

Political Generals in Blue: Lincoln's Gamble for War Support

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Introduction

At his inauguration on March 4, 1861, Abraham Lincoln became President of a divided northern nation. Some northerners wanted a war to restore the Union, which had been divided by the formation of the Confederate States of America one month earlier. However, there were many who wished to let the slave states go in peace. Following the outbreak of hostilities at Fort Sumter on April 12, Lincoln began the military struggle to suppress the rebellion. The President sought support from a wide spectrum of the population, including those who desired peaceful disunion. He needed support not only from Republicans, but from Democrats, and immigrant groups as well. The appointment of generals presented an excellent opportunity for Lincoln to use patronage to enlist and maintain the support of the various political and ethnic groups. The use of political leaders as generals became central to Lincoln's attempt to create and maintain a national war effort.

The state of the Union military machine at the beginning of the war required that Lincoln appoint some non-military generals. In 1860 the regular army contained only 1,105 officers and 15,259 enlisted men. After secession 296 federal officers resigned to join the Confederate military forces, leaving only 809 to fight for the Union.¹ The limited size of the regular army necessitated the assembly of a grander force based on militias and volunteer troops. Traditionally, local politicians assembled and led the militias of each state, receiving minimal funding and equipment from their

respective state governments. In many ways the militia amounted to "nothing but a political spoils system, with generals and colonels appointed to reconcile factional interests, build party power, and pay debts."² Nevertheless, other than the small national army, the militia represented the only body of men immediately available to Lincoln for the defense of Washington D.C.. Lincoln's call for three-year volunteers prompted individual efforts similar to those put forth by the militia leaders. Many politicians utilized their local clout to recruit and organize volunteer regiments, hoping to be rewarded with an official commission from President Lincoln. Increased army rolls soon required that Lincoln grant field generalships to many of these ambitious politicians. However, their appointments should not be dismissed as merely expedient to the rapid organization of field armies. Lincoln's non-military appointees represented political and ethnic groups whose support the president desired for the war effort. By appointing respected, pro-war politicians and ethnic leaders as generals, Lincoln hoped to gather support from their constituents and followers.

This thesis focuses on political generals who represent two major groups from which Lincoln desired and needed support. The German-Americans include Carl Schurz and Franz Sigel. The Democrats include Benjamin F. Butler, Daniel E. Sickles, John A. Logan, and John A. McClernand. In each case study, the general's political and military contributions are traced throughout the war, and the overall effect of their command on the war effort is determined. Lincoln's handling of the political general is analyzed and judged for its wisdom.

Through the analysis of these case studies, the following trends emerge which produce a better understanding of the nature of the political generals, Lincoln's effectiveness in managing their positions, and the extent of their success or failure. The north's political generals held little or no military experience. Therefore, the President had no way to determine their competence for field command. Essentially, therefore, Lincoln gambled that the political benefits of their generalships would exceed the consequences resulting from their military inadequacies. The President needed to carefully manage his political generals to insure that they would not hurt the overall war effort. However, Lincoln tended to allow political considerations to influence unduly his military judgment. The President often granted his political appointees too much command power and the results were at times militarily detrimental. However, politically the President appeared to receive the support he desired. The generals served as pro-war examples and usually attempted to promote Lincoln and his war policies. Unfortunately, the actual effectiveness of the political generals' attempts to create support is unclear. It is difficult to determine whether they instigated or merely followed trends of support within their groups. However, the political power associated with these men, whether real or imagined, usually required that Lincoln risk the military consequences of their generalships.

The German-Americans

The generalships of prominent German-Americans illustrate Lincoln's tendency to give political considerations too much influence in his military decisions. In 1860 German-Americans comprised thirty-one percent of the nation's population. Since the War of 1812, over 1,500,000 Germans and Prussians had immigrated to the United States.¹ In the war, Lincoln desired and needed the support of the north's numerous German-Americans.

Carl Schurz and Franz Sigel were both leaders of the German immigrant group known as the "Forty-eighters." These Germans emigrated to the United States following the failure of the German revolution in 1848. The movement embodied the ideology of Enlightenment poets and intellectuals, "who championed a cosmopolitan humanitarianism based on natural law and the inalienable rights of man which transcended all national and racial boundaries."² Once in America, many Forty-eighters actively participated in German societies that embodied these ideas. The Freethinker society advocated anticlericalism, atheism, and a strong belief in mankind, liberty and equality. The Turner Society emphasized a strict regimen of physical training motivated by German nationalism, patriotism, and a quest for an ideal free republic. In following their creed of freedom, the Forty-Eighters adopted the fight against slavery as their most important and significant cause. As abolitionists, they naturally aligned with Lincoln and the Republican party. Although Lincoln could feel somewhat secure about the loyalty of the radical Forty-eighters, he also desired a broader based appeal among the more

numerous, conservative German-Americans. As loyal Republicans, Schurz and Sigel became tools with which Lincoln hoped to gain this support. The president appointed them as generals, gambling that their military inexperience would not prove too disastrous. While Schurz performed satisfactorily on the battlefield, he proved not to be the political recruiter Lincoln believed him to be. Sigel, on the other hand, generated more support from the "Dutch", but failed drastically as a commander. Despite the shortcomings of both, Lincoln had to continue them in service in order to prevent the possibility of a negative reaction from the populous German-American community.

The political generalships of Schurz and Sigel can best be understood through separate discussions of the two German-Americans. Schurz was the more prominent of the pair. Following his education at the University of Bonn, Schurz joined the revolution movement against the Prussian forces in 1848. Following the revolution's failure, Schurz emigrated to the United States in 1852. Although he never belonged to the Freethinker or Turner societies, Schurz followed their beliefs and became a radical, Republican abolitionist.

Quickly mastering the English language, Schurz was renowned for his powerful speeches, delivered in both his native and adopted tongues. During the presidential campaign of 1856, Schurz's intensive campaigning for the Republicans earned him the reputation of an effective motivator among the valuable German-American voters.³

In the election of 1860 Republican leaders quickly recruited Schurz in their campaign for the German vote. Politicians wholeheartedly believed Schurz when he contended that "In most States west of the Allegheny Mountains, the Germans hold the balance of

power between the parties", and that "A change of a few thousand votes in Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan and even Ohio might throw those States into the hands of the pro-slavery party."⁴ The close attention paid to the German Americans demonstrated how critical politicians believed their vote could be. Led by Carl Schurz, Republican German-Americans helped to draft a national party platform that would attract (or at least not repel) German votes. With their "Dutch Plank," the Republicans hoped to gather support by promising the preservation and protection of immigrants' rights and citizenship. Schurz established a German American speakers bureau that travelled the country espousing Republican policies and attempting to convert German Democrats. Schurz himself delivered hundreds of speeches in English and German throughout the North.⁵

With Lincoln's victory, Republicans praised Schurz for his efforts, apparently convinced by his boasts of effectiveness. In a letter to his wife during the campaign, Schurz had written, "I have been in all respects highly successful. The Germans are coming to our side by hundreds and thousands."⁶ Schurz explained to Lincoln his strategy for the campaign and then exclaimed, "By a canvass of this systematic kind I have no doubt we can at least double the foreign Republican vote in the Northern States and may secure Indiana, Pennsylvania and New York beyond peradventure."⁷ Republican leaders accepted Schurz's assertions as fact. On February 25, 1862, United States Senator, Charles Sumner, a prominent Massachusetts Republican, concluded that without "our German fellow citizens" the Republican cause "would not have triumphed at the last election."⁸ The Milwaukee Sentinel reported that in a state election held prior to the national

canvass "much of the victory in Pennsylvania is due to the labor of Carl Schurz."⁹ Apparently Lincoln also believed that Schurz and the German-American vote had been critical in his election. On February 10, 1861 Schurz "spent the whole afternoon and a part of the evening" with Lincoln.¹⁰ In the meeting Lincoln stopped their conversation and said, "I will give you a mark of confidence which I have given no other man."¹¹ The President then privileged Schurz with an exclusive and private reading of his newly drafted inaugural address. This was a clear and deliberate display of confidence and friendship toward the man believed to be a powerful and influential ally within the German-American community.

Following the election, Schurz began pursuing a position of prominence within the Administration. Lincoln's willingness to please Schurz's command requests further demonstrated his belief in his new friend's power and influence. In his reminiscences Schurz wrote that "immediately after the election, it seemed to be generally taken for granted that the new administration would, as a matter of course, give me some prominent place."¹² Just prior to the war's outbreak, Lincoln nominated Schurz as minister to Spain. After Fort Sumter, Schurz initially desired to resign his appointment and serve the country in the military. However, in a private meeting Lincoln convinced Schurz to hold on to his diplomatic position, suggesting that the war could be over quickly. Nevertheless, Lincoln satiated Schurz's request by allowing him to raise several German cavalry regiments in New York prior to his departure for Madrid. Lincoln supported Schurz in this despite the misgivings of general-in-chief, Winfield Scott, who believed cavalry would be useless in his Anaconda

plan.¹⁹ However, when the cavalry units elected Schurz as their brigadier general it appeared that Schurz would indeed become a commander. On May 13, 1861 Lincoln sent the following memorandum to Secretary of War Simon Cameron: "four German regiments already raised in New-York, wish to form a Brigade, and have Carl Schurz for their Brigadier General. Why should it not be done at once."¹⁴ On the same day, Lincoln sent Schurz the following message: "Get the german brigade in shape, and, at their request, you shall be Brigadier General."¹⁵ However, tension between Spain and the United States over the reannexation of Santo Domingo necessitated the departure of the newly appointed diplomat, and Schurz's nomination was cancelled.¹⁶ Schurz felt somewhat disappointed at having to leave his country in "that critical period," but he felt it his duty to obey his orders.¹⁷ It is important to understand that Lincoln had supported Schurz in his initial request for a generalship. It is likely that if Schurz had fervently protested his diplomatic position, Lincoln would have been readily willing to confirm his appointment as a general.

After seven months in Madrid, Schurz returned to the United States on leave in January 1862. Following an appearance at a New York antislavery rally in March, Schurz visited Lincoln in Washington to request a military appointment. According to Schurz's memoirs, Lincoln first expressed his satisfaction regarding Schurz's work for emancipation and then in response to his request said, "I shall send your name to the Senate with the next batch of brigadiers, and I trust we can find you a suitable command."¹⁸ In May, Schurz was given a division consisting primarily of German regiments in General John C. Fremont's Mountain Department, located in the

Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

In his memoirs Schurz would later claim that "All the great campaigns of modern times had become quite familiar to me from tactical as well as a strategical point of view, and as, in addition, I knew from experience how I would feel under fire."¹⁹ However, in reality Schurz had no military experience or any preparation to command an army division. Lincoln undoubtedly realized this, but he felt that Schurz's supposed political power merited a military appointment. By appointing Schurz as a brigadier, Lincoln gambled that Schurz's ignorance of the military would not prove too costly on the battlefield.

As a brigadier and major general, Schurz commanded troops in four major battles during the war: Second Bull Run (August 30, 1862), Chancellorsville (May 1-4, 1863), Gettysburg (July 1-3, 1863), and Chattanooga (November 23-25, 1863). The quality of Schurz's performance in these campaigns has always been debated. There seem to be two camps in this controversy: those who accept Schurz's self-glorifying memoirs, and those who believe the generals and superior officers who fought along side him. Modern historians generally agree with Schurz's biographer, Hans Trefousse, who writes that Schurz was a "competent officer who had risen too high too fast," and that he had been "unable to establish satisfactory relations with his superiors."²⁰ A discussion of the highlights of Schurz's military career will illustrate this assessment and demonstrate the continuous and unwavering nature of Lincoln's support for Schurz, one of his political generals.

While commanding a division in General Franz Sigel's corps in

General John Pope's Army of Virginia, Schurz experienced his first major battle at Second Bull Run. Although the battle was a Union disaster, Schurz and his troops fought bravely against Confederate General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's corps. In his official report following the defeat, Pope praised Schurz in "high terms."²¹ The New York Tribune reported that Schurz led "his division in the hottest fight with heroic courage and veteran skill."²² Following the battle, Sigel's corps was assigned to the defense of Washington.

From his new location in Fairfax, Virginia, Schurz frequently wrote or visited Lincoln in Washington, discussing politics and often criticizing the administration. In a letter to Lincoln on November 8, 1862, Schurz referred to the Republican's losses in the recent fall congressional elections. He wrote that "The defeat of the Administration is the Administration's own fault."²³ Schurz arrogantly questioned Lincoln's choice of military leaders, suggesting that he choose "generals whose heart is [sic] in the war."²⁴ In a letter sent twelve days later, Schurz suggested that by giving commands to Democrats such as McClellan, Buell and Halleck, Lincoln had placed the management of the war in the hands of his opponents. Schurz knew that his radical Republican beliefs were well known to the President. By essentially drawing a comparison between himself and the unsympathetic Democratic generals, Schurz attempted to promote his own generalship in the mind of Lincoln. Replying to Schurz's letters, Lincoln strongly defended his own policies but was careful not to offend his German general.²⁵ In a personal meeting following their letter debate, Lincoln reassured Schurz of their friendship, saying "I know that you are a warm anti-slavery man and a

good friend to me."26 Lincoln's kind treatment illustrates his continued belief in Schurz's political importance. In early January 1863, Schurz requested a promotion to major general. Lincoln immediately sent the proposal to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, declaring "while so much may seem rather large, any thing less is too small. I think it better be done."27 Schurz received Senate confirmation for his promotion on March 14, 1863.

Schurz's military reputation was tarnished at the battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863. As a part of the Army of the Potomac under General Joseph Hooker, Schurz's Third division formed a portion of the Union forces' right wing during the battle. Unfortunately, Confederate generals Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson chose this wing as the target for their brilliant turning maneuver and surprise attack. In his memoirs, Schurz asserts that he sensed impending danger prior to the attack and made vain attempts to alert his corps commander, General Oliver Howard. Other testimony, as well as the fact that two of Schurz's regiments changed front before the assault, seem to corroborate his story.28 Nevertheless, this does not explain why Schurz never thought to warn his troops of the danger. Schurz's men were playing cards and performing household chores when Jackson's forces struck them late in the afternoon of May 1, 1863. The attack quickly turned into a complete rout and a sound defeat for the North.

Following the loss, newspapers were highly critical of Schurz and his troops. On May 5, the New York Times reported that "the division of General Schurz, which was the first assailed, almost instantly gave way...Thousands of those cowards threw down their guns and soon stampeded."29 Many other newspapers gave similar accounts. Schurz

felt disturbed and insulted by these accusations of cowardice and he asked for a hearing before Congress's Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. The War Department refused and the controversy surrounding the incident still lingers. However, while Schurz's superior officers, Howard and Hooker, both performed incompetently at Chancellorsville, it seems that Schurz cannot be relieved from all responsibility for the rout.

At Gettysburg, Schurz hoped to retrieve his military reputation, but unfortunately his division again came under suspicion. Schurz's Third division remained part of Howard's Eleventh Corps in General George G. Meade's Army of the Potomac. The Eleventh arrived in Gettysburg on July 1, 1863 and took a position north of the town facing General A.P. Hill's Confederate troops. Later that afternoon the Rebels attacked, forcing Schurz and his corps to retreat frantically through the streets of Gettysburg. During July 1-2, Schurz and his troops merely watched the battle from their new position on Cemetery hill. They witnessed the failure of Pickett's charge on July 3 and rejoiced in the Union's apparent victory. In the battle Schurz had performed reasonably well, energetically rallying his men and attempting to stop their retreat.³⁰ However, rumours quickly spread that the "Dutch" had fled again as they had at Chancellorsville. The German troops had become a convenient scapegoat for the disaster of the first day's retreat. In reality, however, Schurz and his men should not have been so heavily criticized. More blame should have been given to General Howard, who on July 1 had incorrectly positioned several brigades, creating a gap in the Union front and giving the Confederates an advantageous point

of attack.³¹

Unfortunately, Schurz's troubles were not over, as he would meet with more controversy during the Chattanooga campaign. Although Schurz's division stood in reserve during most of the battle of Chattanooga, his abilities were again questioned following an incident with General Joseph Hooker. On October 29, 1863, Hooker ordered Schurz to march to the aid of General John W. Geary, who was under attack. However, according to Schurz, Hooker's aide, Lieutenant Oliver delivered another order soon after, requesting that he take a nearby hill. Schurz complied with this order, halting his march toward Geary. Later, Hooker was angry that Schurz had not followed his original order. In his Wauhatchie report of the battle, Hooker reported: "The brigade dispatched to the relief of General Geary, by orders delivered in person to its division commander, never reached him until long after the fight had ended. It is alleged that it lost its way, when it had a terrific infantry fire to guide it all the way, and also that it became involved in a swamp where there was no swamp or other obstacle between it and Geary which should have delayed it a moment in marching to the relief of its imperiled companions."³² A military court requested by Schurz fully exonerated him from the report's allegations.³³

Schurz realized he could not remain in command under Hooker and rather than seek a different assignment he sought a leave from the army to serve Lincoln in the upcoming election. In a letter to Lincoln on February 29, 1864, Schurz, referring to his military court, wrote, "If you have been informed of what happened there, you will already have come to the conclusion that it is impossible for me

to continue in my command." Schurz suggested that "an arrangement might perhaps be made which might render it possible for me to take an active part in the presidential canvass."³⁴ Lincoln replied, "With my appreciation of your ability, and correct principle, of course I would be very glad to have your service for the country in the approaching political canvass." However, he warned Schurz that "if you wish to remain in the military service, it is very dangerous for you to get temporarily out of it; because, with a Major General once out, it is next to impossible for even the President to get him in again."³⁵ In his response, Lincoln attempted to protect Schurz's command, thus once again displaying his willingness to please his German general. From his reply it seems clear that Lincoln either ignored or did not believe the rumors of Schurz's incompetence. With complete trust and faith, Lincoln had given Schurz the liberty to decide his own future.

When the Eleventh Corps was consolidated into a new Twentieth Corps under Joseph Hooker, Schurz's command came to an end. In a letter to General William T. Sherman, General George Thomas, commander of The Army of the Cumberland, wrote, "If you have sufficient major-generals to dispense with Schurz, I would recommend he be relieved from duty with this army. He is neither agreeable to General Hooker nor to General Howard."³⁶ Sherman obliged Thomas, removing Schurz and assigning him to command an instruction camp in Nashville, Tennessee. Schurz readily accepted his new post, viewing it as an opportunity to spend more time in the political arena.

On August 9, 1864, Lincoln called Schurz to Washington for a private conference. In the meeting Lincoln tactfully offered Schurz

a command in General William Rosecrans' inactive department. Schurz declined but agreed to deliver a series of campaign speeches for the administration - - with the understanding that after the election he would return to the army.³⁷ During the next two months Schurz gave many speeches throughout the North. However, in his memoirs he humbly and correctly admitted that following Sherman's capture of Atlanta, "the presidential campaign of 1864 seemed to run itself," and that his "superfluous" speeches contributed little to Lincoln's victory.³⁸

Following the campaign, Schurz, with Lincoln's continued assistance, attempted to secure another command, but as the President had warned there were none available. After making a rather unsuccessful effort to raise a corps of veteran recruits for General Grant, Schurz joined the Army of Georgia as General Henry Slocum's chief of staff. After General Sherman accepted the surrender of General Joseph E. Johnston's army, Schurz resigned his commission and resumed his civilian career.

It is difficult to make a conclusive judgment regarding the quality of Schurz's military career. Records of the events at Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Chattanooga often oppose each other, forcing the historian to base his conclusions on who he trusts or believes most - - Schurz, or the Generals who opposed him. However, it can be said that while Schurz was not an incompetent general, neither was he outstanding. Schurz clearly had difficulty working with his superiors, especially Howard and Hooker, and he lost the respect of other important figures because of it. Following the first day at Gettysburg, Schurz and his troops saw little action for the remainder of the war, perhaps a sign that those in command lacked

confidence in Schurz's abilities. George Thomas and William T. Sherman, two of the war's most successful and revered generals, held Schurz in low regard and immediately removed him from their army. Although the rumors of the German general and his fleeing "Dutchmen" may have been false and based on ethnocentrism, the crucial point is that they were believed by many superior officers and that this belief crippled Schurz's ability to be an effective officer. Lincoln, on the other hand, ignored the rumors and continued to support Schurz, firmly convinced that he had been, and remained, the key to German-American support. However, recent studies regarding the German-American electorate suggest that Lincoln overestimated Schurz's influence within his community.

Lincoln and the Republicans did not comprehend the divisions within the German-American community, nor did they fully understand the factors that motivated Germans to support or oppose their administration. Without this knowledge, they could not realize the extent of Schurz's ineffectiveness. New studies of the 1860 election results reveal patterns that Civil War contemporaries never considered. Most important perhaps was the influence of religion. German Catholics had traditionally voted Democratic while Lutherans had voted Republican. Considering the anticlerical and atheistic beliefs embodied in groups such as the Freethinkers, and the fact that as a Forty-eighter Schurz was associated with these groups, it is likely that religiously oriented voters shyed away from Schurz and his Republican party. In fact, the majority of rural German Catholics, and many Lutherans, remained loyal to the Democrats in 1860.³⁹ The slavery issue may have also alienated many German

voters. By portraying the Negro as a serious economic rival, the Democrats appealed to average German workers who feared that unemployment would result from emancipation.⁴⁰ Schurz's radical views toward slavery may have tainted him and his party in the mind of these voters. Schurz's background and campaign technique may have also been unappealing to the average "Dutchman." In the Cincinnati Gazette a German farmer gave his opinion of campaigners like Carl Schurz. He explained: "We Germans, west, east, and everywhere in the United States need no orators to induce us to vote...We don't care to hear a man who does not follow anything else than stump speaking like any other trade. We know such men; their talk is nonsense." ⁴¹ To the average German-American, Schurz's intelligence and high ideals were suspicious and difficult to identify with.⁴² Despite Schurz's magnificent oratorical skills, the Germans definitely did not follow him "like children."⁴³

In conclusion, there is no real evidence to support Schurz's grandiose boasts of power and influence. While many Germans did support Lincoln, their votes cannot be automatically credited to Schurz. He was not the ideal political tool that Lincoln believed him to be. Therefore, the President's concession to Schurz's command requests was an investment that yielded little political return. However, regardless of these conclusions, Schurz's reputation required that Lincoln treat him with respect. Had Lincoln insulted Schurz or removed him from command without excellent reason, the results could have been disastrous. Within the German-American community, Lincoln's actions would likely have been considered nativist, even among those who had not supported Schurz. The

repercussions of such an action can only be hypothesized, but they certainly would not have been positive. Even though Schurz failed to deliver the political support Lincoln desired, he performed decently on the battlefield and therefore did not adversely affect the Union's war effort.

Unfortunately, Franz Sigel, Lincoln's other prominent German-American general, did jeopardize the Union's military campaign. Sigel received a military education at the Karlsruhe academy and during the 1848 revolution he served as a chief commander in the German Republican army. During the revolt, he and his column were beaten soundly each time they entered combat. In action Sigel demonstrated a tendency to flee frantically. After his first defeat he fled to Switzerland and after his second rout he hid inside a hotel room.⁴⁴ Despite his apparent shortcomings, Sigel became something of a military hero, achieving great prestige among his countrymen. Sigel carried much of this esteem with him when he came to America in 1852.

Prior to the war, Sigel served as a major in the New York militia, taught at the German-American institute in St. Louis, and participated in the Sauk City, Iowa Turner society. At the war's outbreak, Sigel organized a regiment of German volunteers in St. Louis. With his troops he participated as a Colonel in the successful capture of militant Rebel sympathizers at Camp Jackson on May 10, 1861 and in a skirmish at Carthage on July 5. Although these engagements were really insignificant, they made Sigel a hero among his fellow German Americans.⁴⁵ Hoping to gain the support of Sigel's idolizing followers, Lincoln appointed him as a brigadier general on

August 7, 1861.

Three days following his promotion, Sigel's poor performance at the battle of Wilson Creek contributed to the Union's defeat. In a crucial attack orchestrated by General Nathaniel Lyon, Sigel mistook a Confederate regiment for the Union's First Iowa and allowed it to approach close enough to disintegrate his lines with close range fire. Lyon was killed and Sigel was forced to withdraw from the battlefield. Despite Sigel's apparent weaknesses as a general, German-Americans continued to support him. When John C. Fremont received command of all Union forces in Missouri, the Germans were outraged that Sigel had not received the position instead.⁴⁶ German leaders in New York formed a committee and visited Lincoln to protest against Sigel's unjust treatment. Meanwhile, Sigel travelled toward Washington, gathering the support of influential Germans and congressmen along the way. Apparently realizing the extent of Sigel's popularity and support, Lincoln reportedly told the committee that their hero would be made a "General of Division."⁴⁷ Indeed, on March 3, 1862, Lincoln appointed Sigel as a major general of volunteers.

A few days later Sigel fought surprisingly well at the battle of Pea Ridge in Arkansas. His division led the final charge that broke the Rebel lines and brought the North its "most one-sided victory by an outnumbered Union army during the war."⁴⁸ However in August, Sigel again performed poorly at Second Bull Run. His incompetence and ill-advised, piecemeal attacks contributed to the Union's defeat. ⁴⁹ Although he did not participate in the December battle of Fredricksburg, Sigel temporarily received command of one of the grand divisions that had fought there. A few days later, however, he was

returned to his old corps. Infuriated, Sigel wrote Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to insist that, "Either, that I be relieved from my command, or that my resignation be accepted, as my present position and relations...are so unsatisfactory and dispiriting to me, that it would be in the highest degree unpleasant for me to continue in command of my Corps." Stanton replied that the president "has given General Sigel as good a command as he can, and desires him to do the best he can with it."⁵⁰ Unsatisfied, Sigel took leave from the army in February, 1863.

The German-American community quickly rallied in support of their idol, Sigel. The popular slogan "I fights mit Sigel" symbolized the loyalty and affection that German soldiers felt for their general. Referring to Sigel in a letter to his father, German lieutenant Henry Kircher wrote: "he can terrify the enemy, make them flee and as befits traitors, capture them just by going out into the battlefield. His shooting wagons don't even need to thunder. His soldiers will follow him even if he goes with one against a dozen...He did not teach us to know fear, only to obey him, obey him blindly and to win. Long live Siegel! [sic] And woe to him who hesitates to follow him or who places any obstacle in his modest, laboriously earned path to glory and the eternal memory of his Fatherland and the honor of its citizens."⁵¹ Intense feelings such as these were not uncommon among the German-Americans. Some even demanded that Sigel be given command of all Union forces, boasting that he would end the war in two months.⁵² Infused with such emotion, the German Americans' outcries forced Lincoln to reconsider his treatment of Sigel. The President realized that without Sigel in command he risked the alienation of

countless German soldiers and citizens. Desiring to maintain their military support and perhaps hoping for a strong Dutch vote in the upcoming presidential election, Lincoln honored the German committee's request of February 12, 1864, and appointed Sigel to command the department of West Virginia.

Sigel's new command turned into a disaster for the Union. According to General Ulysses S. Grant's plan, Sigel and his army were to move up the Shenandoah Valley, cut communication and supply lines to Richmond, and prevent the Confederacy's valley army from reinforcing Lee. Meanwhile, Grant would be free to concentrate General George Meade's Army of the Potomac against the Army of Northern Virginia. However, while marching towards Staunton, a rebel supply center, Sigel and his 6,500 troops were met by General John C. Breckenridge's meager Confederate force of 5,000. In the ensuing battle of May 15, Sigel and his army were humiliated by the outnumbered Rebels and forced to retreat down the valley. In his telegraphed report of the defeat, Sigel told Washington, "Our troops were overpowered by superior numbers."⁵³ Yet those who had observed the entire Shenandoah campaign knew that Sigel was the real reason for the defeat. In his diary, Sigel's aide-de-camp, Colonel David H. Strother wrote, "The campaign was conducted miserably by Sigel. Sigel is merely a book soldier acquainted with the techniques of the art of war but having no capacity to fight with troops in the field."⁵⁴ Grant was notified of the defeat by General Henry Halleck, Chief of Staff, who telegraphed, "he is already in full retreat on Strasburg. If you expect anything from him you will be mistaken. He will do nothing but run. He never did anything else."⁵⁵ Grant agreed and on

July 7, 1864 he recommended that Sigel be relieved. "All of General Sigel's operations from the beginning of the war have been so unsuccessful," Grant telegraphed Halleck, "I think it advisable to relieve him from all duty".⁵⁶ Sigel was indeed soon removed from field command and replaced by General David Hunter. Sigel resigned his commission on May 4, 1865.

Although the battle of New Market involved relatively small armies and was only a small tactical victory for the south, its results had a far reaching impact on the war in Virginia. Sigel's failure allowed the Confederates access to the Valley and its supplies for three more weeks, enough time to begin the harvest of wheat crops that Lee needed for his army.⁵⁷ Most importantly, the defeat allowed Breckenridge to reinforce Lee before the June battle of Cold Harbor. At Cold Harbor, Breckenridge's brigades helped repulse some of the heaviest infantry assaults ever made by Grant.⁵⁸ One of Sigel's officers believed that it was "within bounds to say that it made a difference to General Grant...of over twenty thousand men" - - the soldiers lost in the battle, the men lost fighting Breckenridge's reinforcements, and the troops used to escort Hunter to the Shenandoah as a replacement.⁵⁹

Lincoln allowed German-American politics to unduly influence his decisions regarding Franz Sigel's command and the consequences were disastrous. With Sigel's promotions, Lincoln hoped to placate the passionate outcries of the German community and secure its loyalty to the administration. Unfortunately, in doing so, the President ignored Sigel's military history. Lincoln should have made some attempt at appeasement without granting Sigel such an important

position in the Shenandoah. However, early in 1864 the German-Americans demanded no less for their hero and Lincoln could never have predicted that Sigel would fall so abjectly. Although Franz Sigel's generalship helped perpetuate German-American support for the war, the military repercussions of his command overwhelmed any political benefits. Such was Sigel's failure that generals Grant and Halleck risked the political consequences and removed him from his military post.

The Democrats

The generalships of prominent Democrats further illustrate Lincoln's tendency to overestimate and overindulge his political appointees. In 1861, Lincoln governed a Union that was politically divided between Democrats and Republicans. While Lincoln had won the 1860 presidential race, the election results hardly indicated a Northern consensus in support of the Republican from Illinois. Although the split of the Democratic ticket between John C. Breckenridge and Stephen Douglas virtually insured Lincoln the electoral majority, the Democrats secured much of the Northern popular vote. In the free states, Lincoln collected approximately 1,839,205 popular votes or 53.9 percent, while the Democrats secured 1,379,578 votes or 40.4 percent.¹ During the troubled war years, Lincoln would need the support of Democrats who had voted against him.

After the bombardment and surrender of Fort Sumter, Democrats, Benjamin F. Butler of Massachusetts, Daniel Edgar Sickles of New

York, John Alexander McClernand of Illinois, and John Alexander Logan of Illinois each set party differences aside and directed their efforts and loyalty toward reunification. They espoused the preservation of the Union and energetically supported Lincoln's initial war efforts. Lincoln hoped that these prominent politicians would serve as examples to inspire other Democrats to support his administration. Seeking to encourage their loyalty and harness their political power, Lincoln appointed the the four Democrats as generals, gambling, as in the case of Schurz and Sigel, that the benefits of their political influence would outweigh any military shortcomings. Indeed, to Lincoln these appointees were, in varying degrees, politically beneficial, however, as with the Germans, the President tended to allow political considerations to cloud his military judgment. Lincoln misjudged the limits of McClernand and Butler's command abilities. Fortunately, General Grant removed McClernand from action before he could do too much damage. However Butler was given too much military power and the results were clearly damaging to the Union war effort. Sickles on the other hand performed adequately on the battlefield but offered little political support. Lincoln's most successful political general was Logan, who became an outstanding commander and a valuable political ally.

Benjamin Butler was perhaps Lincoln's most prominent political general. Following his graduation from Maine's Colby College in 1838, Butler established a successful criminal law practice in Lowell, Massachusetts and soon gravitated into politics. Disliking the aristocracy associated with the Whig party, Butler was attracted

to the Democratic party because of its appeal to the lower classes and its policy of reform. Beginning in 1840, Butler campaigned vigorously for Democratic presidential nominees, soon becoming well known in New England. In 1853 he was elected to the Massachusetts house of representatives, and in 1859 he became a representative in the state senate. Between his terms, Butler was elected general by a brigade of the Jackson Volunteers, an Irish militia company. 2

During his terms in office, Butler established a strong reputation as a Democrat. Referring to the Massachusetts legislature, the Newburyport Daily Herald reported, "The leading mind and the leading man - - the one rising far above all the others, in each house, was a Democrat. General Butler of the Senate, possessed of more intellectual power, cultivation and perception than any of his associates, stood out in bold relief and rendered the State much service."3 Butler's party prominence resulted in his nomination for governor in 1859, which race he lost to the Republicans, and selection as a delegate to the 1860 Democratic convention. At the convention, Butler sought to minimize the slavery issue and nominate a candidate who, by appealing to both the North and South, would preserve the union. When he realized the South would not support Stephen Douglas, Butler bolted the convention and joined the "ultra" Democrats, who supported John C. Breckenridge. Most Breckenridge Democrats were Southerners who advocated an extreme state's rights policy and a federal slave code. Although Butler did not strongly agree with these ideas, he believed that the southern nominee offered the Democrats' only chance to defeat Lincoln and the Republicans.4

Following the outbreak of the war, Butler combined his status

as an "ultra" Democrat with his patriotism and dedication to the union to become a valuable asset for the new President.⁵ Through Butler, Lincoln sought the support of his most dedicated opponents, the "ultra" Democrats. Immediately following the surrender of Fort Sumter, Butler publicly pledged his support to the Administration and the Union and declared that those who withheld their support were traitors.⁶ Recognizing the importance of Butler as an example to the Democrats, John A. Andrew, Republican governor of Massachusetts appointed him commander of the state militia following Lincoln's first call for volunteers on April 15, 1861.

Butler and his Eighth Massachusetts Regiment immediately began journeying toward Washington D.C., which at the time was virtually defenseless against the threat of the surrounding slave states. Travelling on foot and by train, Butler expertly negotiated his troops through Maryland, where secessionist sympathies ran strongly, and, arriving in Washington D.C. on April 25, they became the first Union force to reach the capitol. Butler and his troops were hailed as saviors of their country.⁷ On April 27, Butler was assigned to command the Department of Annapolis, an ideal command for a general with civilian rather than military experience.⁸ Granted blanket authority to counteract any secessionist moves in Maryland, Butler responded by seizing Baltimore, a city filled with Confederate sympathizers.⁸ Lieutenant General Winfield Scott criticized Butler's actions as hazardous and rash. However, the public and press of the North considered the seizure of Baltimore a major victory and hailed Butler as the "First Hero of the War."⁹ Responding to a serenade outside his Washington hotel, Butler accentuated his

dedication to the Union. "The Union must be preserved at all hazard of money, and if need be, of every life this side the arctic regions," he exclaimed to the crowd, "Our faces are set south, and there shall be no footstep backward."¹⁰ Caught between the public's idolization and Scott's demands that Butler be reprimanded, Lincoln removed Butler from the Department of Annapolis but granted him a promotion to major general in command of Fortress Monroe.¹¹ Despite Scott's misgivings, Lincoln realized Butler's popularity and desiring the Democrats' support, felt that he could not risk rebuking the North's new hero. However, Butler felt that his new command was a demotion and that he had been "disgraced" by the administration.¹² In a letter to Secretary of War Simon Cameron, Butler threatened to resign. Further demonstrating his desire to please the Democrat, Lincoln appeased Butler by giving him command of the Department of Virginia and North Carolina.

Butler's command was characterized by administrative excellence and military mediocrity. The Major General improved the fort's plumbing system, constructed a railway connecting the fort and the wharf, and put up telegraph lines.¹³ Most importantly perhaps was his application of the term "contraband of war" to slaves of Southern masters who fled into Union lines.¹⁴ Many radical Republicans were overjoyed with Butler, believing that his new term was the inauguration of the abolition of slavery.¹⁵ The press praised Butler's policy and Lincoln endorsed it. Militarily, however, Butler saw little action, and when he did he performed poorly. Butler lacked enough troops and supplies to mount any serious campaigns, perhaps an indication that the Administration realized his military shortcomings

and was attempting to prevent disaster. However, in an attempt to capture a Confederate stronghold at Big Bethel, Virginia, Butler and 3,500 of his troops were routed by 1,400 Rebel defenders. Following the defeat Lincoln received a letter from Republican Major General Edwin D. Morgan, who suggested that at Fortress Monroe "the duty of disciplining undrilled troops could be most safely committed to an experienced army officer."¹⁶ Receiving similar advice from General Scott, Lincoln removed Butler on August 7, 1861, replacing him with General John E. Wool. Although upset at his removal, Butler accepted the command of a small force in an expedition against Cape Hatteras. Lincoln was wise to listen to his advisors, who were better judges of military capability. Thus far, Lincoln had handled Butler's political generalship ideally. The President had been able to please the general and preserve his support for the administration while limiting his potential for military disaster.

Lincoln continued to handle Butler appropriately, granting him duties that suited his administrative capabilities and carried minimal military risk. The expedition of August 28 against Cape Hatteras was a success, but the victory belonged to the Navy. Butler's only role was in formalizing the surrender of the Confederate forces and forts. Despite his limited role in the campaign, Butler received great adulation for his participation therein.¹⁷ He travelled to Washington D.C. where he was warmly congratulated by the President.¹⁸ In their meeting, Butler expressed his belief that the army was dominated by Republicans. "I find all the good men of your army are Republicans," he declared, warning that "there are no Democrats as privates or subordinate

officers going into the war." Butler suggested to Lincoln that he "Get leading Democrats and they will bring in their rank and file, their clientele, who believe in them and would rally about them." Butler then offered his own services as a Democrat. He suggested, "Give me the authority and the money to organize and pay the troops with, and I will go to New England and enlist six to ten thousand men. I will have every officer a Democrat... I will have four fifths of every regiment good, true Democrats."¹⁹ In the offer, Lincoln realized benefits from his careful treatment of Butler's political generalship. Butler's recruiting mission was a success as he managed to recruit regiments in virtually every New England state.²⁰ Butler's generalship had proved so far to be an excellent gamble.

Following the recruitment mission, Lincoln assigned Butler to Ship Island, located off the coast of Mississippi, and far from the crucial military theaters. Arriving on March 20, 1862, Butler began to prepare for the army's and navy's combined operation against New Orleans. The capture of New Orleans was critical to the control of the Mississippi River and to the success of the Union's blockade. As in the Cape Hatteras expedition, the fall of New Orleans on April 29 resulted primarily from the navy's successful bombardment and destruction of Confederate fortifications. Butler and his troops experienced no real combat but their presence insured the full capitulation of the garrison. For the next seven months, Butler served as the military governor of New Orleans, a position for which he was ideally suited. Although his regimen was controversial it proved a definite success. Butler was sometimes criticized for his harsh treatment of Confederate loyalists and he was accused of lining

his own pockets with stolen goods.²¹ However, Butler rescued the city from starvation by reopening rail lines and waterways, cleaned up the filthy sewer system, and used quarantines to protect the city from yellow fever. Most importantly, with a small military force, Butler prevented any major uprisings within the rebellious city. The radical Republicans were especially appreciative of Butler's iron-fisted rule.²² During his command Butler participated in few military activities. The administration again seemed reluctant to provide Butler with sufficient troops to attempt any serious campaigns.

On November 8, 1862 Lincoln removed Butler from command in New Orleans, replacing him with Republican Nathaniel P. Banks. While the reasons for his dismissal are unclear, it is probable that Lincoln felt that as a Democrat, Butler was not the right man to administer the emancipation proclamation, which would go into effect on the New Year.²³ In addition, Lincoln continued to be warned about Butler's inadequacies. In a September letter to the President, Butler's Quartermaster, John W. Shaffer wrote, "Genl Butler is not much of a soldier, and needs to be surrounded with good officers. And at present with the exception of Lieut Weitzell he has not near him an officer who is competent to advise him in Military Matters."²⁴ It is important to note that Lincoln waited until after the fall elections to dismiss Butler. Lincoln did not want to risk losing the support of Butler's Democratic following or of his growing group of radical Republican friends. The President definitely desired to preserve Butler's loyalty. Lincoln met with the major general immediately after he arrived in Washington and offered him a command in the Mississippi Valley. According to Butler's recollection, Lincoln

praised the General, saying, "I have seen no reason to change my opinion of you which, from the beginning, has been of the highest character, as you know. Now, I want to give you a command quite equal in extent and importance to the one which you won for yourself at New Orleans."²⁵ Butler refused the offer and started toward his home in Lowell, Massachusetts.

Along the way, cheering crowds greeted Butler at every stop. Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy, had declared Butler an outlaw for his behavior in New Orleans, and the people of the North loved it. They glorified Butler as the only general who had made the Confederacy wince and who had frightened the hated Southern aristocracy.²⁶ State legislatures passed votes of thanks for the hero of New Orleans and huge receptions were held in Butler's honor in Lowell and Boston. Simon Cameron and a group of Republican congressmen appealed personally to Lincoln, protesting Butler's dismissal. Butler capitalized on his heightened popularity by delivering patriotic speeches throughout the North, all the while continuing to press Lincoln for an acceptable command.²⁷

The beleaguered president realized he could not push Butler and his feverish supporters aside. Throughout January 1863 Lincoln debated the specifics of Butler's future. The President even considered returning Butler to New Orleans to command General Banks. However, perhaps still doubtful of Butler's military abilities, Lincoln seemed reluctant to grant him an important command. Throughout the year Butler's popularity continued to grow, encouraged by the printing of a promotional biography entitled General Butler in New Orleans.²⁸ Responding to Butler's surging fame, Lincoln strategically announced

Butler's new position on November 3, the day before the 1863 elections. The major general was given his old command in the Department of Virginia and North Carolina. However, since 1861, the department had been expanded and now included areas that would soon become central to the Union war effort. For the first time, Butler had been given a command in which the probability of consequential military action ran high. As he had with Franz Sigel, Lincoln had allowed Butler's enormous popularity and political power to cloud his judgment. The President had resisted the appointment but in the end he succumbed to the pressure of maintaining the allegiance of Butler and his supporters.

Butler's new command began safely but ended with a near disaster for the Union war effort. The major gGeneral spent the first few months administrating Fortress Monroe and negotiating with the Confederates for the exchange of prisoners - - duties that suited his capabilities. Lincoln approved of Butler's performance and on February 26, 1864 he issued a memorandum that stated, "Genl Butler has my confidence in his ability and fidelity to the country and to me and I wish him sustained in all his efforts in our great common cause."²⁹ With this stamp of approval, Butler began planning a campaign with General Ulysses S. Grant. Butler would coordinate his Army of the James, which numbered 30,000 men, with General Meade's Army of the Potomac (to which Grant attached himself) in the region surrounding Richmond and Petersburg, Virginia. Grant was to move south against General Robert E. Lee while Butler secured the fortifications at City Point on the James river. From there, Butler was to move along the south bank of the river, past Bermuda Hundred,

to a point near Richmond, where he would meet up with Grant and surround the Confederate capital. If nothing else, Butler was to tie down Confederate forces that otherwise might join Lee and threaten or cut the railroad lines that supplied Richmond.

The operation began on May 4, 1864. Three days later Butler successfully reached Bermuda Hundred without any contact with the enemy. From his position Butler had a great opportunity to bring defeat to the Confederacy. Located only eight miles to the southwest, the important rail junction of Petersburg was virtually defenseless, protected by only a few thousand Rebels. Twelve miles to the north lay Richmond, which also lacked adequate protection.³⁰ Butler and his army could have marched into either of these cities. However, for several crucial days Butler hesitated, constructing fortifications, destroying railroad track, and arguing with his subordinates over where to attack first. When Butler finally decided to move against Petersburg it was too late. The Confederates had assembled an army under General Pierre Beauregard to match Butler's force. The Army of the James retreated to the protection of Bermuda Hundred. In the words of General Grant, Butler's army "was as completely shut off from further operations against Richmond as if it had been in a bottle strongly corked."³¹ Butler's miserable failure had drastic repercussions for the Union war effort.

Had the Army of the James been properly managed, it likely could have taken Petersburg and perhaps even Richmond, thus saving the Union months of combat and thousands of lives. Without the threat of Butler's army from the east, Lee was able to concentrate his forces against Grant. Ultimately, Grant faced the Army of Northern Virginia

head on, without any hope of assistance from the east.³² In the costly battles of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor Grant attempted to move in between Richmond and Lee's army. In June Grant finally pinned Lee down outside of Petersburg and began a ten-month siege. In the four months that followed Butler's failure at Bermuda Hundred, the Union army suffered 100,000 casualties. While General Butler surely cannot be blamed entirely for this tragedy, it appears obvious that had he performed adequately in his command many of the Union's losses in 1864 could have been avoided.

Despite his failure Butler was not immediately removed from command. With the upcoming presidential election, Lincoln believed it was important to continue pleasing the politically powerful General. Nevertheless, on July 1, Grant sent a letter to General Henry Halleck expressing his concern over Butler. He wrote, "Whilst I have no difficulty with Gen. Butler, finding him always clear in his conception of orders, and prompt to obey, yet there is a want of knowledge how to execute."³³ On July 6, Grant issued an order that dismissed Butler and replaced him with General William F. Smith. However, after a meeting with the major general on July 9, Grant reversed the order, thus preserving Butler's command. While the reasons behind Grant's reversal can only be speculated, it is likely that they were purely political. Lincoln undoubtedly believed it would be politically risky to remove his supposed ally prior to the 1864 election. Had he been removed, Butler might have been tempted to join the radical Republicans or simply rebuke Lincoln and persuade his political friends to vote against the incumbent. However, secure in his command, Butler publicly endorsed Lincoln's candidacy

following the nominating convention in August 1864.³⁴ Lincoln's generous treatment of Butler's generalship had produced political benefits that helped insure his reelection.

After the election, Butler's military career came to a rapid close. Butler was permanently removed from command on January 7, 1865, following a botched attempt to take Fort Fisher, located near the port of Wilmington, North Carolina. With Lincoln's reelection, Butler's political importance had all but disappeared. The President no longer needed to appease the major general and his political allies. With his judgment no longer influenced by political considerations, Lincoln finally removed the militarily inadequate Butler.

For the first three years of the war, Lincoln's use of Benjamin Butler as a political general was a rewarding success. The President was able to please the Democratic general and secure his political loyalty while granting him only administrative commands that matched his abilities. However, in the spring of 1864, at the peak of Butler's popularity, Lincoln allowed his concern for political support unduly to influence his command decisions. Despite his military inexperience, Butler received an important appointment in the crucial eastern theater. Lincoln could have appeased the General by offering him the less important command in the Mississippi Valley, which, by November 1863, Butler was willing to accept.³⁷ Although Lincoln received Butler's support in the 1864 presidential election, the military consequences of the blunder at Bermuda Hundred overwhelmed the importance of any political benefits.

Daniel Edgar Sickles, a New York Democrat, contributed both

politically and militarily to the Union war effort.

From 1857 to 1861 Sickles served as a prominent Democratic representative in Congress. However, in 1859 Sickles shot and killed his wife's lover in Washington D.C.. Edwin M. Stanton, subsequently Lincoln's Secretary of War, successfully defended Sickles in the ensuing trial. Nevertheless, the accusation and rumours that he had consorted with prostitutes stifled Sickles's political career. His popularity reached a new low when he reconciled with his wife, whom the public considered a harlot. For the remainder of his term Sickles exercised little influence in House matters, took little part in debates and was virtually ostracized by his congressional colleagues.³⁸ Sickles stood alone, yet he continued to voice his opinion regarding the events of 1860-1861. Like many so-called Peace Democrats, Sickles initially defended the South's right to secede. However, insulted by the South Carolina's rebellious violence at Fort Sumter, Sickles quickly changed his attitude. In mid January, 1861, South Carolina artillery fired on the U.S. vessel Star of the West as it attempted to reinforce and supply the fort. Following the event, Sickles declared in the House, "When sovereign states by their own deliberate acts, make war, they must not cry peace...when the flag of the Union is insulted...then the loyal and patriotic population of that Imperial city [New York] are unanimous for the Union."³⁹ Sickles displayed the patriotic fever that Lincoln savored, especially among Democrats. After the outbreak of the war and the President's first call for troops, Sickles, and his friend Captain William Wiley raised the New York Excelsior Brigade, composed of five regiments and over 3,000 men.⁴⁰ Despite his complete lack of military experience,

Sickles received an appointment as a brigadier general in May 1861 and was posted to a camp just outside the capital.

The Senate rejected Sickles's appointment on March 20, 1862, a clear display of their dislike and lack of support for the former congressman. However, Sickles's old defender and close personal friend, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton supported the rejected New Yorker and recommended to Lincoln that he be reinstated. The Senate narrowly confirmed Sickles's second nomination by a vote of 19-18, hardly a show of confidence. In addition to rewarding Sickles for his effort in raising the Excelsior Brigade, Lincoln appointed the New Yorker in the hope that he would stimulate support among Democrats. Yet the Senate's initial rejection and subsequent narrow confirmation indicated that Sickles had few political allies, the senators had yet to forget the scandal of 1859.⁴¹ Therefore, Lincoln had appointed a political general who was essentially politically impotent. However, Sickles's performance on the battlefield earned him renewed respect from the people of the North and by the election of 1864, Sickles's popularity had enabled him to contribute politically to Lincoln's administration.

As a general, Sickles participated in three major battles: Fair Oaks (May 31, 1862), Chancellorsville (May 5-6, 1863) and Gettysburg (July 1-3, 1863). At Fair Oaks, Sickles commanded the Second Brigade in General Joseph Hooker's division of the third army corps. Part of General George B. McClellan's indecisive Peninsular campaign, the battle was essentially a draw, although the Confederacy suffered a greater casualty rate. In his command debut, Sickles performed admirably. The New York Times reported, "Gen. Sickles had several

narrow escapes; he was always to be found in the thickest of the fight. Had those gifted Senators who refused to confirm his nomination, but witnessed the enthusiasm of his troops when serving under him, and his military qualifications for the office, they would do penance until reelected."⁴² With his military success, Sickles regained much of the public support that he had lost in 1859. Granted a leave following the battle, Sickles returned to New York in order to recruit soldiers for his depleted brigade.

In his successful recruiting drive, Sickles preached patriotism and loyalty to Lincoln throughout New York. To an audience at the Produce Exchange in New York City, Sickles proclaimed, "Every man...can put implicit reliance in the good faith, the integrity, the intelligence, the patriotism, and the nerve of Abraham Lincoln...I did not vote for him, but I will fight under his orders, and I will trust him everywhere, and pray for him night and day."⁴³ Sickles's popularity was replenished and he was met by cheering crowds throughout the city. On November 29, 1862 Lincoln rewarded Sickles for his recruiting efforts and military performance with a promotion to major general. Sickles returned to his command just before the battle of Fredricksburg. In the December conflict, the Major General and his division were held in reserve and experienced no action.

Five months later, Sickles again performed successfully as the commander of the Third Corps at Chancellorsville. Although the battle was a terrible defeat for the Union, Sickles and his troops fought bravely and aggressively, suffering the largest percentage of corps casualties in the entire army.⁴⁴ The New York Herald reported that "General Sickles displayed that quickness of perception, that

promptness in action, and that never-falling self possession which distinguish the great commander." In its praise the newspaper went so far as to recommend that Sickles be given command of the entire Army of the Potomac.⁴⁵ Sickles's popularity continued to grow as his military successes mounted.

Sickles's greatest military performance came at the battle of Gettysburg. On the second day of combat, Sickles directly disobeyed commanding General George G. Meade's orders to place his corps along the left side of Cemetery ridge. Instead, Sickles situated his troops on another ridge located one half mile in front of Meade's designated line. Sickles firmly believed the ridge had to be secured before the Confederates took advantage of its high ground. However, Sickles's position created a gaping hole between his corps and the corps to his right and it left the important Little Round Top unprotected. Late that afternoon, Confederate General James Longstreet's corps attacked and drove Sickles and his troops back to Cemetery Ridge. The battle raged for four hours, and by the end Sickles was badly wounded and his corps was depleted by one-third.⁴⁶ However, the Yankee line held and the next day brought Pickett's charge and Union victory. Meade strongly criticized Sickles in his official report of the battle. However, it is possible that the New York general's aggressive movement saved the day for the Army of the Potomac. After the war, the esteemed General Phillip Sheridan examined the battlefield and concluded that Sickles "could have done nothing else but to move out as he did" and "if he had not done so there would have been no third day at Gettysburg, and General Meade would have been forced off his position on his left flank and would

have had to withdraw the Army."47 General Longstreet later agreed that Sickles "saved the battlefield to the Union cause."48 Sickles was awarded the Medal of Honor for his service that day. He became a national hero and his amputated leg was enshrined at the Army Medical Museum in Washington D.C..49

Sickles's wound ended his military career. However with his renewed and amplified popularity, Sickles could now act as the vigorous political ally which Lincoln had hoped he would be. Although he still considered himself a Democrat, Sickles strongly backed Lincoln for his dedication to the war and reunification. On November 1, 1864 Sickles was asked to address a rally of Democrats for Lincoln. To great cheering, Sickles proclaimed, "We know that the great mass...who desire the perpetuation of our nationality, and who are willing to make sacrifices to preserve our country...desire the re-election of Lincoln."50 It is impossible to determine exactly how many voters Sickles won over with his endorsement, if any. However, as a popular, idolized Democrat, Sickles's support could have done nothing but strengthen Lincoln's candidacy.

By November 1864, Sickles had proved to be a beneficial political general, both militarily and politically. The major general performed heroically on the battlefield and through his new popularity reclaimed respect and admiration as a political figure. However, Lincoln's initial appointment of Sickles was a poor and risky gamble that payed off only because the general turned out to be an adequate commander. In 1861, Sickles should not have been considered for a generalship. He had no military experience and the scandal of 1859 had destroyed most of his political influence and

public support. Although he raised the Excelsior Brigade, this alone did not merit such an elevated command considering his military and political weaknesses. Sickles's appointment in 1861 demonstrates Lincoln's complete and often blind dedication to recruiting the support of any and all Democrats who supported his administration. Despite the New Yorker's obvious inadequacies, Lincoln appointed Sickles because he was a patriotic, pro-Union Democrat. Essentially, Sickles became a general because he and the President shared similar political ideologies. This fact blinded Lincoln to Sickles's weaknesses and created the potential for military disaster without political benefits. Fortunately, Sickles held unbeknown military capabilities that enabled him to become a successful political general.

Two other political appointees as generals were John Alexander McClernand and John Alexander Logan, both of Illinois. From 1843 to 1851, McClernand served in Congress as a Democrat. In 1859 he won re-election and was joined in the House by Logan, also a Democrat. Their congressional districts were located in the southern portion of Illinois known as "Egypt," an area recognized for its strong dedication to the Democratic party. Economically and socially linked to the surrounding slave states, Egypt was also a Northern center of pro-Southern sentiment.⁵¹ Referring to the secession of South Carolina, the Cairo City Gazette announced, "let her in God's name go peacefully... The sympathies of our people are mainly with the south."⁵² In fact, there was a real possibility that Egypt might secede itself.⁵³ After the surrender of Fort Sumter and Lincoln's call for troops, the sentiments of the region were divided,

many advocated allegiance to the Confederacy, while others supported the preservation of the Union. Early in May 1861 Rebel sympathizers began to organize troops to fight for the South. 54 Although as compromisers, McClernand and Logan had been sympathetic toward slavery, the South, and peaceful disunion, they, like Butler and Sickles, became devoted to maintaining the Union when the Confederates opened fire on Fort Sumter. On June 18, 1861 they spoke together to a Union regiment commanded by Colonel Ulysses S. Grant, urging the men to reenlist. In his memoirs, Grant remembered the effect of their eloquent speeches. He wrote, "It breathed a loyalty and devotion to the Union which inspired my men to such a point that they would have volunteered to remain in the army as long as an enemy of the country continued to bear arms against it. They entered the United States service almost man to man."55 As Egyptian, pro-War Unionists, McClernand and Logan became tools with which Lincoln hoped to secure the support of the Democrats, especially those of southern Illinois. While both men campaigned to some extent for Lincoln and his war effort, their fortunes on the battlefield were vastly different. In their biography of Lincoln, John G. Nicolay and John Hay accurately described the military performance of the two Illinois generals. They wrote, "Logan exhibited everyday, a constantly increasing aptitude for military command and the highest soldierly qualities, not only of courage and subordination, which latter McClernand did not possess and seemed incapable of acquiring."56 A discussion of McClernand and Logan's war careers will illustrate this assessment and demonstrate the extent and value of their political contributions to their commander-in-chief.

Prior to becoming military commanders, the two Illinois representatives remained in the special session of the 37th Congress, actively supporting pro-war legislation. On July 15, 1861, McClernand, a leader among the "War Democrats," proposed a resolution that pledged any sum of money and any number of men necessary for the suppression of the rebellion. Supported by Logan, the proposal passed 121 to 55. On August 7, the day after congress adjourned, McClernand and Logan received their military assignments. Although his only experience as a soldier was a brief stint in the Blackhawk War, McClernand became a Brigadier General of the First Division of Illinois Volunteers. Logan, who served as a lieutenant in the Mexican War but saw no action, received colonelship of the Thirty-First regiment in the First brigade of McClernand's division.⁵⁸

Both men immediately began recruiting soldiers to fill their units' ranks. In his memoirs, Grant remembered that Logan's district was especially patriotic. He wrote, "His district, which had promised at first to give much trouble to the government, filled every call made upon it for troops, without resorting to the draft."⁵⁹ Indeed, even the Republican northern counties failed to fill troop quotas as quickly as those in deep southern Illinois.⁶⁰ While it is possible that Egyptians might have enlisted in Lincoln's army without encouragement, the two popular politicians could have had only a positive effect on the region. Lincoln certainly believed so. On September 17, 1861 Lincoln wrote, "Gen. McClernand, has shown great energy, and industry. He sat in Congress to the end of the session; and since then has effected certainly as much as any other

Brig: Genl. in organizing forces."61 With regard to Logan, the President surely agreed with Grant, who wrote, "Logan's popularity in this district was unbounded. He knew almost enough of the people in it by their Christian names, to form an ordinary congressional district. As he went in politics, so his district was sure to go."62 As Lincoln had hoped, McClernand and Logan helped secure the initial loyalty and support of Democratic, southern Illinois.

McClernand and Logan's military commands began with Brigadier General Grant's expedition against fortifications along the Mississippi River. As a first step to opening the river, Grant hoped to remove General Leonidas Polk's Confederate forces from Columbus, Kentucky. On November 7, 1861 Grant's 3,000 troops attacked the garrison at Belmont, Missouri, located opposite the bluffs at Columbus. They seized Belmont but were driven back by Rebel reinforcements who arrived by boat. Although neither side could claim a victory, the conflict provided valuable experience for Grant and his force. 63 Both McClernand and Logan performed well. In his report of the battle, McClernand praised his Illinois colonel for inspiring his troops and thus "largely contributing to the success of the day."64 On November 10, 1861, Lincoln wrote McClernand, "I think it is safe to say that you, and all with you have done honor to yourselves and the flag and service to the country."65 For the remainder of the fall and winter, the First Division remained encamped at Cairo, Illinois, and experienced no substantial action.

In February, Grant resumed his river campaign in Tennessee. His objectives were the keys to the Confederate defense in the west, Fort Henry on the Tennessee River and Fort Donelson on the Cumberland. On

February 6, when Union forces easily seized Fort Henry, Colonel Logan's troops among the first to enter the abandoned breastworks. Six days later, the approach began against General John B. Floyd's Confederates at Fort Donelson. On the 13th, McClernand gave the first indication of his military ineptitude. According to Grant's memoirs, McClernand "had undertaken to capture a battery of the enemy which was annoying his men. Without orders or authority he sent three regiments to make the assault. The battery was in the main line of the enemy, which was defended by his whole army present. Of course the assault was a failure, and of course the loss on our side was great for the number of men engaged."⁶⁶ On the 15th, McClernand's First Division absorbed the brunt of the Confederates' desperate attempts to break through the Union lines to escape their entrapment within the fort. McClernand's men fought gallantly until their ammunition ran out and they were forced to retreat. However, reinforcements arrived in time to drive the Rebels back into their entrenchments.⁶⁷ Bravely leading his men throughout the conflict, Colonel Logan received bullets in his shoulder and thigh. That night, Floyd surrendered the fort. In the battle, McClernand performed reasonably well. However, his unwise and unauthorized attack indicated an inability to accept subordination. Logan, on the other hand, fought heroically, without regard for his personal safety. In his report to Secretary of War Stanton, Grant referred to Logan and his fellow regimental commander, Colonel W.H.L. Wallace when he wrote, "The two latter are from civil pursuits but I have no hesitation in fully endorsing them as in every way qualified for the position of brigadier-general, and think they have fully earned the

position on the field of battle."⁶⁸ Undoubtedly, Lincoln felt both Illinois Democrats had fought well. On March 3, 1862 the President promoted McClelland to Major General and Logan to Brigadier General.⁶⁹

Throughout March and into April, 1862, Logan recovered from his wounds at his home in Illinois. Meanwhile McClelland and his division participated in the Union victory at Shiloh, Tennessee on April 6-7. McClelland's division experienced the heaviest fighting on the first day of battle, successfully holding its lines against General Albert Sidney Johnston's Confederates.⁷⁰ McClelland acted "promptly and energetically," reported General William Tecumseh Sherman; "He struggled most determinedly." ⁷¹ In his memoirs General Grant remembered that McClelland's division "was complete in its organization and ready for any duty."⁷² Despite his successful performance, McClelland had yet to earn the respect of his fellow commanders. He was disliked for his vanity and exaggerated ambition.⁷³ Since the beginning of the new year, McClelland had written frequent letters to President Lincoln in which he criticized Grant and other superior officers and claimed most of the credit for the Union's victories in the West.⁷⁴ Undoubtedly Sherman and Grant realized McClelland's arrogance.

Following Shiloh, McClelland's Third division was assigned to a camp located on the road to Corinth, Mississippi. On April 12, Logan returned and received command of the First Brigade in the Third Division. As a reserve division, the Third experienced little action during the campaign for Corinth in April and May. However, in his report Sherman praised Logan, saying, "I feel under special

obligations to this officer who during the two days he served under me he held the critical ground on my right."75 Logan's reputation as a military leader continued to grow. On June 7, Logan and his brigade easily drove the Rebels out of Jackson, Tennessee, an important rail center. The town became the center of a district commanded by McClernand. Logan remained in Jackson as post commander and successfully defended his post against Confederate attackers throughout July and into August. In September, McClernand returned to Illinois on a recruiting mission and Grant entrusted Logan with command of the entire Jackson district.

McClernand took advantage of his leave to visit Lincoln in Washington D.C.. He presented to the President his plan to descend the Mississippi and seize Vicksburg, using troops that would be recruited from his supporters in southern Illinois. Lincoln urgently desired the capture of the important river town, and he liked the idea of using an army of Illinois Democrats.76 The President also felt that McClernand was a brave and capable officer.77 On October 21, 1862, Lincoln endorsed Secretary of War Stanton's order that "when a sufficient force, not required by the operations of General Grant's command, shall be raised, an expedition may be organized under General McClernand's command against Vicksburg and to clear the Mississippi river and open navigation to New Orleans."78 Lincoln's choice of McClernand for this important expedition was a curious mistake. Grant, the best general in the west, commanded the department in which the mission would take place and should have been the obvious choice.79 However, hoping to attract the support of Illinois Democrats, Lincoln was likely influenced by the Egyptian

general's political background.

McClelland's expedition soon fell apart as Grant exerted his power as commander in the west. While McClelland raised troops, Grant, backed by his superior, General Henry W. Halleck, planned his own expedition against Vicksburg. Neither Grant nor Halleck had been informed of McClelland's independent command. When they discovered the plan they became determined to persuade the President to stop it. In his memoirs Grant remembered, "Two commanders on the same field are always one too many, and in this case I did not think the general selected had either the experience or the qualifications to fit him for so important a position."⁸⁰ The situation forced Lincoln to choose between the two generals for command of the expedition. On December 18, 1862 Grant received orders giving him the command. He was to divide his command into four corps, one of which would be given to McClelland, and to begin planning the assault on Vicksburg.⁸¹ By taking over the Mississippi expedition, Grant established his superiority in the west and corrected Lincoln's politically motivated and foolish command decision. However, the President still desired the Illinois general's support. Hoping to remedy McClelland's dissatisfaction over his demotion, Lincoln wrote, "You are doing well - well for the country, and well for yourself."⁸²

The Vicksburg campaign ended McClelland's command and brought more glory and prestige to Logan. Throughout the spring of 1863, McClelland and Logan directed their troops in various operations on the Mississippi as Grant attempted to find an appropriate approach to Vicksburg. In March, Governor, Richard Yates of Illinois, a Republican, recommended Logan for a promotion. Lincoln agreed and on

March 13, Logan became a major general. In the battle and siege of Vicksburg, Logan commanded the Third Division in McClernand's Thirteenth Corps. On May 16, Grant's forces met General John C. Pemberton's Rebels at Champion's Hill, to the east of Vicksburg. Following a Union attack, Pemberton's force retreated to the garrison of the river town to await siege. In the battle, McClernand hesitated in attacking the Confederate left flank. Grant remembered, "Had McClernand come up with reasonable promptness...I cannot see how Pemberton could have escaped with any organized force."⁸³ McClernand faltered again on May 22, when he ordered a pointless and deadly attack at Vicksburg. McClernand reported that he had reached the enemy's lines and requested reinforcements for another assault.⁸⁴ Grant felt that the failed attack had "only served to increase our casualties without giving any benefit whatever."⁸⁵ Grant had become increasingly doubtful of McClernand's command abilities.

McClernand's arrogance ultimately brought about his downfall. On June 13, McClernand published General Order No. 72 in the Memphis Evening Bulletin without Grant's approval. In the order, McClernand praised his own corps for its unsuccessful attack of May 22 and insinuated that he had not been appropriately supported by General William T. Sherman's Fifteenth Corps and General James McPherson's Seventeenth Corps.⁸⁶ With this action McClernand lost his last bit of respect from Grant. On June 18, Grant removed the major general from command "for his publication of a congratulatory address calculated to create dissension and ill-feeling in the army."⁸⁷ In a dispatch to Halleck, Grant wrote, "I should have relieved him long since for general unfitness for his position."⁸⁸

Grant had removed one of Lincoln's valued political appointees because of military ineptitude and insubordination. However, Lincoln appeared to support McClernand despite his dismissal. In a letter on August 12, 1863 Lincoln attempted to placate McClernand. He wrote, "I doubt whether your present position is more painful to you than to myself. Grateful for the patriotic stand so early taken by you in this life-and-death struggle of the nation, I have done whatever had appeared practicable to advance you and the public interest together."⁸⁹ Explaining his inability to reappoint McClernand, Lincoln wrote, "For me to force you back upon Gen. Grant, would be forcing him to resign. I can not give you a new command, because we have no forces except such as already have commanders."⁹⁰ Lincoln realized that Grant (the professional soldier) was much more important than McClernand (the political soldier). The President could not afford to chastise Grant by reversing his decision. However, Lincoln successfully justified his inability to change McClernand's command status while insuring the general that he had not lost the support of the Administration. In doing so the President hoped to retain McClernand as a political tool in his quest for Democratic support.

On the other hand, Logan performed excellently at Vicksburg. After fighting admirably at Champion's Hill and in McClernand's assault on May 22, Logan established his siege headquarters in the front lines where he was constantly under fire. Despite a wound in his thigh, Logan fearlessly led his division in an attack on the Confederate works following the explosion of a mine on June 25. After the Confederates' surrender, Grant entrusted Logan with temporary

command of the city.⁹¹ Grant's opinion of Logan soared. In his memoirs, Grant praised Logan and General Marcellus Crocker "as being as competent division commanders as could be found in or out of the army and both equal to a much higher command."⁹²

Following the conclusion of the Vicksburg campaign, McClelland and Logan actively participated in the 1863 state elections, each supporting Lincoln to a different degree. At home on leave, Logan delivered a series of speeches throughout Illinois. In a speech on July 31, Logan encouraged support for Lincoln and the war. He pleaded, "Go on boys, God bless you...Be for your Government, in spite of what anybody may say."⁹³ Throughout his Illinois tour, Logan remained unaffiliated with any party, but he gave all his support to the Administration. By remaining independent Logan was less likely to alienate his Democratic followers who likely opposed some of Lincoln's policies even if they were willing to support the war. No longer active as a commander, McClelland delivered a speech in Janesville, Wisconsin on September 17, in which he advocated sustaining the war effort.⁹⁴ In November, McClelland became the permanent chairman of the Conference of the War Democracy of the Northwest. The conference supported many of Lincoln's war policies, including emancipation of the slaves.⁹⁵ However, because McClelland remained strongly loyal to the war Democrats he may not have been fully effective in creating Democratic support for Lincoln. His support of the Administration was weaker and more conditional than Logan's. While it is impossible to determine the extent to which McClelland and Logan actually influenced voters, it is clear that they were lending measures of

political support to the Administration. Therefore, Lincoln was receiving some political benefits from his two generals from Illinois.

During the remainder of the war, Logan continued his outstanding military service, while McClernand became lost in obscurity. Logan commanded the Fifteenth Corps throughout General Sherman's Atlanta campaign and his March to the Sea. Superior officers continued to praise General Logan's command abilities. In his memoirs, Sherman described Logan as "brave" and "daring," and in his report following the Atlanta campaign he wrote, "General Logan admirably conceived my orders and executed them."⁹⁶ By the end of the war, Logan had become a national hero. To "loud and prolonged acclamations of applause," he marched alongside Sherman in the Grand Army Review in Washington D.C. on May 25, 1865.⁹⁷ McClernand, on the other hand remained inactive until early 1864, when he received an unimportant appointment as commander of the Thirteenth Corps, by then widely dispersed throughout Louisiana and Texas. He retained this command until his resignation from the army on November 30, 1864.⁹⁸ It is likely that Lincoln gave McClernand this position as a concession, hoping to maintain his political loyalty. However, it seems clear that McClernand had been shelved.

In 1864 Logan campaigned enthusiastically for Lincoln's reelection. On September 21 Logan temporarily left his command in Sherman's army and returned to Illinois. While there is no documented proof that Lincoln requested his political services, after the war Logan claimed that, "When I left on leave after the Atlanta campaign to canvass for Mr. Lincoln, I did it at the special and private

request of the then president."⁹⁹ Logan's military success had enhanced his political powers and the Republicans strongly desired his support. In a letter to Logan, Elihu Washburne, a Republican Congressman, wrote, "We want your clarion voice to echo over our state and arouse the Union and patriotic people to the salvation of the country."¹⁰⁰ During the 1864 campaign, unlike that a year earlier, Logan denounced the Democrats, who at Chicago had selected General George McClellan as their presidential candidate on a platform dedicated to peace. In a speech on October 5 in Carbondale, Illinois, Logan announced, "I will act with no party who is not in favor of my country and must refuse to support the nominees of the Chicago platform."¹⁰¹ In a series of sixteen speeches throughout southern Illinois, Logan endorsed Lincoln and Republican/Union candidates for congressman and governor. In the same districts in which they had been soundly defeated in 1860, the Republicans achieved complete victory. Each of the Republican candidates whom Logan supported won the election. Many credited the general with the section's amazing political reversal.¹⁰² Referring to Logan, the Alton Telegraph reported, "The Union party is indebted in a great measure to him for the glorious result... He it was that went to the field of battle and came back covered with glory."¹⁰³ The number of voters Logan actually recruited for Lincoln cannot be measured. However, Logan clearly contributed all his energies to the president's reelection.

McClelland's role in the 1864 election is unclear. While there were reports that McClelland supported McClellan's candidacy, this seems unlikely.¹⁰⁴ There is more evidence that as a War Democrat,

McClelland campaigned against the peace faction of his party; McClelland's support for Lincoln was never as obvious or straightforward as Logan's. His efforts for the War Democrats may have pulled voters away from the peace faction, thus reducing its chances of defeating Lincoln.¹⁰⁵ However, it appears that McClelland never clearly associated with Lincoln and therefore could not have been as effective as Logan in campaigning for the Republicans.

John Alexander Logan was probably the Union's most successful political general, and Lincoln handled him ideally. Highly respected in southern Illinois, Logan recruited thousands of Democratic soldiers from his district. Given only a colonelship at the beginning of the war, Logan received his promotions to brigadier and major general as much because of his military excellence as his political reputation. Lincoln never gave Logan any command for which he was unworthy or incapable. Logan's glory as a commander enhanced his political power and he became considered a valuable ally for the Republican party. In 1864, Logan helped mobilize increase support for Lincoln within Egypt, the traditionally Democratic region of southern Illinois. As a political general, Logan benefitted Lincoln and his war effort both militarily and politically.

In handling McClelland's generalship, Lincoln again allowed political concerns to cloud his military judgment, but only for so long. The President gave far too much military authority to the unproven and clearly incapable general. Although generals Grant and Sherman indicated the Illinoian's inadequacies, Lincoln continued to support McClelland, granting him important assignments, above all the possibly disruptive Vicksburg expedition. Had it not been for Grant's

assertive dismissal, McClernand would likely have remained in command. Essentially, Grant prevented Lincoln from prolonging McClernand's potentially disastrous generalship. However, at this point, Lincoln cut his losses, offering McClernand consolation, but allowing Grant's decision to stand and not providing McClernand with a compensatory military assignment. McClernand's greatest political contributions were probably at the beginning of the war when he served as a patriotic example to the people of southern Illinois. While he mildly supported Lincoln in 1864, his campaign efforts can not be considered outstanding. The Illinois Democrat's political generalship did not seriously help or hurt the Union's war effort. However, McClernand's command indicated that Lincoln may have been overly influenced by his desire to create political support.

Conclusion

Throughout the war, President Lincoln was dedicated to securing the support of Democrats and German-Americans. Political generals became a central part of this campaign. However, Lincoln seemed to overestimate the political powers of his appointees and he often allowed his dedication to creating support to cloud his military judgment. The case studies discussed reveal these tendencies. Except for General Logan, Lincoln misjudged each general either politically or militarily at least once, and the consequences were often costly. At the beginning of the war none of the generals held any relevant military experience. Therefore, Lincoln's main selection criterion was the political generals' ability to influence their selected groups.

Lincoln misjudged the political abilities of Carl Schurz and Daniel Sickles. Neither held the political power or respect to merit their initial appointment. However, Schurz's boasts deceived Lincoln and most Republicans into believing that he in fact held the key to German-American support. Because he appeared to be a worthy selection, the President cannot be criticized for appointing Schurz. Fortunately, Schurz's military performance did not hurt the war effort. Sickles, on the other hand, clearly lacked the means to generate political support and should not have been initially selected. However, Sickles's unknown command abilities salvaged his political generalship and helped the Union war effort.

Benjamin Butler, Franz Sigel, and John McClernand held political

power and the potential to encourage support from certain groups of northerners. Unfortunately, Lincoln became too engaged by their political capabilities and allowed them to be placed in military positions where they could seriously hurt the war effort. While Grant prevented McClelland from causing serious problems, Butler's and Sigel's generalships became military disasters, possibly prolonging the war by months and costing the Union thousands of lives.

John Logan was the only general discussed who contributed both politically and militarily. Lincoln allowed Logan commands of increasing importance only after he had proved himself on the battle field. Political considerations never induced the President to prematurely or unwisely promote the Illinois general. However, the success of Logan's political generalship was definitely an exception.

Without considering Logan, it seems that the generals who were the most politically effective were also those who were the most militarily damaging. The political benefits of their commands were superseded, or at least equaled, by the consequences of their military inadequacies. Because of this, as a group, the political generals discussed cannot be considered a success. Lincoln should have been more cautious with his political generals to prevent military disaster.

While Lincoln could have better managed the commands of his political generals, he should not be criticized for appointing them. The magnitude of the war demanded that Lincoln make an effort to secure the support of the political and ethnic divisions of the North. The use of political generals was a necessary and unavoidable gamble. If Lincoln had not appointed these men as

generals he would have risked alienating their followers, which could have caused a reduction in war support. The potential negative repercussions of not appointing political generals could have been far greater than the results of their commands. With the political generals in power, Lincoln ultimately received the support he needed to achieve victory.

Endnotes

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