

THE MILITARY STRUGGLE, 1861-1862



WINFIELD SCOTT

The Anaconda Plan (1861)

At the beginning of the war, General Winfield Scott prepared a military plan to subdue the seceded states and restore the Union. Although a Virginian, Scott never wavered in his loyalty to the United States, but he had no desire to fight an aggressive, destructive war that would inflame sectional hatreds and make governing a restored Union costly and difficult. Instead, he advocated a war of limited objectives that would minimize bloodshed and facilitate reunion. Therefore, he proposed surrounding the South and, by strangling it economically, forcing the Confederacy to surrender. The northern press dubbed his proposal "the Anaconda Plan," after the large snake that squeezes its prey. In the following letter to General George McClellan, Scott outlined the basic tenets of his plan. Lincoln never fully accepted Scott's strategy, but incorporated parts of it into his plan for a more aggressive war.

Headquarters of the Army,
Washington, May 3, 1861.

Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan,
Commanding Ohio Volunteers,
Cincinnati, Ohio:

Sir:

I have read and carefully considered your plan for a campaign, and now send you confidentially my own views, supported by certain facts of which you should be advised.

First. It is the design of the Government to raise 25,000 additional regular troops, and 60,000 volunteers for three years. It will be inexpedient either to rely on the three-months' volunteers for extensive operations or to put in their hands the best class of arms we have in store. The term of service would expire by the commencement of a regu-

lar campaign, and the arms not lost be returned mostly in a damaged condition. . . .

Second. We rely greatly on the sure operation of a complete blockade of the Atlantic and Gulf ports soon to commence. In connection with such blockade we propose a powerful movement down the Mississippi to the ocean, with a cordon of posts at proper points, and the capture of Forts Jackson and Saint Philip; the object being to clear out and keep open this great line of communication in connection with the strict blockade of the seaboard, so as to envelop the insurgent States and bring them to terms with less bloodshed than by any other plan. I suppose there will be needed from twelve to twenty steam gun-boats, and a sufficient number of steam transports (say forty) to carry all the personnel (say 60,000 men) and material of the expedition; most of the gun-boats to be in advance to open the way, and the remainder to follow and protect the rear of the expedition, &c.

FROM *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. 51, pt. 1, pp. 369-70.

This army . . . should be composed of our best regulars for the advance and of three-years' volunteers, all well officered, and with four months and a half of instruction in camps prior to (say) November 10. In the progress down the river all the enemy's batteries on its banks we of course would turn and capture, leaving a sufficient number of posts with complete garrisons to keep the river open behind the expedition. Finally, it will be necessary that New Orleans should be strongly occupied and securely held until the present difficulties are composed.

Third. A word now as to the greatest obstacle in the way of this plan—the great danger now

pressing upon us—the impatience of our patriotic and loyal Union friends. They will urge instant and vigorous action, regardless, I fear, of consequences—that is, unwilling to wait for the slow instruction of (say) twelve or fifteen camps, for the rise of rivers, and the return of frosts to kill the virus of malignant fevers below Memphis. I fear this; but impress right views, on every proper occasion, upon the brave men who are hastening to the support of their Government. . . . I commend these views to your consideration, and shall be happy to hear the result.

With great respect, yours, truly,
Winfield Scott.



LYMAN TRUMBULL

The Most Shameful Rout You Can Conceive Of (1861)

Joined by several other members of Congress, Republican Senator Lyman Trumbull of Illinois jaunted out to Manassas, Virginia, on July 21, 1861, to witness the first important battle of the war. The initial developments were encouraging, and he sat down to enjoy a picnic lunch while the battle to end the rebellion raged. Later in the afternoon he found himself, along with a number of other civilians from Washington, unexpectedly caught up in the maelstrom of the frantic Union retreat. In this letter to his wife, he describes the Union's debacle and his subsequent mortification. (Paragraphing has been modified.)

Washington, July 22nd, 1861.

We started over into Virginia about 9 o'clock A.M., and drove to Centreville, which is a high commanding position and a village of perhaps fifty houses. Bull Run, where the battle occurred, is South about 3 miles and the creek on the main road, looking West, is about 4½ miles distant. . . .

At Centreville, [Senator James] Grimes and I got saddles and rode horseback down the main road towards the creek about three miles toward a hospital where were some few wounded soldiers and a few prisoners who had been sent back. This was about half-past three o'clock P.M. . . . On the hill at Centreville we could see quite beyond the timber of the creek off towards Manassas and see the smoke and hear the report of the artillery, but not very rapid as I thought. This we observed before leaving Centreville, and were told it was our main

FROM Horace White, *The Life of Lyman Trumbull* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913), pp. 165–67.