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DON CARLOS BUELL, GENTLEMAN GENERAL.

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Don Carlos Buell, Gentleman General

by

James Robert Chumney, Jr.

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Thesis Director's signature:

Bruce F. Lathrop

Houston, Texas
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INTRODUCTION: THE END OF TWENTY-THREE YEARS SERVICE

In November, 1862, Cincinnati was astir over the military commission assembling there to investigate General Don Carlos Buell. Only a few weeks earlier this controversial officer had been removed from command of the Union's second largest army. Now he was in town to face a secret high level court. According to rumor, Governors Oliver Perry Morton and Andrew Johnson along with Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton had instigated the proceedings to condemn Buell. This seemed plausible to many since Morton and Johnson had lately denounced the general in Northern newspapers as a traitor. Others, however, saw something incongruous in the whole affair, for until recently, Buell had been a highly respected field commander. A contemporary described him as an ideal officer—"perfect in manner, bearing, coolness, courage, energy,—physically and mentally a perfect soldier."¹

Certainly he presented an impressive appearance before the commission. At forty-four he was at the peak of his professional powers. Standing five feet eight inches high and weighing 165 pounds, he had a compact frame,
deep chest, and remarkably strong arms. Great physical
vigor and endurance allowed him to go for days with little
sleep during a military emergency. His hair, light and thin
on top, matched the hue of his full and unshaved beard,
just beginning to be sprinkled with grey. His eyes, blue
and firm, yet gentle in their expression, were said to
remain steady and unmoved in the midst of excitement or
danger. Erect and firm on his feet, his step was quiet and
unobtrusive, but he looked people squarely in the eye and
had an air of self-possession. A quiet man and a good
listener, yet he held to his decisions. As proper and
formal as his immaculate uniform while on duty, he was
full of courtesy and kindness in the relaxed atmosphere
of family and friends.²

Anyone only slightly acquainted with Buell would
smile if questioned about his moral qualities. He actually
lived by the gentlemanly code of the officer. His name
could never be connected with colorful barracks stories,
not Buell; it would be unthinkable. Honorable, a man
of his word, a man who kept his mind on business, a man
whose leisure was given to constructive reading or
worth-while hobbies, an ideal family man, worshiped by
his wife and stepdaughters--that was Don Carlos Buell.

The publicity stirred up by the trial brought Buell's
military background and characteristics to light. He had
a good record. Son of Salmon D. and Eliza Buell, he
began life on a farm by the Muskingum River, twelve miles
above Marietta, Ohio, on March 23, 1818. If he wanted to,
he could trace his ancestors in America back to 1640, and
with some pride too, for, if not exactly nationally
distinguished, they included among them a good representation
of lawyers, judges, sheriffs, state legislators and
participants in the Revolutionary War. Buell himself bore
the name of an uncle who had died in the War of 1812. In
Buell's fifth year, his father died, and he afterwards
lived with another uncle, George P. Buell, in Lawrenceburg,
Indiana.  

Uncle George had enough political influence in
Indiana to get his nephew, "an orphan boy about eighteen
years old," appointed to West Point in 1837 and thus
launch his military career. Upon graduation in 1841,
Lieutenant Buell took up the normal duties of a company
officer with the Third Infantry Regiment in the Missouri
territory. Two years later the young lieutenant emerged
from obscurity when he was court-martialed for using the
flat of his sword to discipline a private. Since this
was merely customary army discipline, the court acquitted
Buell, but politicians, debating the status of a peacetime
army, held him up as an aristocratic West Pointer who
deserved punishment. A message from President John Tyler to Congress finally stopped the demands for a new trial, but from the controversy Buell became known nationally as a stern disciplinarian. 4

If certain politicians thought unfavorably of Buell, his reputation within the service was spotless. During the three years following his court-martial, he conducted himself well in the Seminole War and then served in the West until the Mexican War. He participated in the Mexican campaigns on the staff of General David E. Twiggs. For "gallant and meritorious conduct" in the fighting at Palo Alto, Resca de la Palma, and Monterey, he received a captain's brevet. He took part in the siege of Vera Cruz, was "distinguished" in the battle of Cerro Gordo, and acquired a major's brevet for bravery at Contreras and Cherubusco. At the latter place he received a bad shoulder wound. As a combat officer, Buell had obviously pleased his commanding general: "Lt. Buell has served under my own eye and no officer in the army has displayed more gallantry." 5

The next thirteen years (1848-1861) Buell spent in the Adjutant General's Department receiving a thorough education in the administrative side of the army. These were years of close association with high-ranking department
commanders, of paper work, of court-martials, and of mastering the unromantic but essential details of supply and organization. Buell soon developed into a good adjutant general, a talented, persuasive officer who could make a military organization function with machine-like efficiency. His assignments eventually carried him all over the country, from Washington, D.C., in 1848 to various department headquarters in the East, West, South, and on the Pacific coast. As assistant adjutant general in the Department of Texas in 1853-55, Buell gained further recognition. Serving there under an "ease-loving" commander, Buell had to run the department himself, and, according to a contemporary, did a good job: "Buell's responsibility was great, and in the discharge of his duties he won the respect of all the officers of the army in the Department." When yellow fever struck Corpus Christi, the department headquarters, in 1854, Buell and his wife impressed everyone by their "self-sacrificing" devotion to the sick. 6

When Secretary of War James B. Floyd asked Adjutant General Samuel Cooper in February 1859 for an "intelligent and experienced officer. . . whose knowledge of details and usages of the service would be useful to him, and on whose judgment in military matters he might, with confidence, rely," Cooper enthusiastically recommended Major Buell to assist
in the War Office. Floyd liked Buell's work and, as the secession crisis loomed on the horizon in December 1860, entrusted him with carrying verbal instructions to Major Robert Anderson at Charleston, South Carolina. With a business-like air of confidence that impressed Anderson, Buell inspected the forts and made suggestions about their defense before passing on the Secretary of War's message.7

Up to the outbreak of the Civil War, Buell's rise had been rapid and steady. As a regular lieutenant colonel and the third ranking officer in the adjutant general's department, he sailed for duty on the Pacific Coast in April, 1861, a few days after the firing on Fort Sumter. Recalled to Washington in August, he found his name ninth on the first list of volunteer brigadier generals. Not only this, but he was in great demand: George B. McClellan wanted him in the Army of the Potomac and Robert Anderson asked for him in the West. At first McClellan's wishes prevailed; in September and October Buell organized and disciplined a division in the Army of the Potomac. In the end, however, Lincoln sent Buell west in November to take over the Union's second most important command, the Department of the Ohio.8

His year in the field was one of preparation, success, disappointment, and controversy. After organizing an army
in Northern Kentucky, he moved south into central Kentucky and Tennessee, winning a battle at Mill Springs, and capturing Bowling Green and Nashville. With a part of his army, Buell next marched to Shiloh, Tennessee, joined Grant, and defeated the Confederates on April 7. Ordered to capture East Tennessee but plagued by supply difficulties, Buell in the summer of 1862 marched to Chattanooga only to find the mountain city surrounded by Braxton Bragg's Confederates. When Bragg and General Kirby Smith slipped through Union defenses and invaded Kentucky, Buell abandoned Tennessee and withdrew to Louisville, his base of supply. Following an indeterminate battle at Perryville, Kentucky, in October, 1862, he drove the Confederates from the state, but was removed from command.

Significantly, Buell's campaigns were conducted according to certain principles and policies. From years of study and discussion with army colleagues, he had formulated a general rule of strategy. First of all, he believed in thoroughly organizing and preparing his forces and then, after skillful maneuver, crushing the enemy in a decisive battle—not rapidly but surely. When two opposing armies, about equal in size, faced each other, a smart commander would maneuver deceptively, forcing his opponent to make detachments or give battle on unfavorable ground. Battles
should be fought only when they promised a reasonable chance of victory, otherwise, fighting should be avoided: "War has a higher object than that of mere bloodshed."

A general who put valor or impulse over cold calculation might fight more battles, but his chance of meeting disaster would also be greater.

If precaution and the observance of rule diminish the number of battles, and sometimes miss the accidental success which folly or recklessness might have gained, it is nevertheless true that in the end they usually triumph.

Although Buell had a professional zest for waging vigorous war against the enemy's army, he saw his mission in a larger context. To him, Lincoln's aim of restoring the Union was indeed the war's prime objective, therefore he believed it not only humane but expedient for his invading army to respect the Constitution and the rights of peaceful civilians. Whereas numerous Union generals professed a similar policy, Buell enforced it to the letter. Always an inflexible disciplinarian, he prevented his troops from plundering the countryside or harboring slaves in camp. In order to win Confederates back to the Union, he offered protection to all Southerners who obeyed the law, regardless of their private opinions or past acts. When military necessity required it Buell's army did, of course, take private property, including slaves, for public use, but he
insisted upon just compensation whenever practicable.
As a matter of military expediency, maintaining security
of life and property within an occupied territory would
at least prevent guerrilla warfare:

Wars of invasion, always difficult,
become tenfold so when the people of the
invaded territory take an active part against
the invading army. A system of plunder
and outrage in such cases will produce
the same effect of hatred and revenge
that such treatment does under other
circumstances among men. . . . There is
no exception to the rule of securing the
neutrality if not the friendship of the
population as much as possible by just
and mild treatment, and then, having
given no good cause for hostility, to
treat with kindness those who behave
well and with severity to those who
misbehave.10

These policies, along with his reputation as a
Democrat and friend of George B. McClellan, soon antagonized
Radicals and many other Republicans as well. During the
turmoil of the first year of war, those who thought that
the rebellion could and should be quickly crushed lost
patience with Buell’s slow but sure tactics. In this
category came Lincoln, Stanton, Henry W. Halleck and
eventually a segment of Buell’s own army. Abolitionists
and those who advocated punishment as well as defeat for
Confederates detested Buell’s conciliatory policies. In
this group were the powerful war governors, Andrew Johnson,
Morton, David Tod, Richard Yates, and, again, a significant
minority of the Army of the Ohio.11
In spite of an outstanding record, obvious abilities, and reasonable policies, Buell had alienated some powerful people during his year of command. Whatever the cause—military or political—he had been stripped of command and ordered before a commission. Losing an army was disgrace enough for Buell, but he realized that a summons to a secret court could well mean the end of his twenty-three years of service.

Buell had no illusions about what awaited him in Cincinnati. Nominally, the commission would meet to investigate his army's operations from June to October, 1862, but Stanton's directions that it only look into six points implied a condemnation of the army's commander:

General Halleck: You will please organize a Military Commission to inquire into and report upon the operations of the forces under command of Major-General Buell in the States of Tennessee and Kentucky, and particularly in reference to General Buell suffering the State of Kentucky to be invaded by the rebel forces under General Bragg, and in his failing to relieve Munfordville and suffering it to be captured; also in reference to the battle of Perryville and General Buell's conduct during that battle, and afterward suffering the rebel forces to escape from Kentucky without loss or capture; and also to inquire and report upon such other matters [Buell's loyalty] touching the military operations aforesaid ... General Buell will ... have permission to appear and produce and examine witnesses before the Commission.
Friends in Washington had warned Buell of the hostility of some of the members who would sit on the commission. "It was not a secret during the session of the court," Buell later remarked, "that it was contrived and instigated by men who were personally and officially hostile to me."\textsuperscript{12}

When Buell walked into the hearing room on December 1 he met the six officers who would judge him. Stanton's personal representative, Major Don Piatt, would conduct the proceedings as judge advocate. When first assigned to this duty, Piatt had asked Stanton for the charges against Buell and been referred to Morton and Johnson. Approached by Piatt, Morton called Buell a traitor but refused to make a formal charge against him. Apparently Johnson was no more cooperative, for Stanton eventually drew up his own six points. Upon his arrival in Cincinnati, Piatt frankly informed his fellow investigators that they had been "organized to convict" because "Secretary Stanton and General Halleck were desirous of getting rid of General Buell." Afterwards, Piatt, impressed by Buell's strength of character, would have a change of heart and would admit publicly that the court of inquiry "sat as a matter of mere form" and was "such a farce that even Stanton was ashamed to promulgate its acts," but during the session he enthusiastically prosecuted Buell. As an articulate and keen-witted opportunist, well versed in legal procedure,
Platt thought he could humiliate the more reticent Buell. Correspondents in Washington, however, alerted Buell against the judge advocate: "Don Platt is looked upon by everyone here as one of the most contemptible of scoundrels." A clipping sent to Buell from the New York World told of Piatt's recent departure from France without paying $2,000 in debts and noted: "the fugitive Don Piatt now turns up major, AAG, and part of a commission packed for the purpose of slandering a great general."  

Of the five generals on the court, Buell could expect impartiality from only two. Lew Wallace, the president of the commission, was too closely associated with Morton for Buell to trust. Refusing to accept Piatt's definition of the court's objective, Wallace steadfastly maintained that Buell himself was not on trial:

General Buell's status before the commission was peculiar. There was no charge against him of any kind, not even of a failure in command. We were not to investigate him, but a series of operations conducted by him. Consequently, Wallace refused Buell the rights and privileges normally allowed a defendant.  

More openly antagonistic to Buell were Daniel Tyler and Albin Francisco Schoepf. By far the oldest and most experienced member of the commission, Tyler had graduated from West Point in 1819 but left the army in 1834 to make a fortune in iron smelting. Arrogant, crusty, and apparently
irritated by the whole procedure, he would attack Buell like a prosecuting attorney. Schoepf, a Hungarian division commander in the Army of the Ohio, seemed to hate Buell. Not only had he worked to have Buell ousted from command, but had recently denounced him in Washington circles. James B. Fry, Buell's former chief of staff, warned that Schoepf "a deceitful person," went about "condemning you in the strongest terms, so much so that he hardly seems a fit member of the commission."\(^\text{15}\)

Two convalescing combat officers, Edward Otho Cresap Ord and Napoleon Jackson Tecumseh Dana, both West Pointers, would prove most open-minded towards Buell. Ord objected to a secret hearing and insisted that Buell was personally on trial and therefore should be protected by the rules of court-martial. Dana, a simple and direct man, would try his best to settle the question of Buell's loyalty.\(^\text{16}\)

The first day's hearing set the tone for a five-month clash of wills. Just as the lead off witness began testifying, Piatt asked Buell to leave the room while the commission went into secret session. Inviting Buell back in, Piatt tried to swear him to secrecy concerning the proceedings. When Buell declined to be sworn, the commission decided to drop him from the hearing. Again Buell objected, and this time the court said he could attend the session and introduce witnesses but could not cross-examine them.
Exasperated by now, Buell lectured the six officers on his rights before a tribunal. Somewhat taken back, Lew Wallace asked whether he based his objections on privileges belonging to an accused party. Buell answered that of course the convening of the court "implied some sort of accusation or imputation," but that he based his claim on Stanton’s instructions under which they were acting: "General Buell will . . . have permission to appear and produce and examine witnesses before the commission." He won his point. 17

During the following five months the commission held almost daily sessions, meeting in Cincinnati, Louisville, and Nashville. Seventy-two witnesses, both civil and military, including seven generals and nine colonels, were examined at length. Their testimony, allowed to range over many subjects, would finally make a voluminous record, amounting to 721 closely printed pages. From the first the hearing had taken on aspects of a court-martial; witnesses were introduced, on the one hand, for the "government" or "prosecution" and, on the other hand, for the "defense." 18

Technically not a defendant, Buell nevertheless made full use of his privileges to appear before the court and examine witnesses. He soon developed an unexpected lawyer-like capacity, masterfully questioning witnesses and giving
succinct and well-worded arguments. Allowing nothing to divert or excite him, he skillfully cross-examined such government witnesses as Generals Alexander McCook, George H. Thomas, and Lovell H. Rousseau. Had Piatt, for example, asked Rousseau a hypothetical question about the advantages of an earlier occupation of Chattanooga by Buell's army, then Buell immediately had Rousseau admit the practical impossibility of such a course. Whenever strategic or tactical problems were discussed, Buell seemed more like a professor lecturing his students than a defendant.19

Socially, Buell kept to himself. He and his wife sat by themselves at mealtime. At the beginning of a session, he walked in and sat down without a word or sign of recognition; upon adjournment, he gathered up his papers, tucked his sword under his arm and walked out, his eyes straight ahead. Day after day he neither smiled nor said anything not strictly pertaining to business.20

Even Buell's enemies had to admire his spirit and ability to defend himself. Often working through the night without clerical help, he sifted through thousands of dispatches and orders to organize his defense. According to Lew Wallace, "the labor he performed unassisted was prodigious." The court's president was also amazed at the way Buell parried the judge advocate's legal and humorous
thrusts. Confronted with almost any other general in a similar circumstance, Wallace believed that Piatt "would have distinguished himself, for he had ability and showed it." Against Buell's austere seriousness, however, Piatt's wit was impotent. "In the atmosphere of that cold nature humor could not live and wit was a plant too weak to flower." With his career at stake, Buell saw little occasion for humor.

A crisis developed in the hearing during February and March, 1863. After resting its case the government allowed Buell to introduce witnesses in his own behalf. Determined to make the most of his opportunity, Buell asked to be confronted with Morton and Johnson, but Piatt made little serious effort to have them summoned. When Buell next attempted to expose Morton's attitude toward him by having an Indianapolis newspaper editorial read into the record, the commission stopped him. Again shifting his attack, he tried to expose the prejudiced attitude of the more hostile members of the commission. While questioning Tancred R. Wilson, he revealed that Schoepf, while commanding a division in his army, had once defied him and "threatened him with personal violence." Tyler immediately objected to this line of questioning, and the commission then split over the issue: Ord and Dana sided with Buell whereas Piatt, Wallace, Tyler and Schoepf opposed the
introduction of testimony involving a commission member.\textsuperscript{22}

According to Piatt, any doubts in Buell's mind about a member should have been expressed at the beginning, therefore he could not protest at mid-session. Taking Buell's side, Ord recalled that Buell had never been given a chance to challenge members. Piatt countered by assuming Wallace's position—Buell was not on trial and of course could not question a member's partiality. The heated dispute abruptly ended when Schoepf withdrew from the court. The removal of an openly antagonistic member pleased Buell, but Halleck, without stating a reason, ordered Ord dropped from the commission.\textsuperscript{23}

The reduced tribunal heard the rest of the testimony, reached its opinion, and submitted a report to Washington in May of 1863. Since the entire hearing had been secret, the public wondered about the court's decision. When the Cincinnati papers announced the close of the inquiry, someone asked Piatt about the result of the investigation. His answer was cryptic: "Why the main fact developed is that Buell is too thorough a soldier to command one of our armies."\textsuperscript{24}

The unpublished official opinion of Wallace, Dana, and Tyler, however, went into more detail about Buell's shortcomings as a commander. On the credit side, his conciliatory policy, supposedly the policy of the
government, could not be condemned; and it was less
he than Halleck who had prevented the capture of Chattanooga.
But Buell should have attacked Bragg before he invaded
Kentucky. Although not directly responsible for the loss
of Munfordville, Buell missed an opportunity for victory
at Perryville because of his absence from the field and
"ignorance of the condition of the battle." Finally, he
should have pursued Bragg more vigorously after the battle. 25

Much more damaging to Buell was an unsigned report
slipped into the record by Piatt after the commission had
dissolved. Originally Piatt had declined to submit a report.
Now he simply took Stanton's six charges and found Buell
guilty on each count. In the first place, Buell should
have marched to Chattanooga earlier or at least have
defeated Bragg's small army in Tennessee. The retreat of
the Army of the Ohio to Louisville away from an enemy force
half its size made "a new page in our history of shame" and
called for "explanation or severest punishment." Furthermore,
Buell, often in a state of "doubt and confusion," seemed
afraid to fight Bragg, who invaded Kentucky as unopposed
as he retreated unpursued. "But as the road into Kentucky
had been strangely left open to him, so was the road out
of Kentucky made easy." 26

Except to Halleck and Stanton, the results of the
hearing long remained a mystery, but the army and public
took sides on the "Buell question." Critics pointed out
the small results he had realized from good opportunities. He had been slow marching to Shiloh. Bragg had turned his position near Chattanooga and marched into Kentucky. At best, the Battle of Perryville had been indecisive, and the retreating enemy had not been energetically pushed. Buell lacked national enthusiasm and wished for compromise with the rebellion. His hostility to emancipation made him refuse to employ Negroes in the cause. 27

On the other side, Buell's own closely reasoned and documented statement of defense best upheld his competence as a commander. He maintained that although the commission had criticized his campaign, their opinion on the subject could hardly outweigh his. Revealing the methodological insight of an historian, he questioned the value of the commission's verdict:

> Just and thinking men will hesitate to declare in a judicial verdict, with reference to the conduct of operations of such magnitude, more particularly when an important result has been obtained, that the commander ought to have acted differently: First, because, under circumstances which make it frequently impossible to know exactly the true state of affairs, he must act on appearances and probabilities more than on positive knowledge; and, second, because it is seldom possible to say what would have been the consequences of a different action. In this case no such hesitation is apparent. 28

Buell did not stand alone during the controversy; supporters, civilian and military, defended him in the
newspapers and asked Lincoln for his immediate return to active command. In only one year, they pointed out, he had achieved great results, and was potentially the North's best general. Within four months of his assumption of command in mid-November, 1861, he moulded a mob of recruits into the crack Army of the Ohio. He gave the Union its first significant victory at Mill Springs in January, 1862, and then moved south to capture Nashville, the first seceded state capital. His hurried march to Shiloh and his efficient fighting there on the second day of the battle saved Grant from defeat. Only Halleck's restrictive orders prevented him from capturing Chattanooga, an objective much coveted by Lincoln. By rapid marching and skillful strategy he countered Bragg's invasion of Kentucky, and after a partial victory at Perryville, drove the Confederates from the State. All this was accomplished, they concluded, without a single reverse or any waste of life.29

Questions raised by the debate between defenders and critics of Buell must be answered before an assessment of the man can be made. For example, was Buell slow and overcautious, a practitioner of an outmoded, gentlemanly form of warfare, or did his method of carefully maneuvering and concentrating a well-organized force against the enemy constitute sound tactics? Did his policy and attitude toward civilians indicate a lack of enthusiasm, or was it farsighted and militarily effective?
Concerning Shiloh, should he have marched there quicker, and what part did he play in deciding the battle? Was he slow getting to Chattanooga, or a victim of restrictive orders and conditions? Could Bragg's invasion of Tennessee and Kentucky have been prevented? Was Buell incompetent at Perryville, or did he make the best of a situation beyond his control? Should he have destroyed Bragg's retreating army after Perryville? Was he diplomatic enough in dealing with his military superiors and political allies? Did his army lose confidence in him? On a broader level, what was his character as an officer and his ability as a commander? Finally, was it better that his twenty-three years of service be ended, or was he the victim of political enemies and unavoidable circumstances?
NOTES


2. This description of Buell is based upon a collection of contemporary newspaper clippings in the Don Carlos Buell Papers, Fondren Library, William Marsh Rice University (cited hereafter as Buell Papers).


4. Andrews, History of Marietta and Washington County, I, 697; Amos Lane to Benjamin F. Butler, December 21, 1836, Engineer Office of War Department, National Archives; Office of the Adjutant General, Regular Army, Organization Returns, Third Infantry Regiment, 1837-1849, Record Group 94, National Archives; McKinney, "The Trial of General Buell," 163; Message on Court-Martial of Lieutenant D.C. Buell, President John Tyler, January 17, 1844, Senate Docs., No. 71, 28th Cong., 1st sess. (serial No. 432), Vol. II.
5. J. Thomas to General R. Jones, May 6, 1847, Adjutant General's Office, Letters Received, Record Group 94, National Archives; Charles C. Keeny to Lieutenant D.C. Buell, February 10, 1848, ibid.; Lieutenant Buell to General R. Inns, January 28, 1848, ibid.

6. Adjutant General's Office, Letters Received Register, 1848-1859, Record Group 94, National Archives; McKinney, "The Trial of General Buell," 163. The contemporary account of Buell's experiences in the Department of Texas is taken from an undated and unsigned twelve page manuscript in the Buell Papers.

7. Samuel Cooper to Major Buell, February 1, 1859, Buell Papers (quoted); Samuel W. Crawford, Genesis of the Civil War; the Story of Sumter, 1860-1861 (New York, 1887), 71-74.

8. War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (70 vols. in 127 and index, Washington, D.C., 1880-1901), (cited hereafter as OR), Series I, Vol. 4, p. 256, Vol. 5, pp. 16-17, 589; George B. McClellan to E. D. Townsend, September 5, 1861, War Department,
Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, Special Civil War Collection, General's Papers and Books, Don Carlos Buell, 1861-63, 1865, National Archives (cited hereafter as General's Papers, Buell); Special Orders, No. 58, Headquarters, Army of the Potomac, Washington, September 14, 1861, ibid.


10. Ibid., 48-49 (quoted).

11. Even before the war Buell was known to be suspicious of the more radical Republicans. "I suppose John Sherman is so black a Republican that you would not be seen in his company." William T. Sherman to Buell, April 15, 1860, Buell Papers; T. Harry Williams, Lincoln and the Radicals (Madison, Wisconsin, 1941), 15-16.

12. OR, I, Vol. 16, pt. 1, pp. 6-7 (quoted); T.S. Everett to Buell, December 17, 1862, Buell Papers, Buell to Charles E. Bliven, December 20, 1880, ibid. (quoted).


II

THE ASSUMPTION OF MAJOR COMMAND

It was an awesome responsibility to be a department commander in the first year of the war. No general's experience had prepared him to solve the large-scale problems involved in waging a massive modern war. While political leaders and an impatient public demanded quick victories, harassed commanders had to create armies from the ground up. Those who came later inherited organized, veteran armies with plenty of men and supplies and drew upon much painfully acquired trial-and-error experience. But in the beginning, officers like Buell, Halleck, and McClellan had to overcome great obstacles just to field troops.

When Buell entered his new department headquarters at Louisville, Kentucky, on November 15, 1861, he stepped into the public eye. His opportunity for great accomplishment or for disgrace was magnified. Now his decisions and actions, inseparably linked to those of the President, the War Department, and the Union's other two major commanders, would be reported in the newspapers of the country. The fate of whole states and perhaps of the war could turn on Buell's ability and judgment. Not every general could
endure so crushing a burden of responsibility.

Generals Robert Anderson and William T. Sherman, Buell's predecessors in the Department of the Ohio, had been failures. Trying to defend a vast territory—the northern half of Kentucky—with untrained troops against the continuous threat of enemy attack had been too much for Anderson. He had resigned on October 5, declaring his nerves shattered under the pressure of command. His successor, Sherman, had fared no better. Irritated by petty complaints of Louisville citizens, by urgent calls for reinforcements from outpost commanders, and by politicians insisting upon an immediate offensive, Sherman quickly lost his sense of reality. Although only a few skirmishes had actually taken place, he had been completely baffled by the maneuvering of small enemy units in Central Kentucky, and had consequently exaggerated Southern strength. Convinced that most Kentuckians were rebellious at heart, he issued statements about the state's being swept into the Confederacy. Not only was he outnumbered five to one, but Simon Buckner's 20,000 Confederates at Bowling Green (really only 10,000) could take Louisville at virtually any time. When Secretary of War Simon Cameron and Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas visited Sherman in late October, he said he could not invade Tennessee with less than 200,000 men.
Shortly thereafter he was removed. Waiting for Buell to replace him, Sherman believed his two divisions, one stationed below Louisville and another advancing slowly towards Eastern Kentucky under Thomas, were about to be destroyed by overwhelming numbers of Confederates. He ordered Thomas back to defend Louisville. Such was the state of affairs when Buell took charge.¹

Buell's inheritance from Sherman was not encouraging. Only two divisions, or 23,000 men, had been organized while forty odd fragments of regiments were scattered over Kentucky in recruiting districts. Sherman had devised no strategy or plans to pass on to Buell. With one third of Kentucky in Confederate hands, the civilian population was torn between conflicting loyalties, although, as Buell soon determined, Union sentiment predominated. The Western Confederate Army, under Johnston since September 1861, defended a line stretching from Columbus, Kentucky, on the Mississippi River through Bowling Green to Cumberland Gap on the extreme eastern border between Kentucky and Tennessee. Johnston held Bowling Green, his headquarters, with 25,000 men and an advance guard at Munfordville. A small force guarded Fort Henry on the Tennessee River and Fort Donelson on the Cumberland. Because railroad communications connected Columbus, Nashville, and Bowling Green with each
other and points south, the Confederates could quickly concentrate against a threatened segment of their line. About 2,500 troops under Humphrey Marshall advanced into the northeastern part of Kentucky through Pound Gap and 4,000 under General Felix K. Zollicoffer would soon move north from Cumberland Gap.²

Compared to other department commanders, Buell had a wide territory to look after with relatively few troops at his disposal. His Department of the Ohio encompassed Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana—states which furnished recruits and supplies—Kentucky, east of the Cumberland River, and all of Tennessee. Whereas Halleck in the adjoining Department of Missouri, had 60,000 men to operate on a 100-mile front, and McClellan, commanding the Department of the Potomac, had over 100,000 on a front of similar length, Buell faced a 300-mile front with less than 30,000 men.³

The chaotic condition of his troops convinced Buell that an immediate advance against Johnston's Kentucky line was impossible. Transportation available for use in the field was insufficient "to serve 20,000 men two days march from a depot or line of railroad." Consequently, he decided to hold the territory already in Union hands and quickly build an army capable of invading the South. "The first thing to be done," he later explained, "was to organize, arm, equip, and mobilize this heterogeneous mass,
and this was both a difficult and tedious work." Buell did not exaggerate his plight. Except for the two partially formed divisions, his troops, only a few weeks removed from farms and stores, were fragmented in regimental or quasi-regimental outposts. Most of them had not even been mustered into federal service and many lacked arms, equipment, and training. Such weapons as they had might be unreliable foreign discards of two or three different calibers. Buell could rely upon only four or five experienced generals to assist him in organizing the department. Meanwhile men having no rank acted as general and staff officers under conditional promises of appointment. Twenty batteries of artillery were needed; Buell had only ten. He could assemble only four regiments of cavalry, all without suitable arms.4

Buell's most delicate problem was to free his command from the control of the state governors who had raised the troops. He complained to McClellan of

the ill-judged interference of state authorities for what they erroneously consider the welfare of their troops. A system of direct communication and administration has been going on between them. Agents of various description are sent among the troops, and the effect is in the last degree ruinous.5

"Officious" governors ordered regiments about, exchanged their arms, and required morning reports and quartermaster
returns. Some governors insisted that every colonel and brigadier general from their state have a "personal establishment" or bodyguard. Again Buell reported to his friend McClellan:

I learned just this morning that a company of cavalry, got up by the Governor of Indiana as a bodyguard to General McCook, had passed through the city without reporting, and reported to its general. It is unnecessary to add that I ordered it forthwith to repair to another place. Then General Mitchel had his bodyguard, which I have been obliged to interfere with. Following out the idea, the brigade commanders have their cavalry and their batteries, which they tell the division commander he has nothing to do with. I mention these little items to show you what sort of organization and subordination has existed in these remote parts.  

Building the Army of the Ohio from scattered regiments which lacked experience, arms, and leadership was not a glamorous process, not in the sense that taking an army into battle is glamorous, but the work had to be done. Men had to be gathered, supplies stocked, and arms obtained; regiments, brigades, and divisions had to be assembled and trained. Precisionist Buell proved the right man for the task.

On the infinitely plastic nature of a volunteer army, Buell's personality and strong character stamped his own characteristic discipline and efficiency. From the first his troops knew they were serving under a serious minded
professional soldier, intimately knowledgeable and concerned with details of military organization and the duties of officers and men. Demanding proficiency from his subordinates, he would see to it that procedure and training were what they should be. Those unwilling or unable to meet his high standards were pruned from the army: "I have found it necessary to make some summary examples, and have instituted courts-martial and board of examination."\(^7\) No concessions were to be made to the democratic exuberance of the citizen soldier. Require strict attention to duty, subordination to authority, and hard training, Buell maintained, and then the Northwestern regiments would stand steady before any enemy.

First of all the Kentucku regiments and the new ones trickling down from north of the Ohio River must be collected and organized into brigades and divisions. The forty or fifty Kentucky fragments were consolidated into twenty-two regiments, and mustered into federal service. Together with some fourteen others just raised by the enthusiastic Governors of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio they were routed into Louisville. By working his quartermaster department around the clock and by badgering state governors and the War Department for supplies and arms, Buell in only a few weeks had made this river town into a base for his army. As the troops funneled in by river,
train, and pike, they went into a camp five miles from
town where they received uniforms and equipment and spent
their spare time drilling. "As fast as the troops get
their outfit," Buell reported to McClellan "they are
moving into place, and in a few days all that have arrived
will have gone." 8

Buell made it a firm policy to organize his army
along national rather than state lines. Instead of
grouping the incoming regiments by states, as their
governors desired, he purposely mixed them among the
brigades, an arrangement which was, he believed, "attended
with the happiest results in the discipline and tone of the
army." 9 Even though the levying of special state armies
would provide more troops, Buell strongly preferred a
truly national army. In December he advised Congressman
R.C. Wickliffe of Kentucky against asking for a twelve-
month Kentucky army:

The claiming of troops according to
states is to my mind fraught with evils of
serious magnitude, and at least it
certainly does impair their tone-and
efficiency. The effect of the opposite
course is always harmonizing and
beneficial.10

During the first few weeks of command, Buell issued
a series of general orders and instructions which subjected
the amorphous Army of the Ohio to exact systems of reporting,
inspection, and drill. First of all he needed to know what he had to work with. On his second day at Louisville he ordered every regiment in the department to submit consolidated returns to him three times a month, giving the numbers of equipped and unequipped men along with the names of general, field, and staff officers. Officers on detached duty must report immediately by letter, stating what they were doing and by whose order. Every officer in charge of public money or property would "render returns thereof" according to the prescribed form. All returns dealing with ordnance were to describe the caliber of arms and condition of the property in detail. Commanders would report weekly to Buell the amount of ammunition on hand.11

As a prerequisite to a thorough overhauling of his administrative and logistical system, Buell required written reports from the chiefs of his staff departments and corps. The quartermaster and commissary chiefs, for example, had to report, down to the last mule and wagon, the amount and kind of transportation they had on hand and the amount in the hands of the troops; where they obtained their supplies, subsistence stores, ordnance and ordnance stores and "the facility or difficulty to be anticipated in increasing them if necessary;" and
finally the amount of forage and camp equipment on hand. A report on the condition of hospitals, the amount of medicine on hand, and how obtained was expected from the medical officer. Buell's chief military engineer had to report on the defensive works completed, in progress or proposed, and the topographical engineer was to submit information and maps of "the seat of war in the department." Finally, all staff commanders were to give the names, stations and duties of all the officers serving under them.\textsuperscript{12}

Under the stern eye of Buell, combat regiments would be uniformly organized and efficient. To insure this, training would be standardized. In every command the troops had to drill at least four hours a day with all officers and men present, and every company had to stand inspection daily, preferably at retreat, when there would always be a dress parade. For inspection each soldier would have a canteen, haversack, full cartridge-box, and packed knapsack. He must also possess a hat, overcoat, blanket, regular coat, pair of pants, two flannel shirts, two pairs of drawers, two pairs of socks, and one pair of shoes, all in good condition. No other clothing was allowed. The soldier was to supply himself with a tin cup, a plate, a knife and fork, a spoon and a towel. All guard mounting
would be conducted according to Army Regulations; reveille would sound in every command at daybreak, tattoo at 8 p.m., and taps at 8:30 p.m. All officers on duty with troops must appear in uniform and those leading troops in the field must encamp with their men. No women were permitted to remain in camp, nor to accompany troops in the field.¹³

When marching, the troops would abide by strict regulations. On leaving camp they would first form into a neat column and then step off together; thereafter no soldier could leave the ranks without permission from his company commander. If a soldier were unable to continue the march he reported to his company commander who might by printed ticket authorize the soldier to report to the medical officer accompanying the regimental hospital train. A halt of ten minutes would be made after the first hour's march, and thereafter a halt of five minutes every hour or hour and a half. During these rest breaks, arms would be properly stacked. Upon the signal of a short roll of drums, repeated from regiment to regiment throughout the column, the ranks would reform quickly and the march would be resumed upon the command of the general. Buell especially insisted that the prescribed formations be strictly observed on the march and that
ranks remain neatly closed. 14

To make his army more mobile, Buell severely reduced and regulated the amount of the impedimenta. While on the march the allowance of transportation for baggage could not exceed one wagon for each company, two for the field and staff officers of a regiment, two for the headquarters of a brigade, and two for headquarters of a division, and two four-wheeled ambulances and one wagon for a regimental hospital department. Besides the authorized baggage, every wagon would carry four days' forage for the team, and company wagons would haul three days' rations for the men. Officer's baggage was limited: generals carried 125 pounds, field officers and captains, 100 pounds, and lieutenants, 80 pounds. With the same meticulous attention to detail, Buell specified the amount of camp equipment for each officer by rank and the amount allotted to every thirteen mounted or fifteen foot soldiers. Only prescribed items would go along with Buell's army, everything else had to be turned over the quartermaster. All officers belonging to infantry companies had to dispose of their personal horses and march on foot with their men. No longer would generals ride along with splendid bodyguards; Buell specified their escort: a division commander would have only a lieutenant, sergeant, two corporals and twenty privates, while a brigade commander rode with a sergeant,
two corporals, and twelve privates.\(^\text{15}\)

Buell designed many general orders to centralize authority in himself as commander and thereby reduce the interference of governors and the independence of subordinate commanders. All official correspondence and reports would proceed up the chain of command through regular military channels. Only Buell could accept the resignations of officers or discharge soldiers or grant leaves of absence for more than forty-eight hours to troops in the field. Henceforth, soldiers could not change their arms for others without Buell's authority, nor could they, once they were mustered into the federal service, transfer from one regiment to another. Finally, Buell prohibited his officers from issuing proclamations or "other similar addresses" to the public.\(^\text{16}\)

Realizing the elementary need for unity of command, Buell met the issue of a state governor's authority in his department head on. In case a regimental commander obeyed the orders of a governor, Buell took immediate action to stop the practice. Usually in reminding his officers of their duty he went into detail and cited the Second Section of the Constitution and the First, Second, and Tenth Sections of the "Act approved July 22, 1861." According to the Constitution, the President was clearly the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and the
militia of the states when called into active service. The Act of July 22 authorized the President to accept the services of volunteers, made them subject to the rules and regulations governing the regular army, and specified that all volunteer officers would be commissioned by the respective governors of the states or by the President. Obviously, Buell pointed out, governors had no place in the military chain of command. After calmly explaining the "law, custom, and propriety" in such matters, Buell would ask the offending officer to state in writing whether he intended to obey his lawfully appointed superiors or his governor: "Your answer must be forwarded within 24 hours from your receipt of this letter, and the General hopes it will be dictated by a true appreciation of your duty as a citizen of this union and an officer under the General Government."17

State governors soon found their source of military information confined to releases from Buell's headquarters. Officers were warned not to send information about the army directly to governors without first forwarding it through official channels. When Governor Morton, for example, complained about the poor condition of an Indiana regiment, Buell reprimanded the colonel commanding and
asked how his troops happened to be in the "condition represented by your officers in a recent letter to the Governor of Indiana without such fact having been reported at these Headquarters?" The colonel must observe paragraph 451, Revised Army Regulations, which stated that military correspondence had to pass through the proper military superiors. "Hereafter," Buell ordered, "any correspondence of a military nature, passing between your Regiment and Governor of the State in which your Regiment was raised will pass through the proper military channels of correspondence."\(^{18}\)

Much of Buell's success as a disciplinarian stemmed from his determination to enforce his orders and policies down to the smallest detail. Incomplete brigade reports were immediately returned: "In cases where no Regiment reports are received . . . in time to consolidate with Brigade returns you will in future take their last report, and make a note of that effect on Brigade Returns." On one occasion, Buell wrote General James S. Negley a detailed letter, chiding him for sending in a certificate of disability improperly filled out.\(^{19}\) If an officer failed to keep firm control over his troops and allowed them to harass civilians, he had to answer to Buell: "You will immediately report by letter the extent of depredations committed, and the reason you did not put a stop to it
immediately. And also the reason why the fact was not reported by you to these Headquarters."20

On the whole the Army of the Ohio accepted its exacting new commander. He was strict but he made soldiers out of civilians. He lived himself by the Spartan code he prescribed for his men, eating the simple food of the camp and working longer hours than anyone in the department. Most important, although he demanded much, he was genuinely concerned for the welfare of his men. The dignity and military bearing he displayed during his constant round of inspections soon made a favorable impression on the army. "I like the appearance of General Buell very much," wrote an officer to his wife after being reviewed by Buell, and the opinion was widespread in the department. As long as soldiers can see reasons for strict discipline they will submit to it and still maintain good morale. This was true of Buell's emerging army late in 1861. Like most officers in the department, Major Joseph Warren Keifer, a regimental commander stationed near Louisville, appreciated Buell's attempt to solve the problems involved in forging an army:

We experience many difficulties here in keeping our men in camp and out of the city. We are under very strict orders, and must discipline our men more strictly than ever. The troops here need discipline. There are here in most cases raw recruits under Political Officers. The commanding Generals are doing all they can to thoroughly discipline the troops. I have not met General Buell, but his orders show that he is equal to his position.21
With Buell at the helm a noticeable air of calmness, control, and order descended upon the Department of the Ohio. As he organized his army, Buell confidently studied the country and the enemy. In marked contrast to Sherman, he did not allow himself to be bothered by the constant rumors of enemy attack; nor would he be pushed into precipitous action by panicky outpost commanders or "newspaper clamor" before his army was prepared. Buell's messages to McClellan in November and December indicated his informed and firm mastery of the department:

Zollicoffer's force has crossed near Somerset, it is said, with six regiments and eight guns. I content myself with sending sufficient reinforcements under Schoepf to check him. I do not mean to be diverted more than is absolutely necessary from what I regard as of the first importance—the organization of my forces, now little better than a mob. I could fritter the whole of it away in a month by pursuing these roving bugbears.22

The Confederates were, instead of launching an offensive, obviously going on the defensive all along the line. They had fortified Cumberland Gap, Bowling Green, and Columbus and had begun strengthening their forts on the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers. "As for his attacking," Buell wrote McClellan, "though I do not intend to be unprepared for him, yet I should almost as soon expect to see the Army of the Potomac marching up the road as
Johnston." Sheltered behind Green and Salt Rivers, Buell could use Louisville as a base and have railroad communication from there to Lebanon. Thus screened from observation, he could prepare his forces to attack when the time came. "Nothing could be more convenient," he assured McClellan, "this point has the further advantage of bringing everything under my eye."\(^24\)

Until ready to move Buell did not wish the enemy to know where he would strike. Hence he studiously avoided any movements which to the enemy would have the appearance of activity or method. The points occupied are pretty much the same as when I arrived, except that a regiment has now and then been moved into position and Thomas has gradually been closing in upon Lebanon . . . . We have occasional stampedes at the outposts, but I do not allow myself to be much troubled about them. Such a one we have now on the Lower \textit{Green} River where Breckinridge is said to be advancing with 8,000 men. He may have 2,500 or 3,000. \(^25\)

So intent was Buell on keeping his plans a secret that he did not confer with his division commanders. "He has not communicated any of his plans to me," wrote Thomas to Schoepf, "but requires that I shall keep my troops together and be prepared to move promptly in any direction." Buell so effectively concealed his movements that Johnston had no idea of the Army of the Ohio's position or intentions. By the last of December Buell had four divisions or about
40,000 men combat ready. One division camped at
Munfordville, one at Bacon Creek, on the Louisville
pike, one near Green River, on the New Haven pike, and
another at Lebanon.26

Had Buell been a man who simple obeyed instructions,
strategy would have presented no problem. Lincoln insisted
that he march immediately to seize loyal East Tennessee and
McClellan agreed because he thought such a movement would
complement his own attack on Richmond. Buell found
himself in an embarrassing position—much as he wanted
to please Lincoln and McClellan, he considered their
strategy so faulty that he must convert them to a better
course of action. While granting the importance of East
Tennessee, he proposed a different plan—"defense on the
east and invasion on the south"—as the one best suited
to meet the concrete military situation facing him and most
likely to clear the Confederates from all Kentucky and
Tennessee.27

Viewed from Louisville the practical problems of an
East Tennessee campaign were patent: lack of railroad
or river communications, poor roads, and the prospect of
supplying an army in an unproductive, mountainous region
in the dead of winter. The Cumberland Mountains could be
crossed only at certain passes such as Cumberland Gap, much
easier to defend than to capture. Furthermore, while Johnston held Bowling Green and Nashville, Buell's line of operations from Louisville to Knoxville would be exposed to a flank attack.  

Experience confirmed Buell's opinion. Upon the earnest solicitations of Lincoln and McClellan, he sent a division under Thomas from Somerset, Kentucky, towards East Tennessee. When Thomas reported that the roads between Crab Orchard and London, Kentucky, were "wretched" and subsistence and forage unobtainable, Buell took this as proof that a larger expedition could not succeed: "It was barely possible to subsist the 10,000 men at Somerset." Subsequent reports from Thomas only confirmed this view: "To provide forage it is necessary to send 15 miles, and the roads are so difficult that by the time the wagons reach here the teams have nearly consumed their loads."  

Buell's plan was to defeat Johnston's main army before worrying about East Tennessee. The Confederates thinly spread defensive line was most vulnerable where intersected by the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers. As early as November 1861, Buell perceived the strategic significance of the rivers. The Tennessee, navigable as far up as Muscle Shoals in North Alabama, and the Cumberland navigable
as far as Nashville, could serve as avenues for invading Tennessee. Since they also crossed the principal railroads in Tennessee and North Alabama, Union seizure of them would sever Johnston's communications and render his Columbus-Bowling Green line indefensible. If Halleck would cooperate, Buell believed a combined attack could thus pierce Johnston's line and produce his defeat. Buell therefore proposed to advance his army rapidly upon Nashville, passing to the left of Bowling Green, while Halleck made a strong demonstration against Columbus and sent 20,000 men up the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers under the protection of gunboats. This plan, the first comprehensive one for the invasion of Tennessee, Buell urged continually upon McClellan and Halleck from November to February. 30

For Buell's project to be adopted it was necessary, however, that both Halleck and the authorities in Washington become convinced of its soundess. In Washington Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, and Horace Maynard continued to advocate the liberation of East Tennessee as Buell's first objective. "We have just had an interview with the President and General McClellan," wrote Johnson and Maynard to Buell, "and find they concur fully with us in respect to the East Tennessee Expedition. Our people are
oppressed and pursued as beasts of the forest." Because of the suffering in East Tennessee, Lincoln said he had rather see Buell occupy a point on the railroad south of Cumberland Gap than capture Nashville. Buell replied:

While my preparations have had this movement /into East Tennessee/ constantly in view I will confess to your excellency that I have been bound to it more by my sympathy for the people of East Tennessee and the anxiety with which you and the General in Chief have desired it than by my opinion of its wisdom as an unconditional measure. As earnestly as I wish to accomplish it, my judgment has from the first been decidedly against it, if it should render at all doubtful the success of a movement against the great power of the rebellion in the West, which is mainly arrayed on the line from Columbus to Bowling Green, and can speedily be concentrated at any point of that line which is attacked singly.31

Personally the closest of friends, Buell and McClellan nevertheless differed radically over this question of strategy. It required all Buell's powers of persuasion to convince the General-in-Chief that the destruction of Johnston's army was the prime objective in the West. Even before Buell assumed command at Louisville, McClellan had instructed him that because political affairs predominated over military operations in his department, he should remain on the defensive along a line from Louisville to Nashville and march his army rapidly to Knoxville to rescue the loyal Unionists in that area. Several telegrams a week thereafter reminded Buell of his mission: "The object to
be gained is to cut the communications between the Mississippi Valley and East Virginia; to protect our Union friends in Tennessee and re-establish the Government of the Union in the eastern portion of the state."

When Buell first proposed a coordinated move south along the rivers and towards Nashville while simultaneously sending a small column toward East Tennessee, McClellan half consented to a two-pronged attack: "You might attempt two movements, one on East Tennessee, say with 15,000 men, and a strong attack on Nashville, as you say with 50,000." But McClellan made it clear which movement had top priority: "I think we owe it to our Union friends in East Tennessee to protect them at all hazards. First, secure that; then, if you possess the means, carry Nashville." By December McClellan began to vacillate, saying in one dispatch that "mere military advantages" should be second to sympathy for suffering loyalists in East Tennessee, inquiring in another about the details of Buell's plan and who would lead it.

Towards the end of December Buell began more openly to advocate an all-out campaign into Middle Tennessee. He assured McClellan that concern for the East Tennesseans was exaggerated: "Their constancy will still sustain them
until the hour of deliverance." Even the small column of 12,000 men earmarked to move east ought to be sent south with the rest of his army:

> It is my conviction that all the force that can possibly be collected should be brought to bear on that front of which Columbus and Bowling Green may be said to be the flanks. The center, that is, the Cumberland and Tennessee where the railroad crosses them, is now the most vulnerable point. I regard it as the most important strategical point in the whole field of operations. The possession of it secures their force and gives access through the two rivers to the very center of their power. While they hold it, at least two-thirds of the whole force on that front may safely be considered available for any one point that is threatened.\(^34\)

McClellan, worried about his own campaign against Richmond and harassed by politicians failed, like Lincoln, to appreciate Buell's strategical insight. In January he again asked Buell to move east: "I incline to this as a first step for many reasons. Your possession of the railroad there will surely prevent the main army in my front from being reinforced and may force Johnston to detach."\(^35\)

Although any move south depended upon the close cooperation of Halleck and Buell, their personal relationship was not harmonious. Ambitious, unscrupulous, and jealous of Buell, Halleck desired to obtain overall command in the West for himself. Consequently he hesitated to adopt Buell's plan or to send troops over to Buell's department. When
Lincoln asked him to cooperate with Buell in early January, Halleck said his hands were too full in Missouri to spare troops for Tennessee. At first Halleck wholly disapproved of Buell's river plan, labeling it a "plain case of exterior lines," which would result in disaster ninety-nine times in a hundred. Furthermore, if he weakened his army to operate on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, Missouri would be lost.36

Halleck continued to be against Buell's plan until January 20, when he abruptly changed his mind and proposed sending an expedition of 60,000 men up the rivers. Instead of Buell's marching to Nashville, Halleck asked to have all of Buell's troops sent to the rivers, where they would fall under Halleck's jurisdiction. Then on January 30 he unexpectedly announced that he had ordered Grant to attack Fort Henry with 15,000 men. Without authority from Washington or any arrangement with Buell, he had appropriated Buell's plan and commenced a general offensive in the West.37

While Buell organized and planned, he had also found opportunities to send troops into combat. First came a warm-up action. When 2,500 Confederates under Humphrey Marshall invaded Northeast Kentucky through Piketon in December, Buell ordered Colonel James A. Garfield with five regiments of infantry and one regiment of cavalry after him. Garfield defeated Marshall in two sharp engagements
on the Big Sandy River near Prestonburg, and by the middle of February the Confederates had been cleared from that part of the state.\textsuperscript{38}

In the meantime another Confederate column of 4,000 men led by General Zollicoffer had gradually made its way down from the Cumberland Mountains to Mill Springs on the Cumberland River. Although Buell kept his eye on this column, it did not seem at first to offer much either of threat or opportunity. But Zollicoffer proceeded to break one of the elementary rules of tactics by crossing the Cumberland and entrenching himself on the north side of the river. He occupied a position with no natural barrier between his small force and Buell's entire army, and at the same time had practically cut his line of communication and retreat. When Buell learned what zollicoffer had done, he issued firm and detailed orders for Thomas, now at Lebanon, to form a juncture with Schoepf's Brigade and attack. Thomas was to move against Zollicoffer's left and cut him off from his river crossing, while Schoepf attacked in front:

The map will indicate the proper moves for that object. The result should be at least a severe blow to him or a hasty flight across the river. But to effect the former the movement should be made rapidly and secretly, and the blow should be vigorous and decided. There should be no delay after your
arrival. It would be better not to have been undertaken if it should result in confining an additional force merely to watching the enemy. 39

Early in January Thomas got his division under way, but he required ten days to advance forty miles over roads made difficult by winter weather arriving at Logan's Cross Roads, twelve miles from Mill Springs and seventy-five miles from Lebanon, on the 17th. When Thomas complained of the roads and lack of forage, and seemed to be hesitating, Buell spurred him on with orders to get into position, live off the land, and attack the enemy: "It is not sufficient to hold Zollicoffer in check; he must be captured or dispersed." Before Thomas could carry out these instructions, the 4,000 desperate Confederates, now led by George B. Crittenden, came out of their entrenchments and attacked at daylight on January 19. Thomas could bring only 2,500 of his troops into battle, but through superb tactics and the superior training and arms of his men he won a complete victory. During the night the Confederates escaped across the Cumberland, leaving behind Zollicoffer, who had been killed, over 500 other casualties, fourteen pieces of artillery, 1,400 animals, and all their camp equipment and stores. 40

The battle of Mill Springs was the North's first significant victory. It broke the right of Johnston's
Kentucky line, enhanced Union morale, and demonstrated Buell's ability to take advantage of an opportunity. Thomas deserved full credit for winning the battle, but it was Buell who saw the opportunity and directed the campaign. 41

After Mill Springs Buell did not proceed into East Tennessee as Lincoln and McClellan advised. Still faced with bad roads and a scarcity of provisions, he merely ordered a brigade to advance to Cumberland Gap. Thomas he ordered to rejoin the main army south of Louisville. "I feel assured," Buell explained to Lorenzo Thomas, "that the difficulty of moving large bodies of troops in the winter upon long lines of communication on common dirt roads, and through a country which affords but meager supplies, will be appreciated." It was Grant's action on the rivers, however, more than Buell's reasoning that stopped talk about East Tennessee. 42

Halleck's sudden decision to send Grant against Fort Henry came as a surprise. Under pressure of McClellan's orders, Buell had detached a small column toward East Tennessee and had shifted supporting brigades to the east, so that now his troops were ill-situated to render immediate aid to Halleck. "This whole move," Buell complained to McClellan, "right in its strategical bearing, but commenced by General Halleck without appreciation,
preparation or concert, has now become of vast magnitude."
At first Halleck assured Buell that he required no
assistance from the Army of the Ohio, but when Johnston
sent 10,000 reinforcements from Bowling Green down to
Fort Donelson, Halleck asked Buell to make a diversion
on Bowling Green. This Buell decided against; it would
be obvious to Johnston that Buell's main force could not
march forty miles over obstructed roads and quickly take
a fortified city protected behind a river. Instead of
rushing forward a diversion that would fool no one, Buell
began an advance on Bowling Green in force and at the
same time ordered one brigade and eight new regiments to
reinforce Grant. 43

After Fort Henry fell on February 6, Grant attacked
Fort Donelson on the Cumberland, which promised to present
more of an obstacle. Both Halleck and Buell realized the
dangerous position of Grant's expedition. The Confederates
could rush reinforcements from Bowling Green by rail down
to Clarksville and then by river over to Fort Donelson,
where they might defeat Grant and return to Bowling Green
before Buell could capture the city. To prevent such an
eventuality Buell started three divisions on February 13
to reinforce Grant by way of the Ohio and Cumberland
Rivers and at the same time ordered the rest of his army
to march south to Bowling Green. When Buell's advance
guard arrived at Bowling Green the next day and found it being evacuated, Buell had his troops occupy the city while he held back two of the three divisions previously ordered to reinforce Fort Donelson. 44

Instead of sending the bulk of his army to Grant at Fort Donelson and then operating up the Cumberland River as Halleck desired, Buell had now decided that he would lead his main army overland from Bowling Green to Nashville. Halleck protested, arguing that Grant needed immediate and substantial assistance. But Buell believed that a march on Nashville would relieve the pressure on Grant, and that the 10,000 men already sent him from the Army of the Ohio would give him an ample force of 40,000 at Fort Donelson. McClellan agreed with Buell and urged him on to Nashville:

The movement on Nashville is exactly right. If General Grant's safety renders it absolutely necessary, of course, reinforce him as you proposed, but the great object is the occupation of Nashville. If that is gained, or even when your advance from Bowling Green is well marked, they will abandon Donelson, if the way is open for it. 45

The surrender of Fort Donelson to Grant on February 16 proved the correctness of the decision Buell and McClellan had taken. On February 20, the day Buell himself entered Bowling Green, McClellan telegraphed an added inducement for him to capture Tennessee's capital
city: "Have your commission as Major General on the field of battle in taking Nashville." 46

Realizing that Johnston's defenses were tottering, Buell eagerly pressed on toward Nashville without waiting to concentrate his forces. He telegraphed Grant to send William Nelson's borrowed division up the Cumberland and started forward on February 22 with Mitchel's division alone. Forced marches brought him to the Cumberland River across from Nashville two days later, just as a convoy landed Nelson's men. Johnston had meanwhile decided to retreat further into Middle Tennessee. As the Confederates evacuated Nashville on February 25 Buell's troops entered and took positions on the southeastern side of town towards Murfreesboro. Until his other divisions arrived a few days later, Buell had only 18,000 men in Nashville, while thirty miles away at Murfreesboro Johnston had an estimated 30,000. Buell uneasily watched the road from the southeast, but his anxiety was unnecessary, for Johnston's troops were demoralized. By March 2 Buell had gathered together 50,000 men at Nashville. 47

As Buell prepared his army to advance further south, he could be proud of his accomplishments. In less than four months he had transformed a chaotic mass into the highly organized Department of the Ohio. His 50,000 fully equipped troops at Nashville were disciplined and eager
for a fight, his control over the wide geographical area.
of his department was firm, his strategy was proving
farsighted, and his men and officers respected him. By
steadfastly adhering to sound military principles,
even against the desires of politicians and his superiors,
and by acting with energy and decision at the right moment,
Buell had found favor in the highest quarter. "The President
is much pleased with the cautious vigor of General Buell,"
wrote Stanton to Thomas A. Scott, "and relies upon that
to guard, above all things, against any mishap by premature
and unsupported movements . . . ."
NOTES


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11. General Orders No. 2, November 16, 1861, General Orders, Department of the Ohio, By Command of General Don Carlos Buell, Adjutant Generals Office, Record Group No. 94, National Archives.
13. General Orders No. 2 and 4, November 20, 22, 1861, Department of the Ohio, National Archives.
14. General Orders No. 11, December 5, 1861, ibid.
15. General Orders No. 8, 10, 13, December 3, 5, 9, 1861, ibid.
17. See, for example, Buell's Letter to Colonel Duffield, signed by Buell's Chief of Staff, James B. Fry to Colonel Duffield, January 2, 1862, Department of the Ohio, Selected Letters Sent, 1861-62, National Archives.


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24. Ibid., 450-51.

25. Ibid., 451.

26. Ibid., 496 (quoted), 509-10; Thomas Lawrence Connelly, "Metal, Fire and Forge: The Army of Tennessee, 1861-1862" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Rice University, 1963), 175-77; Buell, Statement, 4.

27. OR, I, Vol. 7, pp. 512; Buell to wife, December 10, 1861, Buell Papers.


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36. Ibid., 526-27, 532-33, 539-40, 543.
37. Ropes, Story of the Civil War, II, 6-8; Halleck to
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39. Ibid., 522 (quoted); Peter Franklin Walker,
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Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XVI (September, 1957),
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40. Buell to Thomas, January 17, 1862, Buell Papers;
OR, I, Vol. 7, pp. 78, 519, 549-50; Buell, Statement, 5.
42. OR, I, Vol. 7, p. 568.
43. Ibid., 473, 586, 936; Ibid., 587-88; Ibid., 576; Ibid., 580-84, 588; Buell, Statement, 6-7.
44. Ibid., 6-8; OR, I, Vol. 7, pp. 599, 607-609, 616; Buell to Halleck, February 8, 1862, General's Papers, Buell.
46. McClellan to Buell, February 20, 1862, General's Papers, Buell.
47. Buell, Statement, 6-8; Buell to "Commanding Officer, United States Forces Clarksville," February 22, Buell to McClellan, February 23, Buell to Halleck, February 26, Buell to McClellan, February 26, Buell to McClellan, March 1, 1862, General's Papers, Buell, Buell to McClellan, February 23 and to Halleck, February 26, also printed in OR, I, Vol. 7, pp. 656, 668-69; Ropes, Story of the Civil War, II, 51-52.
III

THE SHILOH CAMPAIGN

From Buell's Nashville headquarters the military situation looked promising in February of 1862. The capture of Fort Donelson and Nashville had shattered the enemy's defense line in Tennessee. With Columbus, Kentucky, and other bastions on the Mississippi north of Memphis now outflanked, and Albert Sidney Johnston's army in full retreat toward Murfreesboro, Tennessee, the Confederates would have to fall all the way back to the railroad, running east from Memphis to Chattanooga. Thus a few swift assaults had gained almost a whole State for the Union; now a strategy was needed to consolidate the gains and press the advantage. Had Buell known the extent of demoralization in Johnston's retreating army of 20,000 he might have pursued down the Murfreesboro pike and annihilated it. After all, he had 50,000 men at his disposal. Never precipitous, however, the Ohio general decided against pursuit; Johnston burned bridges, felled trees behind him, and guarded his rear with effective cavalry, while Buell, responsible for a vast department, had to get coordinated with Halleck before committing himself.¹
As Buell prepared his army for a deeper move into the South he discussed strategy with Halleck in St. Louis by telegraph. The new Confederate defense line would cut across both their departments, making their cooperation imperative. Both generals saw the advantage of joint action against Johnston or against Beauregard, who was building up forces in the Memphis area. At first they differed, however, over a practical plan of operations. Buell proposed using the Tennessee river as a protective shield against Beauregard while his forces and Halleck's joined at Florence, Alabama. If the combined armies then crossed the Tennessee and held a point on the Memphis and Charleston railroad, Buell believed the Confederates would be compelled to give battle there and abandon Island No. 10 and New Madrid. Halleck, on the other hand, wanted Buell to join him in a mass movement up the Tennessee river with Corinth as the possible objective. Buell had no strong objections to meeting the enemy at Corinth, but preferred not to use the river. Ever the tough professional soldier, he believed that his troops should march from Nashville to keep them in training. They could also clear out the scattered enemy detachments along the way.²

Before the two department commanders had settled the details of their strategy, Halleck sent an expedition of
about 35,000 men up the Tennessee to disrupt Confederate communications. For his temporary camp, General C.F. Smith, the leader of the excursion, selected Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, twenty miles north of Corinth and about nine miles south of Savannah. After severing the Memphis and Charleston railroad, Smith was to return, but when the Confederates began concentrating at Corinth, Halleck sent Grant to take over and establish a depot and base at Savannah, a sleepy town on the east bank of the river, Grant did establish his headquarters at Savannah, but upon Sherman's advice kept Pittsburg Landing, across the river, as his base of operations. Since he and Buell had finally agreed to attack Corinth together, Halleck cautioned Grant to hold his position until reinforced by the Army of the Ohio. In the meantime Halleck poured in other reinforcements to Grant until by April 5 six divisions or about 47,000 men had assembled in woods around Pittsburg Landing.\(^3\)

After the 12th of March, Buell no longer had to worry about departmental coordination. He was now under Halleck, whom Lincoln had given overall command in the West. Halleck promptly assured Buell of a free hand with the Army of the Ohio: "You will continue in command of the same army and district of country as heretofore."\(^4\) He urged
Buell to march his army to Savannah for the campaign against Corinth. This Buell was eager to do, but he had to first make careful arrangements to secure the wide geographical area still under his responsibility. He ordered a column commanded by General George W. Morgan to capture Cumberland Gap, he dispersed another division to hold Middle Tennessee and protect his communications, and he sent General O.M. Mitchel with 8,000 men to clear North Alabama and capture the Memphis and Charleston railroad, east of Florence. These missions were all accomplished. With most of his district in Tennessee thus protected from a sudden Confederate raid, Buell had 37,000 men still available for the march to Savannah.  

In the meantime the Confederates were making an all-out effort to concentrate at Corinth and stop the Union tide. When Johnston learned that Buell would join Grant, he decided to attack Grant's exposed army at Pittsburg Landing before Buell arrived. Accordingly, 44,000 Southerners moved out from Corinth on the 3rd of April. 

If Buell had known Johnston's intentions or Grant's vulnerability he would of course have hurried to Savannah by forced marches. But since neither Grant nor Halleck anticipated a battle before he arrived, why force the march and scatter a well-organized army across Tennessee?
Halleck merely ordered Buell to Savannah "as soon as possible." Only incidentally did a courier inform Buell that Grant's army was encamped at Pittsburg Landing; Halleck's dispatches always referred to Savannah as the point of concentration. No sense of urgency tinged messages from Grant himself, for he considered his position between Shiloh Church and the river landing naturally secure from attack. Buell therefore set a march cadence that would bring his men to the Tennessee river in top fighting trim. 7

On the night of March 15 Buell's 37,000 men commenced their advance, and, under the circumstances, they covered the 150 miles from Nashville to Savannah in good time. Buell threw out cavalry to dash down the pike from Nashville and secure the bridges still in enemy hands. The next morning and on successive days his five infantry divisions with their artillery and trains began snaking their way along the narrow road leading to Columbia, Tennessee. McCook by virtue of rank had the lead, followed at six mile intervals by the divisions of Nelson, Crittenden, Wood, and Thomas. Their orders from Buell were to "move forward steadily and as rapidly as possible without forcing the march or straggling." Units of McCook's
horsemen galloped on to Savannah to reconnoiter and report the situation there to Buell.\footnote{8}

All the bridges along the route were saved until the cavalry reached Columbia, where they found the Duck River span in flames. Since rains had recently enlarged this rivulet into a foaming torrent nearly forty feet deep and 200 yards wide, Buell's advance halted. With the more refined engineering skills developed later in the war a stream like this would have been readily bridged, but in mid-March of 1862 the repair job took nine days of strenuous labor under Buell's personal supervision. Just before the bridge was completed, the river receded to a fordable depth, and Nelson asked permission to cross with his division and continue the advance. Although McCook was entitled to lead, Buell gladly gave the impetuous Nelson a free rein. At sunrise on March 29 the men of his Fourth Division stripped, secured their cartridge boxes around their necks, and forded the still dangerous flood. Even though the bridge became usable on the same day, Nelson's fording prevented a clogging up at Columbia and the momentum of his eagerness eventually pulled the Army of the Ohio into Savannah two days early. By March 31 Buell had resumed his advance, but seventeen miles beyond
Columbia the turnpike ended, leaving sixty-five miles to be made over a single ungraded country road that was bad in the plateau region of Middle Tennessee and grew progressively worse as the army descended into the valley of the Tennessee. In spite of the impediments Buell's well-led divisions covered nearly fifteen miles per day, an above average pace. 9

Almost daily during his march from Nashville Buell advised Halleck and Grant of his progress; neither commander objected that his rate of march was too slow. By April 3 courier service opened between Grant and Buell, but no urgent messages reached Buell. The next day, two days before Johnston struck, Grant notified Nelson not to hurry because he would not be able to cross the river before the following Tuesday. Nevertheless, Nelson pushed ahead to Savannah on the 5th, a move which proved to be most fortunate. Buell and Halleck had just decided upon Waynesborough, about thirty miles from Savannah, as Buell's point of concentration, but when Nelson entered Savannah before receiving orders to change direction, Buell allowed the rest of the army to follow as originally planned. Had the Army of the Ohio gone to Waynesborough, it would probably have missed the battle of Shiloh. 10
At sundown on the 5th Buell and his staff rode into Savannah, finding Nelson already in camp. As darkness descended on the peaceful river hamlet, no signs indicated an impending battle. Halleck telegraphed that he would be down from St. Louis the following week to lead the combined armies to Corinth. Just before Buell's arrival, Grant had told Nelson that his division would be crossed over sometime early the next week; and when one of Nelson's brigade commanders had expressed anxiety to get to the front, Grant had assured him he would see no battle at Pittsburg Landing: "We will have to go to Corinth, where the rebels are fortified." That night 44,000 Confederates, drawn up in battle order, rested on their arms about a mile from Shiloh Church. Grant made an appointment to meet Buell the next morning, Sunday, the 6th of April. 11

Before Buell had finished breakfast with Nelson that Sunday morning, he was interrupted by the rumble of artillery fire coming from the direction of Pittsburg Landing. Had Grant been attacked? Neither he nor Nelson could believe it, but Nelson's troops were put in readiness to march. Accompanied by Fry, his chief of staff, Buell walked to Grant's headquarters, only to find that Grant had already departed for the landing. When
the firing continued unabated, Buell and Nelson grew impatient to get the Fourth Division to the landing. Since the road leading there ran through an almost impassable swamp, they waited for river transportation for Nelson's regiments. After four hours none had come. Finally, a tall Tennessean volunteered to lead the division through the nine-mile maze of roads to Pittsburg; the artillery would have to be left behind. After Buell had seen Nelson's men on their way, and had ordered his other divisions forward by forced marches, he took a steamer up river. His vessel soon met another one approaching from the opposite direction; as the two steamers chugged past each other, Buell was handed a letter from Grant. The message told of Johnston's attack and of Grant's perilous position:

General: The attack on my forces has been very spirited since early this morning. The appearance of fresh troops on the field now would have a powerful effect, both by inspiring our men and disheartening the enemy. If you will get upon the field, leaving all your baggage on the east bank of the river, it will be a move to our advantage, and possibly save the day to us. The rebel forces are estimated at over one hundred thousand men.

Midway between Savannah and the battlefield, Buell saw the first visible evidence of Grant's difficulties—fugitives from the battle darkened the west bank of the river. About one o'clock Buell's steamer pulled up to the landing
beside Grant's headquarters boat. Grant happened to be aboard. Naturally disturbed by a tide of reverses, he seemed genuinely relieved to see Buell and learn of his approaching divisions. After Grant had related the day's events, Buell asked to have Crittenden's division, by this time at Savannah, ferried to the landing. With their brief conversation concluded, Buell started walking towards the bluff while Grant and his staff galloped off to the front.¹⁴

Buell stepped into a scene of mass confusion. He had to force his way through a portion of the more than 5,000 panic-stricken stragglers who crowded down to the water front. Atop the 100 foot bluff he beheld a vast pandemonium: the depot area swarmed with men, horses, and wagons, "mixed in apparently inextricable confusion with a battery of artillery which was standing in park without men or horses to man or move it." As more and more stunned Union troops fled back toward the river from the on surging Confederates, Buell tried vainly to reorganize them.¹⁵

Just as the Southerners under General James R. Chalmers pressed down to the landing, Nelson arrived with Colonel Jacob Ammen's brigade, having covered the muddy bottom road from Savannah in only four hours. At 5 p.m.
Ammen's men, the advance of the Fourth Division, took ferries across the Tennessee river and to the tune of lively band music marched up the bank. Buell directed them to a position on the River road. As they deployed for battle under heavy shellfire an unsupported semicircle of artillery, its back to the river, was trying its best to stop a last Confederate assault on the Union left. Shouting and screaming, the gray line came crashing through the underbrush, driving the Federal gunners on the left of the circle from their pieces. At this critical juncture Ammen's troops advanced in line; their muskets flamed; the enemy charge faltered and turned back; the Union line was restored; and the landing was saved. This brief action at 6:30 p.m. ended the day's hostilities.16

Rain, suffering, and darkness fell on the scene at Shiloh. While the wounded armies of Beauregard and Grant grimly settled back to await morning and more fighting, another army, Buell's fresh and spirited force, streamed into the arena all during the night.

First the remainder of Nelson's men, their way lighted by rain-swept torches, crossed the river and, under the eye of Buell, stepped briskly to their position on the right of Ammen's brigade. By 9 p.m. all of Nelson's sodden men rested on their arms as best they could in
the steady downpour. Buell's instructions to them were simple and direct—"attack the enemy at the earliest dawn."\(^{17}\)

Next, Buell, who never slept during the entire night, made his way back to the teeming landing and found the advance of Crittenden's division arriving by steamboat from Savannah. Because thousands of demoralized soldiers blocked the way, Crittenden had difficulty getting his men off the boats. His shouts to clear a path made no impression on the fugitives, surging down to take refuge on the steamers. Exasperated at this insubordination and demoralizing example for his men, he asked Buell's permission to drive the deserters away by force. Buell refused and finally led Crittenden's men himself through the mob and up to a position in the woods at the right of Nelson's division, one half mile from the landing. Meanwhile McCook's division, which had dropped its train and hurried along a cluttered road in the dark, poured into Savannah and would be ferried up river by early morning. The same transport steamers also carried the artillery: Captain Bartlett's Ohio battery, and the regular batteries of Captains Mendenhall and Terrill. Buell realized that his other two divisions, although hurrying along by forced marches, probably would not arrive in time for action the next day.\(^{18}\)
After Buell had designated the positions for his troops he and Fry walked along the front. To the right of the Army of the Ohio they passed through the broken fragments of Hurlbut's, McClemand's, and Sherman's divisions. Finding Sherman resting under a tree, Buell asked for information, but learned little about the enemy's position or strength—"General Sherman's explanations on that occasion were briefer than would ordinarily be expected from him." From Buell's own observation of the Army of the Tennessee, however, he expected little aid from that source on the next day. He estimated that no more than 5,000 of Grant's troops were still in ranks Sunday night. By this calculation Grant would have, even with the addition of Lew Wallace's division, which had marched up from Crump's Landing, only about 10,000 men to oppose the Confederates next morning.

Although the Southerners had sustained 8,000 casualties, among them Johnston himself, and received no reinforcements, they had driven their opponents into a narrow area around the landing. From Beauregard down to the privates they expected to complete their victory the next morning. On the other side, the remnants of Grant's army, except for Lew Wallace's men, were
numbed from a day of constant reverses. Monday morning would witness a clash between 20,000 or 25,000 battle- scarred but spirited Confederates and a line of Union troops, ranging from Buell's 17,000 eager troops on the left and center through the three broken divisions of Grant in the right center to the 5,000 fresh men of Lew Wallace on the extreme right. 20

Technically, Grant was the ranking officer at Shiloh, but Buell, the stern career officer who went about tasks so methodically, was not the sort of man Grant felt he could put under his orders. "Buell was, and had been for some time past, a department commander," Grant later rationalized, "while I commanded only a district." From the first the Ohio general commanded his own army with no plan of coordination with Grant. Without consultation Buell issued his battle orders on the night of the 6th, whereas Grant did not give his troops instructions until the next morning. 21

At 3 a.m. on Monday the bull-like voice of General Nelson awakened Buell's Tenth Brigade leader: "Colonel Ammen, you will put the Tenth Brigade in motion, as soon as you can see to move, at dawn; find the enemy and whip him." Similar instructions aroused the other brigades of
Nelson and Crittenden, and Buell soon had two divisions lined up for battle in the dark, dripping forest along the Tennessee. About 5 a.m., just as McCook's infantry began to arrive by river, Buell led his army to meet the enemy. Since the Confederates had had difficulty reorganizing their intermingled regiments during the night, Buell's men at first encountered only pickets and scattered detachments. Not until reaching the densely wooded "peach orchard" and "hornet's nest," scenes of severe fighting on the previous day, did they meet solid enemy ranks. At Buell's signal the highly organized bluecoats deployed and developed the enemy line. While Nelson's and Crittenden's infantry exchanged volleys with the enemy across the thicket, McCook's men came quickly into line on Crittenden's right. Now the Army of the Ohio occupied a front of one and one half miles, its left anchored on the Tennessee river, its right extending to the middle of McClernand's camp of the day before.22

About 6 a.m. Nelson's division was staggered by enemy artillery fire and slowly gave way before successive infantry charges. Fighting became severe all along the line. In complete control of his army, Buell noticed his left falling back and immediately sent in Mendenhall's
battery to restore the line. It poured a terrific fire into the gray ranks. When Crittenden's division, in the center, wavered, Buell placed Bartlett's battery in exactly the right position to stop the charging Confederates. The effective fire of these batteries, which were repeatedly shifted by Buell as critical needs arose, allowed the Army of the Ohio to advance once again. Buell closely and skillfully directed his men during this portion of the fighting, ordering forward or redeploying not only whole divisions but even artillery batteries and infantry regiments. By deftly sending his artillery and reserve units to any sagging portion of his line, Buell kept his assault going, although it was often slowed by fierce enemy resistance.23

While Buell's left and center pressed forward, his right, McCook's division, fought in the vicinity of McClemand's old camp on either side of the main road leading from Shiloh Church to the landing. The Southerners directed their attack to this point, and it soon developed into the critical part of the battle. In the severe fighting that raged there from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. McCook was supported by Grant's three decimated divisions, but it was McCook's men who decided the day. As the battle progressed, his troops swept in front of Grant's and joined with the left of Lew Wallace's division,
on the extreme right of the Union line. 24

Ironically, Sherman, who later discounted the role of the Army of the Ohio at Shiloh, praised in his official reports "the well-ordered and compact columns of General Buell's Kentucky forces, whose soldierly movements at once gave confidence to our newer and less-disciplined forces." In particular, he liked the way "a whole brigade of McCook's division advanced beautifully, deployed," and assaulted a strong enemy position. Rousseau's brigade had "moved in splendid order steadily to the front sweeping everything before it." Overall, Sherman credited McCook's men with the crucial fighting: "General McCook's splendid division from Kentucky drove back the enemy along the Corinth road, which was the great central line of this battle." 25

With his troops falling back all along the front until they reached his headquarters at Shiloh Church, Beauregard called off the uneven contest at 2 p.m. His exhausted Southerners withdrew in good order behind a 2,000 man rear guard, and the equally jaded Federal troops did not pursue. Grant's men seemed happy enough to have recaptured their camps, and Buell's soldiers, fatigued after a grueling march, a sleepless night, and a hard day's battle, had no desire to chase after an enemy protected by excellent cavalry. 26
On the basis of their success Sunday and their orderly withdrawal Monday, the Confederates at first claimed a victory at Shiloh. Union soldiers pointed out that they had driven the Confederates from the field and captured their abandoned wounded. Casualties gave neither side a real claim, for they suffered equally; the Confederates had 10,500 casualties out of 44,000 men, while the Union had 13,000 out of 65,000 participants. The Northwest, optimistic after Fort Donelson, was stunned by the high casualties. Newspapers carried stories that Union forces had been surprised and routed en masse the first day, and hinted at incompetence in high places. As might be expected, the heavy losses and the rumors caused Grant and Sherman (Grant's unofficial second in command) to react defensively. And defending themselves they played down the role of Buell. 27

Soon after the battle Grant and Sherman challenged Buell's title as the savior of Shiloh, beginning a protracted controversy. At the time Buell himself made no such claim though he confided to his wife that he and his army believed they had saved Grant. According to Grant and Sherman, however, they had required no help at all from Buell. Neither surprised nor defeated on
Sunday, they had merely withdrawn to a strong position at the landing. The Confederate army was more exhausted than theirs after the first day's fighting, and Grant, reinforced by Lew Wallace, would have defeated the enemy Monday even without Buell's aid. When Washington demanded an explanation of the severe losses on Sunday, Halleck, upon whom ultimate responsibility lay, found it expedient to adopt the opinions of Grant and Sherman. Not only did Halleck deny a surprise, but in a letter to Stanton pictured Sherman as the hero of the battle: "Sherman saved the fortune of the day on the 6th, and contributed largely to the glorious victory on the 7th."²⁸

The official maps of Shiloh also tended to belittle Buell's participation in the battle. After Halleck's arrival at Pittsburg Landing, he had his topographical engineer, General George Thom, prepare maps to accompany the official reports of the battle. From information given him by Sherman and Halleck, Thom drew in the troop positions of the 7th in such a way that Buell's army appeared to occupy only about one third of the field. Buell later protested that the map did not show his position when the right of his army had almost joined Wallace's division. Subsequently, Sherman further distorted reality by contriving a map of Shiloh that assigned Grant's force a line of two and one half miles
instead of the one mile it really occupied on the 6th. Presenting his revision to the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, Sherman claimed that "the map as thus modified tells the story of the battle." When Sherman wrote his Memoirs he judged each army's service by its casualties: "our aggregate loss . . . was 12,217 of which 2,167 were in Buell's army, leaving for that of Grant 10,950. The result is a fair measure of the amount of fighting done by each army."  

Although Buell received much less than full credit for his services at Shiloh, he did in fact prevent a serious Union disaster. An assessment of his generalship of course depends very much upon a proper estimation of Grant's army and the enemy's army at the close of the first day. Dispatches from Grant to Buell on the 6th, battle reports, and comments of individual soldiers indicate that Grant was surprised and driven into a critical position on Sunday. With 10,000 casualties and 15,000 or more shirkers, Grant, including Lew Wallace's troops, had no more than 12,000 men in ranks on Monday morning. Never very disciplined in the first place, even those troops who kept their guns were much demoralized by a day of disaster. Leander Stillwell's statement illustrates the opinion of many who believed they had no chance to survive without aid:
I can only say, in the most heartfelt sincerity that in all my obscure military career, never to me was the sight of reinforcing legions so precious and so welcome as . . . Buell's advance column as it deployed on the bluffs of Pittsburg Landing.

In spite of his official exoneration of Grant and Sherman, Halleck's message to Grant on the 14th of April revealed his real opinion of Grant's forces: "Your army is not now in condition to resist an attack."

On the other hand, the high morale of the Confederates and their ability to inflict 2,000 casualties on the Army of the Ohio indicated their fighting strength on Monday. 30

Sherman's criterion of allowing casualties to gage the armies' participation in the battle has to be qualified. As Buell afterward remarked, the "losses of a surprised and routed and demoralized army can not be compared to those of a self-possessed and victorious one." On the other hand, considering prisoners (Grant lost 3,000), the proportional strength of the two armies (Grant's 47,000 to Buell's 17,000), and the proportional time that each army was under fire (Grant's two days to Buell's one day), both suffered heavy losses. 31

Most analyses of Shiloh have noted the conspicuous lack of generalship during the battle. On the Confederate side, certainly, the hopeless intermixing of organizations
did greatly impede tactical leadership. And Grant has been justly blamed for exposing his army needlessly and for not doing more to reorganize his disintegrated forces on Sunday night. It is rarely noted, on the other hand, that Buell exerted a firm executive hand over his army and had his troops organized for efficient service. At critical stages of the fighting he personally sent whatever was needed to just the right place, whether it be ammunition, artillery, or a reserve infantry regiment. An entry in Colonel Ammen's diary probably expressed the opinion of Buell's subordinates at Shiloh: "General Buell is indefatigable, careful of his men, cool in battle, labors hard to get the best positions, and sees and examines for himself."\textsuperscript{32}

Always modestly inclined, Buell never claimed any personal credit for Shiloh, but he did take pride in the discipline and efficiency of his troops. His congratulatory letter to his men attributed their victory to "subordination and careful training." Indeed, by common acknowledgement, the Army of the Ohio was well-organized at this early period in the war. In Buell's hands it could be a lethal machine. All things considered, the timely arrival of Buell's army, his personal urging of the troops to the scene on the 6th, and his skillful direction of the disciplined Army of
the Ohio on the 7th, combined to prevent a Union disaster and win an important battle.33

After Shiloh the campaign was anticlimactic. Assuming personal command on April 11, Halleck marshalled 100,000 men at Shiloh for an advance on Corinth. Before moving out, he organized his large army into three wings, with Buell's Army of the Ohio in the center. One of Buell's divisions went with Thomas to the Army of the Tennessee, forming the right wing. Apparently Buell did not protest this loss to his command, but when Halleck proposed detaching a second division he objected strongly:

Your arrangement leaves me with three divisions, about 18,000 men. . . . You must excuse me for saying that, as it seems to me, you have saved the feelings of others very much to my injury.

His protest saved the division, leaving him with four—McCook's, Nelson's, Crittenden's, and Wood's, in all about 28,000 men.34

On the 28th of April Halleck ordered his army forward. With the carnage of Shiloh fresh in mind, he kept a firm control over his subordinates; the three wings crept glacially toward Corinth. Planning to
take advantage of his numerical superiority by a massive frontal assault on the Confederates' fortified position, Halleck warned his wing commanders to intrench at night and to bring on no engagement until the whole army could act in concert. As the three Union armies closed in on Corinth in the last week of May, Beauregard's position became untenable, and he ordered a secret evacuation of the town during the night of May 29. Early the next morning, the very day Halleck was to attack, 52,000 Confederates had slipped out of town, carrying their artillery and supplies.35

Closely supervised by Halleck and tightly connected with the commands on either side, Buell had little leeway for independent judgment during the abortive Corinth campaign. Several of his decisions, however, caused further friction between himself and Halleck. On one occasion his liberal interpretation of Halleck's intrenching instructions brought a reprimand. In reply, Buell said that his position actually required no intrenchment for security. "Shall I exercise my judgment in regard to the position of the line or will you send an officer to fix it definitely, as well as the character of the intrenchment?" Halleck responded in a conciliatory tone:

Our line is a very long one, and if the enemy should attempt to turn us, forces from the
center must be detached. In that case intrenchment would be exceedingly important. You will use your own discretion as to the location.

Another clash occurred when Buell delayed his army's advance while he personally examined, as was his habit, the ground it would occupy. Halleck had called for a general advance, and Buell's delay irritated him—"Your not moving as agreed upon, has caused great embarrass-
ment." Again, Buell's answer revealed his resentment at oversupervision:

I certainly have intended to carry out your instructions, but where they have not been specific, I have supposed that you expected me to exercise my own judgement.

For Buell's future, this rift with Halleck may have been the most significant aspect of the Corinth campaign. 36

When Beauregard retreated southeast into Mississippi, toward Tupelo, portions of Pope's and Buell's army went in pursuit, but Halleck soon called off the chase, ending a campaign that brought little glory to Buell or any other participant. The Union had captured an important rail center and left a still intact Confederate army to be dealt with. 37
NOTES


2. For Buell's proposed strategy see OR, I, Vol. 7, p. 678, Vol. 10, pt. 2, pp. 27, 33-34, 37-39, 611; Buell to McClellan, March 9, 1862, General Papers, Buell. For Halleck's plan see OR, I, Vol. 7, p. 682. Halleck notified Buell: "I think all your available force not required to defend Nashville should be sent up the Tennessee. This seems to be the best line of operations, as it leads directly to the enemy's center, and is easily supplied. Give me your views," Ibid., Vol. 10, pt. 2, p. 38.

3. OR, I, Vol. 10, pt. 1, pp. 100-109, Vol. 10, pt. 2, pp. 3-8, 33. On March 16 Halleck instructed Grant to hold his position until reinforced by Buell: "As the enemy is evidently in strong force, my instructions not to advance so as to bring on an engagement must be strictly obeyed." Ibid., 41. Again on March 20 Halleck ordered Grant not to "let the enemy draw you into an engagement now. Wait till you are properly fortified and receive orders." Ibid., 50-51.
4. OR, I, Vol. 10, pt. 2, pp. 28-29, 33 (quoted), 613-14. Buell, apparently unaware of the intrigue resorted to by Halleck in getting the command for himself, felt that the change was "eminently proper." Statement, 10.


7. Buell never denied that he could have marched to Savannah more quickly than he did, but under the circumstances he had no cause to make a forced march. "The rate of march of armies," he stated in an editorial after the war, "is regulated to suit the object in view. When there is no pressing emergency, the health and discipline of the troops are the controlling consideration. Under such circumstances, when no serious obstacles have to be overcome, twelve miles a day for many days in succession is a very good average for large bodies of troops." New York World, April 6, 1866. Since Halleck telegraphed that "Grant's army is concentrating at Savannah," Buell believed him secure from attack. Halleck to Buell, March 16, 1862, General's Papers, Buell. When a courier informed Buell of the Army of the Tennessee's actual location, it came as a surprise:
"I understand that General Smith is on this side of the River. Is it not so?" Buell to Halleck, March 18, 1862, *ibid.*, also printed with slightly different wording in OR, I, Vol. 10, pt. 2, p. 44; Halleck to Buell, March 17, 26, 1862, Generals' Papers, Buell. One of Buell's staff members remarked: "While you were encamped with your army, near Columbia, I remember as distinctly as if it were but yesterday, that you remarked to Colonel Fry, that it surprised you very much to learn that Grant had landed on the west bank of the river." T.J. Bush to Buell, January 16, 1866, Buell Papers.


13. The original of this letter is in the Buell Papers and is also printed with slightly different wording in OR, I, Vol. 10, pt. 2, p. 95.


15. Ibid., 494-95 (quoted); OR, I, Vol. 10, pt. 1, p. 292.


arms . . ., hoping, from news received by a special dispatch, that delays had been encountered by General Buell in his march from Columbia, and that his main force, therefore, could not reach the field of battle in time to save General Grant's shattered fugitive forces from capture or destruction on the following day." OR, I, Vol. 10, pt. 1, p. 387.

21. In the matter of his relation with Buell, Halleck instructed Grant, "You will act in concert, but he will exercise his separate command, unless the enemy should attack you. In that case you are authorized to take the general command." Ibid., 94; Ulysses S. Grant, "The Battle of Shiloh," Battles and Leaders, I, 478-79 (quoted); Louisville Courier-Journal, June 17, 1875.

22. OR, I, Vol. 10, pt. 1, pp. 293-94, 303, 324, 335-36 (quoted); Buell, "Shiloh Reviewed," 525-26; Dillahuntly, Shiloh, 16-17; Reed, Battle of Shiloh, 21-22.


25. Ibid., 251-52 (quoted); Buell, "Shiloh Reviewed," 527-29.


29. Buell, "Shiloh Reviewed," 507-18; "It is correct as to topography," Buell later remarked about the official map, "and totally false as to some of the essential points in controversy—that is as to certain positions of the troops. For that Halleck, Grant, and Sherman, especially Sherman, are responsible. It is the first great fraud in the case, and its exposure is one of the first correctives to be applied." Buell to Captain Robert Hunter, January 29, 1885, Buell Papers; William T. Sherman, Memoirs (1875, Bloomington, Indiana, 1957), 247.


IV

DIFFICULTIES BEGIN: THE CHATTANOOGA CAMPAIGN

Until the summer of 1862 Buell's fortune had steadily improved. During the winter in Kentucky he had proved himself a first-rate organizer and strategist, and on a spring day at Shiloh he had shown himself a proficient leader in combat. In spite of a few disputes with Halleck and Lincoln, he was respected by his superiors. More important to a leader of armies, he had gained the admiration and confidence of his men. Whenever "Old Buell" appeared before his troops in the weeks following Shiloh, they broke into spontaneous shouts and cheers. According to one of his brigade commanders, "no officer ever enjoyed to a more eminent degree the confidence of his officers and soldiers than General Buell. I know very well that I was proud to state that I belonged to Buell's army..."¹ Within three months, however, abrupt changes would take place. Military events and unforeseen circumstances on the one hand combined with political pressure on the other to tarnish Buell's reputation and jeopardize his very career.
After the Corinth campaign Buell again became an independent department commander. Although Halleck had a well-led army of 100,000 men at his disposal, he decided to pause and consolidate recent gains rather than advance against Beauregard's entrenched camp at Tupelo, Mississippi, fifty miles away. Railroad communications needed to be established, he rationalized, and East Tennessee was, as Lincoln again reminded his Western generals, still unredeemed. To appease Washington's double desire for military activity of some kind and for the conquest of Tennessee's mountain regions, Buell's Army of the Ohio was detached from the main Union force, now repairing railroads in West Tennessee, and ordered to move against Chattanooga. The assignment came as no surprise to Buell, for Halleck had since May been directing his attention to the Memphis & Charleston Railroad, running east from Corinth across North Alabama to Chattanooga. "The first thing now to be done," Halleck wrote Buell, "is to open the railroad to Decatur. You will therefore immediately put your Engineer Regiment and such railroad officers and men as you may have on that duty opening the road as rapidly as possible to Tuscumbia."²

Summoned to Halleck's Corinth headquarters on June 10, Buell received oral instructions for the campaign.
His main objective, Halleck explained, would be the seizure of key points on the Memphis & Charleston Railroad such as Chattanooga and Knoxville and East Tennessee. Glad to be independent of his overcautious commander for awhile, Buell accepted this part of his assignment. Even though most of his attention had recently been focused on the Shiloh campaign, he always considered East Tennessee his responsibility. Two of his divisions were already in the area, preparing the way for a more general invasion: General George W. Morgan threatened Cumberland Gap, which he would soon capture, and General Mitchel had been operating since April 11 from Huntsville, Alabama, on the Memphis & Charleston Railroad. Having overrun the country north of the Tennessee River, Mitchel posed a constant threat to Chattanooga, and had even sent forward a raiding party on June 7-8 to shell the city from across the river.³

For the purpose of completing supply lines, Halleck stipulated that Buell have his army repair the Memphis & Charleston Railroad from Corinth to Chattanooga as it advanced east. This controversial part of his instructions Buell strongly opposed. In the first place he preferred moving on Chattanooga by a different route. While Morgan pinned down the Confederates at Knoxville and Mitchel menaced Chattanooga from the south, Buell wanted to lead
the Army of the Ohio up into Middle Tennessee along
the Nashville-Decatur Railroad to Murfreesboro whence
he would cross the Cumberland Plateau at McMinnville
or Sparta and the Sequatchie Valley at Pikesville, climb
over Walden's Ridge at Kingston, and then proceed south
down the Tennessee River to Chattanooga. By using this
route, Buell contended, he would be able to march toward
his supplies, which could be efficiently stockpiled at
Nashville by way of the already operative Louisville-
Nashville Railroad, and at the same time employ the
looping Tennessee River to shield him from the enemy. 4

The prospect of repairing the heavily wrecked
Memphis & Charleston Railroad and advancing along it
to Chattanooga had never appealed to Buell. For eighty
miles the road ran south of the Tennessee River and was
therefore especially vulnerable to interruption by
enemy cavalry. As early as April he had informed Mitchel
that the Memphis & Charleston "would hardly be a proper
line of communication for us against Chattanooga at any
rate." Anticipating orders to move east, and preferring
to have his army supplied from Nashville, Buell had
already instructed his quartermaster at Nashville on
June 3 to make preparations accordingly. 5
Although persuaded during the meeting at Corinth to accept the Middle Tennessee route, Halleck telegraphed a change of mind the next day: "After fully considering the whole matter I am satisfied that your line of operations should be on Chattanooga and Cleveland or Dalton instead of McMinnville." Later Halleck would deny issuing restricting orders to Buell, but in fact he explicitly directed that the Memphis & Charleston Railroad be prepared for supply and communication purposes, and Buell had to obey his instructions. On June 16, for example, he wrote Buell: "your force must guard the road from Bear Creek to Decatur till other arrangements can be made . . ." The next day Buell protested:

It seems to me that the importance of the road from Bear Creek to Decatur is greatly overrated; as a means of transferring troops it is of no value whatever, and as a channel for supplying those in Tennessee it is neither essential nor the most convenient, while its exposure to interruption makes it extremely objectionable.

Again on June 21 Buell called Halleck's attention to the shortcomings of the railroad: "The work has been much greater than was supposed. . . . We have derived no benefit from the road worth naming. The first train of consequence was interrupted by the depredation on the track yesterday." But Halleck persisted: "I repeat,
the road to Decatur must be put in running order with all possible dispatch. That being done, supplies can be sent you in abundance. There must be no delay in this matter."9

Before the Chattanooga campaign was well under way, Halleck did Buell another disservice by creating false hopes about his prospects for success. When Lincoln asked to borrow 25,000 Western troops in June to assist in the East (Halleck's army had been inactive after the Corinth campaign), Halleck, in an attempt to justify his large numbers, hinted that Buell would not only capture Chattanooga, but might well march deeper into the Confederacy:

General Buell's army is moving east through a healthy region via Decatur, Huntsville, and Stevenson to Chattanooga and East Tennessee. Should he be able to penetrate into Georgia as far as Atlanta he will be in a dry and mountain country.10

But Buell's promising operations would have to be cancelled, Halleck insisted, if Lincoln transferred troops from the West to the East. Thus led to expect great results from Buell's army, Lincoln revoked his request for reinforcements. Much as he needed troops, he dared not interfere with Buell's campaign, which he considered "one of the most important movements of the
war . . . nearly as important as the capture of Richmond."

Having no choice but to obey orders, Buell started his four divisions eastward from the Corinth area, repairing the Memphis & Charleston Railroad as they went. Even though he doubted whether the defects of the railroad could be corrected, he did all in his power to make it serviceable. He placed an experienced and energetic engineer in charge of the repair work, put his troops to work with picks and shovels, and urged all possible speed. In the meantime ferries were set up to cross the Tennessee River at Florence and Decatur, Alabama. It soon became obvious, however, that getting supplies from the main depot at Louisville into North Alabama by way of the Memphis & Charleston Railroad would be a time consuming if not an impossible task. Because of low water in the Tennessee River, freight boats could not navigate beyond Eastport, Mississippi. Supplies had therefore to be hauled by wagon train from Eastport to Iuka, Mississippi, a town on the Memphis & Charleston Railroad, then loaded on railroad cars to be pulled by "the single half-serviceable locomotive" on to Decatur, where they were ferried across the Tennessee and reloaded
on railroad cars which carried them on towards Chattanooga. Wagon trains also carried supplies on the north side of the river between Eastport and Florence, Alabama. In spite of all this exertion, no surplus of provisions could be built up. 12

During June Buell's advance was delayed while he worried about feeding his men and animals, which required a minimum of 100,000 pounds of rations per day. Freight cars could not be obtained for the railroad nor could Confederate raiding parties be kept from continually breaking the exposed line of track. The attempted repairs not only gave the 50,000 Confederates camped at Tupelo notice of Buell's intentions but the slowness of the work also gave them more than enough time to reinforce Chattanooga. By July 12 Buell told Halleck that experience had proved what he had anticipated from the beginning: "The great difficulty and labor of getting freight across the river at Decatur and the liability of the road to interruption make the Memphis and Charleston road useless as a channel of supplies for this army." 13

Slowed by labor on the railroad and by a shortage of supplies, Buell's army had progressed only about half way to Chattanooga by early July. After repairing railroad track, bridges, and trestles along the way, three
divisions, McCook's, Crittenden's and Nelson's, had reached Athens, Alabama, and Wood's division had crossed the Tennessee River at Decatur. Here the troops halted momentarily while their wagon trains hauled in provisions needed for a further advance. At the end of a month of effort Buell had 25,000 men positioned 150 miles from Chattanooga. Mitchel's 16,000 were already scattered through Middle Tennessee and North Alabama, repairing bridges and guarding key positions such as Nashville, Murfreesboro, and Huntsville.14

It was now that Buell for the first time realized the full magnitude of the problem of advancing on into East Tennessee. To do so was not just a matter of marching his army over to Chattanooga. Before East Tennessee could be successfully invaded, three kinds of difficulties would have to be overcome: insufficient supplies, lack of support from superiors, and unexpected movements of the enemy.

Since the Confederates with unbroken railroad communications could always concentrate at Chattanooga ahead of Buell unless otherwise engaged, and so far Halleck had shown no inclination to disturb them, Buell had to advance there in force, prepared for a siege or battle. Supplies enough to sustain his army for an
indefinite period would therefore have to be carried along:

The question is not so much what we require in the start as what we require when we get to the limit of the river or railroad communication [Buell explained to Halleck], say Stevenson, and what we need there will be needed as soon as we arrive if we are to go right on ... The question of transportation is one of figures and facts, and I have so treated it in equipping my command.15

With no river transportation available, and with the country around Chattanooga largely unproductive and barren, Buell would have to rely upon the railroads running south from his Louisville and Nashville bases. Making the two wrecked railroads connecting Nashville with the Tennessee River operational in order to stockpile supplies at Stevenson, Alabama, was Buell's first essential task. Even though Halleck had finally released him from repairing and guarding the Memphis & Charleston Railroad, Buell was now too deeply committed to the southern route to revert to his original plan of attacking Chattanooga via Middle Tennessee. He would have to go forward from where he was, and repair, operate, and guard a full 400 miles of Tennessee railroad to support his advance.16

Fortunately, work had already commenced on the Tennessee railroads, Buell having instructed Mitchel
early in June to open the Nashville-Decatur line. To expedite matters Buell added soldiers, engineers, mechanics, and an accomplished civilian engineer as supervisor of the rail lines. Nevertheless the work took longer than anticipated. By June 21 cars ran on the Nashville-Decatur road as far as Reynold's Station, eight miles north of Pulaski, Tennessee, where there was still a sizable gap in the line. "We are already able to draw our supplies from Nashville on the Columbia road by hauling twenty-three miles," Buell reported to Halleck on July 1. The Nashville-Chattanooga line could not be opened to Decherd, Tennessee, (eighty-five miles south of Nashville) until July 12. In the meantime Nelson's entire division worked on the line between Decherd and Buell's advanced base at Stevenson. These two railroads, the life lines of Buell's army, would have to be kept open and efficiently administered if Buell were to capture Chattanooga and advance into the misty mountains of East Tennessee. 17

Later it would be said that Buell erred in relying exclusively on railroads to sustain his army, because any good "total war" general would simply have lived off the land. Buell recognized early, however, what subsequent war experience proved, that large-scale
army operations could not be sustained at a distance of more than 100 miles from a river or railroad base. Wagon trains could never haul enough provisions, for over a long trip the teams would consume forage equal to the contents of their wagons. The Army of the Ohio in East Tennessee would either be supplied by rail along Buell's invasion route or not at all. No large army could live on a country such as that and at the same time carry on active offensive operations. The fertile spots were devoted to cotton or already depleted by other armies, and much of the population hoarded what little they had away from Union soldiers. Buell correctly described the country thus:

East of Huntsville the spurs of the Cumberland Mountains run down nearly to the river, leaving only here and there a narrow valley or cove of arable land. The whole country is rough and almost barren, producing no more than is necessary for the support of a poor and sparse population. East of Stevenson, as far as Chattanooga, it may be said to be destitute both of population and supplies.18

With characteristic meticulousness Buell calculated that the Louisville-Nashville-Decatur Railroad would have to furnish his army 300 tons of rations and forage per day in a proportion of one pound of subsistence to three and one half pounds of forage. This amount did not
include the extra stores, clothing, ordnance, and ammunition he would require if his campaign became extended. As Buell soon found out, however, getting 300 tons a day to Stevenson was no slight undertaking. He constantly admonished his quartermaster and commissary officers in Louisville and Nashville to exert themselves, to use imagination, but no matter what, to hurry on the supplies. When an overworked commissary officer at Louisville suggested in July that it would be more efficient if Buell could somehow find bread for his army in Alabama, Buell fired back a dispatch: "The country here cannot supply the flour, nor is there any necessity for our depending on the country if it could. The railroad from Louisville . . . is open to us, and if we don't get supplies it can only be our own fault."\textsuperscript{19}

Actually the real problem in communications and supply had little to do with quartermaster or commissary officers. In mid-July the Confederates' best cavalry, led by Nathan B. Forrest and John Hunt Morgan, made devastating raids on Buell's supply lines. As early as April Mitchel had warned Buell of the transfer of large cavalry units to the north side of the Tennessee River after Shiloh, where they were joined by guerrillas in Middle Tennessee, North Alabama, and southwest
Kentucky. To counter this threat, Buell telegraphed Stanton for help:

There is a great and immediate need for more cavalry in Kentucky and Tennessee. The warfare has already assumed a guerrilla character in Tennessee, and it is to be renewed in Kentucky by marauding bands organized in the state, assisted by a few rebel troops. Kentucky ought to have at least three more regiments and Tennessee two more if they can be spared from the east.20

Stanton answered simply that "this department has no mounted cavalry at its disposal." If the Secretary of War had been half as far-sighted as Buell was in this matter, or even seen as well as the Confederates did the vulnerability of Kentucky to cavalry raids, he would certainly have scraped up some troopers.21

The Confederate raider Morgan reported back to his government in May that a body of cavalry thrown across the river could do irreparable damage to the enemy. He was exactly right, for Buell operated on a 400 miles front, extending from Corinth to Piketon in the northeast corner of Kentucky. His lines of communication around this wide perimeter stretched from 200 to 300 miles in depth. In order to concentrate an assault force at Chattanooga, he had found it necessary to strip the vast area in his rear down to a police force of about 4,000 men. Because of rugged mountains and a lack of troops, the front from
Battle Creek, Tennessee, to Cumberland Gap was not occupied at all. Confederate cavalry units of a thousand or so under Forrest or Morgan could easily brush aside scattered details of Federal horsemen, penetrate country already familiar to them, capture road guards, destroy the Army of the Ohio's communications, and escape at will. 22

Raids such as the one against Murfreesboro in which Forrest on July 13 surprised and captured the garrison of 1,400 men and seriously damaged the Nashville-Chattanooga Railroad, completely disrupted Buell's advance supply system. Supplies needed for the build up at Stevenson were delayed for two weeks until the railroad was repaired. On August 10 Morgan, on his second sweeping raid into Kentucky and Tennessee, captured Gallatin, Tennessee, on the Louisville-Nashville Railroad, a few miles north of Nashville, and destroyed an important tunnel, severing communications between Louisville and Nashville indefinitely. 23

These raids caused alarm in the state capitals of Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana and in Washington. Buell was held responsible for them. "Do all in your power to put down the Morgan raid even if the Chattanooga expedition be delayed," Halleck ordered after the
Murfreesboro debacle. Buell frankly admitted that "the embarrassment from this is great," but asked what he could do without cavalry of his own; "small guards cannot protect them [garrison's such as Murfreesboro], and to give large ones would scatter my whole force." It pained Buell when Stanton and Halleck, who had been called to Washington in July as General in Chief, asserted that "the impunity with which Morgan moved through Kentucky and committed depredations was due in many cases to the want of energy and good conduct on the part of officers." Open supply lines being essential for his advance, Buell had all along done everything possible to cope with the enemy's superior cavalry. He assigned General W.S. Smith to do nothing but command railroad guards throughout the department. He ordered stockades holding twenty to forty men built at every bridge or other point occupied by troops over more than 300 miles of railroad. Improvising a makeshift defense as best he could, Buell consolidated his own scattered cavalry, "broken down by constant hard work," and supplemented it with "light brigades" of infantry, equipped to move quickly in wagons after Forrest or Morgan. One such command was to operate from Murfreesboro, another from McMinnville. Unfortunately, an overzealous General Richard W. Johnson, commander of
the Murfreesboro unit, moved out to attack the enemy before his whole command had joined him. His 700 engaged Morgan's 1,500 to 3,000 near Hartsville, Tennessee, in mid-July and suffered overwhelming defeat. Johnson and 150 men were captured and the rest scattered. At this point Buell renewed his demands for more Union cavalry:

We are occupying lines of great depth. They are swarming with the enemy's cavalry and can only be protected by cavalry. It is impossible to overstate the importance of the matter. Three months ago I represented to the Department the necessity for eight more regiments of cavalry in Tennessee and Kentucky.

When this request went unanswered, Buell sent out an urgent call for 1,000 cavalry horses with the intention of mounting infantry.27

After trying every expedient he could think of, Buell reluctantly withdrew large infantry units from the advancing main army to fend off cavalry raids and protect key bridges. Nelson's division marched rapidly to Murfreesboro, two of Wood's brigades moved to guard Elk River Bridge at Decherd, and Wood's remaining brigade began erecting defenses for the depot at Stevenson. Buell did not fail to explain his difficulties:

We are moving briskly to counteract all movements, but our lines are long, our railroads broken, the weather killing to men marching, and our supplies limited
and now uncertain... I shall be obliged to withdraw two more divisions from the main object to guard against the recurrence of such raids as are now going on in these two states. 29

Even by deploying large units of infantry, it was still next to impossible to clear Tennessee of Confederate raiders. Nelson's reports were not encouraging: "To chase Morgan and Forrest, they mounted on race horses, with infantry this hot weather is a hopeless task." 29

Buell's superiors, Lincoln, Stanton, and Halleck, attributed great importance to the Chattanooga campaign and earnestly urged Buell east, but, inconsistently, they inadequately supported the undertaking. Stanton's failure to provide cavalry has already been noticed. The Washington authorities seemed to think, in spite of Buell's full reports to the contrary, that if only a little "activity" were displayed, East Tennessee could be taken and held. Later in the war they would be glad if a force several times the size of Buell's could capture Chattanooga, but in the summer of 1862 it was expected that Buell could march his 30,000 men into the barren region of East Tennessee, face down a strong enemy force and secure the area. 30

On his part, Halleck failed to provide Buell with the men and supplies requisite to accomplish what Lincoln considered a mission of the first importance. Thomas with
Buell's best division was detained, repairing rail lines and needlessly watching for the enemy south of Corinth, until late July. To Buell's repeated calls for Thomas, Halleck replied on June 25: "I cannot replace Thomas's division quite yet . . . as soon as the railroads are open to Memphis and Columbus I will withdraw a part of the forces employed in repairing them and relieve Thomas's division." On June 30 Halleck again refused to return Thomas and threatened to remove another division from the Army of the Ohio: "Because of request for troops in East, Thomas's division will not join you and perhaps another will be withdrawn." By this time Buell began to doubt Halleck's enthusiasm for his campaign, since the loss of another division would preclude a successful invasion. 31

At the crisis of Buell's campaign in mid-August Lincoln and Stanton made what has correctly been termed a "colossal military blunder of divided command." They lopped off Kentucky from Buell's department and placed it under General Horatio G. Wright. General Nelson, whom Buell had just sent to Kentucky with orders to reopen the supply lines, was completely thwarted by the new commander of Kentucky. In compliance with Halleck's instructions, Wright concerned himself more with the defense of Cincinnati and Cumberland Gap than with Buell's
need for supplies. Buell was left to open his own lines of communications which now ran through Wright's department. 32

It especially annoyed Buell to be reminded that his delay in reaching Chattanooga might allow Bragg to get there first. All along he had insisted that unless the main Union army around Corinth engaged the enemy's attention in Mississippi, Confederate troops could be quickly marshalled in East Tennessee by rail. 33 When Halleck expressed disappointment upon learning that Bragg was winning the race to Chattanooga, Buell reiterated his point:

As to any effect our rate of movement will have on the force we are to meet, it amounts to nothing. The enemy will meet us with what force he can spare for that object, and his facilities enable him always to move more rapidly than we possibly can. If I could have reached Chattanooga in two weeks I should probably have met the same force as now. 34

But even when Buell's superiors learned that the Confederates had reinforced Chattanooga, they ordered no corresponding shift of Union troops from Corinth to Middle Tennessee. Not until September did two divisions from Grant reach Buell, too late to be employed against Chattanooga. When he accepted his assignment, Buell later remarked, he had not anticipated that "the enemy was to be left so unemployed at other points that he could devote
his greatest effort against my enterprise."35

Along with supply and support problems, movements of the enemy under Bragg and Kirby Smith finally stalled Buell's advance and threw him on the defense. As Buell had predicted, the Confederates were ready and able to fight for Chattanooga. When the Army of the Ohio first started marching in early June, Kirby Smith already had 10,000 to 12,000 men stationed along the railroad between Knoxville and Chattanooga, prepared to move either way. Whereas Buell could get little cooperation from Washington, the Richmond government exerted maximum effort to defend its vital rail connections at Chattanooga. In June the Confederate Secretary of War advised the officer commanding at Chattanooga not to worry about Buell, because troops would be rushed to the city: "I have ordered every regiment and battery in Georgia not needed on the coast to proceed at once to Chattanooga. . . . I am sending arms to you as fast as possible. . . . If you can defend your position we may be able to place Buell in a critical situation."36 By July 14, Kirby Smith, the overall commander in East Tennessee, began serious preparations to flank Buell's advance by invading a practically undefended Kentucky. He had now increased his Knoxville
and Chattanooga forces to 20,000 men, and, besides his infantry, had Morgan and Forrest with several thousand cavalrymen available for diversionary raids into Buell's department. In late July Confederate troops suddenly poured into the southeast corner of Tennessee. Bragg, who had succeeded Beauregard as department commander of the West, withdrew 30,000 men from Mississippi and moved them quickly to Chattanooga by railroad via Mobile. He and Smith immediately agreed that Smith with his force of about 20,000 would threaten Morgan's fortified position at Cumberland Gap, detach a few thousand troops to hold Morgan there, and then advance into Kentucky. Simultaneously, Bragg would cross the Tennessee River at Chattanooga, move into Middle Tennessee, and defeat Buell. To prevent Buell from being reinforced, Generals Sterling Price and Earl Van Dorn would by threatening West Tennessee from Mississippi hold Grant's army in check.37

From the last of July through the first week in August Buell concentrated his army to attack Chattanooga even though he knew Bragg had reinforced the city. Momentarily, conditions favored this course. Communications were open again, and supplies began to pile up at Stevenson. Even with 15,000 men on guard and garrison duty, including two full brigades watching over Nashville and Murfreesboro, Buell could attack Chattanooga with
31,000 men. Wood's division moved up to Decherd, at the foot of the Cumberland Mountains, Nelson's men camped close to Murfreesboro; McCook's and Crittenden's troops advanced to Battle Creek, only a few miles from Chattanooga on the north side of the Tennessee River; and Thomas, who had at last rejoined Buell's army took a position at Athens, Alabama. The 31,000 troops of these five divisions could be concentrated at some central point such as Altamont, Tennessee, in twenty-four hours. By abandoning the Nashville-Decatur Railroad and reducing his outpost guards in Tennessee, Buell could increase this assault force to 36,000 men for operations between McMinnville and Chattanooga. Since Bragg was thought to have about an equal force behind the Tennessee River around Chattanooga, Buell's planned assault involved some risk, but he wrote Halleck on August 7 that he intended to fight Bragg:

I shall march upon Chattanooga at the earliest possible day unless I ascertain certainly that the enemy's strength renders it imprudent. If, on the other hand, he should cross the river I shall attack him, and do not doubt that we shall defeat him.

With the closing of the Gallatin tunnel on August 10, and the consequent interruption of the flow of supplies, Buell had to forget about crossing the Tennessee River and, instead,
concentrate on destroying Bragg's army when it took the offensive.

Forced to the defensive, Buell switched his forward supply depot from Stevenson to Decherd and pushed his troops forward to watch the mountain passes into Middle Tennessee, where Bragg would most likely appear. Nashville seemed Bragg's most obvious objective, but the question was, which of the several routes through the mountains would he use? Buell's troops, hampered by a lack of cavalry scouts, had to rely upon spies for information and stand guard from Battle Creek to McMinnville. 39

On August 19 Kirby Smith invaded North Central Kentucky with 18,000 men, separating Buell from his main base at Louisville. Bragg, preparing to emerge from the mountains, had visions of Buell's troops as being much demoralized and amenable to easy defeat in detail. 40 But Buell rapidly concentrated his far-from-demoralized forces to receive Bragg. Determined to prevent a junction between Bragg and Smith and at the same time to defend Nashville, the only sizable base still accessible, Buell ordered his separated divisions to join and attack Bragg as he descended from Walden's Ridge into the narrow Sequatchie Valley. 41

When reliable reports indicated that Bragg would march on the mountain road running through Altamont to
McMinnville and Murfreesboro, Buell ordered Thomas, at McMinnville, and McCook at Battle Creek, to concentrate at Altamont on August 23 and delay the passage of Bragg until the rest of the army could join the attack. McCook and Thomas, however, did not carry out Buell's instructions. Unable to establish contact with the enemy in the Sequatchie Valley on his way up to Altamont, McCook feared Bragg might be advancing by way of North Alabama and consequently returned to his former position at Battle Creek. Thomas, after taking a portion of his division to Altamont, decided not to remain there:

I deem it next to impossible to march a large army across the mountains by Altamont on account of scarcity of water and forage and the extreme difficulty of passing over the road. I will therefore return to McMinnville and await orders.  

Buell's two ranking division commanders had shown themselves quite independent-minded. Swept up in the swirl of military events, Buell chose not to make an issue of the disobedience of his orders. "Owing to the mountainous character of the country," he explained to Halleck, "and perhaps some misapprehension, the concentration was not effected as I designed." 

With Bragg's army hidden in the mountain ranges of East Tennessee, Buell's position along the McMinnville-
Decherd-Battle Creek salient became untenable. Reliable information simply could not be obtained. "The general impression is that the enemy is advancing," reported Thomas from Buell's forward position at McMinnville, "but I have yet to see the person who has seen any of the Chattanooga forces proper." Nevertheless over 50,000 Confederates were known to be advancing in Tennessee and Kentucky. The largest portion of them under Bragg, and screened by excellent cavalry, moved along an unknown route somewhere between Jasper and Sparta. Beyond doubt Bragg had crossed the Tennessee River and passed over Walden's Ridge, but after doing this he could be on one of several routes. Besides the Southern road which skirted around the mountains between Jasper and Decherd and the one which ran northeast up the Sequatchie Valley, there were three others leading up from the valley into the Plateau of the Cumberland and Middle Tennessee. If Buell elected to make a stand at McMinnville, Bragg, with cavalry covering his advance, could move to within twenty miles of the town and then turn north to Sparta and outflank Buell. If Buell concentrated at Sparta, on the other hand, Bragg could move through McMinnville and cut Buell off from Nashville.
Conditions had degenerated in Buell's rear. His communications had been cut for twenty days, and he had supplies for only ten days on hand. Kirby Smith was loose in Kentucky, opposed by nothing but raw recruits. Since Kentucky now lay outside Buell's command, he could do little to reestablish communications. Several months later Buell recapitulated his analysis of the situation:

Such straits did not admit of further delay to await an enemy who could choose his own time for the meeting and who had already been eight days behind the time at which I had reason to expect him. An immediate concentration at a point nearer the source of supply, from which I was separated 260 miles, was clearly necessary. It promised the only means of opening the railroad and still holding Nashville, the possession of which was believed to be the enemy's first objective.45

Buell planned to fall back to Murfreesboro where his army could cover Nashville and more easily receive two reinforcing divisions from Grant, belatedly offered by Halleck. On August 30 Buell issued orders for a concentration that he described with justifiable pride:

The routes and marches were prescribed, and the movement was executed simultaneously and with perfect precision. With the exception of the force on the Decatur road, which was ordered to Nashville, the whole army, coming from various quarters and different distances on four roads,
concentrated at Murfreesboro on the 5th of September, bringing with it whatever supplies could be collected from the country. A small remnant of provisions, for which their was insufficient transportation, was destroyed at Huntsville, and with that exception not a pound of supplies was lost by the movement.\(^46\)

Meanwhile Bragg had moved undetected through the densely wooded Sequatchie Valley, crossed the Cumberland Plateau and, on the same day that Buell's army arrived at Murfreesboro, established his headquarters at Sparta, sixty miles northeast of the Union army. Bragg now had the option either of moving over to attack Buell in the Nashville-Murfreesboro area or of advancing north into Kentucky. When Buell finally learned Bragg's whereabouts, he expected an attack on Nashville, but reports soon indicated that Bragg was crossing the Cumberland River at Carthage and moving towards Kentucky. Buell then garrisoned Nashville and ordered his army after the Confederates. Bragg had at last come out of the mountains; he would have either to fight Buell or to join Kirby Smith in Kentucky.\(^47\)
NOTES


7. Halleck's indorsement dated May 29, 1863, on "Opinion of the Buell Commission," denied having ordered Buell to repair the Memphis & Charleston Railroad: "So much of the report as states that General Buell's march"
on Chattanooga was delayed by the repairs of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad and that General Buell's lines of supply were unnecessarily long is incorrect. General Buell had no other line of supply than this road till he reached Decatur and connected with Nashville. General Buell was not delayed an hour beyond what he himself deemed necessary to secure his supplies. Moreover, his lines of supply were those which he himself selected. Indeed there were no others from which to select." OR, I, Vol. 16, pt. 1, p. 12; In reality, Buell was not released from repairing and guarding the Memphis & Charleston Railroad until June 30. See Halleck to Buell, June 30, 1862, Buell Papers, also printed in OR, I, Vol. 16, pt. 2, p. 75.
8. Halleck to Buell, June 16, 1862, Buell Papers, also printed in OR, I, Vol. 16, pt. 2, pp. 27-28; Buell's protest is from ibid., 33.
10. Ibid., 14, 63 (quoted).
11. Ibid., 75 (quoted); Fry, Operations of the Army under Buell, 31.
17. OR, I, Vol. 16, pt. 2, pp. 10, 16-17, 45, 83; Buell to Halleck July 1, 1862, Buell Papers; Buell, Statement, 13.
21. Ibid., 203-204.
22. Ibid., Vol. 10, pt. 1, p. 876; Buell, Statement, 16-17; Fry, Operations of the Army under Buell, 179.


26. Ibid., 322.


29. Ibid., 234.


32. Ibid., 179. McKinney develops the idea that Lincoln and Stanton blundered in dividing Buell's command. Education in Violence, 148.


34. Ibid., 266.

35. Buell, Statement, 14; Fry, Operations of the Army under Buell, 27.


46. Buell, *Statement*, 24 (quoted); Buell to Halleck, August 20, 1862, Buell Papers.

V

POLITICIANS AND POLICY

Military skill alone did not guarantee the Union general a successful career during the Civil War. In a sprawling and individualistic country like the United States, ever distrustful of military power, generals took a poor second place to politicians. Even a competent West Pointer to succeed during the war must secure the favor of state and national political leaders or at least cultivate a careful political neutrality. Partly this was true because the problems with which a commanding general was obliged to deal, problems such as emancipation and reconstruction, were politically exciting and by no means strictly military.¹

Before taking active command in November, 1861, Buell had received explicit written instructions from McClellan which outlined Lincoln's occupation policies for the Northern armies:

You will please constantly bear in mind the issue for which we are fighting. That issue is the preservation of the Union and the restoration of the full authority of the General Government over all portions of our territory. We shall most readily
suppress this rebellion and restore the authority of the Government by religiously respecting the constitutional rights of all. I know that I express the feelings and opinions of the President when I say that we are fighting only to preserve the integrity of the Union and the constitutional authority of the General Government. . . . I have only to repeat that you will in all respects carefully regard the local institutions of the region in which you command, allowing nothing but the dictates of military necessity to cause you to depart from the spirit of these instructions. 2

Since Buell himself advocated a lenient reconstruction of the South, he happily obeyed the order, faithfully following Lincoln's program in Kentucky and recommending its continuance in Tennessee: "As a matter of great importance and delicacy," he wrote McClellan, "I would advise you to use all the means you have to induce the President to pursue a lenient course." 3

Upon the capture of Nashville Buell issued General Order No. 13a outlining rules for the conduct of his army in occupied territory. Since Federal forces fought, according to the President's statement of war aims, only to preserve the Union and protect the Constitution, peaceable citizens would not be "molested in their persons or property." Private property could of course be used for public purposes whenever military necessity required it, but only at the discretion of the highest
ranking commanders in an area and fair compensation would always be allowed. Soldiers were not to enter the residences or grounds of citizens for any reason except by formal authorization. No one other than persons committing overt offenses against the army would be arrested without Buell's permission. Any soldier or officer who departed from the letter and spirit of these instructions would be promptly punished. 4

During the spring and summer of 1862 Buell refined his basic Order 13a. To win back to the Union those Southerners who were neither hostile nor warmly friendly, Buell would extend liberally the protection of his army. An oath of allegiance would be administered as little as possible. Confederate prisoners who experienced a genuine change of heart would be freed. "The General commanding has already considered the case of Mr. James R. Hallam," wrote Buell in a typical dispatch, "and relying on his own statement of his good faith and loyalty to the government, has ordered his discharge." 5 Such leniency of course did not apply to Southerners who took up arms or gave aid and comfort to the Confederacy. Although Buell would soon be charged with overindulging Southern civilians, his policies were in practical application reasonable and firm. Southerners certainly
saw nothing excessively lenient in Buell's instructions that supplies for the army obtained from citizens always be purchased at a fair price, but that no payment be made for material seized to meet a public emergency, such as the building of a bridge, or taken without authority, that is, by plunder or theft. 6

Buell's slave policy was also reasonable but politically explosive. While authorizing Negro labor on military works and roads, he sought to exclude most slaves from his camps because of their adverse effect on discipline. In accordance with Lincoln's original instructions repeated in his own Order 13a, Buell barred fugitive slaves from his army. Only those who put themselves in a position of needing protection by spying for the Union could stay with the army.

"Several applications have been made to me by persons whose servants have been found in our camps," wrote Buell to J.R. Underwood, a Kentucky political leader worried about the effect of the Union army on the peculiar institution, "and in every instance that I know of the master has recovered his servant and taken him away." Supposedly a man of rigid principle, Buell could occasionally indulge a Southern lady—as long as
doing so did not interfere with military duty: "Send back Mrs. Cole's slaves, Zack and John, who are employed on public work to take care of the place, there being no hands left for the purpose." Men of truly inflexible principles, the Abolitionists, viewed such sentimental behavior with concern. 7

Determined to enforce his regulations down to the smallest detail, Buell alerted his commanders about the dangers of stragglers, "worthless characters who straggle from the ranks on the plea of being unable to march." General Order No. 20, if enforced, would prevent such unsoldier-like scoundrels from preying upon helpless civilians: "Whenever a soldier is found straggling in rear of his regiment or company, his knapsack will be inspected by the rear guard, and every unauthorized article found in it will be thrown out." 8 Whenever Buell heard of "depredations" on private property, even rail fences or standing crops, he ordered an investigation, suitable compensation to the victim, and punishment of the guilty. More serious offenses, such as those alleged against Colonel Douglas A. Murray's troops in August, brought down Buell's wrath:

Reports are made to me of the most disgraceful outrages on the part of troops along the road within 10 or 12 miles of your station. Not only is
property taken without vouchers, as required by law and my repeated orders, but property is wantonly destroyed, negro women are debauched, and ladies insulted. Such acts are said to have been committed at Mr. Clay's place 10 miles west of you, yesterday or the day before.

If you had a party at that place at the time stated you will arrest the officer and send him to these headquar- ters. Such conduct is disgracing the army and is destructive of the public interests.

A strict enforcement of Lincoln's policies irritated some soldiers and infuriated radical politicians, but it proved effective. Witnesses before the Buell Commission would later testify that Buell won thousands of Middle Tennesseans back to the Union. Buell himself considered Colonel Marc Mundy's application of Order 13a to Pulaski, Tennessee, to be good proof of the success of conciliation. When Pulaski was first occupied only two Union men could be found in the whole area. Colonel Mundy immediately had Order 13a read, announcing protection for all who behaved themselves:

After giving this warning to them I treated the people kindly, remedied some wrongs they were suffering and protected them from the marauding of the teamsters and trains that were passing through there. . . . I published an order forbidding any depredations upon the citizens . . . as I was instructed by General Buell's order No. 13a.
Soon the people from the town and the countryside gained confidence in Mundy. Ex-Governor Neil S. Brown in a public meeting declared his conversion from the Confederacy to the Union, and most of the people followed his example. Mundy did find it necessary to expel six men who were bitter secessionists and refused to take the oath of allegiance.

Having relieved the community of these men that they were afraid of, there was no longer any hesitation in declaring their Union sentiments, and I am satisfied that four-fifths of all the men in the country—fully four-fifths—returned to their loyalty and would have been glad to reconstruct the Union.10

Successful Buell's policies might be in a practical sense, but they also helped generate potent political opposition to him. This was especially true among the war governors, and the war governors were a group indispensable to the Union cause during the Civil War. The more ardent among them not only engendered a martial spirit in their states but also raised troops, appointed officers and even aided the national government in arming and supplying the Federal forces. For patriotism and zeal Johnson of Tennessee and Morton of Indiana were outstanding. Lincoln absolutely required their political and military support and could not afford to ignore
their advice even when he disagreed with it. Unfortunately for Buell, he gained from the beginning the implacable hostility of these two powerful men, clashing with them over control of troops and over war aims.11

As early as December, 1861, McClellan had cautioned Buell that Johnson had gained Lincoln's sympathy for the East Tennessee movement and would insist upon its accomplishment. Buell's reluctance to undertake the campaign, although based on sound military reasons and thoroughly explained to Washington, aroused bitter resentment in Johnson, prompting another warning from McClellan in January: "The political consequences of the delay of this movement will be much more serious than you seem to anticipate." Buell was distressed when he learned that Lincoln planned to send Johnson to Tennessee. Knowing Johnson's ill will toward him, and fearing duplication of authority and clash of policies, he urged McClellan to employ his powers of persuasion "against the appointment of a military Government for Tennessee. It will do infinite harm. Beg the president to wait."12 Johnson was nevertheless sent to Tennessee as chief executive, and thereafter multiplied Buell's difficulties. Pathologically fearful of capture by vengeful Confederates, Johnson frantically dispatched
Buell and Washington for additional soldiers to guard Nashville. Although Buell, Halleck, and Lincoln all explained that combat troops must be kept at the front, Johnson accused Buell of not cooperating with him. Ominously for Buell's future, Johnson also began advocating a stern policy to cure Tennessee of her rebelliousness; he would punish those who had sympathized with the Confederacy. Denouncing Buell's conciliatory methods, he flooded Lincoln with messages accusing Buell and his staff officers of lukewarmness and of sympathy with the "master-spirits engaged in the rebellion."

While Buell worked to implement Order 13a, Johnson's soldiers went through Middle Tennessee arresting ex-Confederates and citizens of questionable loyalty, including many who had been guaranteed Buell's protection. In July Johnson finally asked Stanton to replace Buell with a more enthusiastic commander who would secure East Tennessee and force a radical policy on Tennessee: "The rebels must be made to feel the weight and ravages of the war they have brought upon the country. Treason must be made odious and traitors impoverished."13

Governor Oliver P. Morton of Indiana had never forgiven Buell for depriving him of his control over Indiana soldiers during the organization of the Army of the Ohio. The unscrupulous Midwestern politician intrigued
to be made Secretary of War for the West and to control the Western armies. Buell had not been the subservient follower most preferred by Morton, and to the governor's direct way of thinking those not with him were his enemies. Morton now brought Buell's policies and the vicissitudes of his campaign into Indiana politics. Desperately attempting to fire up a flagging martial spirit in the state, a coalition of War Democrats and Republicans led by Morton injected the slavery issue into the war aims and declared in favor of "vigorous war." It required little imagination for Morton to advertise the political implications of Buell's characteristics and policies. The governor professed to believe all the gossip sent to him from the camps of Indiana troops impatient of discipline. According to Morton, Buell's punishment of soldiers for plundering was really sympathy with the enemy. Avoidance of personal display was aristocratic hauteur and undemocratic exclusiveness. Reticence was ignorance of the situation and lack of plan. In short Morton portrayed Buell not only to his Indiana constituents but also to Lincoln and Stanton as a repellent martinet, unable to handle
volunteer soldiers and, more damaging, as a "rebel-sympathizer" if not an actual traitor. Unless Buell was replaced by a more vigorous commander, Morton warned Lincoln, Republicans and War Democrats throughout the Midwest would lose out in the fall elections. ¹⁵

Besides the threats to Buell from radical politicians outside the army, he had reason to be apprehensive of certain of his subordinates, especially General O.M. Mitchel, commander of the Third Division. While separated from the main army Mitchel had assumed much independence of command. A close friend of Stanton's, he communicated directly with the Secretary of War, periodically complaining that Buell neglected the Third Division and had relegated it to inglorious occupation duty. Furthermore, Mitchel criticized Buell's "soft" slave policy, which, as Mitchel distorted it, withheld protection from even those slaves who had spied for the Federal army. Mitchel himself had all along "supposed that the slaves of masters in arms against the Government were confiscated," and he confided to Stanton that men of the Third Division, unknown to Buell, made good use of the numerous Negroes who flocked into camp. Stanton agreed with the general: "The assistance of slaves is an element of military strength which, under proper
regulations, you are fully justified in employing for your security and the success of your operations." Mitchel instructed his troops to abide by Order 13a, but he was too easygoing to enforce discipline. He admitted to Stanton in May that:

The most terrible outrages, robberies, rapes, arsons, and plunderings are being committed by lawless brigades and vagabonds connected with the army. . . . Whenever I am present in person all is quiet and orderly, but in some instances, in regiments remote from headquarters, I hear the most deplorable accounts of excesses committed by soldiers. Reports reached Buell that such "outrages" had alienated hundreds of Unionists. In July he ascribed "the greater part of our annoyance from guerrilla bands to the spirit of hate and revenge" inspired by the effects of Mitchel's laxness in enforcing Order 13a.

An incident had already occurred in Mitchel's command which soon produced far-reaching repercussions. Colonel John Basil Turchin, a fiery ex-Russian officer, had allowed his brigade to sack and plunder Athens, Alabama. There had been some slight provocation in that a Confederate raiding party had killed several Federal soldiers in the small Union-occupied town. When Colonel Turchin, who had openly ridiculed Buell's leniency to civilians, heard that certain townspeople had assisted the raiders,
he ordered his entire brigade to Athens. While he walked approvingly about the streets the town was plundered for hours under the direction of his officers. Soldiers and officers broke into stores and homes to destroy their contents. A colonel not only encouraged his men to wreck the home of a prominent citizen but also behaved "rudely and coarsely" to the ladies of the family. Indiscriminate firing into occupied houses caused one woman to die from a miscarriage; "coarse, vulgar, and profane language" was used before white females; and Negro females were raped, one in the presence of her mistress. 19

This incident of course violated every article of Order 13a. Not only had Buell's orders been disobeyed, but his sense of humanity had been offended—he demanded that Mitchel court-martial the officers involved. Mitchel conducted a half-hearted investigation and recommended dropping the case inasmuch as the townspeople could not identify individual plunderers: "I cannot arraign before a court, civil or military, a brigade." In reality, Mitchel hesitated because Turchin had a good combat record and because many troops of the Third Division, becoming more and more imbued with radical ideals, approved of the Athens incident. 20
Buell decided that for the sake of discipline and justice the Athens offenders should not go unpunished. He convened a court-martial to try Turchin and several of his subordinates. Turchin was found guilty, but six members of the court, including James A. Garfield, recommended clemency on the ground that the offense had been committed under "exciting circumstances." Concerned about discipline and the confidence of North Alabama civilians, Buell decided, however, to carry out the court's sentence of dismissal from the service. In stating his reasons for this decision Buell revealed both his common sense and his concept of an officer's honor:

The question is not whether private property may be used for the public service, for that is proper whenever public interest demands it. It should then be done by authority and in an orderly way. The wanton and lawless indulgence of individuals in acts of plunder and outrage is a different matter, tending to the demoralization of the troops and the destruction of their efficiency. Such conduct does not mean vigorous warfare; it means disgrace and disaster, and is punished with the greatest severity in all armies. The circumstances under which the disorders were committed were precisely those which demanded the strictest observance of discipline. The command was supposed to be in the presence of an enemy . . . . Every man should have been at his post instead of roaming over the town and country to load himself with useless plunder.
Far from being disgraced, Turchin received a hero's welcome at mass meetings and banquets in Chicago. Midwestern Republicans demanded his reinstatement and denounced Buell. Before such pressure Lincoln yielded; in spite of Buell's telegram depicting Turchin as unreliable, Lincoln called him back into the army in August--as a brigadier general. Had Lincoln in effect repudiated Buell for carrying out the President's own policies? Lincoln never said this and in any event would always tack before a sudden political wind, but Buell might well wonder whose policy would prevail, the Commander in Chief's or that of the more radically inclined politicians such as Stanton, Johnson, and Morton.  

Hostile criticism of Buell's Chattanooga campaign and his occupation policies eventually infested the Army of the Ohio itself. Among citizen soldiers, ruggedly democratic and individualistic in bent, criticism of military authority was to be expected. When Buell personally led the army in an active campaign such as Shiloh, complaints and impatience at discipline did not exceed what was normal, but in Thomas's First Division and Mitchel's Third, which had not been sobered by Shiloh and were separated for months from Buell's direct
control, ordinary criticism became magnified by the summer of 1862 into a real threat to discipline and morale. 23

Unrestricted circulation within the army of newspapers from home fostered a critical atmosphere. Reporters who were provoked at Buell for his extreme secrecy and habit of expelling them from camp or opposed to him on political principle wrote denunciatory articles, exaggerating his conciliatory policy and distorting it until it seemed treason. Soldiers read these wild charges including the assertion that he delayed moving to Chattanooga because he had no desire to fight Bragg; they debated Buell's policy in camp, and the more radical or credulous wrote their local politicians to have Buell removed. Midwestern papers such as the Gazette, the Times, and the Commercial of Cincinnati, the Chicago Tribune, and the Nashville Union assailed Buell abusively for treating Southern citizens too kindly, for actually protecting Confederate sympathizers rather than punishing them. They demanded that Buell emulate the policy of General John Pope in Virginia and allow Union soldiers to destroy the resources of the Confederacy and appropriate whatever they needed to make themselves comfortable in the field. The Chicago papers especially
attacked Buell for his dismissal of Colonel Turchin. An article in the Indianapolis *Journal*, a paper expressing the views of Governor Morton, counseled Indiana soldiers to kill their commander. 24

Newspaper correspondents of radical inclination who had been welcome in Mitchel's division and had encouraged harsh treatment of Southern civilians were infuriated by the abrupt changes in discipline and policy that Buell introduced into North Alabama. They wrote sarcastically of Buell's protection of peaceful Southerners:

> The rebels, have gone to their friend and protector, complained of the treatment they received from the Federals; that they took their horses, all the horses they had to carry news on to their Southern brethren, and the shot-guns they used to shoot Federals with, and never paid for them. 25

The Cincinnati *Gazette* printed a fictitious handbill as something Buell had circulated throughout North Alabama:

> All persons having lost any property, will bring in their bills, and they will be paid. The wives of those in the Southern Army shall have the privilege of drawing the amount of their husband's claims, and have a guard placed over their property. 26

Mitchel's men, accustomed to being served by fugitive slaves grumbled when Buell cleared most Negroes from the
division. Reporters spiced the story up a bit:

Since the arrival of General Buell, our services seem to be turned in a new channel, that of catching negroes and returning them to their masters—
even those General Mitchel offered liberty to for valuable information
given, and for which death is their portion if returned to their masters. 27

Such criticism helped undermine among some officers the sense of confidence in Buell that had been widespread during the winter. Major Keifer may be taken as typical of those in the Third Division whose attitude shifted as they became saturated with radical ideas derived from reading newspapers and discussing war aims with mess mates in camp. Instead of implementing Order 13a, Keifer hoped to see the South punished and made a subjugated province. "The people will now have to demand a more rigorous policy on the part of the President and War Department," he wrote his wife in the idiom of the popular press, "and also demand the removal of some of the military leaders who are unfit and unwilling to lead the loyal patriots in the ranks." Eventually about twenty field and general officers of the Third and First Divisions signed a petition calling for Buell's removal. Many of them, like Keifer, denounced Buell because of his policies; others, like General Schoepf,
signed the petition out of a sense of "personal irritation and disappointment" from not being promoted or some similar reason. 28

Whatever the cause of the discontent, Johnson and Morton could now charge Buell with having lost control of his army and allowed it to become demoralized. The assertion contained just enough truth to make it plausible. Aside from the extreme cases of petition signing, the Army of the Ohio had of course shared its commander's frustration during the Chattanooga campaign. Withdrawal from North Alabama and Middle Tennessee after a hot summer on half rations spent repairing railroads and bridges did little for morale, nor did the idea of retreat tend to life spirits. It would be a disappointed and frustrated army that marched into Kentucky in September, but the troops were not demoralized nor out of control, whatever radical newspaper editors and a handful of officers might say. The fast concentration at McMinnville on September 5 demonstrated what Buell could do with his army. 29

The furor stirred up by state politicians and soured soldiers threatened Buell's immediate position only to the extent that it influenced his superiors in Washington. Since Halleck and Stanton advised the
President, their opinion on the "Buell question" was significant eventhough Lincoln alone could appoint and remove department commanders. Unfortunately for Buell, both advisers opposed him at a time when he most needed a friend in Washington. As a West Pointer, a moderate Democrat, and an ex-department commander himself, Halleck could have been expected to assess Buell on purely military grounds and advise Lincoln and Stanton of his difficult circumstances in Tennessee. Before departing for Washington in July, Halleck had in fact promised that he would "properly explain" Buell's military problems to the President: "In the first place they have no conception of the length of our lines of defense and of operation. In the second place the disasters before Richmond have worked them up to boiling heat." Yet Halleck was hardly the one to defend Buell before Lincoln and Stanton. In his eagerness to gain overall command in the West the winter before, Halleck had already diminished Buell's standing in Washington by writing of golden opportunities he had lost by "hesitation and delay." On March 6 Halleck complained that he could never "make Buell understand the importance of strategic points till it was too late." The next day he again charged slowness: "Buell should move immediately and not come too late as he did at Donelson." Several minor
disputes during the Corinth campaign did nothing to improve Halleck's opinion. And after moving up to Washington he was too much on the defensive about his own responsibility for the stalled Union campaign in the West and his restricting orders to Buell to offer a proper explanation of Buell's problems—"it was more convenient to use Buell as a scapegoat."

Ardently antagonistic to Buell's occupation policies, Stanton was sure to seize upon the general's first military mistake (he could scarcely oppose him openly for carrying out Lincoln's instructions) as a pretext for recommending his dismissal. Events played into Stanton's hands. Conditioned by Halleck to expect great results in Tennessee, and upset by military reverses in the East, Lincoln grew impatient with Buell's slow progress. On July 8 the President urged Buell to move faster before the Confederates reinforced Chattanooga. About a month later when Buell had still not accomplished his mission, Halleck sent a warning: "There is great dissatisfaction here at the slow movement of your army towards Chattanooga." Buell's calm answer carried all the conviction of one who knows he is doing his best:

'It is difficult to satisfy impatience, and when it proceeds from anxiety, as I know it does in this case, I am not disposed to complain of it. My advance has not been rapid, but it could not be more rapid under the circumstances. I know I have not been idle nor indifferent."
In a confiding letter of August 12 Halleck recurred to the Administration's great disappointment at Buell's tardiness and inability to stop the raids of Forrest and Morgan. "So strong is the dissatisfaction," Halleck cautioned, "that I have several times been asked by Stanton to recommend some officer to take your place."

A week later Halleck wrote that he had barely been able to prevent Buell's removal. Conscious that he had exerted himself and his army to the utmost, and completely frustrated by this lack of understanding and support, Buell's answer scarcely concealed his exasperation:

My movements have been such as the circumstances seemed to me to require. I beg that you will not interpose in my behalf; on the contrary, if the dissatisfaction cannot cease on grounds which I think might be supposed if not apparent I respectfully request that I may be relieved. My position is far too important to be occupied by an officer on sufferance. I have no desire to stand in the way of what may be deemed necessary for the public good.\(^\text{32}\)

The extreme precariousness of Buell's position by the end of August was plain enough in a letter from Halleck to General Wright:

The Government seems determined to apply the guillotine to all unsuccessful generals. It seems rather hard to do this where the general is not in fault (?), but perhaps with us now, as in the French Revolution, some harsh measures are required.\(^\text{33}\)
As difficulties piled up dangerously in September, 1862, Buell's career thus hung in the balance. With the Chattanooga campaign a failure, with Bragg and Kirby Smith loose in Kentucky, and with powerful state politicians and Stanton himself demanding Buell's removal, events would move with dizzying rapidity to a climax in the baffling Perryville campaign. Only victory over Bragg, or at least the decisive expulsion of the Confederates from Kentucky and Tennessee, could tip the scales in Buell's favor and save his head.
NOTES


2. McClellan to Buell, November 7, 1861, Buell Papers, also printed in OR, I, Vol. 4, p. 342.


4. General Orders No. 13a, February 26, 1862, Department of the Ohio, National Archives, also printed in OR, I, Vol. 7, pp. 669-70.

5. James B. Fry to John F. Fisk, December 4, 1861, Department of the Ohio, Selected Letters Sent, 1861-62, National Archives.


8. General Orders No. 20, June 3, 1862, Department of the Ohio, National Archives.


23. For the democratic attitudes of Union soldiers see T. Harry Williams, "Voters in Blue," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXI (September, 1944), 187-204.


26. Ibid.
27. Cincinnati Times, July 16, 1862.
29. Ibid., 133-38, 540-44, 644.
VI

THE CLIMAX AT PERRYVILLE

Leaving Thomas and 6,000 men to guard Nashville, Buell led six divisions north in rapid pursuit of Bragg. As the Army of the Ohio crossed into Kentucky, however, it faced a potentially dangerous situation. Bragg was far enough ahead that he could veer off to the west, destroy the Union supply depot at Bowling Green, and then press on north to join Kirby Smith, whose troops were gathering supplies in the Frankfort-Lexington area. The combined Confederate armies might then either capture Louisville—the main Union supply base in the West—or turn south and fall upon Buell with a numerically superior force. Aware of his peril, Buell urged his veteran army along by rapid marches and entered Bowling Green on September 15 just as Bragg's rear guard passed through Glasgow, only thirty miles to the east. Months of hard training were paying off in fast marching: Bowling Green had been saved and the gap closed between the two armies. Reports now reached Buell that while Bragg's main force remained around Glasgow his advance guard had invested the Union garrison at Munfordville, a fortified town on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, eighteen miles
north of Glasgow and about sixty-five miles south of Louisville.¹

Anxious to defeat Bragg, Buell directed his army due east towards Glasgow. Before reaching the town, however, he received information that a stubborn resistance from the 4,000-man Union garrison at Munfordville had compelled Bragg's entire army to attack there. Again turning north Buell hurried to aid the defenders of Munfordville, only to learn of their surrender on September 17.²

With the loss of Munfordville Buell's position again looked serious. Certainly Bragg thought so. Not only was the path to Louisville seemingly blocked, but Bragg, perhaps influenced by the Northern press, assumed Buell's army to be demoralized and poorly controlled, and had no idea that it had marched beyond Bowling Green. "My position must be exceedingly embarrassing to Buell and his army," he reported to Richmond on September 17. Actually the reverse was more nearly the case. Unless Louisville was captured--this seemed more and more unlikely with General Nelson working furiously to entrench the city and organize 30,000 new troops for its defense--every mile Buell
marched into Kentucky strengthened his position in relation to the enemy's. He moved steadily toward his supplies and reinforcements while his adversary's prospects for replenishment became progressively more questionable. Buell had temporarily refreshed his troops at Bowling Green and hurried them on to Cave City, a mere ten miles to the south of Bragg. Now it was Bragg's position that became insecure. Separated from Kirby Smith by 100 miles, he had also, by the more or less inadvertent siege of Munfordville, lost his lead on Buell. Buell was closing in for battle. Bragg would have to fight or flee. 3

Bragg decided to fight but only on his own terms. Supposing Buell outnumbered him, he would not risk an open battle. Instead he took up a strong defensive position at Munfordville. This threw the initiative to Buell. Now that he confronted his enemy, should he attack the entrenched position before Thomas's division reinforced him from Nashville? Bragg had only 28,000 men, but Buell's most reliable sources of information, including a paroled officer who had closely examined the Confederate army at Munfordville, credited him with 30,000 to 40,000 men. Until Thomas came up, Buell would have about 35,000 effective troops. According to Buell's
concept of strategy, no commander should initiate a battle without a good prospect of victory. By waiting two days for reinforcements he would feel reasonably sure of success. On the night before Thomas arrived, Bragg, worried about his exhausted supplies and Buell's forthcoming assault, withdrew from Munfordville. At dawn the next day, September 21, Union advance forces drove the Confederate rear guard from the town and nipped at the heels of Bragg until he turned off the Louisville road northeast towards Bardstown, a small town forty miles southeast of Louisville. 4

Instead of pressing Bragg, who would soon unite with Kirby Smith, Buell marched his army directly to Louisville. Union cavalry stationed at Elizabethtown protected the columns from a flank attack and watched for any sudden enemy movements towards Bowling Green. The army's empty wagon trains—indicative of the chronic supply difficulties of the past months—consisting of 1,700 teams and stretching seventeen miles in length, rumbled along from Bowling Green to Louisville by way of Boonesville. 5

Louisville between September 25 and October 1 became a military and political microcosm. During the
first four days Buell's 40,000 ragged and campaign-worn troops poured into the excited city. For weeks General Nelson had been readying the place for a siege and organizing the raw regiments hurriedly sent down by the alarmed states north of the Ohio. With two Confederate armies controlling a large portion of Kentucky and with enemy pickets within miles of the entrenched city itself, a deep crisis seemed at hand. Only Buell's arrival dispelled the sense of impending doom. 6

Actually the safe arrival of the Army of the Ohio at its base had finally turned the tide for the Union in the west. Few people either in the Northwest or in Washington realized the rapidity with which Buell could now advance on the Confederates in Kentucky. He displayed amazing administrative and organizational ability in preparing his mass of old and new troops for the field. Several months later General J.T. Boyle testified that this prodigious feat had gained the admiration of the army:

I think the work of arming, shoeing, clothing, paying, and supplying them in every respect; combining the new with the old and organizing them into brigades and divisions and army corps; preparing them to march against the enemy; preparing all the provisions and
supplies of subsistence and ammunition, and actually moving them, showed what struck me as wonder-ful energy, industry, and ability. I have never seen, known, heard, or read of anything evincing more in the same length of time.

Somehow Buell also found time to increase the mobility of his army by the issuance of cooking utensils to individual soldiers thereby greatly reducing the required number of baggage wagons. Next the augmented army was organized into three corps to be led by McCook, Crittenden, and Nelson. Thomas was named second in command of the army and would march with the Second Corps. 7

While Buell and his staff worked around the clock preparing the troops to march, the city and part of the army seethed with intrigue. Governor Morton went about town conferring with Indiana soldiers and denouncing Buell. During his conversations with Indianians in the Third Corps, he found many who chafed at serving under Nelson. The bear-like general had not only outspokenly criticized Indiana troops for their incompetency at the recent battle of Richmond, Kentucky, but had also violently rebuked Morton's protege, General Jefferson C. Davis, and had unceremoniously ordered him out of the department for neglect of duty. Davis burned for
revenge, and this incident plus Nelson's devotion to Buell and to Buell's conciliatory policies focused upon Nelson the wrath of Governor Morton. 8

Days of plotting came to a climax on Monday morning, September 29. Davis in the company of Morton assaulted Nelson and after a heated argument fatally shot him. News of the killing tore through the army. Kentuckians, who greatly admired Nelson, were indignant and talked of revenge. On the other hand, Morton and the more radically inclined Indiana soldiers defended Davis and even proposed him to lead the Third Corps. Buell settled the question by arresting the killer and asking Washington for an immediate court-martial. Through Morton's influence, however, Davis was soon returned to duty without having faced trial. As often happens in wartime, brutal expediency smothered justice. What was immediately important to Buell, he had lost a loyal friend and his most aggressive combat leader. In a few days the loss would be keenly felt. 9

Amid the excitement caused by Nelson's death and the army's preparation to march the next day, Louisville was again jolted. Colonel J.C. McKibbin, an aide on Halleck's staff, handed Buell an order removing him from command of the army. Thomas would succeed.
Coming on the eve of the army's departure for battle and on the heels of Buell's successful march into Kentucky and quick reorganization of his forces, this development stunned most army officers and citizens of Louisville. Although aware of Washington's attitude toward his recent Chattanooga campaign, Buell himself was equally surprised.10

The immediate pressures that produced the dismissal were mostly reactions to events of the last few weeks. The Northwest had become alarmed when Buell abandoned North Alabama and most of Middle Tennessee and withdrew the largest part of his army all the way to Louisville. Governors Tod and Yates now joined Johnson and Morton in passionately denouncing him. They demanded to know why he had not attacked Bragg instead of allowing a Confederate advance almost to the Ohio River. The Confederate invasion of Kentucky had likewise unnerved Stanton and Halleck. Not long before the Army of the Ohio completed its rapid march into Louisville, Halleck sent Buell a condemnatory telegram: "I fear that here as elsewhere you move too slowly, and will permit the junction of Bragg and Smith before you open your line to Louisville. The immobility of your army is most surprising. Bragg in
the last two months has marched four times the distance you have."

On September 24, the day before Buell entered Louisville, Halleck instructed Colonel McKibbin concerning the delivery of the orders replacing Buell with Thomas:

The Secretary of War directs that if General Buell be found in the presence of the enemy preparing to fight a battle, or if he should have gained a victory, or if General Thomas should be separated from him so as not to be able to enter upon the command of the troops operating against the enemy, these dispatches will not be delivered."12"

Unaware of his impending removal, Buell answered Halleck's complaint on September 25, explaining the necessity of his movements and the impossibility of preventing the two Confederate armies from joining in Kentucky:

It might seem useless for me to answer the frequent charges of tardiness that are made against the movements of the Army of the Ohio, though I think I could answer them with some effect. It is a mistake to suppose that Bragg has marched a greater distance than I have. The contrary is the case. He concentrated his force by railroad at Chattanooga, and from there has marched in a direct line to Bardstown, a distance of about 200 miles. My army, on the other hand (compelled by the nature of the case
to move on outer lines continually),
has marched some 300 miles, taking
Huntsville as a center and not
including the marching from Corinth. . . . It has not been possible to prevent
his junction with Kirby Smith's
forces except through the force in
Kentucky, because he has been able all the
time to move in a direct line, while I
have been forced on a circuitous route.
I have been cramped because my com-
munications have been effectually broken
and beyond my control. I am not disposed
generally to be very zealous in my own
defense, but I ought perhaps to say
this much.13

Informed of the vigor with which Buell had marched
his army and the rapidity of preparation to attack the
enemy, Lincoln experienced a change of heart and instructed
Halleck to cancel McKibbin's mission. But cancellation
proved to be impossible, for McKibbin had already
delivered the orders. Buell immediately turned his
army over to a bewildered Thomas. Knowing how
successfully Buell had faced adverse conditions, Thomas
refused the command. Most of Buell's old troops,
especially the division and brigade commanders, flocked
to his support. Both Kentucky's senators, John H.
Crittenden and Garrett Davis, and two of her congress-
men wired Lincoln requesting that Buell be kept in command
because only he had the "confidence of the people and
the army." Somewhat embarrassed, Washington notified
Buell to forget the dismissal order and to proceed with his campaign. Out of a "sense of public duty," Buell agreed to resume command, and on the next day, October 1, gave the order to advance on Bragg. 14

Buell's plan was nearly perfect. Seeing that the two Confederate armies were still separated by sixty miles, he ordered two divisions under Sill and Dumont to feign an attack on Frankfort, holding Kirby Smith in check, while the main army advanced on Bragg at Bardstown along three converging roads. After defeating Bragg, Buell could move to dispatch Kirby Smith, thus annihilating the enemy piecemeal. Even if Bragg elected to flee, he would at least be driven to the North away from his retreat routes and into a position where he could be forced to fight. This was aggressive strategy. 15

In accordance with this plan, four columns marched out of Louisville on October 1, one heading due east in the direction of Frankfort and the other three, comprising the Army of the Ohio, moving southeast towards Bardstown. McCook's Corps (two divisions) took the Taylorsville-Bloomfield pike; Crittenden's Corps (three divisions),
actually commanded by Thomas, proceeded along the direct Louisville-Bardstown road; and the Third Corps (three divisions), now commanded by General C.C. Gilbert, moved over the Shepherdville-Bardstown-Perryville road. As expected, Kirby Smith mistook Sill's and Dumont's divisions for the main Union army and held his position, frantically calling on Bragg for help. Advancing deceptively the two divisions drove the enemy pickets into Frankfort on October 4. To the south, three Union columns pushed Confederate pickets back to Bardstown where Buell expected to meet Bragg's army. When Gilbert's hard marching Corps closed in on the town, however, the enemy withdrew towards Perryville, closely pressed by the Union column. Overtaken at Perryville on October 7, the Confederate force was compelled to deploy for battle.16

Riding with Gilbert's Corps as it pursued Bragg's retreating forces, Buell sustained an injury that would render his physical role at Perryville much more passive than it had been at Shiloh. Along the troop-crowded Springfield to Perryville road he noticed a group of stragglers helping themselves in the garden adjoining a farmhouse. After ordering the men to return to their regiments at once, he was irritated by one soldier who offered him some impertinence and continued
loitering by the roadside. To urge the man on a bit, Buell rode at him, but the soldier seized the bridle reins, causing the general's spirited horse, Red Oak, to rear up and fall over backwards. Severely bruised, Buell could not sit up or ride the next day, the day of the expected battle.17

Although shaken up by the fall, Buell continued to direct his campaign. He had Gilbert's Corps deploy three miles west of Perryville facing what appeared to be Bragg's entire army. After supervising the disposition of his center corps from a hospital wagon, the general had his headquarters set up two and a half miles behind the line, and as night fell made his plans. Sensing a great opportunity, he wrote out detailed battle orders that would bring up his other two corps during the night and place them in position, right and left of Gilbert, to attack Bragg at daylight. McCook, eight miles back and to the left, and Thomas, six miles back and to the right of Buell, were to begin marching at 3 a.m., come alongside Gilbert, deploy and be ready for battle by 7 or 8 a.m. They were further ordered to examine the ground in their front and report in person for final instructions before time for the battle. Buell appeared to be perfectly situated; by rapid marching and deceptive
tactics he had maneuvered Bragg into a position where he could be destroyed by a numerically superior force. A Union victory on the next day seemed almost certain. 18

Dawn broke on October 8 to the sporadic crackling of musket fire and the deeper roar of artillery as Gilbert's men fought enemy pickets for some water holes between the lines. A great opportunity was lost this morning, for McCook and Thomas did not come into position as expected. McCook, slowed by a rough and winding road, had not progressed towards Perryville as far as was expected. Buell's courier had difficulty finding him in the dark and could not deliver the battle order until 2:30 a.m. A tormenting shortage of water had prompted Thomas to select a camp site five hours marching distance from Hayesville, the location specified by Buell. The courier from Buell could not find Thomas until 3 a.m. 19 Desultory firing and cannonading continued throughout the morning and into the afternoon. Uncertain of his opponent's strength, Buell spent several anxious hours waiting for the other two-thirds of his army to join. Should Bragg be reinforced by units from Kirby Smith's army, he might attack Gilbert's exposed corps before the arrival of McCook and Thomas. When no
enemy attack had occurred by 10 a.m., and when McCook's advance troops began arriving on the field, Buell felt relieved. If the Confederates refused to attack an unsupported corps, they would hardly assault a entire army. Bragg was probably waiting for his own reinforcements. 20

About noon McCook rode up to Buell's headquarters, reporting that his two divisions were in the process of deploying and would shortly be in line. McCook had, it turned out, not reconnoitered his front as ordered, and Buell hurried him back to his troops. Although the commanding general expected no trouble from the enemy, many of McCook's units were untrained and the exact strength and intentions of the enemy remained a mystery. Thomas's three divisions began deploying in the afternoon but their commander, reluctant to leave the front during heavy skirmishing, again disobeyed orders. He merely sent an aide to report his presence on the field instead of coming himself to Buell for final instructions. 21

As mid-afternoon wore on Buell had no definite information from either of his flanks. McCook had reported but was ignorant of the situation in his front. Thomas had not even reported. Incapacitated by his injury, Buell could not gallop over to examine matters
for himself. Nevertheless, he felt reasonably confident. Although too late for a battle that day, the two corps were forming on either side of Gilbert and would be ready to attack next day. Heavy skirmishing and artillery duels had gone on since morning, but Bragg would hardly attack the whole Army of the Ohio now that it was forming for battle. This was Buell's opinion at 4 p.m. when a courier from the First Corps handed him an urgent message from McCook. Buell was astonished. McCook had been under attack for two hours, had given ground to the enemy, and desperately required assistance.\(^{22}\)

Unusual atmospheric conditions and the roughness of the terrain had muffled the sounds of a battle raging on the left. At 2 p.m. Bragg, unaware that he faced a large Union army, had launched his entire force—three divisions supported by cavalry—against McCook's troops as they deployed along the dry Chaplin River, a few miles northwest of Perryville. Taken by surprise, McCook's two divisions, one composed mostly of inexperienced troops, fought stubbornly but fell back over a mile with heavy losses. Only slowly did Gilbert's corps to the right of the fighting realize the situation. McCook called for assistance, but Gilbert's divisions
delayed in responding. When it seemed the enemy would sweep nearly one-third of the Union army away, General P.H. Sheridan, of the center corps, finally swung his division around to the left and had his batteries pour an enfilading fire into the advancing gray line.  

Once informed of the fighting on his left Buell tried desperately to bring his whole army into action. He ordered the reserve division of the center corps to McCook's aid and sent a staff officer galloping off with instructions for Thomas to move the right corps around vigorously and attack the enemy's left. Unfortunately Thomas, who had not reported his position to headquarters, could not be located until 6 p.m. By then it was growing dark and too late for him to trap the reckless Confederates several miles to the left. But as night fell, the Army of the Ohio had recovered its balance. Reinforcements from Giblert had saved McCook, and one brigade had even turned the enemy's left and driven the Confederates out of Perryville. If Bragg held his position he could easily be defeated the next morning.  

Not until he conferred with his corps commanders that night did Buell learn the full story of the day's
events. Far from being a systematic battle, the fighting at Perryville, bloody and savage as it was, resulted from a partial engagement between two poorly informed armies. Although Buell had 58,000 men in the area, only about half could get into action. One entire corps remained practically idle. Until finally reinforced, McCook's 12,500 men fought 17,000 of the enemy. By this tactical advantage on Buell's left, the Confederates inflicted 4,200 casualties while sustaining only 3,400 themselves. Nevertheless, these were heavy losses for both sides. 

Who won at Perryville was bound to be a subject of dispute. The Confederates had audaciously jolted a Union corps and had suffered somewhat fewer casualties than their antagonists in the process. But Bragg, knowing as little as he did about the strength of his opponent, had taken a reckless chance. As darkness stopped the day's fighting two fresh Union corps were circling northeast around Perryville, rolling up the Confederate line to the north. Even though McCook's men had fallen back in confusion at first, they had maintained their organization and were regaining their lost ground toward the end of the day. After dark the Confederates abandoned the field, leaving behind their
dead and wounded. When this became known, Northern newspapers proclaimed a Union victory. Yet the question was debatable, however, and Buell deeply regretted having lost the opportunity for an overwhelming triumph. 26

Circumstances and errors had combined to rob Buell of his chance to destroy Bragg's smaller force. In the first place the Army of the Ohio arrived on the field too late. McCook could fairly plead unavoidable circumstances, but Thomas had simply disobeyed orders. If he had camped at Hayesville as instructed he would have been in position and prepared for action earlier the next day. Buell's incapacitating injury made him especially dependent upon prompt information from his subordinate commanders. This he did not obtain. McCook should have notified him immediately upon becoming engaged, for the arrival of heavy reinforcements two hours earlier might well have changed the outcome of the battle. Since McCook had been provided with a signal corps, his failure to communicate was particularly inexcusable. "What further precautions could be required," Buell wrote several months after the battle, "except the presence of commanders whose duty to communicate with me was as well understood as though it had been
prescribed in their commissions?" It was also
unfortunate that the most inexperienced troops absorbed
the main below. Since Gilbert could not satisfactorily
lead a corps in combat (he was relieved after the battle),
the services of the skilled and aggressive Nelson were
grievously missed at Perryville. Finally, the "acousti-
cal shadow" which obscured the sound of the battle was
plain bad luck.27

Extricating his trapped army from the field during
the night of the battle, Bragg formed a junction with
Kirby Smith's troops, rushing down from Frankfort.
The combined Confederate armies hastily took up a
position at Harrodsburg, a small town about five miles
northeast of Perryville, and there awaited the Union
army. Since to Buell it appeared that his opponents
had consolidated all their forces in Kentucky for a
decisive battle, he proceeded cautiously. Before
assaulting the strong enemy position he waited two days
for Sill's division to join him. Later he was criticized
for this delay, but the decision was correct; even
though the Army of the Ohio had a numerical advantage,
one-third of its troops were raw. Several months later
the general explained his reasoning on this occasion:
"The enemy would have had the advantage of the strong
position which he selected. The result of a conflict under such circumstances is not to be predicted. . . . It was sufficient for me that I could make it reasonably certain by waiting for my troops to come up." As it turned out, however, Buell missed his last chance to defeat Bragg.²⁸

When the reinforced Army of the Ohio advanced to attack, Bragg lost his nerve and decided to give up Kentucky. He pulled out of Harrodsburg, crossed Dick's River, and began a long retreat towards Cumberland Gap. Cavalry skillfully protected the rear of his columns. Taking up the pursuit on October 13, Buell circled his army down around Danville to prevent a sudden rush on Nashville and kept a steady pressure on the Confederates all the way to London, forcing them to abandon hundreds of sick and wounded men. After two weeks Buell had chased the enemy sixty-five miles without bringing him to bay. Taking advantage of the single narrow road and the rough terrain along the way, the Confederate rear guard continually forced the head of Buell's pursuing column to deploy, gaining sufficient time for Bragg's main force to escape.²⁹

When Bragg entered the fringes of the Cumberland Mountains, Buell wanted to call off the pursuit and return quickly to Middle Tennessee. Lincoln and Stanton
had different ideas, however, and for about a week after October 16 Halleck as their spokesman debated strategy with Buell by telegraph. According to the general in chief, Lincoln was pleased with the rapidity of Buell's march from Louisville and with his victory at Perryville, but now wanted the Army of the Ohio to press forward to Knoxville and Chattanooga on the heels of Bragg.  

Buell insisted that a movement into East Tennessee must be by way of Nashville, and on military grounds his case was unassailable. He again reminded Washington of the impossible supply problems to be faced in the mountains: "You are aware that between Crab Orchard and Cumberland Gap the country is almost a desert. The limited supply of forage . . . is consumed by the enemy as he passes. In the day and a half we have been in this sterile region our animals have suffered exceedingly. The enemy has been driven into the heart of this desert and must go on, for he cannot exist in it."  

The already difficult roads would get progressively worse as the winter season approached, the route abounded in defiles wherein "a small force can retard the progress of a large one for a considerable time, and in that time the enemy could gain material advantages" by moving
into Middle Tennessee.\textsuperscript{32}

Lincoln and Stanton could not answer Buell's arguments, nor did they try. Halleck simply reiterated the President's desire to have Buell's army undertake immediately to clear the Confederates from East Tennessee. As for supplies, if the enemy could live in the region so could Buell. "I am directed by the President to say to you that your army must enter East Tennessee this fall, and that it ought to move there while the roads are passable. . . . He does not understand why we cannot march as the enemy marches, live as he lives, and fight as he fights, unless we admit the inferiority of our troops and of our generals."\textsuperscript{33}

Buell replied that he appreciated the strategic importance of capturing East Tennessee but considered the selection of the proper route of advance the most critical aspect of the undertaking. Because troops were simply not available both to maintain long lines of communications through Eastern Kentucky and Tennessee and to meet the enemy with a sufficient force, the route through Middle Tennessee would have to be used.

If the enemy puts himself on the defensive in East Tennessee it will require an available force of 80,000 men to take and hold it. If our army can subsist on the country so much the better;
but it will not do to rely solely on that source. If we can obtain forage and one-half our breadstuffs that for the present is probably as much as we can do; everything else must be hauled. Nashville is essential as a depot; afterward McMinnville. . . . We can procure all our forage and breadstuffs and some meat from Middle Tennessee, but Nashville and the vicinity must be rid of the enemy in any considerable force. We cannot otherwise collect supplies.34

Buell tried to dispel Washington's illusions that major supply problems could be solved merely by traveling light and living off the land:

No army can operate effectually upon less than this has done in the last two months. A considerable part of the time it has been on half rations; it is now moving without tents, with only such cooking utensils as the men can carry, and with one baggage wagon to each regiment; but it must not continue to do this during the cold, wet weather which must soon be expected, without being disabled by sickness.35

On October 23 Halleck categorically rejected Buell's plan and finally got down to Lincoln's real reason--a political reason--for blindly insisting upon a plunge into East Tennessee: "To now withdraw your army to Nashville would have a most disastrous effect upon the country, already wearied with so many delays."36 Congressional elections were at
hand and Northwestern Republicans demanded activity and quick victories from the armies lest the party lose prestige. Not only was Buell's hesitancy to wage a sensational campaign in East Tennessee embarrassing the Administration, protested several war governors, but the general should also have destroyed Bragg's army in Kentucky. The butchery at Perryville had been terrible complained Morton. "In the Northwest distrust and despair are seizing upon the hearts of the people."

Morton and Governor Yates of Illinois started for Washington to get Buell removed.37 "With one voice, so far as it has reached me," Governor David Tod of Ohio informed Stanton, "the army from Ohio demands the removal of General Buell." Stanton answered: "I had been urging his removal for two months, had it done once, when it was revoked by the President." Lincoln could not ignore complaints from such high authority.38

Holding his command precariously to begin with, Buell did little for his own cause by his actions and frank messages in late October. He expected, too confidently perhaps, that the merits of his strategy would soon become obvious to Lincoln and that the past performance of his army would counteract hostile political criticism. Audaciously, he almost prodded
Halleck upon the subject of his removal:

It is but proper that I should say that the present time is perhaps as convenient as any for making any changes that may be thought proper in the command of this army. It has not accomplished all that I had hoped or all that faction might demand; yet composed as it is, one half of perfectly new troops, it has defeated a powerful and thoroughly disciplined army in one battle and has driven it away baffled and dispirited. . . .

In spite of Washington's fairly explicit instructions to the contrary, he followed his own strategic convictions. "Anticipating a movement of the rebel army into Middle Tennessee," the general later explained, "the Army of the Ohio moved promptly in that direction, and on October 31, had, under my orders, advanced as far as Bowling Green and Glasgow. It was my intention to have reached Murfreesboro by November 10. . . . "

The Army of the Ohio had moved vigorously and, as subsequent events would prove, wisely, but this was not the campaign called for by Washington. On October 30 Buell again received orders removing him from command. In his instructions to the new army commander Halleck commented:

The time has now come when we must apply the sterner rules of war, whenever such application becomes necessary, to enable us to support our armies and to move them rapidly upon the enemy. . . . Neither the country nor the Government will much longer put up with the inactivity of some of our armies and generals.
Turning over his army to General William S. Rosecrans, Buell proceeded to Indianapolis to await further orders.
NOTES


11. Ibid., 530 (quoted); Ropes, Story of the Civil War, II, 404-405; Allan Nevins, War for the Union, II, 284.
13. Ibid., 542-43 (quoted).


31. Ibid., 619.
32. Ibid.
35. Ibid., 637.
39. Ibid., 619.
40. Buell, Statement, 42.
"A SOLDIER IS A GENTLEMAN AND HONOR IS HIS NAME"

Following a year of command and six months before a military commission, the pace of Buell's life abruptly slackened. Washington pondered his case and kept him waiting a year without orders. After the commission adjourned in May, 1863, Halleck looked over its voluminous records and, finding no specific charges against Buell, recommended his return to active duty. With this indorsement the records went to Stanton, who would decide the issue—in his own good time.¹

Meanwhile Buell waited under a cloud. The public wondered about a general who had been suddenly cashiered, investigated by a secret court, and then kept from active duty. Attempting to exonerate himself, Buell printed a seventy-page statement based on his defense before the commission. Friends in the old army read the pamphlet, the Louisville Journal reprinted it in full, and abstracts appeared in other Northern papers. Although Buell received many compliments upon his literary efforts—"the mild, dignified, forebearing tone of your own statement is calculated to produce a most favorable effect upon the public mind; and the
history of the campaign therein given will enable any man of sense to perceive that you have been right and those who have reviled you wrong"—Washington seemed not to notice at all. ² Requests for his reinstatement seemed equally impotent. When Generals Thomas, Grant, and Sherman asked to have Buell serve under them, Halleck could not grant their request: "I would like very much to see Buell restored to command and have several times proposed him to the War Department, but there has been such a pressure against him from the West that I do not think the Secretary will give him any at present."³ Political pressure did not diminish enough for Stanton to offer the idle general another major command. False rumors of Buell's reassignment to Tennessee in April, 1864, prompted an immediate protest from Governor Johnson to Lincoln: "I trust in God that General Buell will not be sent to Tennessee. We have been cursed with him here once, and do not desire its repetition."⁴

Finally in the spring of 1864 Stanton invited Buell to Washington for an interview. To his surprise the Secretary of War received him courteously and asked what command he would prefer, provided there were openings. Buell requested that before choosing one his name be cleared by settling the business of
the commission. Stanton promised to look into the matter. Shortly thereafter, without mentioning the commission, he twice offered Buell minor outpost assignments under officers junior to him in rank. When the general politely declined, he was promptly dropped from the volunteer service. In May, 1864, he resigned his commission in the Regular Army.  

Although certain contemporaries such as General Sherman condemned him for not serving in some capacity, Buell considered his decision justifiable. His loyalty and capacity as a department commander, which he believed had been proved before the commission, qualified him for high responsibility. Yet, the positions offered him hardly appealed to a veteran major general. Donn Piatt described one of them as a "sort of picket-command along the Mississippi, where he would have charge of a chain of posts, extending from the mouth of the Ohio to Natchez--such as was usually relegated to the Veteran Reserve Corps." In June, 1864, Buell explained in a letter to a friend why he left the service. Subsequently his explanation appeared in several Northern newspapers. He said that for him to serve under juniors would be degrading but that he also acted upon higher considerations. By 1864 he strongly opposed the radical policies, the
"system of spoliation," encouraged by the government:

I believed that the policy and means with which the war was being prosecuted were discreditable to the nation, and a stain upon civilization; and that they would not only fail to restore the Union, if indeed they had not already rendered its restoration impossible, but that their tendency was to subvert the institutions under which the country had realized unexampled prosperity and happiness; and to such a work I could not lend my hand. 7

After leaving the army Buell entered the mining business and became a prominent citizen of Kentucky. Highly esteemed by his state and by Democrats everywhere, he was asked several times to run for governor and president, but he preferred business to politics. He also wrote, invented, served as pension agent, when the Democrats finally returned to power under Cleveland, and as a Commissioner of Shiloh Park. The old soldier lived until 1898, his eightieth year. 8

A venerable family servant advised Lieutenant Buell upon his graduation from West Point always to remember that "a soldier is a gentleman, and honor is his name." 9 Buell liked this "brief and homely, but comprehensive and exacting" definition and let it serve
as a rule of conduct throughout his army career. His ideal of an officer's duty, his serious attempt to live and to command in accordance with high principles were in keeping with the gentlemanly code of the officer. Buell was indeed an honorable man of high character. Did his idealism and rigid adherence to principle lessen his effectiveness as a general? 10

It has been argued that he was too much the gentleman, too much the practitioner of leisurely, limited, eighteenth century-type warfare. Such gentlemanly instincts are said to have been a hindrance in the modern "hard war" that America fought in the 1860's. Successful generals had the "instinct of the killer" and saw "war as red-hot combat--a business of getting in close with the other fellow and slugging until something broke." Buell's considerable military talent, so the argument goes, was compromised by idealistic and politically unpopular policies towards civilians and a fatal reluctance to go for the enemy's jugular. 11

Although plausible, this theory oversimplifies and in the final analysis distorts reality. The real question, rather, is whether Buell's military assets sufficiently compensated for his political liability to the Administration. In this respect it seems that the Union
cause lost a valuable general whose skills would in
time have won the victories necessary for silencing
political criticism.

By contemporary acclamation no one surpassed Buell
as a disciplinarian. Statements such as that given by
Rousseau before the commission—"the discipline of Buell's
army was far better than that of any army I have ever
seen"—could be accumulated at length. But Buell was
more than a drillmaster. No general exerted a steadier
executive and administrative control over a department.
But again Buell was more than a good quartermaster. His
method—as a matter of principle—of organizing a well-
trained army, of carefully calculating its supply
requirements, and then relying as much as possible
upon railroads for communication and transportation was
as modern as the concepts of Count Von Scholte. Whether
Buell had the "instinct of a killer" does not seem as
relevant as his ability to mould an efficient, spirited
army that swept the enemy before it on the second day
at Shiloh. Certainly on that occasion the "slugger,"
Grant, who had recklessly gotten himself into a
dangerous situation, welcomed the services of the
gentleman general.12

A general's inclination to subsist his troops
off the land during the Civil War has often been used
as a criterion of his modernity. Since Buell graciously compensated civilians for their property and relied mostly upon supply depots he has been classified among the outmoded generals who refused to wage "total" war. This assessment seems questionable. As Buell fully realized, armies could be more efficiently supplied by rail or river than by scattering foraging parties over the countryside. When absolutely necessary, Buell of course fed his troops off the country, but as his orders to Thomas of January 20, 1862, indicate, he insisted that it be done as humanely as possible:

A large supply of provisions and forage must be accumulated at Somerset with all possible despatch. Send into the interior and collect every thing the country will afford. . . . Hire teams to haul them in, and if the people will not accord to that arrangement voluntarily it must be enforced, but with as little hardship or harshness as possible. 13

Strategical insight was perhaps Buell's strongest point as a general. In the fall of 1862, when Halleck and McClellan could not see beyond their own departments and Lincoln brooded over East Tennessee, Buell formulated a comprehensive plan for invading Tennessee and for defeating Johnston's army. He irritated Washington and flirted with insubordination by refusing to bog his army down in a premature East Tennessee campaign,
but as a careful student of the war has correctly concluded, if given the authority to execute his aggressive river plan, he might have achieved much:

Had he at the first—that is, on November 1, 1861—been placed in chief command in the West, it is not too much to say that the Confederate army of the West would have ceased to exist before June 1, 1862, and that thereafter a regiment of Union troops could have marched without opposition from Nashville to Chattanooga and Knoxville.¹⁴

By advocating a move on Chattanooga through Middle Tennessee instead of along the Memphis and Charleston Railroad and by anticipating the Confederate reinforcement of the town by rail in the summer of 1862, he again proved his strategical acuteness. Finally, he correctly insisted upon returning his army to Middle Tennessee after Perryville, for Bragg, as he predicted, immediately invaded the region.

As a tactical leader, Buell had a more uneven record, but under the circumstances he performed as well as the government could expect. During the winter of 1861–1862, he systematically cleared the enemy from Kentucky and Middle Tennessee. His direction of Thomas to Mill Springs was especially vigorous and well managed. Personally leading his army on the second day at Shiloh, he gained the acclaim of everyone on the field. Considering the problems entangling the Chattanooga campaign—
restrictive orders, disrupted communications, lack of support from higher headquarters, and division of command—it was not only impossible for Buell to keep the Confederates out of Kentucky, but Lincoln should have thanked him for preventing a major Union disaster in the fall of 1862. By forgetting about supplies and rushing to Chattanooga in the summer, Buell might have captured the city, but more than likely he would have suffered defeat. With the exception of his quick move out of Louisville to fight Bragg, he displayed little brilliance in Kentucky in the fall and was accused of overcaution. An immediate attack on Munfordville, Perryville, or Harrodsburg might well have defeated the enemy. On these occasions a general of the so-called slugger-type might have won a chance victory, but considering the enemy’s estimated strength and the high stakes involved Buell’s decisions to wait for reinforcements were undoubtedly correct. Everyone expected a decisive battle in Kentucky, and Buell judiciously prepared for a knockout blow.

For a general who always insisted upon strict discipline, Buell dealt lightly with two division commanders when they disobeyed his orders. If McCook and Thomas had been sternly rebuked for not following
instructions in the Sequatchie Valley, they might have performed better at Perryville. Although Buell often demanded written explanations for minor infractions, he merely reminded McCook in a friendly way to report promptly the next time the enemy attacked him.\textsuperscript{15}

Unquestionably Buell was better as a leader than as a follower. If he disagreed with his superiors he made his objections known. Yet granting that he may have been slightly contentious by nature, his argumentativeness stemmed in great measure from circumstances. First of all, McClellan's advice to undertake an East Tennessee campaign was wrong. As friends, he and McClellan wrote informally to each other; Buell felt he could advise the general-in-chief about conditions in the West. Furthermore, so sincerely convinced was Buell of the inadvisability of the East Tennessee project that he deemed it his duty to convince Washington of its error. Coming under Halleck's jurisdiction in March of 1862, he always obeyed his immediate superior's express orders, but his own high rank prompted him to assume as much discretion as possible. Buell's second refusal to invade East Tennessee in late October certainly bordered on insubordination. This time he had no friend in Washington, and his temerity contributed
to his removal from command.

In spite of assertions to the contrary by contemporary reporters and politicians, Buell's men and officers on the whole respected him. Noticeable dissatisfaction with him existed only in the divisions of Mitchel and Thomas, and it began there only in the summer of 1862. Buell demanded much from his men but always complimented them on their accomplishments. He often encouraged his lieutenants with a few cheering words: "I hope I know how to appreciate the strong arm and willing heart which you bring to the service." His staff and most general officers under him, including Thomas, McCook, Rousseau, Fry, Crittenden, Wood, and Nelson, held their commander in high regard. After he left the army, he received many letters of confidence from his former subordinates. "Please bear in mind I wish to be with you in any capacity," wrote General R.W. Johnson. "I have never been as proud of any position that I have occupied in my life," wrote T.J. Bush, "as the one I had upon your staff." With few exceptions the officers appearing before the Commission praised him. McCook said:

I would state that I always had the most implicit confidence in General Buell. . . . I believe that General Buell's army was the best ever put in
the field, and I have heard General Rosecrans say it was the best organized army that ever was, and that is my belief this day. There was never a more untiring general than General Buell. I never knew when he slept. I have been at his headquarters at all hours, but never found him asleep. I have spoken to him many times about it.  

Although he never served under Buell, General W.T. Sherman probably expressed the opinion of most senior officers in the West: "I know that General Buell is one of the coolest, most methodic and patient men living. . . . He knows I always esteem him as one of the best, if not the best practical soldier of our army."  

A recent authority on the Civil War period has concluded that "Buell who should have realized that Lincoln could lose the war if he ignored politics and public opinion apparently never gave the fact a thought." This point, whether valid or not, raises the larger question, would Buell have been a better general by being a better politician? More concretely expressed, could he have dampened the opposition of war governors, radicals, Republicans, and Stanton by acting more diplomatically, by applying his military and reconstruction principles less rigidly? The question admits of no simple answer.
Perhaps grounds existed for a compromise between political and military authority when Buell first organized his army. He thought not, however, and by ridding his regiments of state influence he clashed with influential war governors, making them more willing to follow Morton when the Indiana governor sought Buell's removal from command. As Buell saw it, his first duty was to field an efficient fighting force as quickly as possible, and this could only be accomplished by ousting interfering governors. Undoubtedly, this procedure made for an army more likely to win battles, and if Buell won victories a few dissatisfied war governors would signify little. Even if he had consulted and confided in the governors more, they would have supported him only as long as he achieved military results and as long as his policies relating to civilians did not offend them. It can not be denied, on the other hand, that patience, tact, and an industrious correspondence with political leaders would help any general who commanded south of the Ohio in 1862, and that in this respect Buell probably limited himself too strictly to the military side of his duties.

The chief cause of political opposition and adverse public opinion was Buell's strict enforcement
of Lincoln's conciliatory reconstruction policy. Buell eventually applied the policy too enthusiastically for his own good. His determination to fight only to preserve the Union and to protect innocent civilians was a mixture of the ideal and the practical. Notwithstanding the recent repute of "total" war generals, Buell's conciliatory policy was Machiavellian in the effectiveness with which it won Confederate sympathizers back to the Union and prevented guerrilla uprisings. Perhaps without design Buell played politics, but the wrong brand from the point of view of radicals and Republicans. As a gentleman general who also defended constitutional liberties even in wartime, he gained an immense respect and popularity in the South and among Democrats and conservatives in the North during and after the war.20

Political pressure alone did not force Buell's removal, which resulted rather from a combination of factors. In the first place his superiors and the country as a whole expected too much from generals during the first year and a half of fighting. Only gradually did the North accept the war as a slow process of attrition. Lincoln respected Buell, especially up to the summer of 1862, and protected him from
radicals like Stanton. But for many impatient Northerners, Buell seemed unsuccessful. If he had received full official and public credit for his performance at Shiloh or if he had won a decisive victory over Bragg at Chattanooga or in Kentucky, he could have withstood political buffeting. Instead, Buell took the blame for an abortive Chattanooga campaign, for Bragg's invasion of Kentucky, and for his subsequent escape from the state. At a time when many criticized him for military developments beyond his control, Buell also seemed to become overcautious in his tactics. Sensitive to unjust censure from his superiors, he wrote formal but frank messages to Washington which did nothing to present his performance in a favorable light. Finally, in October 1862 he disobeyed instructions. All this, when combined with political opposition, was too much for Lincoln, and he removed Buell.
NOTES

4. Ibid., 268 (quoted), 278.
5. Fry, Operations of the Army under Buell, 200-201; Philadelphia Age, August 6, 1864.
7. Philadelphia Age, August 6, 1864.
8. Otto A. Rothert, History of Muhlenberg County (Louisville, 1913), 233-40; T.J. Bush to President Cleveland, March 28, 1893, Buell Papers.
10. Ibid.
11. Ambrose, Halleck, 92; Bruce Catton, America Goes to War (New York, 1961), 73-74 (quoted); Donald, Lincoln Reconsidered, 100-101.
18. Sherman to J.M. Wright, October 14, 1863, ibid.
20. George B. McClellan to Buell, November 11, 1864, Buell Papers, R.R. Bolling to Buell, March 12, 1867, ibid., B.B. Lewis to Buell, May 31, 1879, ibid.
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originals and copies, between Buell and his family, friends, and military colleagues cover Buell's service in the Seminole War, on the Western frontier, in the Mexican War, in the Civil War, and his post-war life. Of the more than 500 original letters written by Buell, most are addressed to his wife. Twelve volumes of letter-press copies of Buell letters comprise about 8,400 pages. Among other things, the collection also contains Buell's manuscript condensation of testimony before the commission with his comments, his "Digest of Evidence," and a transcript of his defense; letters from Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, Oliver P. Morton, and Generals Grant, Sherman, McClellan and Thomas; captured Confederate letters, one from General P.G.T. Beauregard to Braxton Bragg; special orders, general orders, and original battle orders; maps, photographs, notebooks, scrap books, account books, financial statements, invitations, proofs of magazine articles, unpublished manuscripts on various subjects written by Buell, vouchers for spies, rocket signal codes, a catalogue of books in Buell's library, and an extensive newspaper collection.

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