, 67-343, Bucks County (Pennsylvania) Historical Society

184. See Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig, eds., The Diaries of George Washington

ABBREVIATION KEY

APS	American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA
CHS	Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, CT
ChiHS	Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, IL
CSL	Connecticut State Library, Hartford, CT
GWP	George Washington Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC
HSP	Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
HUL	Harvard University Library, Cambridge, MA
JAL	James Abeel Letterbook, LC
JCC	Ford, Worthington Chauncey, ed., Journals of the Continental Congress. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1906.
LC	Library of Congress
LIHS	Long Island Historical Society, Brooklyn, NY
MdHS	Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, MD
MHR	Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis, MD
MHS	Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA
MMC	Miscellaneous Manuscript Collection, LC, Washington, DC
MNHPL	Morristown National Historical Park Library, Morristown, NJ
MRWD	Miscellaneous Records of the War Department, NA Washington, DC
NA	National Archives, Washington, DC
NCSA	North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC
NJBAH	New Jersey Bureau of Archives and History, Trenton, NJ
NJHS	New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, NJ

NYHS	New York Historical Society, New York, NY
NYSHA	New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, NY
NYSL	New York State Library, Albany, NY
PA	Pennsylvania Archives, PHMC
PCC	Papers of the Continental Congress, NA, Washington, DC
PHMC	Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, PA
PML	Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, NY
PUL	Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ
RIHS	Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, RI
RISA	Rhode Island State Archives, Providence, RI
RUL	Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick, NJ
SHSW	State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, WI
UG	University of Georgia Library, Athens, GA
UVL	University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, VA
VFHS	Valley Forge Historical Society, Valley Forge, PA
WGW	Fitzpatrick, John C., ed., Writings of George Washington, 1745-1799, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931-1944.
WLC	William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, MI
WRHS	Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH
YUL	Yale University Libraries, New Haven, CT

Pennsylvania Archives

The Pennsylvania Archives (unpublished manuscripts) at Harrisburg, have recently been microfilmed. Reel numbers employed in the footnotes refer to the numbers of microfilmed reels assigned by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

The Albigence Waldo Diary

Historians and readers familiar with the Valley Forge encampment will note the omission of the Albigence Waldo diary from the preceding narrative. The decision to do this reflects a persistent concern on the part of the author, based on a subjective assessment of style, that the diary may not be entirely authentic. The author has not been able to locate the manuscript diary, after an extensive search, nor anyone who has ever seen it in manuscript form. The Waldo diary was published in the Historical Magazine in 1860, and was reprinted in 1897 in the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, apparently from the earlier printed source. Because the text is problematic, and because the original manuscript defies location, the author has elected to omit it from the sources employed.

Chester County Historical Society, Chester County, Pennsylvania

During the entire length of the period devoted to researching and writing the foregoing work, the archives of the Chester County Historical Society have been closed to research. Pertinent information which may be found in the Historical Society will be incorporated into this work at a future date.

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