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Pupillary Size and Its Relationship to the Problem Solving Process

Raymond M. Daly
Loyola University Chicago

THE SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS'S RELATIONS TO THE CONTINENTAL ARMY: WAR MATERIEL

by

Francis J. Daly, S.J.

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PREFACE

Congress was concerned with many aspects of the army. Congress had created the Continental Army and felt very responsible for military affairs. Thus under such close supervision the relations between Congress and its military arm were many and varied. The army's finance, clothing, food, transportation, enlistments, and the place of state militias, were some of the problems that confronted the Congress and army.

For this thesis I have chosen Congress's relations to the army in regard to war materiel. By war materiel, I mean such items as arms, artillery, gunpowder, and ammunition. Of course, some of the above mentioned problems will enter this thesis but I hope to study chiefly the difficulties Congress and Washington encountered in arming the Continental Army.

This thesis covers from the year, 1775, to the capture of Stony Point in July, 1779. During those years the Congress found it most difficult to obtain a sufficient number of muskets and amount of powder. However, by the year, 1779, the arms' crisis had subsided considerably. Moreover major fighting in the North had ended for Washington's army. Most of Congress's problems with Washington's army during the last two years of the war were not concerned with supplying the army with war materiel but rather with food, clothing, and pay. As the war around New York quieted the problem of military

stores lessened for Congress and Washington. Thus I ended this study of Congress's relations with the army in July, 1779.

CHAPTER I

MEN AND NO ARMS

The firing on Lexington Green, the brief stand at the North Bridge in Concord, and the hurried retreat of the redcoats to Boston found the Massachusetts Provincials ready for a clash of arms. As the colonists were familiar with limited self-government, serious preparation for war had been going on for months. Throughout New England the provincial legislatures, although extra-legal bodies, had organized the militias into effective units, ordered the procurement of arms and ammunition, and appointed Committees of Safety.

The Committees of Safety carried on and extended the important work of the earlier Committees of Correspondence. Many of those on the Committees of Safety were merchants and tradesmen. These merchants were shrewd and had a talent for thrift that enabled them to supply the colonies with good provisions. Their main task was to train and supply the militias both with men and war materiel. If the situation demanded, the Committee of Safety was em-

powered to call out the militia. These Committees were aided in obtaining arms for the militia by the decrees of the Provincial Congresses: "If any of the said inhabitants are not provided with arms and ammunition, according to law, that they immediately provide themselves there with, and that they use their utmost diligence to perfect themselves in military skill."[1]

Preparation for war was not a new task for the New England legislatures since their militias had fought in the French and Indian War. Even the idea of minute men was not new for in the middle of the 1750's there had been alarm lists of men who were ready to fight the Indians at a moment's notice. The militia consisted of the entire body of citizens of military age except clergymen, paupers, and certain others. Usually the Provincials possessed muskets but few of them were marksmen. Muskets were not made for accuracy, powder was scarce, and the farmer did not have much time to hunt or practice, contrary to tradition.[2] A musket which weighed eleven pounds, was eleven gauge, and stood four feet, nine inches tall without a bayonet, was commonly used in New England while the rifle was practically unknown.[3] The militia needed regular

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[1]Allen French, The Day of Concord and Lexington, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1925), p. 23.

[2]Ibid., pp. 255-56.

[3]J. W. Wright, "Rifle in the American Revolution," American Historical Review, XXIX, (Jan. 1924), 293-99.

training if they had any hopes of becoming marksmen. On certain days of the year it was a custom that the militia mustered on the town green where the men had more of a holiday than a training period.

However as relations with Great Britain became more tense, the assemblies stiffened their militia's training and some even mustered every week for shooting practice. Many of the colonies had company drill once a month, regimental drill twice a year, and brigade drill once every two years. Connecticut in 1774 could boast of twenty-thousand men in eighteen regiments with at least a troop of horses to each regiment.[4]

Through the efforts of the Committees of Safety the Provincial Congresses had created the militia into an army and these "armies" must remain their servant. The Congresses and Committees were civilian bodies who were determined to control not only the civil affairs of the colonies but also the military affairs. These civilians who directed the militias were sensitive to any military attitude that challenged their superiority.[5]

The colonists became concerned in September, 1774, when General Gage, Commander of the British Forces in America, ordered the gunpowder

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[4]Willard M. Wallace, Appeal to Arms, (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1951), p. 3.

[5]Allen French, First Year of the American Revolution, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934) p. 49.

reserve of Massachusetts to be seized. This brought about the "powder alarm." Israel Putnam, who had led his Connecticut militia towards Boston, returned when he heard that no blood had been shed. However, he did write to the Massachusetts Assembly, "We much desire you to keep a strict guard over the remainder of your powder; for that must be the great means, under God, for the salvation of our country."[6] The assemblies soon realized that this powder which was scarce was necessary for the protection of their rights. With the purchase of military stores and the removal of war materiel from royal arsenals, they began their preparations for hostilities. Although the colonies were hindered by England's Declaration of non-importation of military stores in December of 1774, they decided to try to import gunpowder through the blockade.[7] The assemblies also encouraged the colonists to renew their own manufacture of war materiel.

In December, 1774, Rhode Island militia seized cannon and other military stores from Fort George at Newport, while New Hampshire men captured arms and ammunition from Fort William and Mary at Portsmouth. The

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[6]Sir George O. Trevelyan, American Revolution, I, p. 289, cited in French, The Day of Concord and Lexington, p. 25.

[7]Peter Force (ed.), American Archives, (9 vols.; Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1843-53), Fourth Series, II, 276-77. (From now on referred to as Force.)

Governor of New Hampshire requested General Gage to send troops to guard the King's stores, but before any help was sent, Paul Revere with 400 men had seized 100 barrels of gunpowder, some light cannon, and 60 muskets.[8] A British captain wrote to his superior officer after these assaults that "They (Americans) intend to procure Powder and Ball, and Military Stores of all kinds whenever they can get them...."[9] This captain's opinion was correct since the New England Assemblies realized that arms and ammunition might be the salvation of the colonies.

The colonies were destitute of ammunition and what powder was on hand had been in the colonial stores since the French and Indian War. Most of the powder mills were in ruins. So too, muskets were often in poor condition since there seems to have been no more than two hundred gunsmiths in the colonies.[10] Nevertheless men in the colonies boasted as did one Philadelphian to a Member of Parliament in England that the colony of Pennsylvania alone could manufacture 100,000 stand of arms and gunpowder

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[8]Ibid., IV, I, 1041.

[9]Ibid., IV, I, 1039-40.

[10]Esmond Wright, Fabric of Freedom, 1763-1800, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), p. 128.

more easily than it could be imported from England.[11] The assemblies soon realized such statements were merely hopes that seldom became facts.

The Massachusetts Committee of Safety worked diligently from December, 1774, into the spring of 1775, in the acquisition of military stores. Besides procuring food and mess kits they purchased powder, fuses, grape and round shot, cartridge paper, mortars, musket balls, flints, cannons, cannon carriages, and entrenching tools.[12] Not only did the New England Assemblies prepare for war but southern colonies also stiffened the training of their militia and purchased whatever war materiel they could. In January, 1775, a Committee in Virginia resolved that a poll tax should be taken to procure a quantity of ammunition which would provide for the "common defense of all."[13] George Washington was chairman of that committee.

Throughout February and March the Massachusetts Assembly encouraged the Provincials to produce arms and bayonets by placing a premium on those made by a certain date. By early April, 1775, Massachusetts had on hand in its arsenals an estimated 21,000 fire arms, 17,000 pounds of

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[11] Force, IV, I, 1066.

[12] Ibid., IV, I, 1365-70.

[13] Ibid., IV, I, 1145.

lead balls, 22,000 pounds of powder, and 10,000 bayonets.[14] And yet munitions were never adequate especially in the first years of the war. Scarcity of gunpowder and cartridge paper forced the Provincials to carry fewer rounds of ammunition than did the British Regulars during most of the war.

Although the Committees of Safety obtained war materiel and the militia continued to train, little practical thought was given to what would happen once actual war began. No strategy was planned and no coordination of the militia under one command was considered. In the spring of 1775, most of the people thought only of their farms and trade and perhaps relied instinctively on the known humanity of the British Government.[15] On April 19, 1775, actual fighting occurred at Lexington and Concord which awakened the Americans to their crisis. As the news of war raced through the colonies the Provincial Militia of New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island hastened to Boston to aid their sister province.

The quickness in the assembling of the militia amazed both the colonists and the British. Never had there been anything like it. With the

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[14]Lincoln (ed.), Journal of Each Provincial Congress, p. 756 cited in C. K. Bolton, The Private Soldier Under Washington, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), p. 105.

[15]French, The Day of Concord and Lexington, pp. 81-83.

men pouring in, all parts of New England seemed to have been represented. Most of the militia carried their own muskets, a number of rounds of ammunition, and a little food which their wives had hurriedly gathered. All the clothes they had were on their backs. Patriotism was never stronger as they encamped around Boston. This mass of militia, almost a mob, had to be welded together into an army which would be properly fed, armed, and paid.

These troops set the pace for the colonies who responded with pleas for men, arms, and ammunition. Massachusetts authorized 13,600 troops to be raised, while Connecticut set its quota at 6,000 men, and a force of 2,000 was summoned by New Hampshire.[16] Artemis Ward was appointed General of all the American Forces in front of Boston and those who were soon to arrive.

In May, 1775, there was about 80,000 pounds of gunpowder in the colonies. Georgia who had recently seized 12,700 pounds of powder from a British vessel in Savannah Harbor forwarded most of it to Boston. Massachusetts had stored up 12,000 pounds, Connecticut had 4,000, New Hampshire had 5,000 pounds, Pennsylvania and Maryland each possessed 4,000 pounds

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[16]Wallace, op. cit., p. 27.

and little Rhode Island had massed 17,000 pounds of powder.[17] Although New York and New Jersey possessed very little powder, the colonies had efficiently performed their task of preparing for war. However, these provisions were far from sufficient for embarking on a prolonged struggle. There was still great need of arms, bayonets, flints, tents, blankets, and clothing which the Committee of Safety found more difficult to obtain as the conflict approached.

By June, 1775, army life was already becoming dull with the inactivity of a siege and difficult with the shortage of rations. Soon the troops began to grumble because of the lack of food and liquor; rum was as essential to the army then as coffee is today. Their supply of powder and arms continually dwindled so that by late summer there were 2,000 troops in front of Boston without muskets and very low in powder.[18] Many of the Provincials feared that the war would collapse if not because of the shortage of arms, certainly because of the lack of gunpowder.

The Massachusetts Assembly continued in its attempts to procure arms. On May 2, 1775, it ordered 200 weight of lead balls and 200 pounds

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[17]Orlando W. Stephenson, "Supply of Gunpowder in 1776." American Historical Review, XXX, (Jan. 1925), 271-81.

[18]John C. Miller, Triumph of Freedom, 1775-83, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1948), p. 103.

of powder and 1,000 flints.[19] It further hoped that the artillery from Fort Ticonderoga could soon be seized by Benedict Arnold and sent to Boston. The individual Committees of Safety supported the military arm of the Provincial Assemblies but they did not intend the militia to become too strong too soon because of their traditional dread of the military spirit. Civilian leaders were more concerned about conserving their war materiel than expending it to win their rights. These civilian leaders feared the army's rise to power as they recalled the Caesars and Cromwells who had become dictators. Although in Massachusetts there seemed to be little unwillingness to support its militia, there was an incident that demonstrated the friction between the civil and military power.

Artemis Ward, General of all the assembled militia, ordered the Committee of Safety to deliver the muskets which had been collected (with great difficulty) by the Massachusetts Assembly. The Committee promptly made it known to Ward that he was not empowered "to order them" but could only order his officers. Only after the Committee had read a lecture to the General on his military powers, did it deliver the fire arms to the militia.[20]

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[19] Force, IV, II, 750-51

[20] French, First Year of the American Revolution, p. 267, and Force, IV, II, 676.

The politicians and legislators who were sensitive to any trespassing on their "supreme rights" were quick to keep the army in its proper place. This same feeling would soon be displayed by the Second Continental Congress which was to meet in Philadelphia.

The war with England had begun and the colonies in New England had put an army into the field, but an organized army with an efficient system of war supplied was still greatly needed. The Second Continental Congress had a tremendous task before them; to agree on a war policy, to provide and maintain a well-equiped army that could stand up to the British Regulars, and to determine on a common goal that would satisfy and unify all the colonies. The assembled militia looked to Philadelphia and its civilian leaders for direction.

CHAPTER II

THE PEN DIRECTS THE SWORD

The Second Continental Congress convened on May 10, 1775, in Philadelphia. Most of the members of Congress were in their early forties or younger. Motivated by the new human philosophy of Locke and Rousseau, their enthusiasm gave them confidence and optimism in their new developing land. From the upper class of colonial society many of the members came to represent their colonies. Educated and influential men like Washington, Hancock, John Adams, Duane, Rutledge, Franklin, Sam Adams, and Dickinson were present, and in the near future Jefferson, Gouverneur Morris, Carroll, Jay, and Henry Laurens would meet in Congress. These were the "rebels," enthusiastic, wealthy, and talented, who met to challenge the British Empire.[21]

This Congress was not like the first which had met in September, 1774. This Congress was not to be a mere advisory council. Instead, the

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[21] Miller, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

Second Continental Congress realized the critical situation and decided to assume the character of a governing body. Many problems had to be considered by these forty-eight Congressmen in Philadelphia.[22] Most of the delegates were commissioned by their home governments to consider two issues; the defense of American rights and possible reconciliation with Great Britain. With New England fighting Britain, these representatives had to decide if this war belonged to all the colonies. Some men wanted to petition King George III that he might clearly understand their grievances while others like John Adams felt the time for petitions was past. "Powder and artillery are the most efficacious, sure and infallible conciliatory measures we can adopt," declared Adams.[23]

Congress quickly agreed that measures of defense should be taken by all the colonies because they thought what Britain would do to one colony it could do to all of them. On June 10, 1775, Congress called upon the colonies:

> That it be, and is hereby earnestly recommended to the several Colonies of New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, that they immediately furnish the

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[22] Washington C. Ford (ed.), Journals of the Continental Congress, (34 vols.; Washington, D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1904-37), II, 11-12. (From now on referred to as Journal.)

[23] Wright, op. cit., p. 91.

> American army before Boston with as much powder out of their town, and other public stocks as they can possibly spare; keeping an exact account of the quantities supplied, that it may again be replaced, or paid by the Continent; this to be effected with the utmost secrecy and dispatch.[24]

Although they attempted to establish an adequate defense of the colonies, the Congressmen could only recommend that their state assemblies act on the suggestions of Congress. Also many of the Congressmen thought the possibility of reconciliation must remain open which was one reason for keeping their actions secret.

The colonial legislatures responded to the advice of Congress. Virginia's House of Burgesses took stock of their arms, many of which had no locks or were so old that they were useless. They resolved in mid June to acquire arms for "protection of the colony against Indian wars or slave insurrections" so as not to arouse the suspicion of the royal governor.[25] So too the Connecticut and Pennsylvania Assemblies encouraged the manufacture of gunpowder by placing a premium on making saltpetre from materials that could easily be obtained in the colonies. These assemblies even specified the size of muskets and firelocks to be made.[26] The Massachusetts Assembly not

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[24]Journal, II, 85.

[25]Force, IV, II, 1203-18

[26]Ibid., IV, II, 563, 1172-73.

only accepted Congress's advice to procure powder but voluntarily put itself under the control of the Continental Congress, by asking if Massachusetts could form a state government. This was a precedent since the powers of this Continental Congress were still uncertain. Massachusetts stated that they wanted to form a civil government since there was a vast army of militia in their colony that had no legal civil authority to provide for them or to govern them.[27] Later in the summer Congress consented to Massachusetts' request for a civil government. During 1775 and throughout the war New England continued to fear the threat of military power.

The Continental Congress itself feared the thought of military power. In early June it undertook the organization and direction of the army often without any military knowledge. Congress drew up sixty-nine articles for the army which dealt mostly with discipline.[28] As the war progressed the inability of Congress to provide for the war effort became apparent and not on a few occasions dangerous. In Congress there were no professional soldiers but Congress felt the need to control all military matters.

Of the Congressmen Washington was one of the few who had been an officer in any war. John Adams nominated Washington for Commander-in-

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[27]Journal, II, 75-76.

[28]Journal, II, 111-23.

Chief of the American Forces and Sam Adams seconded the motion. Politics and sectionalism had their influence on this military decision and indeed would continue to plague all military operations. Congress, more especially the New Englanders, hoped to insure Southern support in the war effort by the appointment of a Virginia commander. John Adams strongly favored this appointment and wrote to his wife, Abigail, when Congress appointed Washington Commander-in-Chief.

> This appointment will have a great effect in cementing and securing the union of these colonies... I hope the people of our province will treat the general with all that confidence and affection, that politeness and respect, which is due to one of the most important characters in the world. The liberties of America depend upon him, in a great degree.[29]

In Washington Congress found more than a mere soldier. The General of the American Forces would have to deal with the colonial governments as well as with Congress. Often he had to decide policies and manage men who were jealous of their position and special privileges. A general was needed who could meet the various situations, who could yield as well as insist, and who could concede lesser points in order to gain greater ones.[30] Wash-

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[29]Edmund C. Burnett, (ed.), Letters of Members of the Continental Congress, 1774-89, (8 vols.; Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1921-36), I, 130-31. (From now on referred to as Letters.)

[30]French, The First Year of the American Revolution, p. 484.

ington accepted the appointment and promised to carry out Congressional orders. He certainly proved to be their faithful servant. His task was to unite the existing army and to create an effective fighting force through discipline and training.

On June 17, the Battle of Bunker Hill was fought, a costly victory for the British Army. Already the lack of powder was felt by the American soldiers who had expended most of their cartridges during the battle.[31] John Adams became angry with Congress because he thought it was to blame for this defeat. He wrote Abigail that Congress had prevented every plan that might have put the army in readiness for this attack. Further he bemoaned the delay, jealousy, and timidity that he witnessed in Congress.[32]

Although Hancock, President of the Congress, continued to send requests to the colonies for war materiel, the members of Congress debated whether the manufacture of powder was not primarily within the prerogative of the state rather than within that of Congress. Such wrangling tired Adams, Washington, and the military officers since they were concerned with obtaining the gunpowder, not with the one who produced it.

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[31] Wallace, op. cit., p. 44.

[32] Catherine D. Bowen, John Adams and the American Revolution, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1950), p. 536.

On July 3, 1775, Washington assumed command of the Continental Army at Cambridge. From his first reports to Congress, the General made clear that his task was difficult. Not only were discipline and order needed but military supplies were most in demand. Without these supplies he could not hope to put a well-ordered army in the field. Gunpowder was often wasted by the militia who would hunt, or fire at an imaginary enemy, or simply shoot their muskets for enjoyment. To conserve powder General Washington issued strict orders against such violators but these orders went unheeded throughout the summer. In early August Washington issued a General Order to the army: "It is with indignation and shame the General observes that not withstanding the repeated orders which have been given to prevent the firing of guns in and about camp, that it is daily and hourly practiced." Further he admonished them that it did no harm to the enemy, wasted precious ammunition, disturbed the camp, and added to the difficulty of knowing a real alarm from a false one. Washington declared that violators would be subjected to a court martial.[33]

Powder was expended in such a reckless fashion that by early August there was not enough to furnish the troops with one-half pound each. In June

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[33]French, The First Year of the American Revolution, p. 469.

the militia had about 40,000 pounds of powder on hand but as reports of the colonial stock of powder arrived on Washington's desk, he became very alarmed.[34] With less than 10,000 pounds, or a reserve of not more than nine rounds per soldier in August, Washington was expected to lay siege to Boston.[35] The General wrote to Governor Trumbull of Connecticut on August 14, 1775:

> Upon the subject of powder I am at a loss what to say. Our necessities are so great, and it is of such importance that this Army should have a full supply that nothing but the most urgent and pressing exigence would make it proper to detain any on its way.[36]

Throughout these months Washington wrote to the colonial governors as well as to the Continental Congress. He soon learned that the colonies willingly would equip their own militia but not the Continental Army.

The shortage of ammunition was so critical that the firing of the morning and evening cannon was eliminated and the artillery was not to return British fire. Only one small nine-pounder was occasionally fired from a vantage point on Prospect Hill.[36] A quarter of the army was without fire arms which led the officers to fear that the army was becoming useless.

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[34]Stephenson, op. cit., p. 273.

[35]Force, IV, III, 5.

[36]Ibid., IV, III, 137.

General Nathanael Greene of Rhode Island wrote in a letter: "Oh, that we had plenty of powder; I should then hope to see something done here for the honor of America."[37] In front of Boston there was an army but it was paralyzed because of the lack of arms, artillery, and gunpowder.

Benjamin Franklin, when he heard of the scarcity of arms, suggested to the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety that pikes be used by the two rear ranks of the army. Artemis Ward had also recommended that Congress order the manufacture of spears to defend the American fortifications. Washington himself approved of spears as long as they were sturdy and thirteen feet long.[38] Pikes and spears were not only manufactured in quantity but actually used with good effect throughout the war.[39] The General's letters to Congress continually requested war materiel. On August 20, 1775, Washington received 61 1/2 tons of powder from the South. With this arrival he felt reasonably safe against any attack, but he never had enough to allow an artillery engagement or an infantry attack on the British.[40] It is amazing that

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[37] Ibid., IV, IV, 312.

[38] Ibid., IV, II, 1424-25.

[39] Lynn Montross, Rag, Tag, and Bobtail, (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1952), p. 42.

[40] French, The First Year of the American Revolution, p. 488.

General Gage never realized the plight of the American Army. Elias Boudinot recounts an interesting explanation for Gage's ignorance.

Boudinot stated that a deserter from the Continental Army had gone to Gage and reported the tremendous shortage of arms and powder in the American camp.

> The fact was so incredible that General Gage treated it as a strategem of war and the informant as a spy; or coming with the express purpose of deceiving him and drawing his army into a snare by which means we were saved from having our quarters beaten up.[41]

Congress occasionally acted like Gage in that they could not believe that the army was destitute of arms and powder.

Washington's frequent reports were read in Congress but supplying the army was only one of their pressing problems. In the summer of 1775, finance, national and international diplomacy, and the question of independence or reconciliation were all discussed in Philadelphia. Several days after Washington had assumed command of the Continental Army, Congress approved a Declaration on Taking Arms.

> ...We are reduced to the alternative of chusing (sic) an unconditional submission to the tyranny of irritated ministers or resistance by force — the latter is our choice...Our cause is

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[41]Elias Boudinot, Journal, (Philadelphia: Frederick Bourquin, 1894), pp. 71-72.

> just. Our union is perfect. Our internal resources are great, and, if necessary, foreign assistance is undoubtedly attainable...Lest this declaration should disquiet the minds of our friends and fellow-subjects in any part of the empire, we assure them that we mean not to dissolve that Union which has so long and so happily subsisted between us, and which we sincerely wish to see restored.[42]

This Declaration demonstrates the dualism they encountered in trying to keep the way open for reconciliation with Britain while at the same time they were forced to prepare for war. Two days after this Declaration Congress composed and sent a petition to the King which stated their grievances and hopes for reconciliation. Usually the army suffered most because of Congress's indecision and half commitment to war. Often discussion and debate dragged urgent matters out for several weeks. Congressional work was long and tedious since matters of military stores were frequently delegated to a committee of congressmen for discussion and evaluation. After their consideration the major points were presented to the whole Congress who then resolved to appoint either another committee to obtain the war materiel or merely to recommend the matter to a particular state assembly where more committees would probably discuss the original request for military stores.

Washington wrote to Congress on August 4, 1775:

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[42]Journal, II, 153-57.

> I need not enlarge on our melancholy situation; it is sufficient, that the existence of the Army, and the salvation of the Country depend on something being done for our relief, both speedy and effectual, and that our situation be kept a profound secret.[43]

This letter was read to Congress on September 1, and certainly was not acted on until later in the month. Such delay hindered Washington's organization of the army. This condition was not unique to the first months of the Congress since Joseph Hewes of North Carolina wrote a year later:

> Much of our time is employed in raising men, making cannon, muskets, and merely finding out ways and means of supplying our troops...We resolve to make and import muskets, powder, etc. but it is a melancholy fact that near half of our men, cannon, musket, powder, etc. is to be found nowhere but on paper.[44]

However many of the members of Congress were concerned for the army and realized that confusion over the proper direction of the army existed. Benjamin Harrison of Virginia, in a letter to General Washington, showed a real concern for the army's need of supplies. On July 21, 1775, Harrison made this observation:

> Your fatigue and various kinds of trouble I dare say are great, but they are not more than I expected, knowing the people you

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[43]Force, IV, III, 29.

[44]Edmund C. Burnett, The Continental Congress, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1941), pp. 161-62.

> have to deal with by the sample we have here...Everything that we can do here to put you in the best posture possible I think you may depend on it.[45]

Washington was encouraged by such remarks and continued to place his trust in Congress's direction of the army.

On July 15, Congress ordered the state to lift the embargo of Great Britain which had forbade the importation of arms into America. This was the result of long debates between Congressmen who wanted independence and those who desired reconciliation. The greatest pressure for opening the ports and attempting an American foreign diplomacy came from the army. War materiel was a necessity and only foreign merchants and foreign ports could provide it.[46]

Since trade was permitted with any nation that would supply arms and powder in exchange for produce, Congress appropriated large sums of money for the importation of military stores. On July 27, Congress resolved that $25,000 be spent for importing gunpowder.[47] Shipmasters received licenses only on the condition that they would return with war materiel. With this

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[45] Letters, I, 169.

[46] Curtis P. Nettels, George Washington and American Independence, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1951), pp. 226-28.

[47] Journal, II, 210.

dispensation American ships looked to Europe, Africa, and the West Indies for arms and powder.[48] In September, 1775, Congress created a Secret Committee of seven Congressmen, most of whom were merchants, to supervise the exports and imports of these important items.

From its first days Congress had encouraged the purchase of saltpetre which could then be manufactured into gunpowder. Congress offered to take twelve month contracts with powder manufacturers and stated that such an occupation was an honorable service to their country.[49] Although American manufacturing was generally insufficient to the demands of war, powder mills began to be constructed. In Pennsylvania there were six powder mills which produced several thousand pounds of gunpowder a week which allowed the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety to report to Congress in August that they had a reserve of 2245 pounds of powder.[50]

Congress sent letters to the colonies with information on the different processes of manufacturing powder in hope that they would imitate Pennsylvania. From late August and into the winter the state assemblies continued to respond to Congress's petition for arms and powder. Maryland resolved to

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[48] Ibid., II, 184-85.

[49] Ibid., III, 345.

[50] Force, IV, III, 497.

purchase 200 barrels of powder plus other military stores while New York contracted for 15 tons of powder and 1400 stands of arms.[51] Pennsylvania promised to send two tons of powder to Washington's camp; Massachusetts resolved to purchase 30 tons of sulphur; North Carolina ordered the manufacture of saltpetre and the purchase of 550 pounds of powder, and Virginia resolved to pay 100 to promote the production of saltpetre.[52] New York even ordered all arms found in the custody of those who did not pledge allegiance to the Colony to be impressed.[53] Thus the assemblies cooperated with the Continental Congress in procuring war materiel. However it is almost impossible to ascertain how many of these resolutions were really acted upon and what percentage of the military stores ever reached Washington's army.

On August 1, 1775, when Congress adjourned, most of the members set out to visit the camp at Boston instead of directly departing for their homes. Congress and the army worked very closely but at times too closely for an efficient administration of the army. General Washington knew many of the Congressmen and could rely on their support, but as the war progressed and new faces came to Congress Washington hesitated to rely on Congressional

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[51] Force, IV, III, 104.

[52] Ibid., IV, III, 859, 1510, 209, IV, IV, 80.

[53] Ibid., IV, III, 898.

judgment. Some of the most talented men participated in this Congress but Congress was an experiment in self government for the united colonies and many mistakes would be made before an efficient system of government developed.

These men like the Provincial Congressmen saw no need for too strong an army, especially as they were not yet committed to an all-out war for independence. Congress protected its powers lest they slip into the hands of the army. As a result seldom did Congress allow officers to be appointed by the general in the field. But in July, 1775, Congress left most of the minor appointments to Washington's decision which displeased John Adams. He thought the officers should be made dependent on the Congress and not on their general for their commissions because each officer should be a check on the general and he a check upon them. Granting this power to Washington was unusual since more often Congress reserved this privilege to itself. Because of this practice many officers tried to please the Congressmen who seldom knew anything about the officer's conduct in the field.[54] This custom prevented the General from improving the organization of his army.

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[54]Miller, op. cit., p. 240.

Washington was sensitive of this manifestation of Congress's jealous fear and on occasion the General reminded them that he was a citizen-soldier. On August 1, 1775 Washington was informed by Richard H. Lee of Virginia that Congress tried to make "his arduous business as easy as the nature of things would admit."[55] Washington respected Congress and yet he was frequently uninformed of important matters that were discussed in Congress.[56] The General desired the authority of Congress to be strong in order to keep the Continental Army together. Without a strong centralized government Washington thought the state assemblies with their own provincial interests and varied demands would destroy the army. The general never wanted his authority to be greater than the Congress and he strove to cooperate with Congress. He was aware of their dignity and prestige and he manifested to Congress a respectful subordination.[57]

As the militia enlistments expired Washington had to order that no soldier was to carry away his musket if it was fit for use. Although muskets

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[55]Force, IV, III, 1.

[56]John C. Fitzpatrick (ed.), The Writings of George Washington, (39 vols.; Washington, D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1931-44), IV, 52. (From now on referred to as Writings).

[57]Nettels, op. cit., p. 133.

were appraised and purchased, many soldiers took their leave with their arms because they considered it their reward for service.[58] Thus Washington had to order that "If any Man attempts to carry off a single Grain of Ammunition not known to be his own, he will be pursued, brought back and severely punished."[59] Throughout the fall and winter the army remained in need of powder and arms. Between July 1, 1775 and January 31, 1776, Washington received a total of 443 barrels of powder.[60] Although this shipment could not adequately supply the army, the General was pleased and wrote his brother, John, in October:

> I am also pleased to find that the manufacture of arms and ammunition has been attended to with so much care. A plenty of these and unanimity and fortitude among ourselves must defeat every attempt that the ministry (English) can invent to enslave this great continent.[61]

Throughout the winter months powder vanished as fast as it arrived. Constantly Washington feared that the British Army might make an attack upon his poorly equipped army.

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[58]Bolton, op. cit., p. 113.

[59]Writings, IV, 283.

[60]Douglas S. Freeman, George Washington, (6 vols.: New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948-54), IV, 16.

[61]Force, IV, III, 1055.

As the powder shortage was so great the army's artillery was practically useless, but artillery was necessary if Boston was to be recaptured by the Continentals. Congress found it most difficult to procure any cannon. However Washington decided to send General Knox to Fort Ticonderoga to bring some cannon back to Cambridge. Certainly for the present Washington could not employ more artillery but he hoped the time would come when he could use all his cannons. On Christmas Day the General complained to Joseph Reed in a letter, "Our want of powder is too inconceivable. A daily waste and no supply administers a gloomy prospect."[62]

Although powder and arms were scarce and the situation seemed critical, food was fairly plentiful around Boston. Thus with food rather than with fire arms Washington kept the British Army locked up in Boston that winter.[63]

When Congress reconvened in September, 1775, it continued its debates over the purchase of military supplies. Some of the members who still favored reconciliation were opposed to purchasing large amounts of military

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[62]Stephenson, op. cit., p. 274, quoting Sparks (ed.) Letters of Washington, III, 215.

[63]Wallace, op. cit., p. 56.

stores while others like Duane remarked, "We must have powder; I would send for powder to London or anywhere. We are undone if we have not powder."[64] Delay was inevitable during these debates but it seldom seemed to worry the Congressmen. In some of the debates sectionalism was evident as Congress argued what colony should get a certain contract and what price that colony should be paid by the united colonies.[65] On occasion Congress was embarrassed by having to compete with states in the purchase of private cargoes of arms. Also there were always profiteers who did as much damage to the army and Congress as any British force.

On September 29, 1775, Congress appointed a committee of three of their own members to visit the army camp at Cambridge in order to plan the most effectual method to continue to support and regulate the Continental Army. The instructions approved by Congress for this committee reflected their own ignorance of military affairs. The Committee was supposed to inform Washington of Congress's hopes for an attack on Boston in the near future.[66] After ten days of consultation with the General the Committee returned to report to Congress on November 2, 1775. In their report methods of

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[64]Journal, III, 484.

[65]Ibid., III, 473-79.

[66]Journal, III, 265.

supply, the size of the army, pay of officers, and the discipline of the army were discussed, but no mention of any attack in the near future.[67] After Congress heard the report they discussed most of the issues which were slowly approved in conformity with Washington's wishes.

However, Sam Adams voiced his fear of the possibility of a military dictator if the "general's army" became too independent of Congress for its needs. Sam Adams wrote to Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts that the Continental Army must be under the direction of Congress and the military power of the colonies should remain under the direction of the individual state assemblies unless Congress should demand such authority. Gerry was essentially in agreement with Adams in his reply:

> We already see the growing thirst for power in some of the inferior departments of the army, which ought to be regulated so far as to keep the military entirely subservient to the civil in every part of the United Colonies.[68]

In late October, 1775, Adams still felt that military power "has so often proved fatal to the liberties of mankind" that unless the militia became the backbone of resistance to England, the Colonies were in danger of losing

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[67] Ibid., III, 321.

[68] Burnett, op. cit., p. 107.

their liberties to some aspiring general wearing the Continental Army's uniform.[69]

A letter similar to Adams' viewpoint had appeared earlier in Philadelphia under the title, Caractacus on Standing Armies. "Beware of standing armies...a knowledge of the use of arms is the only condition of freedom.... The Romans conquered the world in the Republican times with armies of unpaid militia."[70] Some members of Congress really distrusted the power of the Continental Army as a standing army because it was paid while others realized that the militia alone could accomplish very little. Fortunately there were enough Congressmen who supported Washington's opinion that the army must be well supplied and paid. Although division of feelings remained in Congress, Lynch, who was a committeeman that had been sent to Washington, wrote to the General on November 13, 1775: "I am happy to inform you that Congress has agreed to every recommendation of the committee."[71]

Congress was not opposed to the army but a number of Congressmen feared the army or simply tried to oversee too many military operations. There

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[69]John C. Miller, Sam Adams, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1936), p. 344, quoting Writings of Sam Adams, III, 230.

[70]Force, IV, III, 219-20.

[71]Letters, I, 253.

was gradually less talk of reconciliation as Ward of Rhode Island wrote to his brother in the middle of October, 1775: "In a word all hopes of a speedy reconciliation are over, and we unanimously determine to push the war with the greatest vigour."[72] Congress was still far from any decision to break completely with Britain in a declaration of independence, but with less talk of reconciliation Congress would attend to the war effort more energetically. Congress continued to be slow to delegate any of its authority to military personnel. It also would try to control both the civil and military affairs of the United Colonies. Thus the shortage of war materiel would continue partly because of Congress's own incompetence to administer both the army and its own legislative body efficiently.

The deficiency in arms and powder was so acute that Washington was prompted to begin his own negotiations to acquire such military stores. On three occasions the General had wanted to attack Boston but his council of war opposed him because of the powder shortage and the troops' lack of experience.[73] By the end of 1775, French merchants had arrived in America and had gone to Congress with their proposals for selling war materiel.[74] By

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[72]Burnett, op. cit., pp. 115-16.

[73]Writings, IV, 405-07

[74]Nettels, op. cit., pp. 229-31.

November the troops had only five rounds of powder a piece and the artillery was silenced while Washington was forced to wait and hope.

The depression was somewhat lifted when news came that a Captain Manly, a privateer, had captured a British brig, the Nancy, in late November, 1775. The ship's cargo contained 2,000 muskets, 100,000 flints, over 30 tons of musket shot, 30,000 round shot, and a brass mortar which the soldiers later named "Congress."[75] By January, 1776 part of this shipment of military stores had reached Washington, and Colonel Henry Knox arrived at Cambridge in February with the much needed artillery of Fort Ticonderoga. During February Washington had to dismiss militia who reported for service without arms, and frequently soldiers would go out on the ice in front of their camp to pick up spent balls that the British troops had fired at them.[76] Stephen Moylan, an aide to Washington, wrote at this time: "If we had powder I do believe Boston would fall into our hands."[77] The situation was still critical when Washington informed Congress of the state of his supplies on February 18, 1776:

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[75]Dr. James Thacher, Military Journal During the American Revolutionary War, (Boston: Richardson and Lord Publishers, 1823), p. 33.

[76]Freeman, op. cit., IV, 19 quoting Baldwin, Journal, pp. 25-26.

[77]Ibid., quoting Letters of Reed, I, 160.

> This, sir, Congress may be assured is a true state of powder (between 60 and 1000 barrels), and will, I hope, bear some testimony of my incapacity for action in such way as may do any essential service.[78]

By the end of February, however, powder and arms were arriving at the camp especially from Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania.[79] In late February Washington thanked Governor Trumbull of Connecticut for gunpowder from his reserve, and in early March the General thanked Joseph Reed for his efforts in Congress to obtain arms. In the letter Washington remarked, "I feel too sensibly the mortification of having them (arms) withheld from me; Congress not even thinking it necessary to take the least notice of my application for these things."[80] Washington's patience often helped him to overlook these slights but that he did feel them is revealed in that letter to Reed. On the twenty-ninth of February three tons of powder arrived at New York and three more were expected. Most of this powder went directly to Washington's army.[81] Somehow General Gage never did learn of the true state of affairs in the American camp and in March the Continental Army's artillery bore down on

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[78] Force, IV, IV, 1193

[79] Ibid., IV, IV, 968, 970, 1477 and Writings, IV, 343, 433.

[80] Writings, IV, 365.

[81] Force, IV, V, 83, 100

the British troops. Washington made good use of his artillery in front of Boston, but throughout the war American artillery was inferior to the British. Washington and his officers felt confident enough to attack the British forces but poor weather intervened and on March 17, 1776, the British evacuated Boston. In their great haste the British left great piles of shot, shells, and other munitions. Even the cannon had been spiked so poorly that many of them were restored to usefulness.[82] Washington and Congress for the first time in months could be proud of the army. This army of half-trained provincials had withstood its first test against the British Regulars as well as it withstood Congress's inefficient system of supplies There were still many more tests to be encountered both by the army and Congress.

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[82] Montross, op. cit., p. 89.

CHAPTER III

CONGRESS AND THE DICTATORSHIP

Throughout the new year of 1776, Congress continued to try to purchase war materiel. John Hancock, President of the Congress, requested several state assemblies to make an estimate of available arms and powder in their military stores. Whatever war materiel the states could procure Hancock thought should be furthered to the Continental Army. Thomas Lynch of South Carolina mentioned in a letter to Washington that Congress had ordered fifteen tons of powder from New York, and that there was enough saltpetre in Philadelphia to produce another eighty tons of gunpowder.[83] In January Congress was informed that only 462 quarter casks of powder had been imported which was hardly sufficient since Congress supplied powder to individual colonies in need, the army in Canada, and privateers, as well as the Continental Army.[84]

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[83] Letters, I, 314.

[84] Force, IV, IV, 1645.

John Adams wrote James Warren to encourage Massachusetts to produce powder from saltpetre since it had worked so well in New York, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.[85] By the end of March 1776, most of the colonies had provided legislation for the erection of both public and private saltpetre works which benefitted the state militias and the Continental Army. The state assemblies tried to cooperate with Congress in obtaining military supplies. The Committees of Safety made contracts with local gunsmiths and blacksmiths to produce muskets and bayonets. On February 23, Congress created a committee of five Congressmen to make contracts and to consider ways and means "of promoting and encouraging the manufacture of Fire-Arms in all parts of the Colonies."[86]

It was futile to hope that most of the arms and powder could be produced within the colonies. As the colonies were chiefly agricultural they were not prepared for a long war and were forced to look abroad for most of their military stores. The values in supplies is seen in the contracts these Committees of Safety made with the privateers. At the beginning of the year 1776, a Maryland Committee wrote to Captain Forsythe:

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[85] Ibid., IV, IV, 1141.

[86] Ibid., IV, IV, 1687.

> The money arising from the sales, you must lay out in gunpowder, if you can get it, if not, muskets fitted with good bayonets, and if they are not to be had, saltpetre and sulphur, and if you cannot get those articles, then lay out the whole in strong coarse linen.[87]

On March 3, 1776 the Congressional Committee of Secret Correspondence wrote to Silas Deane who was in France that they hoped he could acquire "arms for 25,000 men, suitable quantity of ammunition, and 100 field pieces."[88] Although Congress worked to procure arms for their military arm, frequently they wasted too much effort and time in lengthy discussions and mismanagement. Early in March Hancock informed Washington that the importation of war materiel was so dangerous that Congress had appointed a committee to contract only with colonial gunsmiths for the purchase of arms. The letter concluded:

> I flatter myself we shall soon be able to provide ourselves without risk or danger. Because we must, like other States engaged in the like glorious struggle contend with difficulties. By persevereance, and the blessing of God, I trust, if we continue to deserve freedom, we shall be enabled to overcome them.[89]

Had not military stores comes from abroad it is doubtful if the colonies would

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[87] Ibid., IV, IV, 771.

[88] Letters, I, 376.

[89] Force, IV, V, 83.

ever have won their freedom. The colonies certainly did not become self-sufficient in the matter of war materiel.

When news of the evacuation of Boston reached Congress they were too busy to really appreciate the event. Joseph Hewes on March 20, 1776 wrote of Congress:

> We do not treat each other with that decency and respect that was observed before. Jealousies, ill natured observations and recriminations take the place of reason and argument. Our tempers are soured. Some among us urge strongly for independence and eternal separation, others wish to wait a little longer and to have the opinion of their constituents on that subject.[90]

The members of Congress began to irritate one another. Congressmen were swamped with work and had little time for rest. Although committee meetings often began early in the morning and continued late into the night, they were always behind in their work, no matter how long or how hard they labored. The health of some Congressmen broke down under the strain. John Adams wrote that the management "of so complicated and mighty a machine as the United Colonies requires the meekness of Moses, the patience of Job and the wisdom of Solomon, added to the valor of David."[91] There were simply too

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[90]Burnett, op. cit., p. 147.

[91]Page Smith, John Adams, (2 vols.: New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1962), p. 241.

many tasks, too many committees, and not enough representatives.

During the winter months only twelve or fifteen members were present but with the spring more members would attend. For some, this was a way to preserve their health. Much of the work they left behind secretaries could have done but Congress relied only on its own members. No wonder such a body of men could not properly supply and direct an army of 14,000 under General Washington. They were not willing to make matters easier for themselves by assigning to Washington more authority. Even in the midst of their important discussions on independence and a possible declaration Congress held on to the power to control all military decisions. It seems that they were just too distrustful of the army to surrender any of their own powers.

However, one of the most conspicuous failures of the Congress during the war was their inefficiency in organizing and supplying the army. Different factors contribute to this failure. Congress's distrust of the army and their ignorance of military operations, the frequent change of Congressional personnel, and the lack of any strong centralization of authority all added to the distress and confusion of the army. Officers and soldiers complained about the civilian interference of Congress in their affairs. The military personnel felt the civil authority should appoint capable men to command the armies and then allow them to fight the war. They thought members of Con-

gress only made it harder to win the war. General Nathanael Greene, a close friend of Washington, protested acidly against a system that made men of the sword "subject to the censure and reproach of every dirty little politician ignorant of every circumstance necessary to form a right judgment."[92] Greene later in the war became a quartermaster-general which he undertook because he and Washington felt that a soldier must do the job if it was to be done properly.

Congress ordered the General to attend its assembly in late May, 1776, in order to draw up plans for the ensuing campaign.[93] Washington then had the opportunity to report the needs of his army in person to Congress. Throughout April and May, arms were still in great demand but the shortage of powder was not as acute as it had been in the winter months. Earlier Washington had written to Governor Cooke of Rhode Island that "in this Army, altho' I have pursued every mode I could devise for procuring them (arms), their (sic) is still a great deficiency and a considerable number of Men without any in their hands."[94] In like manner the General had written to the Assembly of Massachusetts to request a shipment of musket balls, and to Hancock he had

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[92] Miller, Triumph of Freedom, pp. 84-85.

[93] Journal, IV, 385.

[94] Writings, IV, 414.

written on April 25, "...the Deficiency of Arms is very great...Can Congress remedy this evil? if they can, there should not a Moment be lost in effacing it as our strength at present is in reality on paper only;...I hope Arms may be procured."[95] Thus Washington had much to say to Congress when he arrived in May. Congress listened to the General but it did not realize the impact of his remarks.

Washington with two other generals and thirteen Congressmen discussed the plans of the army. After a few weeks of discussion Congress granted Washington's request that a Board of War be instituted to supervise the Commissary and Quartermaster Departments. However the Board consisted of five members of Congress who were still burdened with other demanding tasks within Congress.[96] Only through disappointments and inefficiencies would Congress learn that its own members could not manage all the assigned committee work. Within a year or two they would realize that no group of men whose main concerns were legislative and political was prepared to plan and conduct a war.[97]

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[95] Ibid., IV, 518.

[96] Journal, IV, 399-401.

[97] Burnett, op. cit., p. 121.

On his return to camp near New York, Washington continued to inform the President of Congress of his military needs especially of lead and flints and occasionally powder.[98] Throughout the summer Washington was almost over zealous in his orders for the protection of gunpowder. As the General realized the importance of ammunition and how easily the troops wasted it he took every necessary precaution. Frequently he ordered that whippings or court-martials be given to soldiers found wasting powder.[99]

In August, 1776, Hancock told Washington that two ships, one of them captured by a privateer, had arrived with military stores. All the cargo on board these ships, Hancock promised would be sent to the Continental Army. Privateers greatly aided Congress in supplying the army. The Franklin in early summer had captured the British ship, Hope, and brought it into port with 1500 barrels of powder, intrenching tools, and gun carriages.[100] These privateers usually were commissioned by state assemblies or the Congress itself to capture whatever military supplies they could. However, there were speculators who had little scruple in raising prices on private cargoes of munitions.

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[98] Writings, V, 19.

[99] Ibid., V, 60.

[100] Ibid., V, 370, and Force, IV, VI, 495.

These men took advantage of both Congress and the army by profiting from their hardships. Washington considered these profiteers as the "murderers of our cause" who should be hunted down, and "I would to God that one of the most atrocious of each state was hung in Gibbets upon a gallows five times as high as the one prepared by Haman."[101] Washington and Congress had no sympathy for these speculators who sacrificed the lives of the army and the rights and liberties of the united colonies for their own selfish gains.

During the summer as the supply of gunpowder increased Congress became concerned over the complaints about the quality of the powder. Congressmen already too busy took on another task of investigating the powder, produced and purchased, for its quickness in firing, dryness, and strength. Finally in August, 1776, Congress appointed inspectors to do this testing but this was not matter that should need the decision of Congress.[102] This kind of work belonged to the army but Congress could not distinguish the minutiae from the major decisions.

Between May 6, and June 14, 1776 fourteen ships arrived from the West Indies with a total of 100,000 pounds of gunpowder and many stands of

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[101] Miller, Triumph of Freedom, p. 454.

[102] Journal, V, 714.

fire arms. Another twelve ships were expected with a cargo of 10-12,000 pounds of powder.[103] As these supplies arrived they were slow to reach Washington's army. On July 6, Congress informed the General that Scotch transports had arrived at Massachusetts and Rhode Island and that Congress had authorized the cargoes to be sent to the Continental Army. Washington then wrote to Artemas Ward on July 9, and requested that these supplies be immediately sent. By late July Washington probably had some of these military stores.[104]

During this summer there were still soldiers without arms which led Washington to continue to request the state governors and the Congress for aid. In late summer ships were still bringing powder and muskets from the West Indies but there is no way to ascertain how much of these military stores reached the Continental Army. Besides Congress's slowness to designate the place where arms should be sent, such supplies did not always arrive. On one occasion Hancock wrote to an officer that he would overlook the offense,

> "...but with respect to the Arms, order'd by Congress to be sent Genl. Washington, and which Mr. Glover mentions he without consulting you had dispos'd of among the Troops, in

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[103]Force, V, I, 265-66.

[104]Writings, V, 243, and Force, V, I, 691.

> his Brothers Regiment, I must insist that you immediately carry that resolution into Execution, and that the Arms be forwarded to the Genl. as as first order'd by Congress, it being my Duty to see every Resolve of Congress executed..."[105]

This instance of mismanagement was frequently repeated by other officers in charge of magazines.

Washington was patient with Congress in their mismanagement of supplies but he became impatient when Congress would not let him manage the officers of his own army. Washington complained to the Board of War that he could not appoint officers to fill up his vacancies without the approval of Congress. On August 2, 1776, Hancock replied to the General that

> Should Congress ever empower its Generals to fill up Vacancies in the Army, they knew of no one in whom they would so soon Repose a Trust of such Importance as in yourself; but future Generals may make a bad use of it.[106]

The President of Congress concluded that the danger of such a precedent prevented Congress from allowing this power to Washington although he might exercise this power with the "greatest public Advantage." Once again Congress's fear of military power is seen and how it hindered Washington's command.

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[105] Letters, II, pp. 25-26.

[106] Writings, V, 349.

"Support the army and that will support the government. Without... all will fall together."[107] This aphorism of General Greene was not accepted by many members of Congress who continued to distrust the army. This distrust of military officers and the fear of too strong an army is one of the chief reasons for the army's deficiency in military stores. Congress tried to adequately equip the army but because of this fear Congress was not ready to allow the army to care for itself. Congress still relied too much on the volunteer militias. Congress's indecision as to the aim of this war also hindered its support of the Continental Army.

In the summer of 1776 there were three parties within Congress. First, there were the conciliationists who were the smallest group, consisting approximately of nine members who wanted self government and autonomy within the British Empire. Such men as Dickinson, Jay, Duane, and Robert Livingston belonged to this party.[108] Then there was the militant party made up of Sam and John Adams, Franklin, Jefferson, and another fourteen Congressmen. Since they favored independence they thought an all-out war was necessary.[109] Finally there were the moderates who were the largest group

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[107] Miller, Triumph of Freedom, p. 558.

[108] Nettels, op. cit., pp. 100-01.

[109] Ibid., pp. 106-07.

consisting of Philip Livingston, Joseph Hewes, William Hopper, Robert Morris, Hancock, Silas Deane, and others. They favored the support of war short of independence. All three groups were united in their defence of American rights and in their fear of a strong military rule.[110]

This fear of the military is reflected in two documents that were drawn up that summer. First it is seen in the Virginia Bill of Rights, June 12, which stated that "...in all cases the military should be under strict subordination to, and governed by, the civil powers."[111] By July 2, the majority of the three parties in Congress agreed that the colonies must be independent of England to protect their rights. This meant the war-effort must be fully supported without hesitation by the Congress of the United Colonies. Nevertheless in the Declaration of Independence which climaxed the Congressional work of 1776, it is charged against the King of England that he rendered "the military independent of and Superior to, the civil Power."[112]

Most of these Congressmen as civilian leaders had given birth to the idea of revolution in America which grew and matured in the public meetings

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[110] Ibid., pp. 111-12.

[111] Samuel E. Morison, Sources and Document: American Revolution, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 151.

[112] Journal, V, 495.

and assemblies of the colonies, the committees of correspondence, and the committees of safety.[113] In general there was a fear of any executive power that was too dominant or dogmatic. Some of these leaders felt the cause of liberty was safe only in their hands. Now the revolution was no longer an idea but a war and many of these same leaders were suspicious of the new class of men emerging as leaders, the generals. Sam Adams still said the colonies were in danger of "losing their liberties to some aspiring general wearing the uniform of the Continental Army."[114] Sam Adams never lost this fear as he proposed that the only way the Congress could avert their Caesar or Cromwell was by keeping the generals securely in their own control and to make the general the instrument of their own sovereign will. Washington's patience and patriotism seldom lessened with this Congressional attitude of distrust. In a letter to Joseph Reed the General wrote, "I am not fond of stretching my powers; and if the Congress will say, 'This far and no farther you shall go,' I will promise not to offend whilst I continue in their service."[115] Washington continued to support Congress and obeyed their orders as well as their requests faithfully although it must have been trying at times.

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[113]Miller, Triumph of Freedom, pp. 239-40.

[114]Miller, Sam Adams, pp. 344-45.

[115]Montross, op. cit., p. 241.

Congress could not directly order the army in the field because of the distance between the two groups but Congress could send committees to the army. Congress insisted not only on its theoretical but also its practical superiority and dignity over the army. Congress never forgot that it had organized the army, directed its officers, occasionally planned its strategy, summoned its generals to their assembly, and countless other small details. Thus Congress extended its control over the army by sending these committees to camp but they seldom could approve or order anything for the army while in camp. They were mere observers and messengers for Congress. Had these committees possessed more authority they could have saved the army from delays in awaiting decisions from Congress. Congress would retain the administration of the army until the winter of 1777 when they appointed military personnel to the Board of War. For the present army management must continue to suffer while Congress dallied in military matters.[116]

Not until July 2, 1776, when the English fleet arrived at New York, was Washington sure where the English army would next attack. In August the size of the Continental Army increased from 17,225 to 27,000 which was the largest

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[116]Louis C. Hatch, The Administration of the American Revolutionary Army, (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1904), p. 110.

American force brought together under a single command during the war.[117] However the colonial troops were still outnumbered by Howe's army of 32,000 men. Washington realized how indefensible New York was but he felt the Continental Army was not sufficiently trained or adequately supplied to attack the British. In early September he conveyed this idea to Congress who needed to be educated in war tactics.

> In deliberating on this Question (defense of New York) it was impossible to forget that History, our own experience, the advice of our ablest Friends in Europe, the fear of the Enemy, and even the Declarations of Congress demonstrate that on our Side of the War should be defensive...That we should on all Occasions avoid a general Action, or put anything to the Risque, unless by a necessity, into which we ought never to be drawn...[118]

On August 27, 1776 the Battle of Long Island began and the struggle around New York continued until November when Washington's army dwindled to 3,000 soldiers in retreat. The Continental Army which several times could have been crushed were led in a good retreat by their able General.

New Yorkers decided to take down all the bells in the different Churches and public edifices in their city that they might be made into cannon.

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[117] Wallace, op. cit., p. 105.

[118] John C. Fitzpatrick, George Washington Himself, (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1933), p. 251.

So too they melted window and clock weights, kitchen utensils, and even a statue of King George for musket balls.[119] New York City fell to Howe's forces on September 15, 1776 as Washington escaped with 13,000 troops up to the White Plains above the city.

Continually Washington's General Orders during this campaign demonstrate his need and concern for ammunition. On September 17, Washington stated that regiments who had expended their ammunition should be immediately supplied, but he was vexed that soldiers still wasted powder by unnecessary firing.[120] Washington also warned the officers to take the greatest care of the arms and ammunition in bad weather. In the middle of October the Board of War added to the General's difficulties since they wanted the immediate return of some ordnance stores. General Washington replied that it was impossible to furnish such a return while the enemy was so near. "As large quantities are constantly in demand in time of war, he (Washington) does not conceive your provision in these instances can be too great."[121] Occasionally Congress was more concerned for its own protection and for the

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[119] Force, V, II, 184.

[120] Writings, VI, 90, 124, 192.

[121] Ibid., VI, 222.

conservation of military stores than for the army's defense and the expenditure of military stores in waging war. And yet Congress cannot be completely blamed as they probably did not know the critical situation that faced the army.

On October 28, the Battle of White Plains was fought in which Howe's 20,000 troops defeated the Continental Army but Washington once again so commanded his forces that they escaped across the Hudson River. More disasters still awaited the American troops on Manhattan. On November 16, Fort Washington was captured and four days later Fort Lee fell to the British. 3000 men, 146 cannons, more than 12,000 shot, nearly 3000 small arms, and 400,000 cartridges were lost to the enemy.[122] Some powder had been saved from Fort Lee which Washington informed Congress. In his report he added that the loss of the soldiers will be severely felt "but when that of the Arms and Accoutrements is added, much more so, and must be a farther Incentive to procure as considerable a Supply as possible for the New Troops, as soon as it can be done."[123] As Washington retreated into New Jersey, Congress became alarmed at the failure of this campaign.

Josiah Bartlett wrote to a fellow member of Congress that "I am sorry our affairs at New York have succeeded so badly. We want a regular, well

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[122] Force, V, III, 1058-59.

[123] Writings, VI, 287.

disciplined army, more experienced Generals. A regular army we must have, at all events, against another year."[124] For the first time many in Congress saw how ill prepared their army was for battle with experienced and well-equipped British Regulars. President Hancock, himself, requested longer enlistments,

> ...give me leave to observe that to make men well acquainted with the duties of a soldier, requires Time; and to bring them under proper subordination and Discipline, not only requires time, but has always been a work of much difficulty...as the time of their discharge approaches, they grow careless of their arms, ammunition, etc., and impatient of all Restraint.[125]

Finally Congress seemed to have heard what Washington had reported. Washington had warned Congress of short enlistments but his words had fallen on deaf ears. The General wrote to his brother that he had pointed out the evil consequence that result from short term militia.

> The consequence of which, you have had great bodies of militia in pay that never were in camp; you have had an immense quantities of provisions drawn by men that never rendered you one hour's service (at least usefully) and this in the most profuse and wasteful way.[126]

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[124]Force, V, II, 1459-60.

[125]Letters, II, 99.

[126]Writings, VI, 137.

In the winter of 1775-76, Washington had thought short enlistments would be the waste of arms and ammunition and the ruin of the army. In December, 1776 the army was still in great need of arms and powder because Washington in his own hand wrote to Congress that many of the militia:

> threw their Arms away, some lost them, whilst others deserted and took them along. In a word, altho' I used every precaution to preserve them, the loss has been great, and this will forever be the case in such a Mixed and irregular Army as ours has been.[127]

The General thought a regular army would end this waste of arms and ammunition since the militia had been "the origin of all our misfortunes and the great accumulation of our debts."[128]

The states as well as Congress must be blamed for this fear of the standing army. Although Congress gradually realized that battles could be won only by experienced and well supplied troops, the bogey of a standing army and the fear of military power still influenced many of the Congressmen. This fear seems to have been too ingrained in their traditions and background. Perhaps history would repeat itself, too many members thought. However Congress persevered in their attempts to procure war materiel and even requested

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[127] Ibid., VI, 406.

[128] Force, V, III, 1311.

the states to lengthen their enlistments. The state assemblies cooperated but continued to support their own militias over the Continental Army.

One member of Congress, Edward Rutledge, wrote to John Jay at this time that Congress possessed its share of human weakness; the way members allow their attention to be engrossed by subjects which could have been postponed while others require despatch instead of neglect.[129] Minutiae as well as personal disputes frequently slowed the work of Congress to the detriment of the army and of the united colonies.

During November and December much needed arms and ammunition arrived from France by way of the West Indies. Silas Deane who was in Paris even sent 100 barrels of gunpowder by way of Amsterdam.[130] At this time too, Deane recommended Congress to deal with a Frenchman, Beaumarchais, under the name of Hortalez et Compagnie in purchasing war materiel. Deane hoped that a treaty of some kind would soon be arranged with France that could lessen the shortage of arms and powder. He even suggested to Congress that they

> ...engage a great general, of the highest character in Europe...to take the lead of your armies, whether such a step

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[129] Writings, VI, 246.

[130] Force, V, III, 512, 596, 1050, 1371, 1436.

> would not be politick, as it would give a character and credit to your military, and strike, perhaps a greater panic in our enemies.[131]

Congress does not seem to have seriously considered this. As the arrival of these ordnance stores from France came to the attention of Congress, usually they ordered them to be sent to the Continental Army as soon as possible. The situation was too critical for Congress to delay. If the army was defeated this winter the cause of the United Colonies was also defeated.

In mid December as the war situation began to look desperate, Congress decided to flee Philadelphia for Baltimore. Before their departure on December 12, Congress enacted a most extraordinary resolution. It stated that ". . until the Congress shall otherwise order, General Washington be possessed of full power to order and direct all things relative to the department and to the operation of war."[132] The idea of delegating such authority was finally approved because Congress knew Washington must be able to act immediately without awaiting their decisions. Otherwise the whole aim of the revolution, liberty and self government, would be sacrificed to their own fear of a possible dictatorship. Four days after this decision Robert Morris wrote to Congress:

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[131] Ibid., V, III, 901, 1089.

[132] Journal, VI, 1027.

> In short, if the Congress mean to succeed in this contest, they must pay good executive men to do their business as it ought to be, and not lavish millions away by their own mismanagement, because no man living can attend the daily deliberation of Congress and do executive parts of business at the same time.[133]

In supplying as well as directing the army Congress had to risk delegating their authority and sharing their responsibilities if they hoped to prevent further mismanagement of the war effort.

On December 27, Congress extended Washington's powers for six months and specified more clearly what his powers were. The main powers were concerned with the care of the army but he could also exercise martial law.[134] Only a week prior to this, when the General wrote to Congress to petition them for power to promote soldiers in the field, he said:

> It may be said that this is an application for powers that are too dangerous to be entrusted. I can only add that desperate diseases require desperate remedies; and with truth declare, that I have no lust after power, but wish with as much fervency as any man upon this wide-extended Continent for an opportunity of turning the sword into a ploughshare.[135]

Washington, himself, must have thought it strange that Congress should en-

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[133]Force, V, III, 1241.

[134]Journal, VI, 1045-46.

[135]Force, V, III, 1311.

trust him with so much power but it was the opinion of many Congressmen that it was absolutely necessary.

William Hooper wrote to Robert Morris that Congress had endowed Washington with "large powers" and that the business of war will now be in the "proper channels and the Congress be no longer exercised about matters which it is supremely ignorant."[136] Whipple wrote that it was "thought absolutely necessary for the Salvation of America."[137] Finally Benjamin Rush stated in a letter that "General Washington must be invested with dictatorial power for a few months or we are undone. The vis inertiae of the Congress has almost ruined this country."[138] Congress trusted their General partly because they had no other choice but defeat.

During these last few days in 1776, Congress revealed the locations of the powder magazines to Washington and informed him that he had full access to these supplies. If he thought it necessary he could increase the size of the army and appoint officers. Congress even wrote Washington that they were happy that this Country had a General who could be entrusted with

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[136] Letters, II, 196.

[137] Ibid., II, 198.

[138] Force, V, III, 1487.

such "unlimited Power and neither personal security, liberty, or property be in the least degree endangered thereby."[139] So it seems that when on the brink of disaster Congress who so often feared the powers of the Caesars and the Praetorian Guards imitated the old Roman Senate and created a temporary dictatorship.

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[139] Ibid., V, III, 1618, and Letters, II, 198.

CHAPTER IV

VALLEY FORGE: DESPAIR AND HOPE

Washington's victory at Trenton on December 26, 1776, renewed Congress's hopes and encouraged all the colonies. Certainly it was not an overwhelming victory but it came at a time when the cause of liberty seemed futile and lost to many. The small army struck the British again at Princeton on January 3, 1777, and turned back the British troops. Although this was more a skirmish than a battle it proved to the British that the Continental Army had great recuperative ability and must be reckoned with. Washington then led his soldiers to Morristown for winter quarters where he attempted to reorganize, train, and better equip his army.

While in winter quarters Washington issued an order under the jurisdiction of his dictatorial powers. He stated that all those in the area around his camp who had subscribed to Howe's declaration of pardon must take an oath of

allegiance to the United Colonies or leave for the British lines.[140] Congress was disturbed by the General's exercise of his power because they thought it was an infringement on the civil rights of the states. Congress's concern reflects their fundamental distrust of General Washington's power, the very power with which they entrusted him.

Throughout 1777 Congress urged the colonial assemblies to supply the army with military stores. Congress attempted to cooperate with the army as well as they could but they were disturbed by too many other problems. In late January Congress ordered Washington to send 94 tons of powder to General Schuyler who commanded the army in New England. Washington could not fulfill this request since he had no more powder than was necessary for the immediate consumption of his own army.[141] Although Washington kept Congress regularly informed, they seldom communicated important matters to their Commander-in-Chief. From February to April Washington's letters reflect his concern for military stores. He feared that powder was a great deficiency in all the colonies since many state assemblies were writing to him

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[140] Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p. 285.

[141] Writings, VII, 70.

requesting ammunition.[142] In a letter to the Massachusetts Assembly General Washington stated that:

> Nothing distresses me more than the Universal Call that is upon me from all Quarters, for Fire Arms, which I am totally unable to supply. The scandalous Loss, waste, and private appropriation of Public Arms, during the last Campaign is beyond all conception.[143]

As the General could do little to procure arms at least he hoped to prevent such great loss and waste of public arms. He ordered that "United States" be stamped on all the weapons and that the muskets in need of repair be not discarded but fixed.[144] The loss of five to eight thousand muskets a year in the Continental Army led Congress in February to request the colonies to purchase all the arms of private persons who had no immediate need of their fire arms.[145] In March, 1777, Washington sent a circular to the New England assemblies and personally wrote a letter to the Governor of Connecticut, Trumbull, to cooperate with this request of Congress.[146] At times Congress

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[142] Ibid., VII, 169.

[143] Ibid, VII, 208-09.

[144] Ibid., VII, 340-41, 358.

[145] Montross, op. cit., p. 270

[146] Journal, VII, 119, and Writings, VII, 230.

was as unable as the General to procure arms since they could only request the state assemblies to cooperate with their demands.

Washington complained to Congress that his enquiry about the amount of military stores on hand had not been answered. When two and three states were completely unrepresented in Congress delay was inevitable. Samuel Chase complained to his own Maryland Committee of Safety that:

> It is not only necessary to be represented, but be assured the Business, the Interest of these States require a full Representation. We have not thirty Members in Congress, and it is not only improper, but impossible, for so small a Number to conduct so very important Business.[147]

Under such circumstances Congress continued to do its best in the procurement of war materiel.

Washington's concern and worry about war materiel was reduced when he received word of the Mercury's arrival at Philadelphia. The Mercury, one of Beaumarchais' supply ships, brought 11,000 muskets plus other needed military stores. Most of these muskets were from the French royal arsenals.[148] Congressman Whipple remarked that the arrival of this vessel "is the most lucky circumstance that could have happened," and John Adams wrote to James

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[147] Letters, II, 229-30.

[148] Charles W. Sawyer, Firearms in American History, (2 vols.; Boston: Charles W. Sawyer, 1910), p. 113, and Journal, VII, 211.

Warren that, "On how many Occasions when We have been unable to see any Way to help ourselves has Providence sent us an unexpected Relief. Thus it has been, and thus it will be."[149] Congressmen as well as army officers rejoiced over this cargo.

On April 20, 1777, another French ship, the Amphitrite, docked at Portsmouth with 12,000 muskets and 1000 barrels of gunpowder. After this Washington remarked to Governor Trumbull that "we shall have no further complaints for the want of arms."[150] Congress was confident too, but Washington immediately urged them to appoint someone to direct all these military stores lest confusion and ill consequences result.[151] The General also hoped that these supplies would be moved inland to prevent any quick naval attack by the British navy. One ship, the Seine, which Congress awaited was captured by the British.[152] However during the remainder of the summer, 1777, French ships carrying war materiel purchased with Beaumarchais' aid, continued to arrive at New England harbors. Most of these arms and ammunition went to the

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[149] Letters, II, 310.

[150] Writings, VII, 334.

[151] Ibid., VIII, 2-3, 7-8.

[152] Ibid., VII, 216, 330.

army in the North but Washington must have received some of them. John Adams who was on the Board of War wrote to Warren in late March, 1777, that:

> There is no danger of our wanting Arms or Ammunition for the future — between six and seven hundred Barrells of Powder having arrived in Maryland, and indeed, We have plenty of Powder before. In short, my Friend, although We have many grievous things to bear, and shall have more; yet there is nothing wanting but Patience.[153]

France generously aided the American cause long before any formal treaty or alliance was made Through the efforts of Silas Deane Congress was secretly negotiating with France and hoped France would soon declare openly in favor of the colonies.

Somehow arms were scarce again in April when Congress stipulated that the states must arm their soldiers before they were sent to the Continental Army. The army had no surplus of muskets and there was a shortage of cartridges.[154] Washington ordered that the troops' arms and ammunition be regularly inspected so that the soldiers could account satisfactorily for any deficiency or pay for it.[155] On June 10 and 20, 1777, the General wrote that the army could use any spears that might be stored in the armory, and he

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[153] Letters, II, 313.

[154] Journal, VII, 315 cited by Freeman, op. cit., IV, 631.

[155] Writings, VII, 391.

specified the way he wanted 500 spears to be made for his "Horse and Light Foot."[156] In a reply to a letter of Governor Trumbull Washington apologized that he could not supply him with any arms as there was hardly a sufficient supply to meet the demands of the Continental Army. What amazed Washington was that the late importation of arms outnumbered the Continental troops raised to use them. "These have not and could not have been all put into their hands; and yet there are very few of them (muskets) now to be found undisposed of."[157] In this same letter the General told the Governor to supply the Continental troops with arms rather than the militia because he could order the Continental Army more quickly to a trouble spot than a governor would send his militia. Friction between the army and militia still existed and this was most felt in regard to supplies.

The war effort was further thwarted as state assemblies would pay high bounties in order to raise troops for their militia. Washington found it difficult to enlist men to whom Congress paid minimal wages. John Adams realized that these short term militia could not win the war as he remarked that "We shall never do well until we get a regular army and this will never be until men are

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[156] Ibid., VIII, 222, 272.

[157] Ibid., VIII, 334-35.

enlisted for a longer duration."[158] This meant that Congress must grant more generous bounties and better pay. Congress was reluctant to do this but if the war was to be won Congress and the army and the colonies had to cooperate and compromise.

Thomas Burke of North Carolina informed his Governor that within Congress "all particular jealousies are for the present laid to sleep, and long and uninterrupted may their slumber be. We are more wisely employed in giving vigor to our military operations and in correcting abuses in our departments..."[159] If harmony existed between the members of Congress, it did not yet exist between Congress and their army. Washington wrote to Governor Trumbull that he did not know where Congress had sent some of his new troops which had upset his plans.[160] From time to time Congress would order soldiers to a town or arsenal without informing the Commander-in-Chief. In June, 1777, Washington wrote Richard H. Lee, a Congressman from Virginia, that he had received no answer to a request of his: "...and this being frequently the case, leaves me often in a very disagreeable state of suspense, from which a simple

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[158] Smith, op. cit., pp. 287-88.

[159] Letters, II, 325.

[160] Writings, VIII, 43-44.

yea or nay would relieve me."[161] Congress lost in their own work continued to test the patience and loyalty of their General.

Muskets were still a serious problem in July as John Adams informed Warren that although 18,000 arms had arrived at Portsmouth, he did not know what became of them. Other arms had also arrived in Massachusetts but Congress had no idea where they had gone.[162] Washington feared that the arms quickly vanished due to the carelessness of his officers and the mismanagement of Congress. Thus he reported to the Board of War that a set of arms would be as necessary as a new suit of clothes each year.[163]

Towards the middle of July, 1777, a committee from Congress arrived to confer with the General and on August 5, they reported to the whole Congress that the army needed not only arms but also food and clothing.[164] There were serious problems in the Commissary and Quartermaster Departments. In the past Congress had so interfered with these two departments and had so bound their hands that in August the Commissary General, Joseph Trumbull, resigned

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[161] Ibid., VIII, 160.

[162] Letters, II, 404.

[163] Writings, VIII, 388.

[164] Journal, VIII, 546, 608-15.

and in October, Thomas Mifflin, the Quartermaster General resigned. Although Washington reminded Congress frequently of the need of these officers for the very existence of the army no new appointments were made. This committee made known the need of a better organization within the army for the location of food and military stores but Congress took no immediate action. The army, not Congress, would suffer for this failure.

The shortage of powder was no longer so severe. By the fall of 1777, the colonies had imported 1,454,210 pounds of gunpowder, had locally produced 115,000 pounds of powder from saltpetre, and had made 698,245 pounds of powder from 478,250 pounds of imported saltpetre. The total amount of gunpowder in the colonies was then estimated at 2,267,455 pounds. Massachusetts and Pennsylvania made the largest contributions to this quantity of gunpowder.[165] Ninety per-cent of this powder came from France by way of the West Indies. The crisis of gunpowder had passed but the Continental Army would never be as fully supplied as the British Regulars. Together Washington and Congress had accomplished this difficult task.

The army remained in need of arms. Washington ordered that all discarded arms should be collected and repaired. Soldiers often were issued a

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[165]Stephenson, op. cit., p. 277.

new musket because no gunsmith was in camp who could fix the old one.[166] By the end of the summer the shortage of food and clothing became a graver concern to Congress and their General than their musket shortage.

Military and civil affairs grew worse in September when Washington was forced to retreat from Brandywine. In this battle the army contained nearly a thousand troops without muskets.[167] Washington had hoped to defend Philadelphia from Brandywine but his troops were outflanked by the British. Although the Continental Army retreated in good order, they left behind some artillery. Shortly afterwards on September 18, 1777, Congress quickly fled from Philadelphia and on September 27, General Howe marched triumphantly into the city. The dignity of Congress had again been ruffled as they were forced to leave their city comforts. Congress blamed Washington and the army for the indignity and physical inconvenience which they suffered. They so easily seem to have forgotten that the condition of the army was partly due to their own muddling incompetency.[168] Before Congress departed for York, Pennsylvania,

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[166] Writings, IX, 18-19.

[167] Rufus Lincoln, Papers, 1776-1780, James Minor Lincoln (ed.), Private Printing, 1904), p. 10.

[168] Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p. 312.

it invested Washington with dictatorial powers for sixty days.[169] Only when everything seemed beyond hope did Congress trust Washington and his seeming "military might." Congress delegated this power to the General because it seemed to be the lesser of two evils; defeat or dictator.

Congress's confidence had been shaken during this military crisis in which the army could only retreat. Congress accepted the advice of Washington and appointed a new Board of War made up of military personnel. But Congress sacrificed any immediate hope of harmony between the Board of War and the army by choosing adversaries of Washington. Gates, Mifflin, and Conway made up the Board. The members of Congress seem to have intended this as a system of checks and balances.[170]

Congress could not understand Washington's continual retreat maneuver but the General had one aim, to win the war. The only way possible was to fight a war of skirmishes, avoiding any major engagements unless the odds were heavily in his favor. He had to keep his army together and strong enough to harass Howe's forces but an all-out attack would quickly put an end to his army and the war. While Washington did not prefer this kind of war, he realized it was the only kind of war his army, often impaired by the shortage of

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[169] Journal, VIII, 751.

[170] Miller, Triumph of Freedom, p. 254.

military stores, could engage in at the present. Congress did not yet appreciate this military insight.[171] Some Congressmen thought Washington was too hesitant to be an effective general.

Since Howe's forces were split and Washington was tired of Congress's complaints of inactivity, he decided to attack the main British force at Germantown. On October 4, 1777 foggy weather brought confusion to the inexperienced troops of the Continental Army and Washington lost the effect of his surprise attack. The army was prevented from any further attack because of the scarcity of powder.[172] The attack, however, was not completely in vain because it reinforced Howe's conviction that the Continental Army had a lot of fight. Both armies then settled in their winter quarters — the British at Philadelphia and the Americans at Valley Forge.

During the winter of 1777, the relations between Congress and the army became more strained. Washington who considered himself the servant of Congress reported regularly by letters to Congress, but frequently he was kept in the dark by Congress not only of civil matters but also of military. It seems that Washington was told nothing of the forthcoming French Alliance by Con-

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[171] Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p. 297.

[172] Writings, IX, 477-78.

gress.[173] Members of Congress thought it best that the possible alliance be kept a secret from the General despite the protest of Henry Laurens who was then President of Congress.[174] Perhaps the Legislators were too busy to keep Washington informed, but it is more likely that Congress wanted to remind the General that he was subordinate to them and must depend on them for whatever information they wanted to make known. Washington began to mistrust some of the Congressmen whom he felt were working more for their own selfish purposes than for the common welfare of the united colonies.

In late October Congress celebrated General Gates' victory over Burgoyne at Saratoga as the news had just reached them. Washington wrote to General Putnam that "The defeat of General Burgoyne is a most important event, and such as must afford the highest satisfaction to every well affected American."[175] News of this victory gave a powerful impetus to an attack against Washington which became known as the Conway Cabal. To some Con-

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[173]Force, V, II, 839, and V, III, 1437.

[174]Miller, Triumph of Freedom, p. 243. I have found nothing in my research to substantiate this claim of Miller except a few remarks in Force, V, II, 839. At the same time I found no evidence to deny it. My proof rests with Miller who gave no references to primary sources.

[175]William S. Baker, Itinerary of General Washington, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1892), p 99.

gressmen the Commander-in-Chief had accomplished almost nothing except a series of failures. Sam Adams felt that Continentals must fight the British to the finish and could have defeated the British had there been an energetic campaign in the fall of 1777.[176] Conway who sought his own promotion wrote to General Gates in early November that "Heaven has been determined to save your country or a weak General and bad counsellors would have ruined it."[177] This clearly implied that Washington was that "weak General". The Congress wanted a General who won major victories and now they had one in Gates. Linked with Sam Adams were Mifflin, James Lovell, Benjamin Rush and even Richard H. Lee who thought a New England General was needed to win the war. Sectionalism was still prevalent in Congress. There were secret conferences but little is known about the plans of these Congressmen except that they expected Washington's resignation to be soon given to Congress.[178] For a time Washington's recommendations went unheeded as Congress hesitated to give him their full support. On December 30, 1777, Lafayette wrote to his General:

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[176]Miller, Sam Adams, p. 348, quoting Warren-Adams Letters, I, 278.

[177]Baker, op. cit., p. 104.

[178]Letters, III, 267.

> There are open dissension in Congress; parties who hate one another as much as the common enemy; men who, without knowing any thing about war, undertake to judge you, and to make ridiculous comparisons. They are infatuated with Gates, without thinking of the differences of circumstances, and believe that attacking is the only thing necessary to conquer. These ideas are entertained by some jealous men, and perhaps secret friends of the British Government, who want to push you, in a moment of ill humor, to some rash enterprise upon the lines, or against a much stronger army.[179]

Washington was well aware that Congress was opposed to his "Fabianism" but he refused to be pressured by them against his better military judgment. He answered Lafayette's letter the next day:

> For it is well known, that neither ambitious, nor lucrative motives led me to accept my present Appointment; in the discharge of which I have endeavoured to observe one steady and uniform conduct, which I shall invariably pursue, while I have the honor to command, regardless of the Tongue of slander or the powers of detraction.[180]

Massachusetts and Virginia as a whole refused to turn against Washington but it was not until mid summer 1778, that Washington regained Congress's confidence. The General felt it was his duty to remain with the army until he was dismissed by Congress. In January he wrote a friend, Reverend William Gordon:

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[179] Writings, X, 236.

[180] Ibid., X, 237.

> So soon as the public gets dissatisfied with my service or a person is found better qualified to answer her expectation, I shall quit the helm with as much satisfaction, and retire to a private station with as much content as ever the wearied pilgrim felt upon his safe arrival in the Holy-land.[181]

Washington was sensitive to the dissatisfaction within Congress and was "exceedingly hurt with these Observations and hard speeches" but he was determined not to resign.[182] The jealousy and intrigue of this cabal furthered the estrangement between Congress and Washington's army during a time of great need, Valley Forge.

Valley Forge became a tragedy because the army was in the midst of plenty or very near to it but could not share in it. There was no shortage of food in the colonies and yet food did not reach the army because of the greed of farmers who insisted on hard cash for their produce. Also the transportation system with the army was completely tangled and confused. In reality the Quartermaster Department did not exist while Congress failed to do anything except discuss new plans for a Quartermaster Department. The problem of supplying the army was now as serious as it had been a year ago. On December 23, Washington addressed Congress in a long letter on the needs of the

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[181] Ibid., X, 338.

[182] Boudinot, op. cit., p. 52.

army and on their responsibilities to the army:

> I can assure the gentlemen that it is much easier and a less distressing thing to draw remonstrances in a comfortable room by a good fireside, than to occupy a cold, bleak hill, and sleep under frost and snow without clothes or blankets. However, although they seem to have little feeling for the naked and distressed soldiers, I feel abundantly for them, and from my soul, I pity those miseries which it is neither in my power to relieve or prevent.[183]

In the same letter Washington told Congress that the "army can do three things, starve, dissolve, or disperse."

Some of the Congressmen opposed to Washington seem to have blinded Congress to the pressing needs of the ragged army. This is evident from a letter of Washington to Robert Morris in which he complained that he seemed to have failed to make completely known the true state of affairs in camp since Congress thought "it is but to say, Presto Begone, and everything is done."[184] Occasionally Congress almost believed that it was the duty and privilege of the soldier to suffer for his country. Lafayette remarked "these veterans have patience in their misery which is unknown to European armies."[185] This could

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[183] Writings, X, 196.

[184] Alfred H. Bill, Valley Forge: the Making of an Army, (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1952), p. 12.

[185] Miller, Triumph of Freedom, p. 499.

as well have been said of Washington. While Congress discussed the food and clothing shortage, foreign officers in the American army were reported to have said that no other government than a republic would have inflicted such unnecessary suffering upon its defenders.[186]

As officers would no longer make excuses for their legislators the army began to complain and spoke of Congress with contempt.[187] Washington warned Congress that there was a point beyond which the patience, fortitude, and loyalty of the troops could not be driven. If the army this winter did not reach that point it was mostly due to their General. Without strong leaders the army would have fallen to pieces. The cause of liberty, alone, cannot stir men to valor when food, clothing, and arms are lacking, but a personal loyalty to a commander can strengthen men in their determination. The very thing that Congress feared most; the army's loyalty to its general rather than its nation, it forced upon the army.

Congress had given Washington power to impress supplies from the surrounding countryside but he was slow to act because he knew colonial resentment of the military power. The farmers no less than the Congressmen

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[186]Hatch, op. cit., p. 223

[187]Ibid., p. 94, quoting Joseph Clark, "Diary," New Jersey Historical Society Proceedings, 1st series, VII, 104.

detested a military dictator. Although Washington had to impress supplies and wagons he feared that he would make more enemies than friends among the farmers. He was so concerned about the use of this power that he requested Congress to let the states use their civil authority to impress the farmer's supplies since:

> The people at large are governed by Custom, To Acts of Legislation or Civil Authority they have been ever taught to yield a willing obedience without reasoning about their propriety. On those of Military power, whether immediate or derived originally from another Source, they ever looked with a jealous and suspicious eye.[188]

On several occasions Congress urged the General to exercise this power of impressment but he was sensitive to the friction between military and civil authority, and thus rarely used this authorization. Besides, the soldiers were seldom either well-enough or adequately dressed to travel outside the camp for any impressment of supplies.[189]

Though there were many opponents of Washington in Congress who were loud in their criticism, there were also many who were concerned with the welfare of the army and who valued Washington. Congress resolved in late November to send a committee to camp to devise ways to supply the army and

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[188] Writings, X, 159.

[189] Thacher, op. cit., p. 153.

the best means of carrying on the next campaign. At the beginning of the new year, 1778, another committee was authorized by Congress to visit Washington at Valley Forge.[190] The first committee remained in camp all winter, and due to either misunderstanding or ignorance frequently antagonized the officers. On the other hand the visiting committees often were sympathetic to the army and would represent the army's grievances in Congress.[191] By means of these and other committees Congress attempted to keep in touch with the army and perhaps more closely direct it.

At the time Congress extended Washington's extraordinary powers, it also resolved that one month's extraordinary pay be given to the troops for "their soldierly patience, fidelity, and in zeal in the cause of their country." Congress further assured the soldiers that it was trying to remedy their grievances by better direction of the Commissary Department.[192] Congress tried hard, but this was not good enough as Hamilton remarked, "In what Congress had at any time done for the army, they have been commonly been too

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[190] Journal, IX, 972.

[191] Montross, op. cit., p. 242.

[192] Burnett, op. cit., p. 277.

late."[193] Certainly this was most true of Valley Forge.

Congress attempted to supply the army but often provisions on the way never reached the camp or could not be shipped from the depots because of the scarcity of wagons and horses. During the winter of Valley Forge Washington's correspondence constantly mentions the need for clothing, food, and transportation. Likewise Congress's Journal records the orders of military supplies. Congress was sympathetic to these needs but they were utterly unable to relieve them because of the inefficiency of the Quartermaster and Commissary Departments. Congress was deceived by some profiteers and speculators who had no concern for the army.[194] There was graft, speculation, selfishness, and even some meaness, but gross mismanagement strained Congress's relations with the army and caused much needless privation and worry. Gradually Congress realized that it could not oversee all the duties it had assumed. Congress decided to share some of these responsibilities with men who were not members of Congress. Nathanael Greene, a close friend of Washington and a soldier, perhaps could organize the Quartermaster Department. On March 2,

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[193]Allen Bowman, The Morale of the American Revolutionary Army, (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs, 1943), p. 93, quoting Hamilton, Writings, I, 168.

[194]Wallace, op. cit., p. 169.

1778, Greene was appointed to the post of Quartermaster General by Congress.[195]

Added to the army's problem of sufficient food and clothing was the deficiency of muskets which still concerned Washington. In late December and again in January several ships arrived with arms, gunpowder, musket balls, saltpetre, and some cannon.[196] Washington congratulated the army on their arrival and considered these French ships as proof that France was well disposed towards the colonies. The General maintained discipline throughout the winter as well as he could with a ragged and half starved army that frequently deserted for a period. General orders stipulated that the soldiers' ammunition must be examined carefully each day at roll call to prevent the waste of any powder.[197]

When Baron von Steuben arrived on February 27, 1778, he described the army he saw encamped at Valley Forge:

> The arms at Valley Forge were in a horrible condition, covered with rust, half of them without bayonets, many from which a single shot could not be fired. The pouches were quite as bad

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[195] Journal, X, 210.

[196] Writings, X, 181, 202.

[197] Ibid., X, 358-59.

> as the arms. A great many of the men had tin boxes instead of pouches, others had cow horns; and muskets, carbines, fowling pieces, and rifles were to be seen in the same company. The description of the dress is most easily given. The men were literally naked; some of them in the fullest extent of the word.[198]

On March 28, Congress appointed von Steuben Inspector General of the Army which post he served excellently. He enforced a rugged discipline in his training throughout the spring, 1778, as new recruits came into camp.

Despite the privations and frustrations Congress caused the army, a well-equiped and well-disciplined Continental Army emerged from Valley Forge in June, 1778. The equipment and food had been supplied by Quartermaster General Greene who accepted his position only if he was not hampered by Congress. Congress slowly learned the advantage of the centralization of authority as it allowed Greene his desired freedom of action.

Most of the soldiers had a musket and bayonet in which he had a new confidence because of Baron von Steuben's training. Before the Baron's instructions, the Continentals seldom relied on their bayonets as few knew how to use them well. John Laurens wrote to his father, the President of Congress, in early April that:

> I must not omit to inform you that Baron Steuben is making a sensible progress with our soldiers...If Mr. Howe opens the

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[198]Baker, op. cit., p. 123, quoting Kapp, Life of Steuben.

> campaign with his usual deliberation, and our recruits or draughts come in tolerably well, we shall be infinitely better prepared to meet him, than ever we have been.[199]

All the soldiers were equiped with knapsacks, cutting swords or tomahawks, cartridge pouches, and American flints. The army was still without uniforms but they wore a "rifle dress" which was a hunting shirt, long breeches and leggings, a dark hat decked with a cockade or green twig, and a white belt over their shoulder for their cartridge pouch.[200]

The hardships and difficulties endured together at Valley Forge gave the troops a new bond of union. Congress through its mismanagement and seeming indifference, nevertheless, had welded together an army under the skilful and faithful direction of General Washington. The situation looked much brighter in this spring of 1778 as Washington and von Steuben placed their confidence in these soldiers who were hardened veterans, the core of the Continental Army. The army still had to be tested under fire but Washington waited for Howe to make the first move. As summer approached Washington hoped that a better understanding and cooperation between the Congress and its military army could be achieved.

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[199] Ibid., p. 123.

[200] Bill, op. cit., pp. 191-92.

CHAPTER V

THE CRISIS IS PASSED

In the early spring of 1778 Congress's attendance improved as the legislators returned expecting to pick up business where they had left it the previous winter. Henry Laurens, distressed by this cavalier attitude, wrote to James Duane who had been absent from Congress since December, 1777:

> What representation had ye for upward of three precious months, when those things were done which ought not to have been done, and those left undone which ought to have been done?...seldom 15 to 17 (members) made a very full House — you well know Sir, the unavoidable drudgery of Committees requires more hands...[201]

Laurens had every right to complain as Congress accomplished most of its work in committees which depended on a full representation of the colonies. Necessary decisions frequently had to wait. This spring Congress hoped to reorganize the army especially in the commissary department and to improve the financial status of the United Colonies.

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[201] Burnett, op. cit., pp. 319-20.

On April 7, 1778, Congress agreed to make a Contract with Beaumarchais's Roderique Hortalez et Compagnie for arms, ammunition, clothing, and other military stores. Within a year after this agreement Beaumarchais sent eight shiploads of war materiel valued at five to six million livres to the colonies.[202] Congress was relieved by Beaumarchais's successful efforts to supply the Continental Army.

In this same spring of 1778, General Washington was displeased with Congress as it would neither increase the pay of his officers nor grant them any kind of pension after the war. As a result some of his officers were resigning when the General needed them most. Washington revealed his feelings about the army and Congress in a long letter to John Banister who was a delegate from Virginia. However, Washington seems to have intended that the letter be read by other Congressmen too:

> We must take the passions of Men as Nature has given them, and those principles as a guide which are generally the rule of Action. I do not mean to exclude altogether the Idea of Patriotism. I know it exists, and I know it has done much in the present Contest. But I will venture to assert, that a great and

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[202] Edward S. Corwin, French Policy and the American Alliance of 1778, (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1962), p. 79, quoting Wharton, I, 60, and Journal, X, 316-21.

> lasting war can never be supported on this principle alone. It must be aided by a prospect of Interests or some reward.[203]

Washington, unlike some of the Congressmen, was a practical man. He realized that political philosophy or the ideal of independence was not sufficient to keep his soldiers in the field.

Washington continued in this letter to compose his thoughts in a manner that was rare in his correspondence. The small number of Congressmen present and their limited talents concerned the General. "I wish our representation in Congress was complete and full from every State, and that it was formed of the first Abilities among us. Whether we continue to War, or to proceed to Negotiate, the Wisdom of America in Council cannot be too great..."[204] Washington like Laurens wanted all the states represented by qualified men so that more work could be accomplished by the committees. The army was very dependent on Congress for its supplies and the General understood this as well as any Congressman.

Washington concluded this long letter to Banister with two more observations. The indecision of Congress which he never became accustomed to, was the first. Laurens himself was aware of this problem and once wrote to

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[203] Writings, XI, 286.

[204] Ibid., XI, 289.

Washington that "..'tis seldom in the power of the President to answer with that dispatch, which may seem necessary..."[205] The President of Congress also realized that "precious time was lost" and Charles Carroll remarked in this April of 1778, that "The Congress does worse than ever: We murder time, and chat it away in idle impertinent talk: However, I hope the urgency of affairs will teach even that Body (Congress) a little discretion "[206] Congress did not always realize the army's need for urgency.

The second observation made by the General was that:

> The jealousy which Congress unhappily entertains of the Army, and which, if reports are right, some Members labour to establish. You may be assured there is nothing more injurious, or more unjustly founded. This jealousy stands upon the common, received Opinion, which under proper limitations is certainly true, that standing Armies are dangerous to a State.[207]

He continued that most nations had found fault with standing armies in time of peace since they consisted of "mercenaries and hirelings" but not in time of war. The General looked upon his men not as mercenaries but as paid citizen soldiers. Washington wrote, "We should all be considered, Congress, Army, etc., as one people, embarked in one Cause, in one interest; acting on the

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[205] Letters, II, 549.

[206] Burnett, op. cit., p. 317.

[207] Writings, XI, 289.

same principles and to the same end."[208] Washington was concerned that Congress so feared the army and was opposed to a standing army. Militia alone could not win the war. The army, Washington realized, must be subordinate to the supreme civil authority of the nation but this did not mean that the army became the slaves of Congress. As an ex-Congressman, General Washington understood that these "jealousies" would only injure the cause and war effort of the United Colonies. Thus he concluded his letter in a defense of his soldiers:

> It is unjust, because no Order of Men in the thirteen States have paid a more sanctimonious regard to their (Congress's) proceedings than the army...it may be said that no history, now extant, can furnish an instance of an Army's suffering such uncommon hardships as ours have done, and bearing them with the same patience and Fortitude.[209]

Congress realized that they had made mistakes and in April they began to discuss the army especially after their winter at Valley Forge. Debate over an increase in pay for the officers lasted until May 15, 1778, when a proposal was passed. The debate centered about whether officers should receive half-pay for life. Some Congressmen argued that it was not in the power of Congress to enact such a measure while others feared a standing army would

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[208] Ibid.,

[209] Ibid., XI, 290.

result. A compromise was reached in May when Congress resolved that half-pay be awarded the officer for seven years instead of life.[210] This compromise satisfied both the army and Congress.

The scarcity of arms and ammunition still perturbed the General as he awaited action by the British Forces. He informed Congress of his need for the coming campaign:

> I shall not add upon the importance of this subject or apologize for giving you this trouble, as you are so well acquainted with the real, as well as accidental expenditure of ammunition in the course of a Campaign, and the fatal consequences attending a scarcity of it.[211]

Washington's orders continued to be strict in regard to the loss of gunpowder. He prescribed thirty-nine lashes for any soldier found wasting ammunition.[212] Discipline was necessary for the army's survival.

Congress listened to the Commander-in-Chief's petitions and tried to provide the needed war materiel. According to Samuel Chase, Congress had on hand in late April, 15,000 muskets and 200 field pieces.[213] Congress

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[210] Burnett, op. cit., p. 313.

[211] Writings, XI, 315.

[212] Ibid., XI, 249.

[213] Letters, III, 179.

informed General Gates, Commander in the North and the favorite of some of the legislators, that on no account was he to stop the supplies destined for the main army. Also the "hero of Saratoga" was told that no expedition should be undertaken without Washington's approval and that all requests for soldiers should likewise be approved by the General.[214] Congress had forgotten the Conway Cabal. This was the same Congress that had preferred Gates over Washington last winter but the rumors and jealousies against Washington no longer were given much attention. On April 23, 1778, Congress even manifested their confidence in Washington by extending his plenary powers until August 10.

Washington learned of the French Alliance from another general, Alexander McDougall, who had received the news from Simeon Deane. Deane, the brother of Silas, had recently returned from France to deliver the actual treaty to Congress which he did on May 4.[215] Congress quickly ratified the treaty. It seems that Washington had no official information from Congress that an alliance might be agreed upon in the near future, but he overlooked the slight and rejoiced that France had formally come to the aid of America.[216] However John

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[214] Journal, X, 368.

[215] Writings, XI, 332.

[216] Ibid., XI, 288.

Laurens, Washington's aide, wrote to his father that it was not proper that the General of the Army should be so poorly informed of all that is known by Congress of European affairs.

> Is it not a galling circumstance, for him to collect the most important intelligence piece-meal, and as they (Congress) choose to give it,...it should be considered that in order to settle his plans of operation for the ensuing campaign, he should take into view the present state of European affairs and Congress should not leave him in the dark.[217]

The President of Congress answered his son that he was not ignorant of his son's complaint and that he was ashamed that Congress was so slow to entrust secrets to their commander. Once before, but to no avail, Henry Laurens had rebuked Congress for their withholding information from Washington.[218]

The French Alliance was celebrated on May 6, in Washington's camp at Valley Forge. A salute was given by firing first thirteen cannons, and then each soldier fired three rounds and the artillery discharged forty-four cannons.[219] Powder could be expended since a French Alliance would mean more arms, artillery, powder, a whole army, and a navy. Washington could feel relieved

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[217] Letters, III, 228.

[218] Ibid.,

[219] Elijah Fisher, Journal, (New York: reprinted William Abbott, Magazine of History, 1909), p. 19.

because what Congress could not supply, perhaps, France could. Actually French supplies were no greater after the treaty than before due to Beaumarchais's tireless service to the colonies between 1776-1778.[220]

With the summer campaign very near in the middle of May Washington's letters continually mentioned the need of arms. Although General Knox informed the General that 2,000 muskets were on the way to him, Washington asked for another 1000 as a "number of men are intirely (sic) destitute."[221] The General also urged Congress to see that the arms and clothing expected from France were sent to the army as soon as they arrived. "Our distress is amazingly great" he reported as recruits came into the camp without muskets.[222] Frequently other generals requested arms of Washington since they thought Congress would best supply the Continental Army. But he was helpless to aid them as he wrote to General Smallwood on May 19, 1778,

> The scarcity of arms with us is so great, that I can at present afford no relief to your wants in this respect. I am employing every means we have, to collect supplies and shall furnish you as soon and as amply as possible.[223]

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[220] Charles Van Tyne, "French Aid Before the Alliance of 1778," American Historical Review, XXXI, (Oct. 1925), 20-40, p. 20.

[221] Writings, XI, 409.

[222] Ibid., XI, 416.

[223] Ibid., XI, 422.

Occasionally Washington was frustrated by having his orders countermanded and the military stores he had expected from Springfield, Massachusetts would never arrive. In early June he was still making last minute preparations by obtaining pistols and swords for his officers.[224]

On June 18, 1778, Sir Henry Clinton, the new Commander of the British Forces, evacuated Philadelphia and began his march towards New York. As Clinton's baggage train was very long, his army took seven days to march forty miles.[225] The Continental Army marched out of Valley Forge on June 19 and 20 in pursuit of Clinton. On June 28, 1778, the Continental Army attacked the British near Monmouth Court House but General Lee panicked and ordered the army to retreat. The retreat was not a rout and the battle lasted all day thanks to Generals Washington, Knox, Greene, and Wayne and Von Steuben's well trained troops. This was the first time that the army displayed steadiness and maneuvered tactically under British fire. During the night Clinton and his troops, exhausted after the day's fighting, continued their march to New York. This battle was not an American victory but the Continentals had proved themselves both to Congress and Washington. Slowly Washington continued his

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[224] Ibid., XII, 27.

[225] Miller, Triumph of Freedom, p. 318.

pursuit of the British. He set up his own camp on the White Plains where two years earlier he and his Continental Army had fought the same British Army.[226]

On August 3, 1778 the General wrote to Congress in praise of Quartermaster General Greene for performing his duties well. He informed them that Greene had made possible his quick mobility with the whole army from Valley Forge until he camped at White Plains.[227] Most of the Continental Army would remain in the New York vicinity for the next three years while the main theatre of war would shift to the South.

Throughout the fall and winter General Washington tried to obtain arms for his troops as there was a considerable deficiency. Washington urged Congress to send cargoes that arrived from the West Indies and France to Springfield, Massachusetts "from whence the Articles may be brought to the Army as they are wanted."[228] Cannon was another deficiency within the army, and now that the army could perhaps lay siege to New York it would need more artillery. In late November, 1778, Washington wrote Congress:

> The providing of Cannon is a matter of infinite importance and I am persuaded Congress will take every means in their power to

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[226]Fitzpatrick, op. cit., pp. 353-55.
Fisher, op. cit., p. 22.

[227]Baker, op. cit., p. 140.

[228]Writings, XIII, 311.

> accomplish it. . .we cannot extend our views too soon to the obtaining a further large supply. We must in the course of things have occasion for a great deal of Artillery.[229]

However the Continental Army was always weak in artillery and depended heavily on French Artillery.

The army made winter quarters near West Point while Clinton's forces remained in New York. In December Washington indicated to Congress that he desired to attend their meeting to inform them personally of the state of the army and what was needed to continue the war. Congress ordered the General to come as soon as practicable to Philadelphia. On December 24, Washington announced his arrival to Congress. Although the General had made known his desire to visit Congress, they could not simply let him come but thought the initiative should appear to have been taken by Congress. Thus in the Journal of Congress civil power indeed was supreme over the military as it is written that the General "persuant to their orders" appeared before Congress.[230]

When men like Sam Adams still feared the army, no wonder Congressmen were "jealous" of their power. In a letter to James Warren, Adams wrote,

> The time may come when the Sins of America may be punished by a standing Army; and that Time will surely come when the Body

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[229] Ibid., XIII, 317.

[230] Burnett, op. cit., p. 386.
Journal, XII, 1230, 1250

> of the People, shall be so lost to the Exercise of common Understanding and Caution, as to suffer the Civil to stoop to Military Power.[231]

Adams was quite irritated. In his letter he mentioned that the French Count D'Estaing who had arrived with his fleet in July had fired a thirteen gun salute to the Army but none to the Congress. Such anxieties and disputes continued to prevent some of the Congressmen from cooperating as well as they might have with the Continental Army and Washington.

At the time of Washington's visit to Congress he shared his impressions with Benjamin Harrison. The General thought that the states must cooperate if the nation was to survive the war. There was a "lax of public virtue" which concerned the General as he knew the colonies were too committed to the cause of the revolution to withdraw or become indifferent. This lengthy quotation demonstrates Washington's genuine concern.

> I have seen nothing since I came here to change my opinion of Men or Measrs. but abundant reason to be convinced that our Affairs are in a more distressed, ruinous, and deplorable condition than they been Since the commencement of the War...If I was to be called upon to draw a picture...from what I have seen, heard, and in part know I would in one word say that idleness, dissipation and extravagance seem to have laid fast hold of most of them...That party disputes and personal quarrels are the great business of the day whilst the momentous concerns of an empire...are but secondary considerations and postponed from

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[231] Letters, III, 458.

> day to day, week to week as if our affairs wore the most promising aspect; after drawing this picture, which from my Soul I believe to be a true one I need not repeat to you that I am alarmed and wish to see my Countrymen roused.[232]

Washington was convinced that the states should send their ablest men to Congress since "these characters must not slumber, nor sleep at home, in such times of pressing danger; they must not content themselves in places of honor. .while the common interests of America are mouldering and sinking into...ruin in which their must ultimately be involved."[233] Sectionalism blinded the Congressmen occasionally to the needs of the Continental Army and the cause of the colonies. Washington retained a vision of an America where all the colonies accepted their responsibilities and contributed to the commonweal.

During this visit Washington was concerned with the pay of the army, arms, clothing, and plans for the coming campaign. Military stores were still required for the success of the army. With Clinton in New York Washington knew the army might have to take the offensive and this type of warfare consumed more war supplies.[234] In late January the General requested Congress

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[232] Writings, XIII, 466-67.

[233] Ibid.,

[234] Ibid., XIII, 488.

to grant him leave to return to camp. Washington was sensitive to the hardships his soldiers endured while many of these legislators enjoyed the city comforts of Philadelphia with its many parties. On February 2, 1779, Washington gladly departed from Philadelphia for his camp at White Plains.

When he arrived at camp he began his preparations for the spring campaign. By April Washington had not yet received all the reports as he asked General Knox to check what was needed so that he could order it from the Board of War. Particularly there was a deficiency of small arms, powder, and lead.[235] The General also informed the new President of Congress, Joseph Reed, that the militia must come provided with arms since the Continental magazines were exhausted. War materiel must have come into camp for Washington wrote a general that 40 rounds would be sufficient for his troops.[236] Washington had returned to an army lacking many of the essentials necessary for winning a war, but he was forced to rely on Congress and ultimately trusted in their support.

Earlier in March the General congratulated Thomas Nelson of Virginia on his return to Congress. In a letter, the citizen-general remarked that the times called for "cool and dispassionate reasoning" as well as integrity, strict

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[235] Ibid., XIV, 372.

[236] Ibid., XIV, 459.

attention, and application. More than ever before Washington thought that political skill was required to steer Congress and keep it on the correct course.

> Unanimity in our Councils, disinterestedness in our pursuits, and steady perseverence in our national duty, are the only means to avoid misfortunes; if they come upon us after these we shall have the consolation of knowing that we have done our best, the rest is with the Gods.[237]

Washington's interests in Congress were sincere and he desired a strong central authority that could weld the states into a strong union. Shortly after this last letter, he wrote to George Mason that he could not fully express himself since so many accidents occur in the mail but he did compare Congress to a clock with each state representing a small part of it. All the small parts, he wrote, endeavour to put themselves in fine order "without considering how useless and unavailing their labour, unless the great wheel, or spring which is to set the whole in motion, is also well attended to and kept in good order."[238] Perhaps more than anyone in Congress Washington understood the importance of unity and cooperation between the states, and the states and the army if freedom was to be won and maintained for the colonies. Congress's distrust of the army was difficult for Washington to understand since the soldiers were

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[237] Ibid., XIV, 246.

[238] Ibid., XIV, 301.

citizens of the colonies. For the present the army was as necessary as Congress to protect the new nation.

As summer approached Washington grew alarmed over the condition of the army. "Our army as it now stands is but little more than the skeleton of an army," Washington wrote to Gouverneur Morris, "and I hear of no steps that are taking to give it strength and substance."[239] So too he informed his brother, John Washington, of his concerns in May,

> This is no time for slumbering and sleeping; nor to dispute upon trifles, when our Battalions are to full, supplies to provide, and ruined finances to recover and at a crisis with Great Britain is ready to put forth her utmost vengence.[240]

His letters repeatedly mention his fear that Congress would not be qualified this spring, 1779, to handle the crises. "I have never yet seen the time in which our affairs in my opinion, were at so low an ebb as at the present."[241] Washington also informed Morris who was in Congress that should Clinton soon attack he did not know what the consequences might be, but he feared the worst.[242] While in this same mood the General wrote Congress that little aid

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[239] Ibid., XV, 25.

[240] Ibid., XV, 59.

[241] James B. Perkins, France in the American Revolution, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1911), p. 7 quoting Sparks, VI, 252.

[242] Baker, op. cit., p.. 156.

should be expected of the army in its present situation and that the militia were too poorly armed to even defend themselves. He concluded that, "How this can be remedied, and the army supplied, I know not."[243]

Although tired of trying to get arms and powder from Congress and the state assemblies, Washington continued to write, beg, and warn the legislators that without a strong well-supplied army the cause of independence would soon be lost, possibly during this summer of 1779. On June 9, the General wrote the Board of War that "I am really pained that our supplies of ammunition should be so miserably low, and trust that proper measures have been taken to place them on a more respectable footing."[244] For the remainder of the war Washington would plead and remind Congress of the need of war materiel and Congress would continue to try to meet the army's demands. Friction between the two groups of colonists, and between Congress and the army, would continue until the army was disbanded in 1783, but relations between Congress and Washington would get no worse. The crises of the first years were passed and experience would aid both the army and Congress.

In May of 1779, Washington believed what he wrote to Armstrong, a Congressman from Pennsylvania, "The hour therefore is certainly come when

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[243] Ibid., p. 157.

[244] Writings, XV, 248.

party differences and disputes should subside; when every Man, especially those in office, should with one hand and one heart pull the same way and with their whole strength."[245] This was Washington's vision that gave him patience when he tired of fighting for every musket, cartridge, or grain of powder that his army needed. The General felt that it was worth fighting for "this hour" of unity for even if did not come in 1779, it would eventually come. Congressmen agreed that this was worth fighting for and continued to support their General as well as they could.

In May, 1779, Clinton threatened West Point but only captured Stony Point, a small outpost on the Hudson River. After the main part of the British forces returned to New York Washington sent Wayne to recapture Stony Point. On July 16, 1779, by means of a surprise attack Wayne took Stony Point but he could not maintain the fort because of the lack of troops. On July 20, he removed the military stores and cannon before he destroyed the small fort. He then led his troops back to camp near West Point. Here the Northern campaign ended as Washington's soldiers spent the summer strengthening West Point's defenses and Clinton entrenched his army in New York. The remainder of the war would be mostly fought in the Southern colonies but Washington's army continued to harass the British about New York. The army still suffered from

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[245] Ibid., XV, 99.

the scarcity of military stores and still had to face the miserable winter of 1779-1780 but it would survive. Together, the Congress and the army survived the crises of those first four years of war and there would be more in the remaining two, but the major crises were passed. Congress and Washington had kept a fighting army in the field that threatened the British Army and this had been the chief military strategy. So far it had worked and it would continue to work in the next two years.

When Congress had created their military arm, the Continental Army, they had decided to guard its every motion. Like the earlier colonial assemblies they wanted the civil authority to be supreme. However, before the first year ended Congress had experienced the difficulties of directing and supplying an army in war. The two worked very closely together often to the army's detriment but their disputes and misunderstandings somehow seemed to heal. At first Congress's indecision to an all-out war for independence had hindered their support of Washington and the Continental Army. But even after July, 1776, Congress was still slow to fully support the war effort since their fear of too strong an army dominated their military proposals. This fear of the army and of a military dictatorship harassed the progress of the army's organization and fostered the Conway Cabal. There were Congressmen who believed that the states might "lose their liberties to some aspiring general wearing the

uniform of the Continental army."[246] They felt it was their duty to prevent the rise of any Caesar or Cromwell. These Congressmen had given birth to the idea of the revolution and thought their cause was safe only in their hands. Certainly they were wary of this new class of men, the generals.

But this fear of the military and a possible dictatorship did not blind some of the Congress who recognized the excellent qualities of their Commander-in-Chief and realized the necessity of supporting their army. John Adams himself had stated that the "Liberties of America depended upon him (Washington), in a great degree."[247] Many in Congress worked diligently to supply the Continental Army with war materiel which was a tremendous task. Hancock and Laurens as Presidents of Congress continually exhorted the state assemblies to furnish the Continental Army with military stores. Congress had successfully acquired muskets and powder for the army through the Frenchman, Beaumarchais, which had made the war effort possible in 1776 and 1777. So too, Congress assured the army further support with the French Alliance in 1778. Congress was concerned with the army's deficiencies and in its own way tried to remedy them.

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[246] Miller, Sam Adams, p. 344, quoting Writings of Sam Adams, III, 230.

[247] Letters, I, 131.

Washington realized that there were parties within Congress and usually he was patient in awaiting their decisions. He accepted their criticism and willingly supported this body of legislators who frequently were ignorant of military matters. Although the General had won no major victories as of 1779, he had kept the Continental Army together in the field and had engaged the British Army at Long Island, Brandywine, and Monmouth. He had also driven Howe's army from Boston, defeated the British at Trenton, and survived the winter of Valley Forge. Throughout these years Congress with all its shortcomings and fears had furnished the army with war materiel. On several occasions Congress had even entrusted Washington with dictatorial powers as Congressmen like Benjamin Rush realized, "General Washington must be invested with dictatorial powers for a few months or we are undone. The vis inertiae of the Congress has almost ruined this country."[248] Washington was saddened by Congress's distrust of his army. He was as opposed to a dictator as they were, and remarked that "I confess, I have felt myself greatly embarrassed with respect to a vigorous exercise of military power."[249]

Fortunately Washington and some Congressmen were above the routine business of an army and a legislative assembly. They could see beyond the

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[248] Force, V, III, 1487.

[249] Writings, X, 159.

present crisis to a new form of government wherein independence would be guaranteed. The common welfare of the United Colonies came before their personal desires. Many generals could not have done all the correspondence of Washington to the state assemblies and the Congress on behalf of his army's needs. Frequently Washington begged Congress to consider the serious condition of the Continental Army. Not many generals would have been as subservient as General Washington was to Congress. Washington as a citizen-soldier believed that civil authority must be superior to the military authority, and he directed the Continental Army according to this principle. He realized that Congress must be powerful if the Continental Army was to be maintained and the independence of the colonies won. Washington wrote to Congressman Joseph Jones in the summer of 1780 that,

> Certain I am that unless Congress speaks in a more decision tone; unless they are vested with powers by the several states competent to the great purpose of War, or assume them as a matter of right; and they, and the States respectively, act with more energy than they hetherto have done, that our Cause is lost.[250]

Washington was a practical man who often had to argue with Congressmen who were more concerned with political philosophy than with the present crisis that faced Congress and the army. Since the General favored a strong civil

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[250]Burnett, op. cit., p. 456.

authority he recognized the weaknesses within Congress. He hoped that qualified men would come to Congress so that the army and Congress might cooperate in winning the war. So too he was disappointed when Congress wasted valuable time in making military decisions which injured the well-being of the army. Most of all he wanted Congress and the army to overcome their petty "jealousies."

All these factors made it more difficult for the Congress to adequately supply the army with the much needed military stores. Congress tried to meet the army's demands and had partially performed their difficult task. By the fall of 1777, the major powder crisis had passed but muskets continued to be wanted. Military stores were never adequate during the war but the deficiency in July, 1779, was much less than the scarcity of arms and powder that Washington had to accept as his army laid siege to Boston in the winter of 1775. Perhaps the Congress and the army were the victims of a war that was too great for a rural country with limited manufacturing. Alexander Hamilton in 1779 reflected on the first years of the war for independence in a letter to Robert Morris:

> The war, particularly in the first periods, required exertions beyond our strength, to which neither our population nor riches were equal. We have the fullest proof of this, in the constant thinness of our armies,...the scarcity of hands in husbandry,

> and other occupations; the decrease of our staple commodities; and difficulty of every species of supply.[251]

Together Congress and the army challenged a great empire. Despite their many differences and frustrations, Congress and the army had cooperated. Although there had been mismanagement within Congress, the army had been supplied with war materiel. The Continental Army remained a loyal instrument in the hands of Congress and as long as Washington was Commander-in-Chief the legislators need not have feared a dictatorship. Civil authority would remain superior to military power, and yet only in union could independence be won and preserved. Together the Congress and Continental Army would pursue the war until it ended in their favor, and then the army would disband to allow Congress to guide and govern the new nation.

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[251] Montross, op. cit., p. 243, quoting Hamilton, I, 116-17.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Francis J. Daly, S.J. has been read and approved by the director of the thesis. Furthermore, the final copies have been examined by the director and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

April 7, 1967
Date

Charles K. Metzger (PR)
Signature of Adviser