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Baron Von Steuben and the military forces in Virginia during the British invasions of 1780-1781

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BARON VON STEUBEN AND THE MILITARY FORCES IN
VIRGINIA DURING THE BRITISH INVASIONS OF 1780-1781

BY

MICHAEL McMILLEN DECKER

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
IN CANDIDACY
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
IN HISTORY

APRIL 1979

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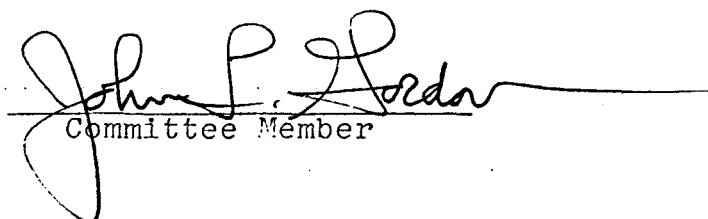
BARON VON STEUBEN AND THE MILITARY FORCES IN
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PREFACE

The subject of this thesis is Major-General the Baron von Steuben and his role in military events in Virginia during 1780-1781. Steuben came south in November 1780 with Major-General Nathanael Greene to help re-form, re-equip, and re-man the Southern Army. Finding Virginia potentially valuable, General Greene detached General Steuben soon after their arrival with the primary mission to remain and expedite supplies and manpower southward. While so engaged, Steuben also assumed a secondary mission when he found himself, for a time, military commander of the Continental and state militia forces in Virginia. His performance from November 1780 until October 1781 with an evaluation of his successes, failures, strengths, and weaknesses is the central theme examined here. This thesis is limited to this period of service which was, in itself, filled with events that brought him both praise and criticism.

In completing this study, the efforts of many people must be recognized. The personnel at the University of Richmond Library and the Virginia State Library provided valuable time and advice. Special thanks go to Terry Long, Sandra Picchi, Ethel Slonaker, and Tim Heigh of the Virginia State Library for their invaluable aid. The friendly assistance of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Research Archives, the Valentine Museum, especially Michael Sanchez-Savaadra, and the people of the Virginia Historical Society Research Library also aided in many ways with my research.

Thanks, too, go to Professor Harry M. Ward, who acted as my thesis director. His comments and criticism contributed immensely to bringing the thesis to completion. I wish also to extend my special appreciation to Nita Bender for her long hours spent editing the text and to Glenda Giddens and Kay Durr for the long and difficult task of typing the manuscript. Finally, I wish to thank my wife and daughter for their concern and support.

ABBREVIATED NAMES AND TITLES

- VCM Virginia Cavalcade Magazine
VMHB Virginia Magazine of History and Biography
VSL Virginia State Library
WMQ William and Mary Quarterly

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	i
Chapter	
I COMMANDER OF VIRGINIA FORCES	1
II ARNOLD'S INVASION	16
III LOGISTICS AND MANPOWER PROBLEMS	32
IV OPPORTUNITY LOST AT PORTSMOUTH	54
V THE BATTLE OF PETERSBURG	65
VI ROAD TO YORKTOWN	84
VII YORKTOWN	102
VIII CONCLUSION	123
FOOTNOTES	130
BIBLIOGRAPHY	152
VITA	163

CHAPTER I

Commander of Virginia Forces

Following the disastrous loss by Major-General Horatio Gates to British forces at Camden, the American troops had either been captured or scattered throughout North and South Carolina. General George Washington had received news that General Charles Lord Cornwallis intended to pursue the advantage and increase his hold on the southern states. Any doubt of this was dispelled when General Alexander Leslie landed in Virginia in October 1780. From the American view it was absolutely essential that a new commander be sent to reassemble and rebuild the troops into a Southern Army which could oppose moves General Cornwallis would surely make. To do this successfully meant providing a commander who possessed the respect of the people in the South. General Washington proposed to the Continental Congress that Major-General Nathanael Greene would be the proper person to carry out this duty. Nominated by General Washington on October 22, 1780 in a letter which was read before the Congress on October 27, General Greene was confirmed on October 30 and orders were cut appointing him to command the American Southern Army.¹ On October 22, 1780 General Washington wrote to General Greene that:

. . . I also propose to them to send Major General the Baron De Steuben to the Southward with you; his talents, knowledge of service, zeal and activity will make him very useful to you in all respects

and particularly in the formation and regulation of the raw troops, which will principally compose the Southern Army. You will give him a command suited to his rank; besides employing him as Inspector General. . . . He will take your orders in Philadelphia.²

Major-General Nathanael Greene would command and Major-General the Baron Frederick Wilhelm von Steuben would form and regulate the raw troops.

On the same day Washington also informed Baron von Steuben that:

Though . . . sensible how important your services will be in this quarter; yet as to the Southward, there is an army to be created, the mass of which is at present without any formation at all, your services there will be still more essential; and . . . I have recommended it to Congress to send you with General Greene to the Southern Army.³

Whether the army was to be created or rebuilt, the task ahead was formidable. The Southern Army's success at rebuilding would require the experience in organization and training of Baron von Steuben.

The confidence expressed by General Washington in his letter was not in the least unfounded. From the time of his arrival at Valley Forge on February 23, 1778, Steuben had been deeply involved in providing military instruction to the American Army. Steuben had been schooled in the Prussian style of military drill while serving as a captain in the Prussian Army, and he brought this knowledge with him to America. To perform these training responsibilities, General Washington set up the

temporary department of inspection with Steuben at the head. Under him were five inspectors who, by working with the brigade-inspector, were to teach the soldiers. The improvement this training gave the troops became apparent to General Washington, and he was impressed sufficiently enough to write the Continental Congress on April 30 asking that Steuben's talents be noted and official recognition of his position be given. On May 5, 1778 the Congress formally established the Department of Inspection, ratified Steuben's appointment as Inspector-General and gave him the rank of Major-General.⁴ In 1779 Steuben took the procedures he had been using to teach the troops and produced a set of regulations for training and drilling the American troops. This manual, first printed in 2,969 copies, would be the standard throughout the remainder of the war.

On November 3, 1780 Steuben with his commander, Nathanael Greene, prepared to depart Philadelphia--Major-General Greene to assume command of the Southern Army and Major-General Steuben to recruit in Virginia. Assignments confirmed and orders in hand, they departed Philadelphia on November 3, 1780 for the inn, at Chester, Pennsylvania, thirteen miles down the Delaware River.⁵

By November 5 the party arrived at Head of Elk, Maryland, and by the 12th, at Mount Vernon. At some

point after November 4, Steuben parted company with General Greene and went on to Mount Vernon, where he enjoyed Mrs. Washington's hospitality while waiting for Greene to rejoin the party.⁶

During the period when Steuben went on to Mount Vernon, General Greene met with various state officials, including the Maryland legislature, to improve public confidence in the struggling Southern Army so necessary to gain the support of the southern states. As General Greene wrote, "the whole southern operations will depend upon the stores coming from the northward."⁷ Following a brief visit with Mrs. Washington, the travelers pressed on to Fredericksburg, where they arrived on November 14 looking for the inn formerly operated by Virginia Brigadier-General George Weedon.⁸

The remainder of the journey was completed by November 16, 1780, when the group arrived in Richmond, Virginia. During the following six days, the generals were met by state officials, and took advantage of Governor Jefferson's hospitality.⁹

During the period from November 16 to November 21, General Greene's time was filled with letter writing and conversations aimed at establishing the importance of his mission to the South with the civil authorities of the various southern states and the reliance his army would have upon supplies provided by them.¹⁰ He likewise made

the decision that Steuben, with his experience in training and organizing, would best aid him by remaining in Virginia as an intermediary who could expedite support southward to him. On November, 20, 1780, therefore, General Greene wrote a letter to Virginia Governor Thomas Jefferson in which he stated:

I propose to sett out in the morning for Hilsborough, but shall leave Major Genl. Baron Steuben to command in this State for the present, and to put things in the most proper train for forwarding the Reinforcement of Men, and supplies of every Kind to the Southern Army. He will advise with your Excellency.¹¹

An attachment to this letter was General Greene's requisition for the Southern Army, the first paragraph of which provided Baron von Steuben with his immediate instructions:

The state immediately furnish its quota of Troops agreeable to the new Establishment, and that the Men be supplied with cloathing, Blankets, Arms, and every Accoutrement necessary for equipping them for a Winter's Campaign, and that Lawson's Corps, and Steuben's Brigade of Militia Continue in Service till the regular Regiments are formed. . . .

The attachment then went on and called for the state to provide a magazine of ten thousand barrels of flour, five thousand barrels of beef and pork, three thousand head of cattle, one hundred good wagons with a driver, four good horses and harness complete to each wagon, two hundred hogshead of rum or brandy and that provisions and forage be provided at the different places of rendezvous for receiving recruits. It would also provide forty

artificiers, of whom twelve would be shipwrights or boat builders, twelve house carpenters, four wheel wrights, six smiths, three armorers, two saddlers and one harness maker. Finally, five thousand dollars would also be provided to defray the contingent expenses of the army.¹² Neither General Greene nor Baron von Steuben were under any misconceptions as to the ease with which these needs were going to be met.

General Greene felt he had brought all the pressure to bear that he could for the time being. All that remained was to issue the orders necessary to sustain military operations in Virginia and notify General Washington of the steps taken. Also on November 20, he issued instructions on the arrangement of the Virginia line, the inspection of stores, revitalization of the State Quartermaster General's Office, and notified Major-General Peter Muhlenberg, previous commander of the Continental forces in Virginia, to report to Steuben and take his orders. He then wrote General Washington that, "I think the legislature will adopt your Excellency's plan for filling their regiments for the war. But I foresee very great difficulties in arranging the officers of the Virginia line, as there are so many prisoners of the war and such great discontent among them."¹³ With that General Greene left Richmond on November 21, 1780, heading for Hillsborough, North Carolina.

Steuben was not idle during this initial period. It had been his responsibility to take stock of the military forces in Virginia in preparation for taking command. What he found was very upsetting. The three essentials of the military: organization, manpower, and material were in complete disarray.¹⁴

Steuben began immediately in making changes to right the chaos which existed. Some changes were for the better and some for the worse. To understand the how and why, Steuben's motives should be examined. While he came to America principally to train and organize troops, he nevertheless had always desired a field command in order to prove himself and start him down the "road to glory and great possessions," as he was told by those in France who had convinced him to come.¹⁵ By going with General Greene, he was getting this opportunity. The stop in Virginia, while certainly necessary, was not believed by Steuben as any great obstacle to this goal. It was a simple case of no organization, no administration, no training, and insufficient arms. He felt capable of solving the problems and turning things around within a few months; he would then once again be free to join General Greene and obtain his long-awaited command.¹⁶ Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee's Corps, given orders to join General Greene in the South by General Washington on October 22, 1780, together with the troops Steuben would send from Virginia, should, when the remnants of General Gates'

army were included, be a worthy fighting force with which to join.

Steuben, knowing his recruits for the Southern Army would have to come from the only ready source of manpower in Virginia, turned his attention to the military forces in Virginia. He discovered they were of three types: the state militia, under Generals Robert Lawson and Thomas Nelson;¹⁷ approximately nine hundred Continental troops who were under General Muhlenberg's command;¹⁸ and the State Garrison Regiment, a small unit used to guard harbors and ports, with a special garrison in charge of the defense of government buildings and officials.¹⁹ In addition to being varied, these forces were also widely separated--so much so that Steuben wrote to Governor Jefferson that:

Instead of forwarding Genl. Greene the reinforcements he Expected, we are Keeping a Number of Corps dispersed about the State, where no Enemy has been these Eight Days thereby Exposing General Greene with an inferior force to the Enemy, and exhausting what little provision was Collected in this State.²⁰

Steuben selected militia principally from Lawson's troops to prepare to march southward to reinforce General Greene and notified Governor Jefferson by letter that they were to be dispatched on December 2, 1780. To his surprise he received a resolution of assembly by the Virginia legislature directing that General Lawson's troops be discharged.²¹ Shown a copy of the resolution by General Lawson himself, Steuben had no choice but to comply and

then seek another source--the Continental troops under General Muhlenberg. When Steuben directed four hundred of the best equipped be detached under Colonel John Green to reinforce the Southern Army, he found that the officers of this detachment were unpaid and ill-clothed, with scanty provisions. Consequently, they had become discontented to the point where a paper complaining of ill treatment by the state was written, and the officers expressed their determination not to march until their grievances were redressed. Baron von Steuben went to General Muhlenberg who spoke to the troops, persuading them to withdraw the paper, which they did.²²

When General Greene arrived at the location of the Southern Army, he was so upset by the appearance and state of preparedness of the Virginia troops, he complained that no more should be sent in that condition.²³ Another delay then was inevitable and it took Colonel William Davies, Commander of the Continental Depot at Chesterfield Courthouse several weeks to find enough muskets and clothing to outfit a detachment of four hundred Continental recruits.²⁴ This provoked Steuben to write from Petersburg:

I came here Yesterday in full Expectation of sending off Colo. [John] Greenes Detachment of 400 Men this Day, and it is with great pain I have to inform Your Excellency that so far from being ready to March I am even fearfull they will not be able to March at all.

Amongst the 400 Men selected . . . about 60 only had blankets. . . .²⁵

Finally overcoming the major obstacles, the troops were ready to march on December 14, 1780 in the company of the three hundred troops of Henry Lee's legion, which had arrived in Virginia. They were on their way south as Washington had ordered in October. Steuben gave him twenty-five men to replace a like number lost to desertion along the way. Then the total force numbering some seven hundred Continentals left to join the eight hundred Continentals who comprised the Southern Army.²⁶ More would need to be sent. Steuben was responsible for maintaining certain numbers of troops in the army based on quota allocations provided to Virginia by the Continental Congress. On December 16, 1780, Steuben wrote Governor Jefferson from Richmond that "the number required by Congress is for the Infantry 5448. Cavalry 844. Artillery 544. For Lee's and Armand's Legion's 50. In all 6886."²⁷

In addition to recruiting troops, Steuben also set out to reorganize the military forces of the state to provide better internal control, more effective administration, and a better knowledge of the amount of arms and equipment in the state. As Steuben wrote:

Under the orders of General Muhlenberg I found about 1100 Men, enlisted for various terms 18 months to three months in general, naked of body. Besides . . . the remains of the state regiments consisting of 120 men for the war. . . .

Besides the above the State had raised at a great expense a Corps of volunteers under Brig. General Lawson to serve for six months--Said to consist of

7 or 800 men I received them at Petersburg and found only 57 cavalry and 203 infantry under arms. . . . I am afraid that the arrangement of the Va line on the new establishment will be attended with many difficulties.²⁸

After Steuben sent the 425 troops to General Greene, his remaining force at Chesterfield Courthouse "by a return delivered me a few days ago they do not amount to 600 Men."²⁹ Most of these were sick and lacked clothing, blankets, and other essentials. In order to determine how many troops were dispersed throughout Virginia, Steuben published the following notice in the Virginia Gazette of December 23, 1780:

By the Honorable Major General Baron de Steuben, commanding the troops in the state of Virginia.

The Honorable Congress of the United States having directed that the officers of the state of Virginia on Continental establishment should assemble together that their lives may be arranged under the new regulations of the 21st of November last: I do, therefore, hereby direct all Continental officers belonging to the line of this state to repair to Chesterfield Courthouse, on or before the 10th day of February now ensuing, in order that their respective claims may be considered, and finally decided upon. And should any officer fail to attend at the time appointed, without furnishing proper reasons for his absence, it will be considered as a resignation. All such of the aforesaid officers who are in the vicinity of Chesterfield Courthouse, are to repair thither as soon as possible, to take charge of the troops who may be ready to march to join the southern army.³⁰

At the same time the Virginia General Assembly passed a resolution authorizing regiments to be raised to meet the new army establishment. These troops were to total three thousand, but because of constant losses to sickness and

desertion, Steuben felt this was still too small a number. "I am informed that the Bill which passed the House of Delegates . . . has limited the number to 3000-- by far too small a number for the end proposed. . . ."31

In fact, the whole system by which troops were recruited had been unsatisfactory to Steuben. Earlier in December Steuben had written a series of letters to Governor Jefferson in which he recommended changes which would better meet the needs of the Southern Army. In the first letter on December 9, 1780, Steuben stated that "The Frequent abuses that have happened . . . and an absolute Necessity that those Men who are raised for the War in Future should be fit for the Service and the Continent and State no longer deceived, by having Old Men, Deserters, &c &c, imposed upon them; I have made the . . . [following instructions. . . ."32 These instructions called for recruits under fifty years of age, in good health, delivered by the county lieutenant, and all be accounted for and under proper control. A list of all bounties and other payments should be kept so that any subsequent desertion can be discovered. On December 16 Steuben wrote the second letter in which he addressed himself to another area of recruiting--the quota system. Steuben, following a familiar system, referred to the European system calling for the recruits to be selected in accordance with a class system proportioned as nearly as possible according to

property. This system required that:

each class be obliged to furnish a Man for the War by a certain fixed period otherwise to be subjected to a Draft. The recruit so furnished to be considered as a representative of the class, and in case of Death by sickness; or Desertion to be replaced by the Class in one month after notice given. . . .³³

Steuben was convinced that these changes would solve the recruiting problems. Although the first suggestion was implemented and the second was not, the real promoter of recruiting was invasion by the British. The greatest success in Continental recruiting came when the threat was most imminent.

Even when the troops were on hand, the other side of the problem appeared. There was never enough of anything to equip them. Steuben spent much time on obtaining arms, clothes, blankets, and food for the recruits, but it never seemed to be enough. Repeatedly Virginia was called upon for all types of provisions, and repeatedly the supplies were given; however, the limited funds and credit of Virginia could not provide it all. Though Virginia's efforts were in the best spirit of support, they constantly fell short of the goals.³⁴

Another area with which he had become deeply involved almost from the first days after his arrival was fortification of strategic areas susceptible to British attack. Since almost all movement was carried on by water, particularly during the winter, the areas requiring fortifications were those that commanded the main rivers

and bays of the state. Here, as it was with men and supplies, Virginia seemed willing to do something but was unable to provide complete and resolute action. This was illustrated by an attempt by Steuben to fortify a principal defensive site on the south side of the James River about twenty miles south of City Point between Flowerdew Hundred Creek and Ward's Creek, called Hood's. This site had been a flourishing mercantile center with a cooper's shop, a smithy, and two large tobacco warehouses built on a 100-acre tract owned by John Hood. At this point there was also a ferry between his place and Weynoke on the north side of the river. Besides this, the river narrowed at this point, from which it could be defended with a fortified emplacement. A fort at this location would give advance warning of any attempt to move up the river toward Richmond, and would, if properly protected, slow down any enemy's progress to allow the city to make defensive preparations.³⁵

Early in 1780 Governor Jefferson had charged Colonel George Muter of the state garrison to construct a battery at Hood's. He obtained the assistance of the owner, Walter Peter, and construction was begun. By September 1780 it was apparent that a supply of bricks could not be located, so the fort was not completed. In November 1780 Steuben, with the assistance of Colonel John C. Senf, prepared a report after visiting Hood's on what needed to be done. In transmitting the report to the House of

Delegates of the advantageous position of Hood's, he declared that it was "considered as very capable of opposing the passage of vessels." The General Assembly took no action other than to table Senf's report. In spite of this leisurely effort, the fortress did manage to receive three 18-pounder and one 24-pounder cannons with a brass 8-inch howitzer. Work on the parapets to provide embrasures for the gun positions was also completed although the battery itself was not completed. The identity of the workers or the source of the cannon is not known.³⁶

As a start, Steuben was making good progress. In just over a month and a half, Steuben had called in the scattered forces, made efforts to improve recruiting of additional troops, given some promotion to the organization of his recruiting efforts through the use of depots, sent troops to General Greene, and had applied some effort to providing security from attack by water, a most likely prospect. Those were the actions Washington and Greene had expected of Steuben, and he was fulfilling their trust. Another side of Steuben had yet to be tested--that of field commander.

CHAPTER II

Arnold's Invasion

At 8 a.m. on Sunday, December 31, 1781, Governor Jefferson received a letter from General Thomas Nelson, enclosing a letter from Jacob Wray, which told of the ominous developments in the Chesapeake Bay. Passing this information to Steuben, he said:

I have this moment received information that 27 sail of vessels, 18 of which were square rigged, were yesterday morning just below Willoughby's Point. No other circumstance being given to conjecture their force or destination. . . .¹

Steuben had been a trainer and organizer. This emergency would be his trial as field commander, and he would not fare too well. Immediately after receiving Jefferson's letter, Baron von Steuben dispatched Colonel Senf, his engineering expert, and Captain James Fairlie, an aide, down the south side of the James River to gather intelligence as to the ships' nationality, strength, and destination. General Nelson was dispatched by Jefferson down the north side of the James River to assist in this identification; and, if British, to call up militia capable of opposing the force. Steuben himself went some of the way with Senf towards Hood's before returning to meet with the Governor's Council on January 2, 1781. The fact that the vessels and soldiers were British, under the command of newly commissioned Brigadier-General Benedict Arnold, was confirmed on January 2, 1781, when Colonel

Nathanael Burwell, County Lieutenant of James City County, reported that the vessels were British and had advanced as far as Warrasqueak Bay. The fleet, consisting of nineteen ships, two brigs, and ten sloops and schooners, had departed New Jersey carrying a force which Washington's intelligence had estimated to be twenty-five hundred men. Enroute one ship became separated from the fleet during a storm and did not reach Virginia in time to join the first invasion. The actual raiding party in Warrasqueak Bay was nearer sixteen hundred men.² That day Steuben met with the governor and his council--David Jameson, William Fleming, Andrew Lewis, George Webb, and Jacquelin Ambler--in Richmond, and a decision was made to immediately call the following militia to assist the Continental troops:

. . . one-half of the militia of Henrico, Hanover, and Goochland counties and one-fourth of the militia of Fluvanna, Albemarle, and Amherst to rendez-vous at Richmond; one-half of the militia of Chesterfield, Powhatan, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, and Amelia, and one-fourth of the militia of Buckingham, Bedford, Halifax, Charlotte, Prince Edward, Lunenburg, Mecklenberg, Sussex, Southampton, and Brunswick were ordered to rendez-vous at Petersburg.³

In addition, orders were issued to organize rifle companies of men called up from Shenandoah (216 men), Rockingham (219 men), Augusta (344 men), and Rockbridge (146 men) counties to move arms and other stores from Petersburg toward Richmond and to bring the powder from the powder mills to Westham. Major Richard Cláiborne was to have boats collected at Westham to move supplies across the

river if a threat developed there. Completing their deliberations, the legislature adjourned and carried the orders for militia back to their respective counties.⁴

Baron von Steuben, staying at Wilton, then located on the James River below Richmond, shuttled back and forth between Richmond and Chesterfield Courthouse. He wrote a letter to George Muter, Commissioner of War for Virginia, dated January 1, 1781, informing him that "the present alarm has occasioned my ordering four hundred of the [Continental] troops at Chesterfield to hold themselves in readiness for marching."⁵ However, on January 2, 1781, Steuben found that only one hundred fifty of the Continental troops at Chesterfield Courthouse were physically able to fight. These were formed into a battalion and sent to Petersburg to protect supplies stored there until Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Carrington could get there and remove them.⁶ As Steuben moved about between Richmond, Chesterfield Courthouse, and Manchester, he was most interested in where the enemy was bound. Governor Jefferson had stated that since confirmation of the first sighting of the enemy had not been received in the five hours or so, as had been expected, he had come to the opinion that "the first intelligence should be totally disbelieved."⁷ William Tatum, reporting to Steuben the evening of January 2, found everything in total confusion. Even after confirmation of the identity of the invading

force on January 2, 1781, the destination was still unknown. It might still have been Williamsburg, Jamestown, Petersburg, Richmond, or maybe even beyond to Charlottesville, where British soldiers constituting the remnant of General John Burgoyne's Convention Army still resided. Accordingly, Jefferson wrote a letter to Francis Taylor in Charlottesville to move the British to "Fort Frederic," in Maryland.⁸

On the morning of January 3, General Arnold's fleet was off Williamsburg and Jamestown. Though he put a party ashore, they reembarked almost immediately. This was possibly because of the militia General Nelson and Colonel James Innes had collected and brought to Williamsburg. General Nelson had informed a courier sent from Arnold that he intended to defend the town. As the fleet moved upriver, uncertainty over the probable destination of the fleet narrowed. Arnold was bound to be headed for Petersburg, Richmond, or Westham. Once past Williamsburg, the next point from which the fleet could be opposed would be Hood's. Major James Cooke of the militia and Captain John Allen of the State Artillery Regiment had managed to assemble about seventy-five men there. Steuben continued to have great faith in the ability of Hood's to repel an enemy, so he hoped that these men could slow down or deter the advance. By evening word was passed that the fleet had passed Brandon

Plantation eight miles below Hood's and the first British schooner advanced under the guns and was fired upon by the 18-pounder. By 10 p.m. the remaining ships anchored below Hood's, and twenty small boats carrying one hundred thirty troops were dispatched to Ward's Creek to subdue the American garrison. Afraid of being overrun, the defenders pulled back; but before departing, they fired two more rounds of warning toward the ships. By 12 midnight, when the British forces, arrived, they found the battery abandoned. The troops spiked the cannon, burned the gun carriages, and carried off the howitzer. With no further action possible at that late hour, the British fleet drew up near the fortifications and anchored for the night.⁹

On January 4, 1781, the fleet made its intentions known. Leaving Hood's, the fleet proceeded to Westover and began disembarking troops on the north side of the James River. They were headed for Richmond.¹⁰ Although Arnold expressed doubts at first as to whether to march in the face of a militia surely accumulating at Richmond, Lieutenant-Colonels Thomas Dundas and John Simcoe persuaded him that the magazines at Richmond were worth it. The British troops accordingly left Westover¹¹ and advanced as far as Four-Mile Creek, where they encamped for the night.¹²

In response to the arrival of General Arnold this far up the James River, Governor Jefferson changed the

previous order of January 2 in which the county lieutenants were instructed to send only a portion of the militia to an order in which they were instructed to send all the militia.

The rapid Approach of the enemy renders it necessary that for instant Opposition you embody the whole able to bear arms. Should they not be armed, there are Waggon's loaded with arms at Chesterfield Courthouse. . . . I must desire that you without a moment's delay send every man in your County able to bear Arms to rendezvous at Westham.¹³

On January 4, 1781, Jefferson told Steuben that:

Majr. Dick calls on me for an order for the militia of this place to march. I beg you will be so good as to consider the militia of every place as under your command from the moment of their being embodied, and to direct their motions and stations as you please.¹⁴

Steuben was then in charge of all the troops. Meanwhile, even as this new responsibility was being passed to him by Jefferson, Steuben spent the day around Richmond collecting any remaining militia. Although a sizable force was gathering in Manchester, there were, to his surprise, only about one hundred in Richmond.¹⁵ These he organized under Major Alexander Dick of the state militia and sent them down the James with instructions to oppose the enemy at every possible opportunity. In the confusion of the moment, Major Dick, who was completely unfamiliar with the terrain and who had also found that he was in receipt of poor

intelligence about Arnold's whereabouts, misunderstood and stumbled around, at first marching east toward the Chickahominy River, then back toward Richmond. This movement kept the Americans from opposing the British approach.¹⁶ In advance of the British troops, Steuben sent the remaining Continental stores and provisions out of Richmond toward Westham, then across the river to be dispersed in the countryside. The state provisions, which were located in Richmond, were also moved out of town to the West. These, however, were not under the direct control of Steuben, but of the Commissioner of the Virginia War Office, Colonel George Muter.¹⁷ Colonel Davies was directed to move all the stores out of Chesterfield Courthouse, relocate the hospital, have the tailor and tanner move from Warwick to join the smith and staff at Chesterfield Courthouse, and order the one hundred fifty Continentals sent to Petersburg on January 2 to march back up and take position across the river from Westham. In addition, he was to bring the remaining Continentals--sick, clothed, armed or not--to Westham. Having directed this movement from the headquarters at Chesterfield Courthouse, Steuben retired during the evening of January 4 to Manchester to collect the militia assembled there and oppose any effort the British might have made to cross the James.¹⁸

While Steuben waited on the south side, the British approached Richmond along the north. Departing their camp on Four-Mile Creek the morning of January 5, the British troops rebuilt a bridge across the creek that the American troops had earlier destroyed. Prior to reaching Richmond at about 1 p.m. on January 5, the British encountered American troops two times. The first was an encounter with the party which had burned the bridge; the second was a patrol about seven miles southeast of Richmond. When the British finally reached Richmond, numbers of militia, some armed but many others not armed, appeared before the British at Church Hill. This force included Major Dick, his militia, and spectators. When an assault was attempted on the hill by Lieutenant-Colonel Simcoe, the troops fled into the surrounding woods. Following this assault, the British moved on to Shockoe Hill and dispersed the Americans there.¹⁹

Throughout the time Arnold was on the north side of the river, Steuben had remained on the south side. His disposition of troops at Manchester was to protect his lines of supply and retreat, and he ignored the fact that all the political and military targets a reluctant general could want were readily available north of the river. (Arnold did not march on Richmond until persuaded

by his officers). This reluctance by Steuben to directly oppose the British must be attributed to a lack of knowledge of how effective his small number of troops would be in combat and insufficient information about his opposition. Perhaps if he had remained in Richmond and opposed Arnold directly, he would have been soundly defeated. As it was, a greater damage was done in the minds of Virginians concerning the ability of his military force to defend the state. This in turn affected the willingness of the people to support the military effort.

Having returned from pursuing the retreating soldiers in Richmond, Simcoe was told to take the Queen's Rangers, together with the flank companies of the 80th, and march on and destroy the foundry, laboratory, and magazine at Westham.²⁰

Prior to the arrival of Simcoe at Westham and while Steuben was at Manchester, Governor Jefferson went to the foundry on the evening of January 4 to observe for himself how Steuben's directions to Major Claiborne were being carried out. There he met Captain Nathaniel Irish and others. Together they spent most of the night moving the powder, arms, and munitions out of the foundry and across the river in the boats Major Claiborne had provided. The next morning, after moving his family from Tuckahoe across the river to Fine Creek, Jefferson returned, and "finding the arms &c. in a heap near the shore,

and exposed to be destroyed by cannons from the North bank, he had them removed behind a point of land near by."²¹

Steuben left Manchester after seeing that Arnold was not seriously considering the crossing of the James. His destination was Colonel William Fleming's house in Powhatan County (near Midlothian). Here on the evening of Friday, January 5, 1781, he met with Governor Jefferson. While there, the two were presented a proposal from General Arnold carried by several businessmen from Richmond. The proposal stated that if Richmond were surrendered without resistance, the city would then be spared and only the tobacco taken. Neither Jefferson nor Steuben would agree.²²

At about this time, Simcoe arrived at Westham and destroyed everything he found. He broke the trunnions off the cannon and broke up a large quantity of small arms and military stores. He set fire to the boring mill, the magazine, the ordnance repair shop (laboratory), John Ballandine's house, and one or two warehouses. Some of the state documents which had been brought to Westham also were destroyed. The foundry itself had only its roof burned off; its chimney remained intact.²³ The magazine had originally been set to be blown up but:

Upon consultation with the artillery officer, it was thought better to destroy the magazine than to blow it up, this fatiguing business was effected by carrying the powder down the cliffs, and pouring it into the water; the warehouses and mills were then set on fire. . . .²⁴

Finally, after raising five cannon dumped into the river by departing American troops and destroying them, Lieutenant-Colonel Simcoe and his troops returned to Richmond, arriving late the night of January 5. There the men, fatigued with the march, fell asleep or got into private homes and obtained rum. Though large scale plundering was strictly forbidden by the British, damage and looting by "straggling parties" was significant and costly. The tobacco requested as ransom for the city the day before was untouched. Even so, as the British prepared to leave Richmond, fire was set to several public buildings, the ropewalk, warehouses, and workshops. These fires also destroyed several houses and one of the town's two printing presses. While much of the blame is given to the British, Americans, both white and black, were also responsible for fires and looting in the town.²⁵ In the end, buildings and property in all parts of Richmond were severely damaged or burned. Steuben, meanwhile, prepared to move east from Midlothian through Manchester and south to Warwick. January 6 was the day he stopped waiting and began the chase.²⁶

Just after noon on January 6, exactly twenty-four hours after coming to Richmond, retracing his steps toward Four-Mile Creek and Westover, Arnold left behind a town covered by a great cloud of smoke, with provisions and liquor strewn about the streets. Toward evening it began to rain hard in Richmond.²⁷

As Arnold and Simcoe retraced their steps toward Westover, the American troops moved forward to keep an eye on them. General Nelson, who had been protecting Williamsburg, kept his troops north of the James River, but moved them steadily up to Charles City Courthouse while Steuben, still on the south side of the river, at first moved south to Warwick on January 6 to protect the grain stored there, and then to Osborne's on January 7. As they moved, both Steuben and Nelson received militia responding to the call of January 2 and 4. Since Steuben had ordered the dispersal of arms at Petersburg, Richmond, and Westham to prevent their capture, no arms were on hand to give the new arrivals. When he left Midlothian, Steuben had about one hundred fifty armed Continentals, plus two hundred militia which he had picked up at Manchester on January 5. By the night of the 8th, when Steuben had reached Petersburg and joined the militia under Colonel Gibson, his force numbered about eight hundred. Sufficient numbers of these men were unarmed to prompt Steuben to write to Governor Jefferson on January 6 to send one thousand stand of arms.²⁸ Unfortunately, most of the good arms saved from Westham which could be found had been given to the Hanover militia. The rest were scattered in church eaves, barns, or otherwise hidden away. Try as they would, neither Colonel Davies, George Muter, nor Governor Jefferson could obtain the arms required. On

January 7 Steuben paused in his movements south of the James long enough to write from Osborne's that with more militia arriving all the time, the shortage of arms was becoming critical. On the 8th Governor Jefferson managed to find some cartridges to send to Steuben and to General Nelson, but the arms were still inaccessible.²⁹

General Nelson, watching General Arnold, wrote to Governor Jefferson that on Saturday, January 7, he had intended to attack the British rear, but ". . . the Gates of Heaven were opened, and such a Flood of Rain poured down as rendered my Plan abortive by almost drowning the Troops. . . ." ³⁰ Instead, on January 8 a patrol of the Queen's Rangers, which had set out for Long Bridge, captured several riders who told of an assembly of some of General Nelson's militia at Charles City Courthouse. Turning in that direction, Lieutenant-Colonel Simcoe and a small detachment reached the area in the early evening. In the action which followed, the militia was dispersed.³¹ Steuben, still moving along the south side of the James, was camped in Petersburg without means to cross the James River.

Though it has not been conclusively shown that Steuben's real concern had been the defense of Chesterfield County from the Courthouse to Petersburg, it probably was on his mind. On January 9 Steuben concluded that Arnold's inactivity at Westover was not a prelude to

attack on Petersburg. He therefore moved the militia further south to Prince George Courthouse. Receiving word early on the morning of January 10 that the British were reboarding their ships, Steuben immediately returned to Coggins Point, located across the river from Westover, and personally observed the loading. Steuben turned again to the battery at Hood's. He sent Colonel George Rogers Clark with three hundred infantry and thirty horse cavalry to the abandoned fortress to oppose the fleet when they went downstream. Though the cannon had been rendered unusable, the British would still stop to make sure. At 12 noon the fleet got underway and by 4 p.m. had reached Flowerdew Hundred, where at dark a force of approximately five hundred troops were put ashore in eighteen boats to examine the battery.³²

Gen. Arnold had scarcely landed, and Col. Dundas, with the 80th regiment, was not yet on shore, when a patrol of the enemy fell into the ambush of the Yagers, and exchanged shot with them: the night was very dark. Gen. Arnold directed Lt. Col. Simcoe immediately to march toward's Bland's, with Col. Robinson's regiment and his own infantry; but the cavalry did not land. The detachment had not proceeded above two miles, when Robinson's corps in front received a heavy fire. There was no room for disposition, for the road ran through a wood which was remarkably thick, at the forks of which, as the clearest ground, the enemy had placed themselves. Upon the firing, the troops were immediately ordered to charge; they rushed forward and the enemy fled: near twenty of Col. Robinson's regiment were killed and wounded. . . . The troops returned to Hood's battery, which having totally dismantled, they carried off the heavy artillery and quitted it; the next day re-embarking and falling down the river.³³

That same night, January 10, Steuben had marched with his militia to Bland's Mill, about seven miles from Hood's. The following day, Thursday, January 11, he arrived at Hood's, but the British had left. He ordered three hundred infantry and two troops of horse cavalry to continue on to Cabin Point and, for the first time, sent 560 militia across the river to reinforce General Nelson at Williamsburg. General Arnold continued down the river, making no further attempt to land until reaching Hardy's Ferry twenty-two miles below Cabin Point. There the British began their march toward Smithfield, where they arrived without incident on January 15. From January 16 to 21 Steuben remained at Cabin Point, while on January 19 General Arnold reached Portsmouth, where he disembarked, established his camp, and sent his vessels on down to Hampton Roads. Steuben, meanwhile, left Cabin Point on January 21 and, following the path of the British troops, arrived in Smithfield on January 22.³⁴ On his arrival Steuben stationed the American troops with the express purpose of:

. . . preventing the Enemies parties from making incursions into the Country on either Side of the James River or should they undertake to come out with their whole force, to render any enterprize of theirs difficult, always having in view the keeping open the communications across James River.³⁵

To do this, Steuben deployed troops on both sides of the James River to observe and contain General Arnold.

General Muhlenberg was placed in command of all forces south of the James, and General Lawson commanded all forces north of the river. General Nelson backed them up with one thousand militia located in Williamsburg.

Steuben had not done well in the first effort as a field commander. Throughout the campaign he had been on the wrong side of the river and unable to oppose the British. Because of this, he was only able to prevent a raid on Chesterfield Courthouse and Petersburg. At the same time he allowed the British free access to Richmond, the seat of Virginia government, and the foundry and arsenal at Westham. He also lost control of arms and supplies needed for offensive action against the British after the attack. Only the desire of General Arnold not to overextend himself and his overriding intention to return to Portsmouth before he could be captured saved Virginia from worse depredations. A military commander cannot long afford these mistakes and avoid defeat. The people of Virginia were also taking notes. They would want to know why such an intrusion could have been made over a nineteen-day period with so little resistance. Both Steuben and Jefferson would be called upon to justify their actions.³⁶

CHAPTER III

Logistics and Manpower Problems

Baron von Steuben survived his first military action in Virginia. It formed a part of a learning process which had begun at Chesterfield Courthouse while trying to bring organization to the Continental Quartermaster Department and promoting cooperation between the Continental troops and the Virginia militia. In November 1780, when Steuben began his organizational effort, all manner of activities were centered in Richmond. When the government had moved from Williamsburg, the city had become the staff headquarters in Virginia with all the confusion such a move meant. Here, in one area, was the state government, the laboratory, offices of all sorts, and even the location of one of the four Continental quartermaster depots.¹

Steuben, however, soon took a step which decreased somewhat such centralization. He separated a portion of the Continental and state government and quartermaster organizations by moving some activities to a county courthouse. These courthouses were points where county government, court, and the militia assembled and where other affairs of mutual interest to all residents of the county were transacted. About ten miles south of Richmond was one such location known as Chesterfield County Courthouse. Once before, this location had attracted the attention of

Governor Jefferson and Steuben's predecessor, General Peter Muhlenberg, who felt its location made it ideal for quartering recruits. Steuben likewise felt this way and that in addition to a troop rendezvous, it would also be an excellent choice for a Continental depot because it was near enough to the capital at Richmond for ease of communication and a place from which the business of the quartermaster department could be conducted. It was also far enough away to be reasonably safe if the capital should come under attack. The barracks at Chesterfield County Courthouse which were quartering the new recruits could be refurbished and from here Steuben could establish a program of drill and military instruction. Other buildings including the jail located there could be used for manufacturing and storage of supplies, with land available for more barracks if necessary.² Chesterfield County Courthouse now joined the other three depots, Alexandria, Fredericksburg, and Petersburg in stocking items for the military. These movements were directly in line with Steuben's responsibility to preserve Virginia as a source for men and materiel and to keep them moving southward. As Greene specified in his letter of December 8, 1780:

. . . inform the state that the troops must be properly found with everything to fit them for service, or that they will not be received. Use every argument you can to convince the Assembly of the necessity of clothing their troops. If they mean they shall render any service (to the army) or do not wish to fall a sacrifice to death, desertion and

disease, I beg them to give their men good covering, for without it this will be their portion.³

Steuben also wrote the same day to Washington that he was well aware that the state of internal affairs would require improvement before he could meet his responsibilities to General Greene.

. . . The derangement of the finances is more sensibly felt here than in any other part of the continent. All the wheels of the administration are stopped; the late invasion of the enemy has completed the confusion. (General Leslie in October 1780) The few articles which were in the Continental as well as State magazines were distributed, without any orders, to the several corps of Volunteers, Militia, etc., and although the strictest orders have been given to collect the whole, I fear a considerable number will be lost.

The Quarter-master's Department and indeed almost all the departments here have no head. The Executive part of the administration is carried on only by expedients, while the Legislature cannot agree on any system whatsoever. They are now debating on the state of finances, and the new arrangement of the army has not yet been taken into consideration.

Nothing will be more difficult than to arrange the line of officers of this state according to the new Establishment.⁴

One of Steuben's first steps was to appoint Colonel William Davies to oversee the assembling and equipping of troops to be sent to General Greene. Steuben also charged him with the renovation of the barracks, conversion of the courthouse into a hospital and transformation of the two jails--one for debtors and the other for criminals--into magazines for the storage of food and supplies. Additionally, Davies would be responsible for constructing new barracks for the troops and a tailor's shop from wood in the nearby forests.⁵

As construction and renovation progressed, Davies began to move the supplies at Richmond to Chesterfield Courthouse. It became the largest and most important recruiting and supply depot in Virginia and the key to an overall plan to improve the organization of the quartermaster departments.

It would take more than this realignment to solve the logistics problems facing Steuben. They were deep and widespread. To properly assess the magnitude of these problems and Steuben's handling of them, each of the major categories of supply, transportation, and manpower must be considered--so too must Steuben's relationship with the Virginia government.

During the early part of the war, militia units in Virginia had secured supplies directly from merchants who had in turn billed the government for payment. Before long, fraudulent or inflated claims were being submitted. This had caused disputes over reimbursements and a clamor for tighter control of funds.⁶ In order to correct the abuses, changes in both the Continental and state quartermaster departments were taking place. Such was the case in Virginia when Steuben arrived. To improve the reliability of the departments, people were appointed who could work with the Continental officials in Philadelphia and the Virginia state officials to solve the problems interfering with supply support for the Southern Army. These people had to be not only resourceful and innovative but

often stubborn when they found themselves having to commandeer and impress supplies from the local populace.

Steuben appointed Major Richard Claiborne to be Continental Deputy Quartermaster General for Virginia. In addition to the Continental position, Claiborne was also Virginia Quartermaster General until March 1781. Finding both jobs entirely too difficult to perform, Claiborne finally resigned the state post and was succeeded by Captain Henry Young.⁷ Other Continental quartermaster personnel with whom Steuben, Claiborne, and Davies would work were John Peyton, Clothier General Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Carrington, Deputy QMG; Captain Charles Russell, Assistant Deputy QMG; John Lightfoot, Assistant Commissary of Hides; Captain Berryman Green, Continental Deputy Quartermaster; and William Aylett, Commissary of Supplies.⁸ On the whole, the Continental organization was capable and dedicated, but Steuben soon found that even with the best of organizations, some problems were insurmountable.

In the early war years of 1776-1777, Virginia had been a state with a very prosperous economy. This prosperity had enabled the state to be generous in providing supplies to the war effort. The state raised sufficiently large crops of foodstuffs, not only to feed the population, including the army, but also to offer them for export.⁹ Virginia also had one of the largest producing lead mines in the colonies, located in the western part

of the state.¹⁰ Although almost all arms were important, most Virginians possessed a weapon to use for hunting and protection as well as to comply with a law in Virginia requiring every man to own a firearm while serving as a member of the militia. Clothing, too, was often imported, but since the militiamen wore ordinary clothes rather than a special uniform, that which was available or locally manufactured satisfied the day-to-day needs of the militia. During 1777 when powder was plentiful, large quantities had been purchased and stored in Henrico, Dinwiddie, and Chesterfield Counties.¹¹ Virginia had the materiel to support an army.

In the latter years of the war, the picture changed. Shortages of many items began to appear and so did the problems in supply. The main problem areas in supply were in arms and ammunition, clothing and leather accoutrements, food, and funding responsibility.

Steuben found that so many weapons had become unserviceable or lost by 1781 that the lack of weapons was affecting the army's ability to conduct warfare. Except for the few weapons made at Hunter's Arms Works in Fredericksburg, and the Kentucky and Pennsylvania rifles which were brought in from the Frontier, most of the arms in Virginia were French; including the muskets which were the main weapon of the infantry.¹² As these weapons became

damaged, they were at first taken to Westham.¹³ After its destruction, provisions were made to send the damaged arms wherever workmen skilled at repairing arms could be found and hired to make the required repairs. This was not always easy to do for some artisans found ways to avoid this type of work. One such instance occurred early in January when William Davies tried unsuccessfully to obtain the services of a Mr. Cunningham to help repair arms damaged when Arnold moved up the James River to Richmond. Not every man placed patriotism first.¹⁴

Steuben brought the problem up on April 21 when he wrote:

The great distress we are in for Arms has determined me to deliver out all those we have here (Chesterfield Courthouse) that were destined for the Recruits, except 150 which I have delivered to the recruits that are here. I have at the same time taken the arms out of the hands of the Artificiers, in order that they may be delivered to the Militia. Notwithstanding our Distress I find that the 1,000 arms which have been distributed to the troops under Genl. Muhlenberg are not in a condition to be used.

I have ordered Capt. Prior to establish a Manufactory for the reparation of Arms at Powhatan Co. Hq. I have written to Genl. Muhlenberg to send the Armorers from Broad water to that place that they may be immediately set to work, but as more hands will be necessary for the reparation of so great a number of Arms in so short a time, I request your Excellency to furnish as many armorers as possible. . . .¹⁵

Though arms never would be in good supply and there would always be newly arrived recruits who were without any kind of weapon, Steuben's efforts at least provided some serviceable arms for the militia in the field.

Powder and lead were also a problem. Lead, which

was from the Virginia mines had been available in large quantities but since then, quantities of the metal had been squandered, sold, given away or used up until now lead supplies were almost depleted.¹⁶ Powder too had once been ample to meet Virginia's requirements. Now, however, Virginia powder requirements, rested on the meager imports from the West Indies, stocks brought in from elsewhere, and that which was produced in laboratories. One such laboratory had originally been established in Richmond. Colonel Timothy Pickering, a member of the Continental Board of War and active in quartermaster affairs, had noted that a Continental laboratory in Virginia would significantly aid support to the army in the South so in conjunction with Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Carrington, Pickering explored the possibilities of moving the laboratory to Westham and expanding it to handle Continental needs. Becoming one of the largest and most complete facilities in America, this laboratory not only repaired arms and made cartridges but also cast cannon in its foundry.¹⁷ It served in this capacity until its destruction in January 1781, after which it never again was able to achieve its former capability.¹⁸ Other items in extremely short supply were clothing and leather accoutrements. When the Virginia government decided to establish factories and hire artisans to make footwear and overalls to meet the shortage, two locations, Petersburg and Albemarle Barracks, were designated as centers

for clothing manufacture.¹⁹ However, to satisfy requirements for clothing, blankets, and accoutrements the items had to be imported from outside the state or abroad, and these sources fluctuated in reliability as pressure by the British increased or decreased. The troops could never seem to get enough of anything. William Davies reported on the unresponsiveness of the supply system to Jefferson on January 25, 1781:

I found . . . that all the troops . . . had by order of Baron Steuben come back to this station, from their utter inability to keep the field, from a want of almost every species of cloathing. Many men have not a remnant of cloathing larger than a good napkin to cover their nakedness, and a number of these are dependent upon others for a part of a blanket to shelter them at night from the cold. . . . Unless some method can be adopted for supplying the men, they had much better be dismissed altogether; they are not able to do any thing in the field, and near 60 of them too naked to do any thing in quarters, and every idea of training them for actual service has long since been laid aside.

On those items which were provided, a distinct lack of coordination was evident when they were issued to the soldiers.

. . . Another great misfortune is the manner of issuing the cloathing. A good pair of stockings is given to a naked soldier today; he has no shoes and wears them out by the next week, and in a fortnight afterwards when his stockings are gone, he gets his shoes; Or perhaps he gets his breeches, but no lining to them; a new coat or a fashionable hat, but has no shirt, or if he has, he is without breeches. By this means, the country runs into debt, and the soldier is always uncomfortable. . . .²⁰

Food would seldom be a problem in Virginia. As the British invasions followed one another, however, Steuben would be required to replace rations captured by

the enemy. For example, following the Battle of Petersburg, large quantities of flour were destroyed on board vessels at Osborne's, and quantities of foodstuffs were destroyed at Warwick.²¹ In addition, Steuben would have difficulties with forage for horses and would even levy fines against individuals when forage was available but not given.

Compounding the shortages of supplies was a shortage of money as well. While Continental army letters of credit were accepted earlier in the war with minimal resistance, the value of Continental currency had become so depreciated by 1780 that individuals receiving quartermaster certificates in payment for supplies or services complained bitterly. The certificates were of such little value that county officials would not even accept them in payment for taxes.²² No efforts by Steuben could solve this problem. He was only able to pressure the government to still provide money so supplies could be bought.

Also facing Steuben and master departments were problems of transportation--especially water transportation. Supplies and equipment in the American colonies had always moved by one of three means--carried by the colonist, loaded onto pack animals or wagons, or in the boats and ships which sailed the waters of America. Though boats were the best means by which materiel, including military supplies, could be moved to and within America, Steuben and his staff in Virginia would

have difficulty moving supplies to the Southern Army because all the rivers flowed in the wrong direction. Supplies needed to move south from New England, Maryland, and Pennsylvania through Virginia to General Greene in the South. Using the rivers which flowed northwest to southwest, the supplies traveled many miles and sometimes days out of the way. There was also a distinct shortage of deep draft vessels capable of carrying a significant quantity of goods. Before the war most of these ships were British and were lost to the colonists when hostilities broke out. Even if there had been large numbers of these vessels, the British Navy would have quickly captured them since there was no significant American Navy to protect them.

The primitive roads in Virginia were not much better for they were little more than footpaths, dusty in summer and wet and muddy in winter. In the winter, in fact, most military activity came to a halt and the troops established camps in which to rest until good weather once more allowed operations to begin again. There were reasons for this. The mud and snow would become so deep that movement of supplies would be paralyzed for days or weeks at a time. The type of transportation would also create problems since supplies were only given minimal protection from the weather, large quantities of supplies could be destroyed simply moving the items from one place to another. Yet, for all these difficulties, the horse or

ox and wagon became the principal vehicle for moving military supplies in Virginia. The owners of these wagons, who in other ways supported the war effort, would do almost anything to prevent their horse or oxen and wagon from being impressed. This is understandable when it is realized that their wagon was the only way they had for moving items to market.²³

On April 4, 1781, Richard Claiborne wrote Jefferson concerning his frustration over the lack of wagons:

The great demands which are made upon me for things to be furnished from this department, both for the Southern Army and the Troops within this State, alarm me more and more, as I have Not the means to answer any purpose whatsoever. I am called upon by the Commissary General of Purchases, and the Commissary General of Military Stores for Wagons and horses daily, to transport their Stores and have it not in my power to procure any. The preparations which the Baron directed me to make for the Cavalry and Infantry to be equipped in this State cannot be done, as I have not money to purchase, and I cannot get credit for an Article.

. . . In short Sir, I plainly foresee, that unless I have great aid from some near resource, the operations of the whole department will stop in a few days.²⁴

On April 9 he again complained to Jefferson:

. . . I have failed in all my endeavours towards obtaining the wagons. . . . having no Public Waggons in the State but what are already appropriated, and that very necessarily; I ask Government for aid, or I must decline the attempt, as I have no possible prospect for accomplishing the business.²⁵

These shortages were especially frustrating to Steuben who had asked Davies and Claiborne to move material for use by the army. Delays could be expected whenever wagons could not be found or when they had to be

moved long distances such as from Fredericksburg to Richmond or from Williamsburg to Point of Fork. Davies set out to solve the problem by repairing and manufacturing wagons at Dinwiddie Courthouse. Although some wagons were completed there, this created no solution partly because the artisans, especially reputable blacksmiths, were expensive and hard to find. More progress was made by sending a highly regarded person out to gather what his talents and reputation would allow.²⁶

Still another problem was manpower. In 1775, Virginia had boasted well over fifty thousand white males of military age (sixteen to fifty years) under a universal militia obligation. During the intervening years, the warfare had made many demands on this pool of manpower. A number of Virginia soldiers were committed to guarding the British prisoners of war or "Convention Army" from the surrender at Saratoga, and another force had been dispatched to the western frontier. Additionally, in May 1780, when the British captured Charleston, almost the entire active Virginia Continental line was taken prisoner. Two weeks later, Banastre Tarleton's cavalry defeated Colonel Abraham Buford's recruits, who had been sent to reinforce the Virginia Continental regiments. On August 16, the defeat of General Gates cost Virginia another two hundred state regulars when virtually the whole army was sent scurrying from the field with heavy losses. Of those troops remaining after the battle, most were reluctant to

rejoin any military force.²⁷

If Steuben was to make use of the available manpower in supporting Greene, a number of problems basic to militia organization had to be resolved. Financial responsibility for troops under Continental control, the militia system with its county lieutenant and court-martial, the philosophy regarding exemptions for artisans and others critical to the war effort, and the provision of direct reinforcements to the Southern Army when it was outside Virginia--these were all problems in this category.

When Jefferson placed all military forces, including the militia, under Steuben's command at the time of General Arnold's invasion of Virginia in January 1780, Steuben became deeply involved in the question of financial responsibility for the militia during periods of crisis. Regulations at the time stated that under these conditions, state forces became the responsibility of the Continental Congress in matters of pay and support. Steuben, however, made it very clear that the Continental forces assumed responsibility only when the militia actually "took the field, armed and formed into a fighting force."²⁸

Less successful were his encounters with the Virginian militia system. In Virginia, the county lieutenant acted as liaison between the governor and the county on administrative matters relating to the militia and the county court-martial directed the militia,

approved promotions, and controlled the draft. Each was an important element of the organization, without whom militia would not be raised. Unfortunately, the county court-martial was not responsible to the county lieutenant, however it alone decided whether the militia would report often; therefore, the wishes of the Governor could be lost if a conflict existed between the two elements. The power of the court-martial was not inconsequential because a large county had as many as twenty to twenty-five companies and each company had from thirty-two to sixty-eight men. Steuben's arrival in Virginia had caused friction in this area from the beginning. Steuben had intended to recruit volunteers and take all who came his way, equip them from state stores, and send them south. This philosophy ran directly opposed to the state militia system where officers gained rank by the number of men they brought with them. To compound the situation, these officers and members of the court-martial were usually the most influential people in a county. There was, therefore, a tendency to favor the local system instead of the needs of a Continental officer who would take his share and leave. However, Steuben found himself in the unique position of maintaining both systems when he became Commander of all Virginia troops following Arnold's invasion. Steuben continued his efforts, however, and considering the significance of the problem, was able to obtain Continental recruits though not in the numbers desired. As

the war intensified in Virginia there was also a greater difficulty in obtaining all troops.²⁹

Steuben was also confronted with those who needed exemptions from military service. Many of these requests were from the government, personnel of the quartermaster departments, and the artisans and artificiers who were employed by the quartermaster department. While anyone could apply for exemption, few were approved. Though providing fair treatment for everyone, it soon created shortages of some skills needed in a community to provide continued support. On one occasion all the tailors at the Petersburg clothing manufactory were drafted by the county court-martial. An appeal was made to Steuben but when he did not intercede to try for an exemption from the governor, the whole facility had to be closed down.³⁰ As the war progressed, these shortages became recognized and such jobs as wagon master and armorer were granted exemptions. For example, John Lightfoot, Assistant Commissary for Hides, became the subject of a request for exemption which was approved because without him there would have been a shortage of leather for saddles and other cavalry equipment.³¹ The reason for this low approval rate was the widespread belief held by Steuben and the civil authorities that the draft was equitable, honestly run, and a man's chances of receiving the call were not that great.

Early in the war only Continental forces were expected to fight outside their home state. If an

expeditionary force had to be raised, the troops volunteering to go were enlisted or transferred to the Continental forces for a specified period, usually eighteen months. When volunteers were not available, a draft was implemented with each county being given a quota to fill. The remainder of the militia would be used to defend the local population within the county. Sometimes, however, when this process would be too slow to meet emergencies, the state militia from the counties closest to the threat would be employed directly. Virginia responded in this way when Greene was being pursued by Cornwallis to the Dan River. Once this militia was called up the county court martial might then agree for the militia to remain on duty with the Continental troops without being transferred. Such was the case from March 1 to March 15, 1781 when more than twelve hundred militia, including two brigades of eastern Virginia militia under Generals Edward Stevens and Robert Lawson and another two from western Virginia under Colonels Charles Lynch and William Campbell, were in Greene's army. These militia troops were of great assistance to General Greene but since they had a shorter term of enlistment they could only be counted on for two to three months.³²

As the overall commander of the Virginia forces, Steuben assumed the responsibility for these problems but the real burden for their resolution rested on Colonel William Davies. In November and December, Davies had

only been responsible for the operation of the depot at Chesterfield Courthouse while George Muter was Commissioner of the Virginia War Office and responsible for recruiting, training, and supply. Steuben had formed a dislike for George Muter when he was unable to provide weapons to the troops in the hectic days when General Arnold attacked Richmond in January 1781. From that time until Muter's replacement in March, Steuben wrote and discussed Muter's incompetence with Governor Jefferson. Because of this feeling Steuben placed his faith and much of the work on the shoulders of Colonel Davies. When Davies became Commissioner of the Virginia War Office on March 22, 1781, as well as Commander of the Continental Depot at Chesterfield Courthouse, his work became even more involved and his control of supplies even more far-reaching. Only after the arrival of Lafayette, and relief from the pressure of command, was Steuben able to work more closely with Davies in obtaining supplies for the Southern Army, but by then his interest was undermined by his problems with Virginia officials.

Steuben's relationship with the administration of the state of Virginia had been worsening for some time, since both the state and Steuben felt that the full measure of effort was not being given by the other. He felt that the state government was too critical of his activities, and the state felt that, given the chance, Steuben would remove men or arms southward from the state

to the detriment of local defense. The result was two forces who at first amicably disagreed but promised each other all possible aid, then quietly did what they wanted to do. Later the disagreement was to turn to distrust and then to genuine dislike.

This lack of cooperation was demonstrated when Steuben and Colonel Senf drew up plans to reconstruct a fortified battery at Hood's. These plans were submitted to Governor Jefferson on January 29, 1781, calling for a battery of "Eight 24 to 18 pounders and defended in the Rear by a strong Redoubt for Sixty Men and four or two Field pieces, mounted in the Angles in Parapet."³³ Although the Virginia government approved these plans, as of February 11 no workmen had been hired to begin to work on the battery. On that date Steuben wrote an angry letter describing the past plans and delays and asked the governor to "consider the shamefull opposition made to the last incursion of the enemy" and stated his "wish to prevent a repetition of the disgrace." However, he added, "I can do nothing without the Assistance of the Government."³⁴ In his reply, Governor Jefferson stated that the project was approved, but all technical aspects and hiring of labor would be left to Colonel Senf. The delay which had occurred, he went on to say, "were produced by circumstances which it was not in our power to control."³⁵

Besides encountering difficulties in cooperation, Steuben and Virginia governmental officials were also

beginning to doubt each other's motivations, forming a more basic mutual distrust. Steuben was having more trouble keeping his Continental and State responsibilities operating in cooperation. Steuben felt that the reluctance of the state to support his efforts could prevent his joining General Greene or even perhaps spell defeat for his army. The officials felt that any person who would take a significant percentage of the men and arms from a state and then leave it could not possibly have the interests of the state in mind. Steuben, therefore, was mistrusted because it was felt that he threatened the state's security due to his strong loyalties outside the state. Steuben, for his part, did not deny he had, on a number of occasions, indicated his intent to march south to meet General Greene.

Areas other than support of the troops also gave the Virginia government reasons to believe in Steuben's incompetence or unreliability or both. The first was the incident at Westover, when, during February 1781, Steuben became embroiled with Mrs. Mary Willing Byrd over the use of truce flags. When General Arnold departed Richmond in January, he took forty-nine slaves from Westover belonging to Mrs. Mary Willing Byrd. Soon after, she applied for a truce flag from Baron von Steuben for the purpose of recovering them. Although Steuben stated at the time he did not know of the new policy, Jefferson had issued a letter prohibiting their use for

the recovery of property. When Mrs. Byrd used the flag, questions were raised about whether she was taking advantage of her connections and raising a treasonous correspondence with the enemy. Because of Steuben's authorization, he, too, came under suspicion.³⁶ Second was the discontent among Virginia officers occurring when General Weedon was returned to active service. This was explained by Colonel Davies in a letter to Steuben dated February 20, 1781:

I am instructed to advise you our opposition to the return of General Weedon is not founded upon any personal pique toward him but that we can never consent to serve in any army where our rights as officers are so essentially injured. . . and with the same justice as might General Muhlenberg have retired on the same occasion and on the same footing with General Weedon.³⁷

Steuben's dissatisfaction is shown in this letter from Steuben's aide, Major William North, of February 23 to General Greene:

The Virginia Line give him (Steuben) the Greatest Trouble. The Arrangement is nearly completed and they are continually applying for leaves of absence. . . . The Baron wishes to be with you. He had rather Obey in an Army than Command in Virginia.³⁸

Steuben had been given his mission and had begun in a positive vein realigning the Virginia depots by improving the administration of the Quartermaster department and by channeling his efforts to the accumulation of supplies and troops from Virginia resources. Soon, however, he found that the state could afford to provide much less than was required, serious geographical obstacles to the

transportation of supplies to areas of combat, and that insufficient manpower was willing to join the Continental forces. These problems then created clashes between Steuben and the Virginia government. The net result was a constantly struggling support effort which required the full attention of the Commander. When warfare took away Steuben's attention, Colonel Davies provided the main emphasis to keep the supplies moving to the troops. Even so, since January it had been a struggle just to provide the supplies needed to support operations in Virginia. This struggle was irreparably damaging Steuben's relationship with Virginia government officials. The future did not give indications of improving when, on February 15, 1781, General Greene showed that his army would soon be needing help for war was once again returning to Virginia. On February 15, 1781, General Greene wrote Steuben:

. . . the enemy have been daily pressing our rear and at this moment are in full march for the river, not three miles from our camp. But we are happy enough to have the river between us. This will delay them for some time. . . .

Whether the enemy will pursue us further is uncertain; but as the Army is so great an object I am rather inclined to think they will, for by the destruction of this Army they complete the reduction of North Carolina and lay a great foundation for that of Virginia.³⁹

CHAPTER IV

Opportunity Lost at Portsmouth

During the last ten days of February 1781, the events which most occupied Steuben were the movements of General Greene and General Cornwallis and the pressing need to provide more Virginia reinforcements for the Southern Army. Steuben received the news from Greene of Cornwallis' approach on February 15 and from Governor Jefferson on February 17 that: "I have this moment received intelligence that Lord Cornwallis continues his rapid approach."¹ He immediately followed this news by instructing the county lieutenants of Lunenburg, Amelia, Powhatan, Cumberland, and Brunswick counties on February 18 to assemble all the militia and be prepared to march to the aid of General Greene.² By February 21 Lord Cornwallis still prepared to cross the Dan River, and the militia from at least one nearby county had joined with General Greene to prevent it.³ By February 25, 1781, Steuben knew that General Cornwallis had ceased his northward movement after being thwarted in his effort to overtake General Greene by the rain-swollen Dan River. Nevertheless, the counties of Washington, Montgomery, Botetourt, Henry, Pittsylvania, Cumberland, Powhatan, Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Amelia, Lunenburg, Brunswick, Prince Edward, Mecklenberg, Charlotte, and Halifax had

been instructed to call up their militiamen with arms to aid in the emergency.⁴ Of the more than two thousand troops who responded, only half that number had the arms to be useful to General Greene. Colonel Lawson even wrote that he could send another one thousand if they could be armed. Before arms were found, the problem once again lessened in importance with Lord Cornwallis' movement southward.⁵

Fear over the approach of Lord Cornwallis made other aspects of Steuben's job easier. It was easier to obtain Continental army recruits during this time. By February 25 Steuben was able to dispatch "400 rank and file . . . well armed and tolerably equipped men" to the South as reinforcements for General Greene's army.⁶

During the collection of troops for this reinforcement, an incident occurred between Steuben and a militia colonel which showed Steuben's desire to provide good soldiers to General Greene as well as the length to which people would go in satisfying the requirements for military service.

Men sufficient to form a regiment had, with much pain, been collected together at Chesterfield Courthouse. The corps was paraded and on the point of marching when a well-looking man on horseback, and as it appeared, his servant on another, rode up and introducing himself, informed the Baron that he had brought him a recruit. "I thank you, sir, with all

my heart; you have arrived in a happy moment. Where is your man, Colonel?" for he was a colonel in the militia. "Here, sir," ordering his boy to dismount. The Baron's countenance altered; he saw and feared the approaching storm. A sergeant was ordered to measure the lad whose shoes, when off, laid bare something by which his stature had been increased. The Baron, patting the child's head with his hand trembling with rage, asked him how old he was. He was very young, quite a child. "Sir, you must have supposed me to be a rascal; an infamous rascal, thus, to attempt to cheat your country. Take off this fellow's spurs; place him in the ranks, and tell General Greene for me, Colonel Gaskins, that I have sent him a man able to serve, instead of an infant whom he would basely have made his substitute! Go, my boy, take the Colonel's spurs and his horse to his wife; make my compliments, and say her husband has gone to fight for the freedom of his country, as an honest man should do."

Colonel Gaskins, fearing the consequences, let the man escape on the arrival of the corps at the river Roanoke. The man, upon returning, was not tardy in making application to the civil authority for redress. But Governor Jefferson . . . and other gentlemen of the council . . . prevented any disagreeable results. . . .

Eager to secure the capture of General Arnold, who was still in winter quarters at Portsmouth, Steuben read with interest a letter sent to Governor Jefferson from General Lafayette which said, in part:

I Am the More flattered By the Command Which His Excellency, General Washington, Has Been Pleased to Intrust to Me, As Independent of the General Good that May Be Hoped from this Expedition, It seems to Promise an Opportunity to Gratify the High Sense I Have of My Personal obligations to the State of Virginia.

This letter, received on the last day of February 1781, was acknowledgment that Major-General Lafayette was coming to Virginia to aid Steuben in a campaign against General Arnold. Steuben himself had received a letter

from General Washington dated February 20, 1781, with the information that he had ". . . detached a corps of 1200 men from this army, chiefly consisting of the light infantry, of course commanded by the Marquis de Lafayette, which will, I hope, arrive at the Head of Elk about the sixth of March to embark there and proceed down the bay to Hampton Roads or the point of operation."⁹

Lafayette, in his instructions, was to "open a correspondence with Steuben, who now commands in Virginia, informing him of your approach and requesting him to have a sufficient body of militia ready to act in conjunction with your detachment."¹⁰

Steuben was pleased but cautious. Although he desperately wanted the opportunity to capture General Arnold, the Marquis de Lafayette was his senior and would, upon his arrival, command the troops in Virginia. Difficult though this would be to accept, Steuben turned his attention to Portsmouth and made preparations for the arrival of Lafayette and the "glorious opportunity of perhaps exterminating the Enemy in this country," while capturing General Arnold because "the grand traitor cannot escape."¹¹

Since General Arnold had arrived in Portsmouth on January 19, 1781, the troops under General Muhlenberg and General Lawson had secured the landward routes from the town. There were, however, no vessels to secure the seaward avenues of retreat. It was recognized by Steuben

and everyone else, including General Washington, that some French ships would be necessary to hold Arnold if an attack were launched against him.

On February 9, 1781, a small French fleet consisting of a ship of the line of sixty-four guns and three frigates under Monsieur de Tilly departed Newport for the Chesapeake to assist against Arnold. However, after dropping off eight prizes taken against the British and finding out that the Americans did not consider themselves yet able to move against Arnold, the fleet withdrew. Much to Lafayette's chagrin, the fleet withdrew all the way to Newport, throwing into question the entire idea of Lafayette's mission in Virginia.¹²

Meanwhile, General Washington negotiated with the French concerning the dispatch of vessels to the Chesapeake to coincide with the arrival of Lafayette. At first, General Washington had received only assurances that a captured man-of-war, the Romulus, would return to the Chesapeake. By the time the French completed their arrangements, a fully equipped squadron under Monsieur Destouches with eleven hundred troops under the command of Baron de Viomenil was enroute to Chesapeake Bay.¹³

In spite of the size and strength of that force, Lafayette, resting with his Continental troops at Head of Elk, Maryland, since March 3, was encountering difficulties obtaining ships with which to move to Virginia.¹⁴

Finally reaching Yorktown on March 14, Lafayette sent the following letter to Steuben:

Here I am, my dear Baron, in consequence of a new arrangement which I shall explain to you. I anticipate with great impatience the pleasure of seeing you, and I shall communicate to you the very important object which has caused me to precede the detachment. As soon as we have talked with each other, we shall send an express to the General, who is doubtless impatiently waiting to hear from us.¹⁵

Steuben, meanwhile, had been busy during this period making preparations for the arrival of Lafayette and the French fleet. After delivering to the governor a list of things required at Portsmouth, he proceeded to Chesterfield Courthouse where he made an assessment of the military personnel and equipment. Steuben noted shortages of clothing for his four hundred troops, the need and high cost of horses, the shortage of good weapons, the continued need for fortifications at Hood's, Newport News, and Yorktown, and the need for an overall plan for a standing militia of four thousand with good arms and equipment which could adequately defend Virginia.¹⁶ After submitting these observations on March 5, Steuben left for Williamsburg where he stayed at the King's Arms Tavern.¹⁷ When Lafayette arrived in Virginia and met with Steuben, he found that upon his arrival:

. . . Baron de Steuben had been very active in making preparations, and, agreeable to what he tells me, we shall have five thousand militia ready to operate.

This with the Continental detachment (still in Annapolis) is equal to the business, and we might very well do without any land force from Newport. . . . (the troops of the Baron de Viomenil) In your first letter to the Baron, I wish, my dear General, you will write to him that I have been much satisfied with his preparations. I want to please him, and harmony shall be my first object.¹⁸

In the letter Lafayette also declined to take immediate command of the military forces in Virginia. He felt that only when his detachment was present, the French fleet had been deployed off Portsmouth, and the operation was set to begin would he assume command from Steuben. The two officers continued their effort to obtain arms, horses, oxen, and artillery for the upcoming campaign. They also visited General Muhlenberg, who was posted at Suffolk. Together they advanced near enough to Portsmouth to bring about a skirmish, but a lack of ammunition prevented their advancing beyond the outposts. They were in this position on March 20 when word was received that a fleet had arrived within the Capes. Lafayette sent a French officer from Yorktown to determine the fleet's identity. When told these were not the ships expected, "nothing could equal my surprise." The fleet, consisting of eleven heavy ships of the line, were British. General Muhlenberg immediately took his troops back to Suffolk, and Steuben began to transport the supplies and equipment and "take Measures for the Security of Such Articles as Might Be Exposed. . . ."¹⁹

The fleet, after its initial arrival, moved back out of the Chesapeake on March 24 and returned to Lynnhaven Bay on the 25th, bringing with it a convoy of transports bearing a detachment of troops from New York under the command of General Phillips. The arrival of these transports, with every appearance of having been unmolested by the French, convinced Lafayette and Steuben that the operation against Arnold was ended. On March 26 Lafayette wrote General Washington from Williamsburg:

The return of the British fleet with vessels that must be transports from New York, is a circumstance which destroys every prospect of an operation against Arnold. . . . The expenses of this expedition are very great, and the minds of the Virginians are so disposed as to make me more obstinate to pursue the expedition. Upon its success great deal depended, particularly for Gal^l Green's army. Never has an operation been more ready [on our side] nor conquest more certain. But since we must give it up, I shall return to Annapolis. . . .²⁰

Before Lafayette returned to Annapolis, however, Steuben presented him with a plan for his concurrence. Although General Phillips had arrived, thwarting American dreams of capturing Arnold at Portsmouth, there might still be a way to counter the British and also to remove the war from Virginia. On March 27, General Weedon wrote Governor Jefferson:

The Honble. Major Genl. Baron de Steuben will lay before your Excellency, an expedition suggested by himself, which meets the full approbation of a Military Board convened on the occasion and which may if agreed to by the Honble: the Executive, in a great measure terminate the War.²¹

Which, in Steuben's words, was that he

. . . march with 2,000 men from Suffolk to Halifax . . . Crossing the Roanoke below the falls . . . by pressing on Cornwallis from three different points we²² should oblige him to retire towards Cambden.

Steuben felt that Phillips would not actually try an invasion into the interior of Virginia and by the Americans pressuring Cornwallis in North Carolina, Phillips could be forced to move south to assist and would, therefore, leave the state. If he did not come to Cornwallis' aid, then the forces of Greene and Steuben would be strong enough to defeat Cornwallis. After his defeat the combined forces would return to Virginia and defeat General Phillips. On March 29, 1781, Steuben presented the plan to the Virginia council. Armed with letters from Richard Henry Lee and General Weedon approving of the plan, Steuben was convinced the plan would be approved.²³ It came as a bitter blow to Steuben when the council responded:

. . . taking under their most serious consideration the proposition of Major General Baron Steuben for sending immediately into North Carolina a Detachment of two thousand of the Militia now embodied on the south side of James River . . . [the council is] of opinion that . . . the number carry with them bearing a very great proportion to what will afterwards remain in the State, it will be a matter unjustifiable in the present circumstances of affairs the enemy²⁴ having lately received a great reinforcement. . . .

After receiving the information, Steuben wrote to General Greene on March 30 of the plan and the decision while including a copy of the resolution. Each of

the three generals had reasons to feel bitter. Steuben, while taking the defeat of his proposal as a personal slight, felt also that the disapproval would have dangerous consequences for General Greene's army if Arnold and Phillips moved south to join Cornwallis. He hoped Virginia would not come to "repent it before it is too late."²⁵ Steuben had, after all, based his plan on the belief that the British would not attempt a general invasion of the state, and in fact, would probably not even retain their base at Portsmouth.

General Weedon expressed bitterness by saying, "I was fearful our Scheme would be rejected by the Executive who have not an Idea beyond Local Security. We must therefore content ourselves till a force is raised with which they will have nothing to do in point of direction."²⁶ Weedon felt that the state government was too conversative to be realistic in its judgment. He also believed that military matters should be left to the military.

Greene felt that the Virginia government's decision was bad for the more all encompassing reason of command and control, the needs and orders of which take precedence.

If the views of a State are opposed to the general plan of operations, and the force in the field can only be employed at such points as they think proper, no officer can be safe in his measures: nor can the war be prosecuted upon a general scale, where partial views have an undue influence.²⁷

General Greene also felt, as did Steuben, that his position

was the most precarious and to deny him support in what appeared to be a reasonable move was foolhardy for not only Virginia but the entire South. Although Governor Jefferson did call on eleven southern Virginia counties to support the Southern Army, Greene felt so strongly he immediately sent a circular letter to these same counties to send well-equipped militia to him along with provisions to aid in trying to "vex Lord Cornwallis if not beat him."²⁸

Steuben then decided that there was no longer anything for him to do in Virginia except to accelerate the departure of what new levies had been collected. Furthermore, when they went, he would lead the first detachment south to join General Greene, leaving Generals Muhlenberg and Weedon to command the troops.²⁹

In the long run, history has shown that it was the council and governor whose course of action was most prudent since General Phillips had as his intention from the beginning the invasion of the interior of Virginia and destruction of supplies bound for General Greene. In spite of this, Steuben felt as late as June that Cornwallis would have followed him if he led forces away from Virginia.

Phillips
←

CHAPTER V

The Battle of Petersburg

The principal objects of General Phillips' mission to Virginia were to establish a British post in Virginia and then to render direct support to Cornwallis by destroying magazines along the James River. Phillips was also instructed by General Clinton to examine the suitability of Portsmouth as his base and if it were unsuited as a fortified station for large ships, he was to examine Yorktown and Old Point Comfort.¹ The examination and fortification of Portsmouth took three weeks--from his arrival on March 27 until his departure for the upper reaches of the James River on April 18.

During this period, Baron von Steuben had occupied his time with the Steuben plan for reinforcement of General Greene. On April 1, 1781, he was still at Chesterfield Courthouse taking stock of the availability of troops. The calling up of militia to oppose Arnold in January and to counter General Cornwallis in February resulted in many militiamen nearing the end of their service. Steuben had also concerned himself with the Virginia Quartermaster Department and also the performance of George Muter, the Commissioner of the War Office

of Virginia, whom Steuben had long felt was to blame for many of the supply difficulties of the army. On March 22 Muter was replaced by William Davies.² Steuben envisioned that Davies would bring about sweeping changes in the quartermaster department; but, since Davies also held his old job at Chesterfield Courthouse, the span of his responsibilities was too broad to see an immediate improvement of any magnitude.³

The armies, both Continental and state, were in need of everything--arms, lead, cartridges, and clothing. Although the ships under Monsieur de Tilly had brought a few merchant ships carrying goods, the supplies in Virginia were still nearly non-existent. This scarcity of supplies, lack of money for payment, and inactivity before Portsmouth also caused desertions to increase markedly. By April 15 Steuben was forced to write General Washington that he was obliged to undertake the defense of the countryside against three thousand regular troops with nothing to oppose them but militia. Those militia who had served since the beginning of the invasion had discharged themselves by this time; consequently, General Muhlenberg was left on the south side of the river with only seven hundred men and General Weedon on the north side with about six hundred men.

A very great evil resulting from the invasion is that it stops the recruiting for the army. So long as a county has any militia in the field,

that county is prevented from drafting; and as most of the counties have had part of their militia either here or with General Greene, little or nothing has yet been done. . . . [to raise troops] Only fifty-two have yet come in and of these some have already deserted. . . . When they do come, I am still much at a loss of what to do for arms.⁴

Frustration over provisions and troops was still causing Steuben to consider leaving Virginia. One such letter to General Greene, written from Chesterfield Courthouse on April 2, revealed his feelings.

If I preferred my own inclinations to the public interest, I should immediately set out to join you; my desire to act under your immediate directions, and the disgust I have for my situation here, are motives equally forcible to urge my departure hence.⁵

Again these thoughts would be interrupted. This time it was General Phillips who brought the war to Steuben.

As early as April 15, Steuben had been aware that movement by General Phillips up the river was only a matter of time. He had been told that work on the fortifications at Portsmouth was nearly complete and that construction on some flat-bottomed boats had begun. In anticipation of the coming expedition, Steuben submitted a plan to Governor Jefferson on April 17 detailing the steps to be followed if the British decided to attack within the state. Written at Chesterfield Courthouse, it called for the two thousand militia under the command of General Muhlenberg to be armed and ready to oppose the British on whichever side of the James River they chose to

Hood's for exemption from militia duty, it was too late. In addition, William Davies and Colonel James Innes, commanding some of the militia in the field, became so convinced that General Phillips would move against Petersburg and Richmond that they tried desperately on April 16 to get wagons and teams impressed to transport over one hundred fifty wagon loads of supplies from the depots at Petersburg and Chesterfield Courthouse to safer locations.⁸ Steuben completed the confusion by ordering the dispersal "as high in the country as necessary" of the supplies accumulated for use in the Portsmouth operation. All in all, when Phillips moved, it came as no surprise; but, as usual, the supplies which would soon be so desperately needed were deposited some distance from where they would be needed, including as far away as Point of Fork.⁹

On April 16, 1781, Phillips embarked his men on twenty-five flatboats, each carrying one hundred men, and began moving upriver with General Muhlenberg following Steuben's orders, keeping track of their movements.¹⁰

The twenty-five boats, preceded by the gun boat, Bonetta, paused at Old Point Comfort, then moved on and took the gun emplacement at Burwell's with only minor opposition. Following its occupation, Lieutenant-Colonel Simcoe with the Queen's Rangers was directed to march toward Jamestown and, if possible, surprise any batteries which might wait in ambush. Having marched during a dark and rainy night:

. . . on the 20th, Lieutenant Colonel Abercrombie, with the light infantry, proceeded up the Chickahominy in boats; Lieutenant Colonel Simcoe, with a detachment to York; Lieutenant Colonel Dundas, with another detachment landed at the mouth of the Chickahominy; and Major General Phillips and myself landed with part of the army at Williamsburgh, where about five hundred militia were posted, who retired upon our approach. The militia at York crossed the river before the arrival of Lieutenant Colonel Simcoe, who made a few prisoners, spiked and destroyed some cannon, and next day returned to Williamsburgh.

On the 22nd, the troops marched to Chickahominy. We were met on the road, five miles from the mouth of the river, by Lieutenant Colonel Dundas with his detachment; this evening the troops, cavalry, artillery, etc., were re-embarked. The next morning we were [re] joined by Lieutenant Colonel Abercrombie with the light infantry, who had been ten or twelve miles up the Chickahominy and destroyed several armed ships, the state shipyards, warehouses, etc.¹¹

Later on April 22, the British fleet passed the deserted battery at Hood's. By April 23 the fleet was off Westover, and on April 24 they reached City Point and disembarked. During this part of the expedition, General Phillips, according to Simcoe, had emphasized three primary objects:

. . . to surprise, if possible, a body of the enemy stationed at Williamsburg, at any rate to attack them. . . .

. . . to obtain possession of Hood's battery, now reported to be closed, without unnecessary risk; to open all obstructions on the James river, and to seize the arms said to be at Prince George Court house.

. . . to gain Petersburg for the purpose of destroying the enemy's stores at that place, and it is public stores alone that [were] . . . intended to be seized.¹²

Steuben, however, remained at Chesterfield where he was attempting to recruit a force of cavalry until certain of Phillips' destination. Henrico, Prince George, Dinwiddie, Goochland, Hanover, Powhatan, Cumberland, Amelia, and Chesterfield counties were called up.¹³

On April 21 Steuben, commanding the forces, had begun to move the troops into a position allowing flexibility of movement but still principally influenced by an anticipated move toward Petersburg. He directed the militia assembled at Richmond to remain in place, but those in Manchester were ordered to move to Petersburg to relieve others who were to be moved to Bland's Ordinary.¹⁴

Steuben believed that while Phillips was definitely headed toward Petersburg, he was also:

. . . of the opinion that the Enemy mean for the present, but to occupy the Neck of Land between the York and James River as high up as Williamsburg . . . I am endeavoring to have the fortifications at Hood's put in the best state of defense possible; and making what other preparations in my power, to oppose the Enemy should they advance on this side [southside] of the James River.¹⁵

Steuben also felt he had time to undertake the instruction and drill of his troops and ordered that they be "exercised in marching in the morning and the manual in the afternoon."¹⁶

That same day, however, the drilling and marching at Chesterfield Courthouse came to an end when Steuben received notice of the British passing Hood's and their

immediate approach to Westover. He directed Colonel Innes to "approach the James River" and to oppose them at Turkey Island if they should land on his side. The militia at Manchester was then ordered to take up position at Osborne's and for the militia in Richmond to split, with one half going with Innes at Turkey Island and the other half to Long Bridge. Unfortunately, Innes was out of his expected position and north of the Pamunkey River and on his way toward Richmond. He had crossed the Pamunkey River to counter the British during their forays downriver. On April 23 he heard that the British were headed for Richmond so he turned in that direction but was then unable to return in time. He did not get to Osborne's until April 25, too late to oppose the British at Petersburg. The forays of the British caused numerous misunderstandings and uncertainty over where to deploy troops. This uncertainty also led to a fear among the Americans that improper actions might bring on a repeat of the British invasion in January, when no opposition was presented. Compounding this situation was a breakdown in communications-- a possibility that should be avoided in wartime. The final result was that for a time on April 23-24, the commanders were unaware of everyone's exact location. Innes did not know where Steuben or Phillips were; Steuben did not know where Innes was.¹⁷

By the evening of April 23, most intelligence had Phillips at Westover and heading for Richmond. By April 24, Steuben himself felt it necessary to enter firsthand into the activity. He went to the shore opposite Westham and found twenty-three flat-bottomed boats and thirteen topsail vessels. While he watched, the ships began to move upriver but have Steuben no indication as to which side of the river they intended to disembark the troops. When the ships disembarked their entire force at City Point in the evening, all doubt as to their intentions was finally removed. Steuben's prophesy in his plan had been proved to be correct. Steuben, as overall military commander, then made the decision to fight. The troops under Steuben with which he would oppose the British probably now were down from the thirteen hundred to less than one thousand for Steuben, in a letter to Greene on April 25 and confirmed by one from Jefferson to Washington and from Muhlenberg to his brother stated that there were "not more than One Thousand men to oppose the Enemy advance."¹⁸ The force probably consisted of some five hundred men, less the Isle of Wight and Nansemond militia, who marched to Petersburg on April 20.²¹ Added to this would be the troops and cavalry brought from Chesterfield Courthouse, probably about one hundred. The final addition to the army would be the militia who arrived at Petersburg or who came from Manchester and Richmond in accordance

with Steuben's instructions. Since the militia from Richmond and Manchester did not turn out in number and those soldiers who did were poorly armed, the bulk would have come from militia assembling at Petersburg. This number would probably exceed the arms available. Since the number of arms given to troops under Muhlenberg was about one thousand, this was probably an approximation of the number of troops ready for battle.²² These one thousand troops available to counter Phillips' twenty-three hundred were an insufficient number to attack ships unloading troops. Steuben therefore notified all militia and Continental commanders that Blandford, a small settlement between City Point and Petersburg, would be the "place of defence and the Bridge of Pokohuntas for our retreat."²³

On the morning of April 25, Generals Steuben and Muhlenberg with their assembled troops faced the army of Generals Phillips and Arnold. The two American generals had already mapped out the strategy to be used, and Muhlenberg was as prepared as possible. They planned to meet the British advance force with an American advance force. Once the battle had begun, the lead force would retire and be joined by a larger force of troops. They would engage the British, then retire and join a still larger force. This would continue until all forces had entered the conflict and one side or the other left the

field. In preparation for the action, Steuben and Muhlenberg called for a sufficient amount of rum to be taken from the stores or wherever it could be found to give a hogshead to each regiment. After it was distributed to the troops, they were told to "drink and fill your canteens . . . we are going to fight today."²⁴ Thus fortified, the Americans awaited the conflict. During the morning the British approached to within three miles of the American lines, and by noon they made their first contact. The British formed their lines and general firing began at three o'clock. It continued until after five o'clock, when "the superior number of the enemy and a want of ammunition obliged me to order the retreat, and the bridge to be taken up, which was executed in the greatest good order. Notwithstanding the fire of the enemy's cannon and musketry, the troops . . . retreated about ten miles on the road leading to Chesterfield Courthouse."²⁵

One of Steuben's soldiers, Daniel Trabue, gave an account of that afternoon's events:

Our advance Guard met the army about one mile from town. This advance was a Sergeant and 12 men; his orders were when he would meet them, to fire when they came to 200 paces of them, and then to retreat to where they would meet with a larger squad. They did so, and met about 100 who had the same orders, so these 100 men fired when the Enemy was fully 200 yards Distant. . . .

The British fired their cannon, but our men were so scattered that it did not cause much Damage, while the Enemy's loss was considerable. At length,

the British charged on our men, and then retreated to where the main Army was. Our men were behind a Ware House, a hedge, and Dikes and Fences. . . .

We left Petersburg when the sun was nearly 2 hours high in the evening. I was now 25 miles from home. We marched towards where I lived up toward our [Chesterfield County] Court House, we went about 7 miles that night and encamped at dark, where there was plenty of wood and water, and all went to cooking and eating.²⁶

On May 6 Jefferson, in writing to General Washington, stated that the Americans had:

. . . disputed the ground very handsomely two hours, during which time the enemy gained One mile only, and that by inches. Our troops were then ordered to retire over a bridge, which they did in perfectly good order. Our loss was between sixty and seventy, killed, wounded, and taken. The enemy's is unknown; but from circumstances of probability it must have been about equal to ours.²⁷

General Muhlenberg, in his account of the battle, stated that:

. . . the enemy approached the town in two columns and were met by our light infantry about a mile from town, where the skirmish commenced, and every inch of ground to the bridge was warmly disputed. . . . At length they cannonaded us so severely, that we broke up the bridge and retreated in the greatest regularity, after maintaining the fight for nearly two hours.²⁸

Lieutenant-Colonel Simcoe, in his Journal, listed the casualties of the battle as the Americans having been "said to have lost near an hundred men killed and wounded, while that of the British was only one man killed, and ten wounded of the light infantry."²⁹ During the main part of the battle, the British had only been able to advance about one mile toward Blandford Church in two

hours. Steuben had placed his cannon on Archer's Hill, and from there, covered the skirmish well until over-matched by numbers. Steuben crossed the river, tore down the Pocahontas Bridge, and headed north to Chesterfield Courthouse.³⁰

After crossing the river the morning of April 27, Arnold, with the 18th and 76th regiments and Simcoe's Rangers, proceeded to Osborne's, where rumor had it that numerous stores were located and near which was a marine force sent to oppose any additional progress of the British fleet up the James River. At the same time, General Phillips marched toward Chesterfield Courthouse. This two-pronged attack on Chesterfield County was the most destructive to date of the war in Virginia. On April 26, after the skirmish at Petersburg, Phillips destroyed some "four thousand hogsheads of tobacco, one ship and some vessels on the stocks, and in the river."³¹

Arnold, with Simcoe and the Queen's Rangers, the 76th and 80th Regiments, and part of the Yagers marched to Osborne's on April 27, arriving about noon. "Finding the enemy had very considerable force of ships four miles above Osborne's drawn up in a line to oppose us, I sent a flag to the commodore, proposing to treat with him for the surrender of his fleet, which he refused, with this answer, 'that he was determined to defend it to the last extremity.'"³² The British then opened fire from the

water's edge at a distance of barely one hundred yards. Though opposed by fire from several ships and musketry from the opposite shore, the British were able to capture or sink the entire fleet of Virginia ships. Two ships, three brigantines, five sloops, and two schooners loaded with tobacco, cordage and flour were captured, and four ships, five brigantines, and a number of smaller vessels were burned or sunk.³³

General Phillips and his troops marched to the Continental depot at Chesterfield Courthouse and on April 27 and 28, laid waste to all the barracks, warehouses, and shops. They "took what they wanted and burned the balance--even the Courthouse they burned."³³ Steuben, in the meantime, just barely had time to remove the troops to Richmond and to send stores to Point of Fork, about forty miles up the James River from Richmond.³⁵ The Virginia government likewise adjourned to Charlottesville during the emergency.

General Arnold left Osborne's on April 29 and moved up the south bank of the river to Ampthill, the home of Archibald Cary, five miles west of Richmond.³⁶ The next day General Arnold rejoined General Phillips between Cary's Mills and Warwick. Together they marched to Manchester, across the river from Richmond.³⁷

Steuben, moving just ahead of Phillips, managed to cross the James into Richmond just barely ahead of the

British arrival at Manchester. General Lafayette, who on April 8 had been ordered to rejoin General Greene and aid him in any way possible, had been directed back to Virginia to take command in the state, and after making forced marches from Head of Elk, he joined Steuben in Richmond at about 5 p.m. on Sunday, April 29.³⁸

Phillips and Arnold, having destroyed twelve thousand hogsheads of tobacco at Manchester, prepared to cross into Richmond; but when word came of the arrival of General Lafayette the day before, they changed their minds. Looking across the river upon their arrival, "from whence they had a view of M. Fayette's army encamped upon the heights of Richmond . . . [the British] wheeled their columns and proceeded back downriver to Cary's."³⁹ This was followed by a further movement through the settlement of Warwick in Chesterfield County to Falling Creek, where it meets the James River. The settlement at Warwick, at that time larger than Richmond, suffered severe damage when the British put the town to the torch. According to General Arnold:

We destroyed a magazine of five hundred barrels of flour, and Colonel Cary's fine mills were destroyed in burning the magazine of flour. We also burnt several warehouses, with one hundred and fifty hogsheads of tobacco, a large ship and a brigantine afloat, and three vessels on the stocks, a large range of public ropewalks and storehouses, and some tan and bark houses full of hides and bark.⁴⁰

Still in Richmond, collecting and reorganizing the scattered militia, Lafayette and Steuben could only

watch the destruction to Manchester and Warwick. It was only after the British moved on that the American generals left Richmond in pursuit. After leaving Warwick, Phillips and Arnold proceeded next past Osborne's to Bermuda Hundred, where the army embarked on the ships on May 2. Once embarked, the British gave every intention of returning downriver to Williamsburg or Portsmouth. General Lafayette and Baron von Steuben were willing to let them go. The fleet proceeded south to the waters off Jamestown, where preparations were made which gave the impression that the troops were landing. This apparently was a feint to confuse the Americans. To a degree, it was successful since Lafayette and Steuben moved their camp on May 3 to Bottom's Bridge on the Chickahominy River, sixteen miles southeast of Richmond.⁴¹ This change in location gave Lafayette more flexibility to move toward Jamestown while still being near enough to Richmond to withdraw if Arnold and Phillips returned north.

On May 6 a boat arriving from Portsmouth came alongside General Phillips' boat. Immediately after its departure, the order was given to turn and proceed up the James River. The ship had delivered a message from General Cornwallis written at Wilmington on April 24 stating his intention to proceed by land straight north and join Phillips and Arnold at Petersburg. The courier stated further that Cornwallis had departed Wilmington and was expected to arrive on May 6 at Halifax, where he would cross the Roanoke River and enter Virginia.⁴²

The fleet bearing Phillips and Arnold reached Brandon's where all the troops but the light infantry landed and moved west toward Petersburg. The light infantry continued to City Point, where it disembarked and then also moved toward Petersburg. The approach of the main British Army, together with the forces of Phillips and Arnold, could have brought great pressure on the American forces in Virginia, who could not match in experience or provision the British forces.⁴³ Two things, however, changed the circumstances of the deployment. First General Phillips had been taken ill during the ascent back up the James River, with the illness advancing swiftly. After May 7 he was rendered incapable of command. Secondly, the battle of Cornwallis and Greene at Guilford Courthouse had reduced the strength of the British forces to the point where reinforcement was necessary.

Lafayette and Steuben, who had been following the British, were forced to retrace their movements. Upon their arrival at the James River on May 8, they found that Phillips and Arnold had already entered Petersburg. While attempting to cross the river also, the Americans encountered elements of the British right flank which extended all the way to the James. During the course of the ensuing clash, men in Lafayette's army were said to have cannonaded the British lines doing some damage to the house where Phillips lay

dying. British authors years later accused Lafayette of "inhumanity" for this action, but it is probable that if Lafayette had known he was there, no such firing would have occurred.⁴⁴

Lord Cornwallis, having been met by Lieutenant-Colonel Simcoe and the Queen's Rangers at the Roanoke and told of General Phillips' failing health, marched across the Meherrin and Nottaway Rivers, almost straight north towards Petersburg. Off to his right marched the one hundred eighty cavalry and sixty mounted infantry of Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton.⁴⁵ Arriving in Petersburg on May 20, the army was met by Brigadier-General Arnold. General Phillips died on May 13, 1781, and was buried in an unmarked grave in Blandford cemetery.

Throughout the Battle of Petersburg and the retreat through Chesterfield Courthouse, Steuben was in overall command. What kind of commander was he when his actions are viewed in retrospect? Whether he was accepting advice from General Muhlenberg or the idea was his own, the method of battle used at Petersburg gave him one of the best possible chances for success when facing an enemy force over twice as large but he did fail to utilize a possibility open to him while at City Point before meeting the British at Blandford. If he had attacked Arnold as he was disembarking troops, he would have had them at a disadvantage. Instead of the ships firing on the Americans,

they would not have been able to employ cannon for fear of hitting other ships and their own troops and this would have at least given Steuben an added advantage later in the day when he had fallen back to Blandford. Complete success at City Point would have forced the British to abandon the operation and take what men and ships remained and returned to Portsmouth.

After Steuben recrossed the Appomattox River into Chesterfield County, there was no natural barrier to the British advance. Once again the superiority of the British Army would prohibit Steuben from meeting Phillips on equal terms, and he would have no choice but to retreat to Richmond, where the James River provided some security. In so doing, however, Chesterfield Courthouse was abandoned to the enemy. In Steuben's defense, the militia had so often retreated when a firm stand would have meant victory that it was difficult for a commander to place the type of faith in them that would have been required to attack at City Point, fall back to Blandford, re-form and attack again.

The war in Virginia had experienced the caution of Arnold and Phillips, who never strayed too far from their ships. Virginia's next experience was to be the battle-scarred and fast moving warfare of Lord Cornwallis.

CHAPTER VI

Road to Yorktown

With the arrival of Lafayette in Virginia on April 29, Steuben was confronted with new challenges. Until that time he had been in command of the state and Continental forces; then Lafayette was. He still had the responsibility to recruit for the Southern Army, but one task would be removed. Steuben summed it up when he wrote Greene that he:

. . . looked upon myself discharged from attending the Operations in the field, the more especially as he had three Brigadiers under him. I therefore again turned my attention to collecting and equipping the Recruits, and, with the Marquis's consent,¹ fixed the general rendezvous at Albemarle Barracks.

As one of his first actions after the arrival of Lafayette, Steuben sought to recover the supplies scattered into the countryside before Phillips' raid on Petersburg and Chesterfield County Courthouse; but since these locations were not considered particularly safe, Steuben, Lafayette, and Jefferson concurred in making Albemarle Barracks the new collection point for the recruits. Many Continental supplies were already stored there or at the warehouses at Point of Fork, a state depot, located in Fluvanna County, about fifteen miles down the river from Albemarle Barracks. This area was ideal for Steuben's purposes. On May 10 Steuben had moved his headquarters to Charlottesville because it was far enough from

the scene of the fighting to provide relative safety; it was near the homes of some friends; and it was near the Virginia government which had moved there May 7. This selection was criticized by some vocal Virginians who felt that instead of placing his troops in a position to defend Virginia, Steuben was making it more difficult. The threat was from the East instead of the mountains. This additional criticism, which was leveled against him, in addition to that resulting from his inability to keep Phillips from Petersburg, Chesterfield Courthouse, and Manchester, made Steuben even more unhappy in Virginia.

Steuben was told by Jefferson that fewer troops could be expected because many counties had militia in the field and so long as they did, the county would not draft men for Continental duty. When Steuben asked Jefferson what he believed would be the maximum he could receive from counties, he replied that he was confident fifteen hundred men could yet be provided. Steuben then ordered the men he had already collected to go to Albemarle Courthouse to be clothed and armed. At this time Colonel Davies wrote him a letter in which he said that Albemarle Barracks was a very poor choice for receiving recruits. It was difficult to reach by land, had no natural protection such as woods, and the barracks were nearly destroyed. Davies then suggested that the state depot at Point of Fork would be much more suitable. After meeting with

Lafayette at Wilton and obtaining his concurrence, Steuben ordered his recruits to Point of Fork where they would be prepared to join General Greene or General Lafayette as needs dictated. Steuben arrived at Point of Fork on May 20 and spent the next week there and at Albemarle collecting troops and equipment.² On May 26 Steuben's troops numbered 470 and he wrote Greene that they were ready to march and that "I shall be happy if I get off from here the 4th or 5th of June . . . I must beg you to determine by what route I shall join you."³ Steuben waited for instructions, but they did not come. Unfortunately for Steuben, they had been intercepted by the British.⁴

On May 24 after only four days rest in Petersburg, Cornwallis crossed the James River at Westover and headed north after Lafayette. By May 28 the force was sixteen miles east of Richmond at Bottom's Bridge; May 29, at New Castle; and on May 20, at Hanover Courthouse. Lafayette, trying to avoid a direct confrontation until General Wayne could get to Virginia and join him, kept retreating. As he wrote to General Washington on May 24:

. . . was I to fight a battle I'll be cut to pieces, the militia dispersed, and the arms lost. Was I to decline fighting the country would think herself given up. I am therefore determined to skirmish, but not to engage too far, and particularly to take care against their immense and excellent body of horses whom the militia fears like they would so many wild beasts. . . . was I any ways equal to the ennemy, I should be extremely happy in my present command.⁵ But I am not strong enough even to get beaten.⁵

Lafayette had another reason for fighting a delaying action. In early April, when Lafayette had received his orders to return to Virginia, General Washington had also instructed General Anthony Wayne to march his Pennsylvania troops south and join with Lafayette. Wayne, however, had been delayed by bad weather and discontent over a lack of supplies and pay among his troops, as had Lafayette during his march in April.⁶

As the force marched south with a strength of eight hundred instead of the fifteen hundred with which Wayne had expected to march, doubts began to be raised as to whether this detachment could provide the support Lafayette was expecting. Wayne also experienced difficulties arising from his efforts to hurry. As he crossed the Potomac at Georgetown on June 1, his six field pieces fell into the river, necessitating a halt. It had rained so hard for several days that the army was bogged down, as was also the case on June 3 when he was passing Leesburg. It was not until June 10 that Wayne was able to join Lafayette at Raccoon Ford on the Rapidan River.⁷

Cornwallis, with Tarleton and Simcoe, watched for Wayne's arrival with a certain degree of concern. Though his estimated seven thousand troops opposing Lafayette's three thousand gave him more than a two-to-one advantage, the British knew that the arrival of Wayne with his nine hundred men with Steuben's five hundred

would more nearly equalize the armies in strength and cause Lafayette to seek the initiative.⁸ General Cornwallis therefore formulated a plan in which he dispatched Tarleton and his 180 dragons with 70 mounted infantry in support, to "proceed . . . before daybreak tomorrow to Old Albemarle Courthouse, where you will destroy any stores you may find. If you find no other stores of any consequence . . . you will cross . . . [the Rivanna] and strike a blow at Baron Steuben."⁹ Lieutenant-Colonel Simcoe, with three hundred men of the Queen's Rangers, with two hundred of the 71st Regiment was sent directly to Point of Fork to oppose Steuben on June 2, 1781.

Tarleton moved the seventy miles to Charlottesville in only forty-eight hours and attacked there on June 4. Luck was with the assembly as Jack Jouett, riding ahead of Tarleton, was able to warn nearly every delegate. With little time to spare, all but seven members were able to escape west over the mountains to Staunton.¹⁰ Though unable to capture the assembly, Tarleton did destroy a thousand flintlocks, four hundred barrels of powder, clothing, tobacco, and such public records as could be found.¹¹ Having completed his mission in Charlottesville, Tarleton turned south with his prisoners and marched toward Point of Fork to rejoin Lieutenant-Colonel Simcoe.

At five o'clock on June 3, Steuben received word that a British force moving up the river was approaching

from the direction of Goochland Courthouse. Anticipating that these troops were intent on attacking Point of Fork, Steuben put aside for the moment his preparations to join General Greene and feverishly began removing all the stores across the James River. Guards were posted to warn of the arrival of any British troops, and the supplies, food, and arms were loaded onto boats and canoes and along with the troops transferred to the south side of the river. During the day General Robert Lawson arrived with some two hundred fifty militia who were also put to work. By evening almost all the Continental stores had been moved when Colonel Davies arrived to oversee the movement of the Virginia state supplies. With everyone working, the remaining supplies were moved across and put on wagons or set on the shore. By early on the morning of June 4, virtually all supplies and troops had been transported across the river. Only about thirty men remained on the north side when the British appeared.¹²

Moving rapidly, Simcoe covered the last four miles to Point of Fork in about two hours, arriving at noon on June 4. Simcoe had been very careful in his approach to avoid detection by capturing or detaining everyone with whom the troops came in contact. As a result, he was able to capture the troops who remained in the camp. He was also able to prevent Steuben from knowing the size force which came. Simcoe saw that Steuben had already crossed the river but that quantities of supplies were still sitting

on the shore. He decided upon a ruse to make Steuben think Cornwallis had arrived with his entire army, believing that in so doing, Steuben might abandon the supplies and retreat into the countryside. During the day Simcoe sent the scarlet-clad troops of the 71st Regiment into the camp with a three-pounder cannon with instructions to fire one accurate shot across the river at Steuben. They were then to begin building rafts to cross the river. The remainder of Simcoe's troops were to spread out, remain under the cover of the woods, and at dark build sufficient numbers of campfires to give the impression of a large force.¹³

All of this activity, when coupled with the intelligence furnished by some of his staff, had the desired effect on Steuben. While he actively worked to remove those supplies and troops he could to a safer location, such as Albemarle Barracks, he nevertheless decided soon after dark to abandon what was left and to leave Point of Fork without confronting Simcoe and to move on to Willis Creek.¹⁴

The following morning Simcoe, pleased that his efforts had been successful, sent a detachment of light infantry across with saddles and instructions to destroy the supplies on the shore. Then they were to mount whatever available horses could be found and actively pursue Steuben far enough to give him the idea that the whole British army was behind him.¹⁵

Estimates of the losses in supplies resulting from the British attack varied. Simcoe's estimate was that:

. . . two thousand five hundred stand of arms, a large quantity of gunpowder, case shot, &c., several casks of saltpetre, sulfur, and brimstone, and upwards of sixty hogsheads of rum and brandy, several chests of carpenters' tools and upwards of four hundred intrenching tools, with casks of flints, sail cloth and wag-gons, and a great variety of small stores. . . . There were taken off, a thirteen-inch mortar, five brass eight-inch howitzers, and four long brass nine-pounders . . . all French pieces and in excellent order. . . .¹⁶

The Continental storekeeper, taking inventory after the raid, estimated the losses as:

. . . 68 boxes of coarse cloths, 60 pair of leather breeches, 1 small bale linen--2,000 yards Canvass, 1 Hhd Checks soldiers hatts, 1 box containing linen and Coarse thread, 2 small bales of Blankets containing about 75, 2 Hogsheads of Coffee, and 1 small case of Tea.¹⁷

When these totals were given to the Virginia delegates, they were outraged. To them, Steuben had once more demonstrated his disregard for Virginia's well-being.

As Steuben moved away from Point of Fork, he added still more fuel to the fires of criticism levied by the Virginia government officials. On June 5 a letter had been written to Governor Nash of North Carolina requesting supplies be provided to support the troops he was taking south to the Southern Army. Steuben sent the dispatch with a Captain Kirkpatrick, who arrived in North Carolina on Friday, June 8. Steuben, meanwhile, left Willis Creek and continued south to Prince Edward Old Courthouse, then to Charlotte Courthouse, arriving on June 9. Here, in a letter to General Greene, he stated his intention to march

south and join the Southern Army in accordance with his orders bringing with him five hundred fifty recruits and informed Greene that he had left General Lawson with six hundred militia to counter the British.¹⁸ Upon his arrival at Granville, North Carolina, Captain Kirkpatrick found that Governor Abner Nash was not present so he delivered the request to General Jethro Sumner. Sumner indicated his willingness to support Steuben's request but told Kirkpatrick that it was surprising news to hear Steuben was moving south when he had orders from General Greene to bring the new Carolina levies and march north to Virginia if Cornwallis entered the state. Kirkpatrick immediately sent the information Sumner had given him back to Steuben, who received it on June 10. Steuben halted his march at Cole's Ferry on the Staunton (Roanoke) River to await instructions from either Greene or Lafayette.¹⁹

During all this time, public outcry had grown over the loss of supplies at Point of Fork and was growing still more over Steuben's apparently precipitate departure southward. Steuben was by no means oblivious to these developments, but for some days he remained at Cole's Ferry hoping word would come from Greene. During this wait, Steuben addressed himself to the militia in southwestern Virginia in a circular letter. Addressed to the county lieutenants of Prince Edward, Cumberland, and Amelia Courthouses, which had been established as places of rendezvous for

recruits since Chesterfield Courthouse and Point of Fork had been destroyed, Steuben entreated everyone to:

. . . get together every man in your county, who can possibly be armed. . . . If we succeed in collecting such a body of militia as can offer resistance to the enemy, I have not the least doubt that we shall not only preserve this part of the State from their depre-
dation, but that in a short time they will be driven back to their shipping. . . .²⁰

On June 13 Steuben received a letter from Lafayette:

I request you, my dear sir, that you will immediately return this way, and with the Continentals and militia under your command, hasten to form a junction with us. I am afraid General Greene's letter requesting you to remain with us has not yet got to hand, but unless you have received orders subsequent . . . I can assure you his desire was then to form a junction.²¹

Though Steuben still had not received word from General Greene, he now had definite indications that he was to remain in Virginia. Steuben left Cole's Ferry on June 12 after he received the information from Sumner and proceeded to Prince Edward Courthouse arriving there on June 13. He then received Lafayette's letter. With definite instructions, Steuben crossed Carter's Ferry June 16 and marched across Goochland County. On June 19 Steuben safely re-joined Lafayette in Hanover County at Colonel Dandridge's.²² General Wayne had also joined Lafayette on June 10 so the American army had become a formidable force of some four thousand men. The four American generals--Lafayette, Wayne, Muhlenberg, and Steuben--watched intently to see what Cornwallis' next move would be. To their surprise,

he moved back through Richmond on June 21 and continued back down the north side of the James River. Going first to Bottom's Bridge, then to New Kent Courthouse on June 22, he slowly made his way toward Yorktown and Williamsburg by June 25.²³ The reason behind this move was a directive from General Clinton, Commander of British forces in America, for Cornwallis to fortify a position in Virginia and then to send the remaining troops to New York. Clinton believed that the growing strength of French and Americans around New York placed his army in danger. Even if it did not, he wanted to launch a campaign against Philadelphia and the Virginia troops would aid him considerably.²⁴

Along the route of march, there were several instances when the American troops in their eagerness formed to do battle with the British, only to be disappointed. One occasion happened on June 18, the day before Steuben joined the army near a place called Meadow Bridge, located on the Chickahominy almost due north of Richmond. General Muhlenberg, in the advance, was pressing Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton from the rear. During the course of the march, he approached too closely and was met by an element of the British Cavalry. By the time the Americans could form, the British had moved off without any serious engagement. Two members of the First Pennsylvania Regiment, a Captain John Davis and Lieutenant William Feltman, made virtually the same observation when they left

camp at sunset to surprise a "party of Tarleton's horse continued to daylight, but on our arrival found they were gone some hours. . . . (traveled) 13 miles."²⁵ After this false alarm, the march after Cornwallis was resumed. On June 22 the Americans came to Richmond. Much of the city still lay in rubble as a result of the British attacks, but there was enough activity to allow Captain Davis and Lieutenant Feltman the opportunity to go to town for the purpose of "playing billiards and drinking wine."²⁶

From June 23-26 the Americans proceeded east to the Pamunkey, then south toward Spencer's Ordinary just northwest of Williamsburg following the army of Cornwallis. On June 26 the advance guard, under Colonel Richard Butler, arrived at Spencer's Ordinary while Lafayette, Steuben, and the rest of the army remained encamped at Bird's Tavern. A British force under Lieutenant-Colonel Simcoe, returning from a night-foraging march, ran into Butler's force at Spencer's Ordinary. The Americans charged Simcoe's men and then fell back to allow the riflemen to press the advantage. The British gave way under the attack with losses reported by General Cornwallis of thirty-five and by the Americans of nine dead, fourteen wounded. Following the confrontation, both sides claimed victory; the Americans were left in possession of the field and the strategic advantage.²⁷

General Cornwallis continued his movement toward Portsmouth while the American army, remaining a safe distance away, followed along behind. On June 28 Cornwallis was in Williamsburg while the American army rested at Tyree's Plantation twenty miles northwest of Williamsburg. On July 4, 1781, Cornwallis began to move his troops from Williamsburg to Portsmouth.²⁸

From there would come the decision to move to Yorktown, where the British army in Virginia met its defeat. Steuben had no role in this part of the conflict. The fatigue of the marches, the conflicts between Steuben and the state, and the worries over support for his army had climaxed in an illness which removed Steuben from the battlefield from about July 2 until September 3, 1781.

The seriousness of the illness and the pain and discomfort it caused were excellent reasons for Steuben to think only of his recovery. Unfortunately, many people and the Assembly of Virginia had become thoroughly disgusted with what they felt were the errors in judgment demonstrated by Steuben at Point of Fork. In the days immediately following the event, public outcry against Steuben grew to exceptional heights. Even Lafayette, who knew the problem of field command, wrote his personal feelings to General Washington on June 18:

The conduct of the Baron, my dear General, is to me unintelligible--Every man woman and child in Virginia is roused against him. They dispute even on his

courage but I cannot believe their assertions. I must however confess that he had 500 and odds new levies, and militia, that he was on the other side of the river which the freshet rendered very difficult to be crossed . . . the greater part of the accounts made Simcoe 400 strong; that our stores were destroyed by 30 or 40 men . . . that the Baron went to Staunton River about 70 miles from the Point of Fork--that the militia abandoned him and . . . the new levies deserted from him because they did not like his maneuver.²⁹

Later, however, after hearing Steuben's account of the affair, Lafayette would change his belief and would state that "the Lordship did us no harm of any consequence" at Point of Fork.³⁰ It was learned, for instance, that the muskets referred to were arms needing repair, not new ones. Davies also reported that the clothing and supplies had been moved to Staunton. Only remnants of needed items were abandoned and of those that were left behind, most belonged to state rather than Continental forces. Furthermore, he stated on June 23:

The Assembly were at first much mortified at the losses we had sustained by the rapid incursions of the enemy, and in their discontent were really clamorous; they moderate in their vexation, as they have since found that the mischief done by the enemy was inconsiderable compared with the plunder of the inhabitants, of whom we expect to recover a great deal.³¹

The damage was done, however, and the dislike and distrust between Virginia and Steuben grew even stronger. In the course of days which followed, Steuben gave the following as an explanation of his actions:

I could not see what could hinder the enemy from detaching a sufficient party to disperse my force and render themselves master of the stores . . .

I thought it to be absurd making a bravado with a small number of bad troops against such a force, while the marquis, being near one hundred miles off, could make no diversion on that side. I, therefore, gave orders for dispersing the stores in such a manner that only part could fall into the enemy's hands on any route they could take, and sent off three officers successively to acquaint the marquis of my situation. I wrote circular letters to the county lieutenants to call on their militia, and leaving General Lawson at Charlotte Courthouse, I marched the recruits to Cole's Ferry, on the Stanton.³²

In May 1781, after the events at Point of Fork, the House of Delegates passed a resolution:

That the Honorable Major General Marquis La Fayette be requested to cause an inquiry to be made into the conduct of all persons under his command, who may be supposed, either by neglect or otherwise, to have been instrumental in the loss of the said stores.³³

If this resolution had meant only what it said, the investigation would have either been made, Steuben absolved of blame, and the matter forgotten; or Steuben would have been found responsible and given a rebuke. It would not be the first time a military officer or even a general had been investigated for alleged improprieties. This inquiry, however, was the culmination of a series of disagreements over policy, tactics, and motivation. Benjamin Harrison, Speaker of the House of Delegates, wrote to Joseph Jones, a Virginia delegate in Congress on June 8, 1781:

We have 600 fine men under Baron Steuben which he will not carry into action. What are his reasons, I know not, but I can assure you his Conduct gives universal disgust and injures the Service much, the People complaining and with reason that they are draged from

their Families at a time when they are most wanted to make bread for them, whilst the Soldiers they have hired at very great expense lay Idle. In short my Dr. Sir, his conduct does great mischief and will do more if he is not recalled, and I think it behoves you to bring it about. I assure you it is the wish and desire of every man that this Event should take place. I believe him a good officer on the Parade, but the worst in every other respect in the American Army.³⁴

Archibald Cary, Speaker of the Senate, had also written to Jefferson on June 19, 1781 that some three members of the council had observed that ". . . Steuben deserves to be hanged for his Conduct."³⁵

This was the final straw. In summarizing and evaluating Steuben's actions from his point of view, it had been disturbing when Virginia officials, upset by Arnold's freedom of movement and Steuben's lack of opposition in January had heaped criticism on Steuben and the army. In March, the inability of the Americans to capture Arnold at Portsmouth, even with Lafayette, again brought criticism to the army. Then when the Virginia government disapproved, on March 29, his plan to take two thousand troops southward to attack Cornwallis, he returned the criticism by openly questioning the motives of the Virginia authorities. This sudden disapproval of the plan when approval had seemed certain because Generals Lafayette, Weedon, Gouvion, Greene, Washington, and Lee had given their concurrence, led Steuben to the conclusion that the government and the chief executive were making this a matter of personal rebuke. When Phillips and Arnold invaded and destroyed

Osborne's, Chesterfield County, and Warwick, Steuben was praised with Muhlenberg for the resistance given to the British. Soon, however, the critics again became vocal and stated their beliefs that no matter how many Americans could be put against the British, they would be unable to defend the state from destruction.

Steuben was also frustrated and upset when accused of not having Virginia's interests at heart in his decisions as military commander. The Virginia officials made no secret that they felt his actions were often dictated by a desire to leave Virginia for the South and take all manpower and materiel resources with him when he went. Finally, with the resolution requesting an investigation of his actions at Point of Fork, Steuben lost his remaining patience and consideration for the Virginia government.

The unfortunate part of the alienation was that the greater part of the accusations and counteraccusations by both the Virginia officials and Steuben were misunderstandings and a somewhat natural desire to find something or someone else upon whom to affix blame. As time passed and further information became available, each point of disagreement was cleared. Those losses the Virginia authorities laid so quickly at Steuben's feet were, when the facts of the battles were made known, brought on by other underlying causes--lack of arms, untrained militia, and ineffective intelligence. Steuben's main

faults lay in the area of inexperience and an excess of caution. The damage was done. Everything Steuben had undertaken had either been unsuccessful, criticized, or misinterpreted. Once the seed of doubt had been placed in people's minds, the facts could easily be arranged to suit the point of view. While Steuben felt his actions had been reasonable under the circumstances and the Virginia officials were incorrect or too hasty in the evaluation, the Virginians held quite an opposing viewpoint.

As this doubt grew in both camps, so did each side's provocations and accusations, thereby creating more ill-will. As early as April but certainly by mid-June, Steuben was convinced that his usefulness was at an end. His disputes with the officers of both the militia and the Continental line as well as his conflicts with the Virginia governmental authorities had alienated many people. It was perhaps only his illness in July that kept him in Virginia and permitted him to play a part in the siege of Yorktown.

CHAPTER VII

Yorktown

During the first few days of July 1781, Baron von Steuben became progressively ill, when, as Steuben described it:

Fatigue of body and mind and the hot climate, so unfavorable for my bilious temperament, have so affected my health, that about two weeks ago, I was obliged to withdraw and take treatment for a skin eruption which became quite serious. . . . an eruption of blood, which covered my whole body.¹

Steuben, following the onset of the illness, took leave of Lafayette and traveled to the home of friends made during his travels in northwestern Virginia. In his letters he tells of staying at a country house near "Mr. (John) Walker's whom you (Greene) met at Philadelphia, a member of Congress and his father, who is my physician."²

Dr. Thomas Walker, father of John Walker, lived at an estate called Castle Hill in Albemarle County, Virginia. The estate was located on the main road from Keswick to Gordonsville in the northern part of the county. This estate, then comprised of some eleven thousand acres of land, had originally been land granted by George II to Nicholas Meriwether. Upon the birth of the Walker children, the main estate was subdivided into the estates of Turkey Hill, Peachlorum, Belvoir, and Kinloch. John Walker owned the estate of Belvoir, which was located about four miles southeast of Castle Hill. Built on the original grant also was Grace Church and a small village

consisting of Shay's store, Bowle's Shop, and an ordinary.

Steuben had first met John Walker while he served as a representative to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. On a number of occasions between October 1780 and July 1781, Steuben had been at Castle Hill for visits with the Walkers and it was here to this complex of estates that Steuben came when illness caused him to seek a quiet, safe haven--a haven far removed from the ravages of war and the Virginia government--where he could rest and, at the same time, receive medical help.³

There are few letters written by Steuben from early July until late August, most probably because of the severity of his condition. There are, however, a number of letters to him with instructions to recruit Continental troops or requesting advice. One of these was a letter on July 12 from General Daniel Morgan telling Steuben that Lafayette wanted him to take action to obtain items of equipment for the cavalry. On July 16 Baron von Steuben replied:

Colonel White has just handed me your letter of the 12th instant.

You must certainly, Sir, have misunderstood the Marquis, as he knows that I am here for the recovery of my health and not for the purpose of equipping the cavalry. Major (Richard) Call has the superintendance of that business.⁴

During this period of pain and idleness, Steuben once more turned his thoughts to General Greene and the

Southern Army. On July 23, 1781, in a letter to his long-time friend, Richard Peters, he poured out his frustrations:

I have seen so many atrocious villanies since I have been in this state that I can no longer be surprised at anything. (In regard to my actions at Point of Fork) . . . I will be forced to expose the dastardliness of the government, the absurdity of the law, and the pusillanimity of those who should have executed them. . . . When my health is restored, I intend to once again join the southern army.⁵

In August, however, his health steadily improved and by mid-month he was able to write to General Greene that:

I have received your favor of the 19th of July, in which I am ordered to join you. If it had pleased God, my dear General, that this order had reached me some months sooner, I should have escaped a great deal of pain and chagrin. . . . My duty and inclination would have engaged me to set out immediately on the receipt of your letter, had not my ill health prevented me. . . . The heat of the season, uneasiness of mind, and a thousand other things have so used me up that I cannot yet sustain the fatigue of a journey. I shall, however, prepare to take up my line of march the last of this month. . . .⁶

Though Steuben's illness forced him to leave the army for Charlottesville, the main American army, which then consisted of 4,155 troops, with Colonel Christian Febiger in command of Steuben's troops, continued to pursue Cornwallis toward Portsmouth.⁷ Along the way two skirmishes, the battles of Spencer's Ordinary and Green Spring Farm, occurred. These battles delayed the arrival of Cornwallis' army in Portsmouth until July 14. Cornwallis was returning to Portsmouth in preparation for sending troops for the reinforcement of General Clinton's army. He had learned in May from dispatches that General

Clinton planned an attack on Philadelphia using troops from New York and Virginia. As originally envisioned, the Virginia troops would advance up the Chesapeake to Head of Elk, then march overland toward Philadelphia. General Phillips, who was to lead the expedition had approved of the plan contingent upon being given two thousand more men. Clinton agreed and sent eighteen hundred men to Virginia who arrived about the same time Cornwallis came to Petersburg. When Cornwallis took command, he heard of the proposed campaign, but disagreed with the idea entirely, even though it had previously been approved. In fact, Cornwallis wrote a letter on May 26 voicing strong opposition to the plan and stating that "if offensive war is intended, Virginia appears to be the only province in which it can be carried on, and in which there is a stake."⁸

Clinton, however, would not be dissuaded from his plan of action. When Cornwallis completed his campaign in Virginia, he received a letter on July 8, repeating the request for troops. Following its receipt, Cornwallis moved to Portsmouth to comply with Clinton's order.⁹ The troops embarked on July 20 but did not sail as planned, for Cornwallis received another letter from Clinton dated July 8, which stated that he had no intention of imposing his will over that of Cornwallis and that he would accept Cornwallis' decisions.¹⁰ By July 26 Lord Cornwallis, in a letter sent to Admiral Thomas Graves, Commander of

the British fleet; the stage for the siege of Yorktown was set.

. . . the Commander-in-Chief having signified to me that he thought a secure harbor . . . of so much importance in the Chesapeake, that he wished me to possess one . . . I shall immediately siege and fortify the ports of York and Gloucester.¹¹

On August 2 Cornwallis sailed for Yorktown and began the task of fortifying the town and the surrounding area.

General Washington had likewise begun to make plans. As early as May 21, he had met with Rochambeau at Wethersfield, New York, to discuss a joint operation against the British, probably at New York. Final preparations required only a strong French fleet to guard the seaward front. On June 13 the final piece fell in place when Admiral de Grasse announced his fleet would arrive in American waters in mid-summer.¹²

While planning the campaign against New York, Washington also received numerous letters from Virginia informing him of the progress of Cornwallis' campaign in Virginia, but Washington felt Clinton was closer and his defeat would insure victory. On August 14, 1781, a fateful letter from Admiral de Grasse informed Rochambeau and Washington that his vessels would sail directly for Chesapeake Bay and not New York. Early in August Washington knew of the occupation of Yorktown by Cornwallis. A fleet to protect the seaward front presented the opportunity Washington wanted. The scene of the campaign shifted rapidly from New York to Virginia.¹³ Washington and

Rochambeau then requested Admiral the Comte de Barras to bring his fleet to join that of de Grasse. These two together would be stronger than anything the British could send.¹⁴

General Washington, with his army, broke camp at Dobb's Ferry on August 19 and marched toward a junction with Lafayette. Washington's progress toward Virginia was steady but since he was moving to avoid detection by the British, it was not particularly direct or rapid. Arriving at Williamsburg on the 14th, Washington had an army of some two thousand men made up of infantry from New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey, with Hazen's Regiment, Rhode Island's Regiment, and a regiment of artillery to use in the coming siege. Also marching south to join this relatively small force was another formidable army of four thousand under General the Comte de Rochambeau.¹⁵

The real concern of the generals was that since the plans had been set in motion, Cornwallis must not be allowed to escape before the armies could merge against him. General Washington wrote on August 21 to Lafayette that it would be his responsibility to insure that Cornwallis did not move from Yorktown before he could arrive.¹⁶

General Lafayette moved his troops under Generals Wayne and Muhlenberg to carry out their orders. Wayne was sent south of the James River to guard the south bank and the roads leading southward, and Lafayette with Muhlenberg moved along the north bank of the James to Holt's Forge.

On September 1, Lafayette wrote Washington that the French fleet had arrived and that:

I hope you will find we have taken the best precautions to lessen His Lordship's chances to escape-- He has a few left but so very precarious that I hardly believe he will make the attempt--if he does he must give up Ships, Artillery Baggage part of the Horses all the Negroes--He must be certain to lose the third of his Army¹⁷

After the arrival of the Comte de Grasse, Lafayette dispatched a letter on September 3 to Steuben, informing him that the French fleet with a corps of thirty-three hundred troops under the Marquis de St. Simon was in the bay and that "he would be charmed to see me at his headquarters at once."¹⁸ Whether it was a desire to become involved in a new action against the British or an apprehension that to leave Virginia and move south would only further damage his reputation, Steuben wrote to Greene:

I beg you, my dear General, to permit my assisting this expedition which is preparing. Considering how small the number of your troops is, I think my presence may be dispensed with for some time; nevertheless, if you judge it necessary and should you think the motives which induce me to stay insufficient, the moment I receive your commands, I shall begin my journey. Tomorrow I shall join the Marquis. I shall give him every assistance in my power.¹⁹

Once he was in Williamsburg, Steuben reported to General Lafayette but did not see him since the marquis was ill and unable to see anyone. Nevertheless, when a meeting did take place, Lafayette accepted his offer and together the generals awaited the arrival of General Washington. While they were waiting St. Simon and de Grasse approached Lafayette with the suggestion that it

was pointless to wait for the arrival of Washington since St. Simon had thirty-one hundred soldiers and eight cannon, while de Grasse also offered eighteen hundred sailors for Lafayette's use against Cornwallis. Though this offer was tempting, Lafayette refused, suggesting that a "frontal assault on prepared fortifications would be very costly in lives, especially without the aid of siege artillery and might possibly be a failure."²⁰

When Washington arrived at Williamsburg on September 14, he found Steuben hard at work again on the drill field.²¹ By September 25 all Continental and French troops were on hand and Washington had designated, along with his two other senior generals, Benjamin Lincoln and Lafayette, Baron von Steuben as a division commander. To quote General Washington:

. . . The Baron from the warmth of his temper, had got disagreeably involved with the state (of Virginia) and an inquiry into a part of his conduct must one day take place, both for his own honor and their satisfaction. I have for the present given him a command in this army which makes him happy²²

On September 28 the combined armies moved to within two miles of Yorktown. Steuben's division, located in the center, had the French to his left and first Lafayette then Lincoln, occupying the position of honor, to his right. His division was deployed along the Warwick Courthouse Road, almost due south of Yorktown. His force consisted of two brigades, sappers, miners and a few recruits from Delaware. The First Brigade under

Brigadier-General Anthony Wayne of Pennsylvania had 275 men in the First Battalion (Pennsylvania) under Colonel Walter Stewart, 275 men in the Second Battalion (Pennsylvania) under Colonel Richard Butler, and 350 men in the Virginia Battalion under Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Gaskins. The Second Brigade was under the command of Brigadier General Mordecai Gist of Maryland. His brigade consisted of the 550 men in the Third Regiment (Maryland) under Lieutenant-Colonel Commandant Peter Adams and 450 men from the Fourth Regiment (Maryland) under the command of Alexander Roxburg. In support were 50 miners and sappers and 60 Delaware Recruits under Captain William McKennan. Of the total 2010 troops, approximately 617 were sick or unfit for duty as the siege began.²³

In addition to this command, Steuben also acted as advisor on siege warfare. He was the only American officer who had ever taken part in a regular siege; therefore, when the necessity arose to consult and act in common with the French staff, Steuben acted to insure the Americans were fairly and equitably participating in the action. Steuben also was undoubtedly consulted when General Washington drew up his instructions for the conduct of siege operations since Washington had never participated in this type of warfare before.²⁴

By September 29 the combined American and French armies, totaling some sixteen thousand soldiers, had moved into place around Yorktown. The engineers, having

examined the topography of the area, had briefed the division commanders on where and how each should locate their lines.²⁵ Once in place, all of the divisions including Steuben and his troops spent the time preparing for the siege. On September 30 Steuben was officer of the day and therefore responsible for overseeing offensive preparations. During the course of his tour, two spectators were killed while they were moving about observing the British. Fearful of the safety of other spectators, Steuben issued orders that no one except those required to do so, were allowed to check out the enemy lines.²⁶ His troops meanwhile, along with the French and anyone who could be put to the task were busy making gabions, fascines, and stakes as well as offloading and bringing up the cannon.²⁷

During the first few days of October, the fire from the British lines was quite intense. On the nights of October 1 and 2 General Wayne, one of Steuben's brigade commanders, along with his troops manned the American lines. During his period of duty the firing was particularly severe with not only the cannon in the city but the ships firing as well. By the end of Wayne's duty at sundown on October 2, the British had expended 351 rounds. Once Wayne was relieved of this duty, he rejoined Steuben and the rest of the division moving the American cannon to the fortifications.

By October 3, Steuben had been presented with one more worry. He had received instructions to prevent any

of his troops from visiting any houses in the vicinity since almost everyone was infected with smallpox or some other illness.²⁸ On October 4 General Wayne advised Steuben that two deserters he had encountered while checking new British defenses along the York River had reported extensive illness in Yorktown with two thousand of the British troops being hospitalized.²⁹

Throughout October 5 the preparation of the breastworks and positioning of cannon continued. Finally, everything along the American and French lines was in readiness. On October 6, the siege officially began for the combined armies with the opening of the first parallel. Steuben, again officer of the day, joined by his inspector Major William Galvan, oversaw the preparations being made.³⁰

Lincoln, the senior major-general, was designated to lead the ceremony opening the parallel. With Lincoln were six regiments selected from the right side of each brigade and two brigadier-generals, Clinton and Wayne. At six o'clock in the evening, Steuben watched as Lincoln with the Americans and Baron de Viomenil with the French formed the line. There were four thousand three hundred in all--fifteen hundred to do the digging and twenty-eight hundred to act as gurars.³¹

During the first night, little firing was directed toward the troops. By morning a long trench ran from nearly the center of the enemy's fortifications at a distance of about five hundred fifty yards all the way to the York

River. Supporting it would be four redoubts, two in the French area and two in the American, and five batteries. Also, On October 6, General Washington issued General Orders with the fifty-five siege instructions. Because of Steuben's experience with siege warfare, it is most probable that he advised Washington on the procedures or even assisted in writing them. This is especially likely when considering the relative inactivity of Steuben during the first few days of October. The next day, October 7, was spent with reinforcing and strengthening the parallel so that the artillery so badly needed would be mounted. On this day Lafayette entered the trenches "with the tread of veterans, colors flying, drums beating, and planted their standards upon the parapet."³² The siege was underway in earnest.

On October 8 Steuben's division manned the trenches. In so doing, he preserved the order in which each general's troops took the trenches on a rotating basis of once every three days. Steuben and his troops would next have the duty October 11, then the 14th and finally the 17th. This rotation was also followed for assigning details for fatigue duty.³³

Steuben's responsibility on this day was the completion of the trenches and the fortifications for the cannon. Difficult though this was, Steuben was able to take his first day in the trenches and turn it into a lesson in siege warfare for the other senior officers

present.

. . . the general of the trenches enjoins it in the strictest manner, on the officers to remain with their respective commands. The officers commanding platoons are, particularly during the night, to keep their men together, with their arms in their hands. In case the enemy should sally, the whole of the troops are to form eight paces in the rear of the trench; and as the enemy came into the trench, the respective platoons will rush on them with the bayonet; when they are repulsed and retiring, then, and not before, the troops will occupy the banquette, and fire at them in their retreat.³⁴

During the day his division was successful in completing a large battery on the extreme right of the parallel, located on the York River. This battery contained three twenty-nine pounders, three eighteen pounders, two ten-inch mortars, and two eight-inch howitzers. Simultaneously the French completed another battery similar to Steuben's on the left end. These two batteries combined with a third in the center and a smaller one on the left and right of center were ready for use when Steuben was relieved by General Lincoln on October 9. At 3 p.m. General Washington is said to have fired the first cannon, whereupon the French and American batteries began to return the fire they had so incessantly received from the British since the investment began.³⁵ It is not known exactly whether Washington fired from the French or American battery, but the fire which followed silenced many British guns. Some of the fire was aimed at British warships sitting in the York River beyond Yorktown forcing several to move to the Gloucester side.

On October 10 the first parallel was completed and two new batteries, one on the extreme left and another in the center, were completed. They had been delayed because sufficient horses and wagons were not available to simultaneously pull all the guns and ammunition required for the parallel. Following completion of the batteries on the right, the Americans loaned their horses and wagons to the French to speed up the work.³⁶ These new batteries were equipped with the heavy thirty-two pounder siege guns. The power of these weapons when they opened fire on October 10 came as a frightening surprise to General Cornwallis. In a letter to Clinton on October 11, he stated:

On the evening of the 9th their batteries opened, and have since continued firing without intermission, with about forty pieces of cannon, mostly heavy, and sixteen mortars, from eight to sixteen inches. We have lost about seventy men, and many of our works are considerably damaged. With such works on disadvantageous ground, against so powerful an attack, we cannot hope to make a very long resistance.³⁷

The sheer volume of the huge shells crossing the sky from the American to the British lines made a "very beautiful, though at the same time dreadful appearance."³⁸

October 11 marked a significant point in the siege when the second parallel was opened at a distance of only two hundred fifty yards from the British fortifications. On this day Steuben and his division were once more in the trenches. Steuben instructed each of his men to carry a shovel, spade, or grubbing hoe, with every second man to also carry a fascine. By morning the division had constructed an entrenchment seven hundred fifty yards long,

three and one-half feet deep and seven feet wide.³⁹ All this time the cannonading on the American and French lines was becoming more intense as each subsequent battery became operational. The British, too, responded with a "very heavy fire of . . . shot and shells going over our heads in a continual blaze the whole night."⁴⁰

At no time were the men occupying the trenches at all safe. Even Steuben and Wayne from their position in the new parallels, came under fire from a British battery.

The Baron, perceiving himself in danger, . . . threw himself into a trench. General Wayne in the jeopardy of the moment fell on him. The Baron, turning his eyes, saw it was his brigadier: "I always knew you were a brave general," says he, "but I did not know you were so perfect in every point of duty. You cover your general's retreat in the best manner possible."⁴¹

As a result of this near miss, Steuben issued an order designed to keep the men alert. It said:

The Soldiers (are) not to be allowed to lay down in the night, but remain as in the daytime with their arms in their hands. Officers (are) to remain at their respective posts. No fashines (are) to be untied nor made use of in any manner whatsoever but for the construction of the Works.⁴²

By October 12 Steuben was ready to be relieved after the digging and firing of the night before. Just after noon Steuben's troops marched off with drums beating and flags flying. The main activity this day rested with the incredibly accurate fire of the artillery.

It is astonishing with what accuracy an experienced gunner will make his calculations, that a shell shall fall within a few feet of a given point, and burst at the precise time, though at a great distance. When a shell falls, it whirls round, burrows, and excavates

the earth to a considerable extent, and bursting, makes dreadful havoc around.⁴³

The fire was intense enough for General Cornwallis to add a postscript to his letter of October 11 to General Clinton that "we continue to lose men very fast."⁴⁴

The next day, October 13, Steuben's division once more went on fatigue detail to build and repair defensive works on their own lines. Several defectors from Yorktown reported that the British in the town have been thrown into total confusion by the firing.⁴⁵

On October 14 Steuben's division mounted the trenches early in order to relieve the light infantry of Lafayette who were to take part in the main action of the day.⁴⁶ The engineers had reported to Washington that sufficient damage had been done to the two advance British redoubts that they might now be successfully stormed.⁴⁷ Lafayette and the Baron de Viomenil each were selected to command a special force, to attack the redoubts, and if possible, add them to the American defenses. At sundown the two forces moved out of the American lines. At 7 p.m. the redoubts were attacked with Hamilton leading the force which captured the one nearest the river (no. 10) and the Baron de Viomenil the one away from the river (no. 9). Each was taken in about ten minutes.⁴⁸ With the redoubts gone, the second parallel was completed to the right all the way to the York River, and when the American artillery was moved forward, it fired almost point blank into the British fortifications.⁴⁹ Steuben remained in the trenches until

about one o'clock in the afternoon of October 15. During this morning General Washington, Rochambeau, and others visited the lines to see the completed parallel.⁵⁰ While there the New York Brigade marched into the captured redoubt with drums beating and flags flying, but Steuben hurried out and silenced the activity to prevent their being fired upon by the British.⁵¹

At three o'clock in the morning of October 16, the British attacked the American lines with the intention of doing what Hamilton and Viomenil had done on October 14, capture or destroy some unfinished batteries. Attacking the French line to Steuben's left, the British were able to storm one battery before being driven back into Yorktown. Unsuccessful though this effort was, it gave Cornwallis the will to make an effort to escape before surrendering. Later during the night of October 16, Cornwallis transferred some of his troops by boat across to Gloucester Point, but a storm arose about midnight which prevented any other attempt to cross. The storm was "Almost as severe a storm as I ever remember to have seen," said Elias Dayton.⁵² At dawn, the troops who had crossed came back to Yorktown and were met with devastating cannon fire from the American lines.⁵³

As Steuben's men mounted the trenches at eleven o'clock a.m. on October 18, 1781, a feeling of expectation was in the air. At about ten o'clock a scarlet-coated drummer had mounted the parapet and began to beat a "parley."

With him was an officer waving a white flag, who, after being blindfolded, was escorted to General Washington. The British proposal was to suspend hostilities for twenty-four hours and appoint commissioners to determine the terms of surrender. At first Washington made no response and sent the officer back. At four o'clock another flag was sent, requesting a cessation of four hours. Washington replied that he would suspend firing for two hours in order that Cornwallis could submit his terms in writing. The next day, October 18, Lafayette approached Steuben's position to relieve him. Steuben refused, stating that European tradition dictated that he remain on duty until the surrender was signed or broken since the first contact for surrender had been received during his guard. Although Lafayette went to Washington to protest, Steuben was adamant and Washington allowed him to remain.⁵⁵

Although Cornwallis complied, it was Washington's terms which were insisted upon.⁵⁶ On October 18, while Steuben remained in the trenches, the commissioners considered the articles of surrender. The morning of Friday, October 19, the articles were submitted to General Cornwallis with a note from Washington stating his expectation that the articles would be signed by eleven o'clock in the morning and the troops would march out to surrender their arms at two o'clock in the afternoon.⁵⁷

About eleven o'clock the articles were signed by Cornwallis and the siege of Yorktown was ended. By noon

the flags were struck, and the first American unit moved into Yorktown. Ensign Ebenezer Denny of the Pennsylvania troops, under the command of Colonel Richard Butler, was marching at the head of the American column carrying the regimental flag. Once inside the British fortifications, Denny moved to the parapet to plant the colors. Before he could do so, however, Steuben seized the staff and ceremoniously stuck it atop the works. At the time the troops cheered at the sight of the flag in place, but Colonel Butler, watching from the rear, became very angry and cursed Steuben as an "arrogant, ignorant, knavish foreigner."⁵⁸ Later Butler sent Steuben an insulting message which would probably have resulted in a duel if Washington and Rochambeau had not been able to calm things down.⁵⁹

Between 4 and 5 p.m., the British troops, with arms and baggage, standards covered but with drums beating, marched out to surrender. The British army marched on the Williamsburg Road past the combined armies of the French and Americans, who were aligned by regiments in parade. In front of each regiment were the generals and staff officers. The left of the line included the Americans with Generals Washington, Gates, Steuben, and Wayne. Then it was over. The war in Virginia had come to an end--no more battles to be fought, no more honors to be won. On October 20 General Washington wrote a letter of congratulations, which especially commended the three

division commanders--Lincoln, Lafayette, and Steuben.

Baron von Steuben reassessed his position in Virginia and in the Continental army. As a result, on November 5, 1781, he wrote General Greene that he would be unable to join him.

. . . Pity me then, my dear General, when I assure you that I am prevented from following my duty and inclination by extreme indigence--an utter incapacity of any longer supporting myself and family. (aides, retinue, etc.)

Hitherto, I have supported myself by drawing on account fo much paper money as served to subsist my family The real value of what I have drawn does not exceed 150 Guineas. I lost three of my own horses & have obliged to purchase others at an enormous price and my camp equipment after 18 months campaign is nearly destroyed.

Under these circumstances, my Dear General, I must necessarily quit. I have obtained permission to go to Philadelphia to settle my accounts with Congress. After four years' fatiguing service, it is right I should know on what footing I stand. If I have merited nothing I am content. My pay they will not dispute

I go then, my Dr General uncertain if ever I shall have the happiness of seeing you again⁶⁰

When the siege of Yorktown was ended and Cornwallis surrendered, the final chapter was written in the inquiry into Steuben's conduct. Before leaving Virginia, Steuben tried to find out the particulars of the attempt by the Virginia Assembly to reinstate an investigation of his conduct at Point of Fork, but his letter to Governor Nelson, who was soon to resign the governorship, went unanswered.

The first week of November 1781 saw Steuben leave Virginia. He had not come very far down the road to

glory and great possessions, he had not successfully defended his honor for his actions at Point of Fork, nor had he commanded troops under General Greene. He had however, been field commander and had the satisfaction of seeing his opponent General Cornwallis, walk before the assembled Americans and surrender his enemy.

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined the professional ability of Baron von Steuben to determine how successfully he accomplished his primary and secondary missions. His primary mission, that of providing men and supplies to the American Southern Army, had been given to him as a result of his success in training the American Army at Valley Forge. His secondary mission, as Commander of the Virginia Continental and militia forces and as field commander under Lafayette and Washington, was the result of need and circumstances. When the British made the need for a commander paramount he was the senior military man available.

In the overall evaluation of Steuben during this period it is necessary to weigh his accomplishments against his failures and determine by either number or significance his degree of accomplishment. In accomplishing his goals, Steuben must be judged at best a limited success in meeting his primary mission and except for Petersburg, unsuccessful in meeting his secondary one.

His success comes from the fact that he recruited 425 men and sent them to General Greene, and he selected a quartermaster staff which was as able as any who had served in Virginia. Steuben also reemphasized the need for defensive works to protect Richmond and established Chesterfield Court House in an effort to improve the Virginia system of supply depots.

These accomplishments had occurred in November and December 1780. During this period, Steuben had foreseen complete success for his mission since everything had been in proper order. He was hopeful that all the needs of General Greene could be met.¹ His initial introduction into Virginia had been assured when General Greene, himself a popular figure in the State, introduced him to public officials and in so doing, emphasized that his staff officer carried the complete confidence of the Continental Army and General Washington. In return, Steuben received promises of cooperation from Governor Jefferson.

The Virginians likewise responded favorably and his popularity increased among Virginia officials to the point that in December 1780, the legislature, while awarding grants to Continental officers, deeded Steuben fifteen thousand acres of land "as testimony of the high sense the General Assembly of Virginia entertained of the important services rendered the United States by the honourable Major General Baron Steuben."² Then on January 1, 1781, Steuben's fortunes turned for the worse.

With General Arnold's movement up the James River, two things happened. Steuben became so involved with his secondary mission as commander that he no longer could pursue his primary mission and he failed to maintain a good relationship with Virginia government officials and instead substituted an ever-increasing desire to leave Virginia

and join General Greene. This, in turn, seriously hampered his staff as they continued their efforts to obtain supplies.

Historians writing of this period of American Revolutionary history point out that Steuben had difficulties with Virginia officials while in the state and that these difficulties limited his effectiveness.³ John McAuley Palmer, one of Steuben's principal biographers, indicates that this difficulty began when Virginia came under attack and the Virginia legislators sought to identify a scapegoat upon whom blame for the success of the British expedition could be placed.⁴ Friedrich Kapp, the other biographer, also states his opinion of the criticism by the Virginians by stating that "Steuben has been assailed outrageously . . . and particularly by the government of the State. The joy of his numerous enemies became apparent when they discovered one assailable point in him."⁵

Steuben, trained as a strict disciplinarian in the European military style, failed to realize that he could have alleviated many of his problems by allaying the suspicion, fear, and doubt of the populace. If he had defused this fear and panic in the Virginians and kept the government aware of events he would have probably maintained control of the situation. Instead, Steuben increased his own anger and resentment which he directed against the Virginians and turned more toward General

Greene for relief. The result was an increase in the conservatism of the Virginians and a significant loss in confidence in Steuben's proposals with less support for his requests for supplies and manpower, particularly to support the Southern Army. Steuben's initial success in meeting his primary mission was now a thing of the past. Now he would find success more difficult to attain. The reputations of his staff now brought more results than did Steuben's.

Steuben had experience in recruiting troops and obtaining supplies but he had none as field commander. In fact, since he had assumed his current rank when he came to America, he really had no experience as a general either. Against the more experienced British generals, Steuben was at a distinct disadvantage.

In every confrontation between Steuben and the British there was not a single instance in which he could not have done more to try to insure success. Reasons for this vary with point of view. In the biographies of Steuben, actions he left undone were rationalized as unnecessary or impractical, when in fact they happened because he lacked the flexibility to adjust to varied battlefield conditions, such as at Petersburg and Point of Fork. Other books written about this period show Steuben to be a very conservative commander who made errors of judgment.⁶ As such, he was not able to exercise inno-

vative tactics and repeatedly retreated when faced with pressure by the British instead of trying to achieve the upper hand.

Steuben was conservative, but this basic conservatism was not unusual, as it was possessed by many field commanders on both sides. But in those who were successful, it was overcome or compensated for, something Steuben was unable to do. Further, I believe that his conservatism came from a reluctance to risk the army or individuals' lives unnecessarily, an uncertainty about the capability or reliability of the officers or men, and a knowledge that replacements of men or supplies could not be obtained.

In January 1781 Steuben issued instructions to meet and engage the British, but lack of experience and conservatism made him slow to follow up to see that they had been done. These instructions, if carried out, would have resulted in confrontations and made General Arnold abandon his expedition and return downriver, but Steuben was unable to make this happen. In February, Steuben's troops had successfully held Arnold at Portsmouth awaiting the arrival of Lafayette. This combined force would have been sufficient to defeat the British if they had attacked before Arnold was reinforced by Phillips, but caution and adherence to standard rules of warfare put Arnold's capture beyond reach. In April, while a more experienced Steuben fought credibly against

the British at Petersburg, victory was again lost because defensive rather than offensive tactics were used. An alternative attack by Steuben at City Point might have forced the British to retreat. Finally, at Point of Fork, more confidence in his troops and more accurate intelligence, enabling him to know the size of Simcoe's force, would have opened the way for Steuben to fight instead of retreat. In retrospect, virtually any of these encounters might have been won if Steuben had offset his lack of experience and conservatism by finding and pressing some advantage, either of position, arms, or surprise.

By the summer of 1781, Steuben's actions were not only being seriously challenged by the Virginians but were coming to the attention of his own superiors as well.⁷ On July 10, 1781 George Washington, his staunchest supporter, wrote to Joseph Jones that: "the complaints against Baron de Steuben are not more distressing than unexpected, for I always viewed him in the light of a good officer."⁸ Lafayette also stated that "the hatred of the Virginians toward him was truly hurtful to the cause."⁹

If it had not been for Steuben's illness, public opinion might well have forced his removal from Virginia. As it was, however, he was given one more opportunity to prove his value to the American cause. His knowledge of siege warfare became invaluable at Yorktown and surely

shortened the period needed to reduce the British defenses. This was important for with the British fleet coming from New York swiftness made the difference.

In the final analysis, Steuben was no brilliant tactician or inspired leader of armies. He was a good quartermaster officer and teacher who worked tirelessly to carry out his responsibilities but who found that the road to "Glory and Great Possessions" was not easy to travel.¹⁰

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

1. Gailand Hunt, ed., Journals of the Continental Congress (Washington, D. C., 1910), XVIII, 988.

2. Washington to Greene, October 22, 1780, John C. Fitzpatrick, The Writings of George Washington (Washington, D. C., 1931-), XX, 238-239. See Douglas Southall Freeman, George Washington (New York, 1952), V, 226-228. In much of Washington's correspondence, Washington refers to Baron de Steuben as do others in both manuscript or narrative. Since the "von" in German is roughly equivalent to the "de" in French--both meaning "of" and Baron von Steuben spoke and wrote principally in French while in America, the use of the "de" is very understandable. In fact, the baron appeared to prefer its use.

3. Washington to Steuben, October 22, 1780, Fitzpatrick, Writings of Washington, XX, 240-241.

4. Joseph R. Riling, Baron von Steuben and His Regulations (Philadelphia, 1966), 5-16.

5. Greene to President of Congress, Philadelphia, November 3, 1780, Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, National Archives Collection, microfilm. George Green, The Life of Nathanael Greene (Freeport, 1972), III, 49-50. See also Elsyth Thayne, The Fighting Quaker: Nathanael Greene (New York, 1972), 180.

6. Greene, Greene, III, 53-54. See also John M. Palmer, General von Steuben (Port Washington, N. Y., 1937), 238, and Joseph B. Doyle, Frederick William von Steuben and the American Revolution (Steubenville, 1913), 191-192.

7. Greene to Colonel Donaldson Gates, November 5, 1780, quoted in Greene, Greene, III, 50.

8. Ibid., 54.

9. Harry M. Ward and Harold E. Greer, Richmond During the Revolution--1775-1783 (Charlottesville, 1977), 73.

10. Thayne, Fighting Quaker, 181.

11. Greene to Governor Jefferson, Richmond, November 20, 1780, Julian P. Boyd, ed., Papers of Thomas

Jefferson (Princeton, 1951-), IV, 130-132. Besides notifying the Virginia government that Baron von Steuben would command, the letter also called attention to the dissatisfaction that existed among the officers of the Virginia Militia and directed that the grievances be heard and "reasonable satisfaction be given to their just demands." Boyd feels that his comment might have been made to help a frustrated governor get some help in dealing with a reluctant legislature.

12. Ibid., 133-134.

13. Greene to Washington, November 20, 1780, quoted in Greene, Greene, III, 57-58. Many of the officers still available for duty in Virginia had seen fellow officers captured at the defeat of General Gates at Camden. Many were likewise ill-clothed, unpaid, and short even the most basic of essentials.

14. Ibid., 56-63. See also Ward and Greer, Richmond During the Revolution, 94-99.

15. Doris D. Hammes, "The Road to Glory and Great Possessions," VCM, XIX, 2, 14.

16. Palmer, Steuben, 241.

17. Ward and Greer, Richmond During the Revolution, 154. Kapp, Steuben, 362. A British landing party, commanded by General Leslie, had come ashore at Portsmouth on October 15, 1780. Before their departure on October 25, 1780, a number of state troops were called to duty, including those of General Lawson. Since their total period of service was only six months, their terms of service would expire on March 15, 1781. See also Henry A. Muhlenberg, The Life of Major General Peter Muhlenberg of the Revolutionary Army (Philadelphia, 1849), 203-211 for the complete story of General Leslie's landing.

18. Doyle, Steuben, 196-197.

19. Ward and Greer, Richmond During the Revolution, 155-156.

20. Steuben to Jefferson, November 27, 1780, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 163.

21. Jefferson to Steuben, December 1 and 2, 1780, Ibid. The legislature that when militia aid got to General

Greene, the terms of enlistments would be almost up, and no service could be obtained from them.

22. Muhlenberg, Muhlenberg, 218-219.

23. Doyle, Steuben, 197-198.

24. Palmer, Steuben, 241.

25. Steuben to Jefferson, December 10, 1780, Steuben Papers, microfilm collection, New York Historical Society.

26. Palmer, Steuben, 241. Steuben's letter to General Washington dated December 8, 1780, enumerates all the problems he had complying with General Greene's demands. See also Muhlenberg, Muhlenberg, 218-220.

27. Steuben to Jefferson, December 16, 1780, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 212-214.

28. Steuben to Washington, December 17, 1780, Library of Congress Collection, George Washington Papers, microfilm. VSL. Another version of this letter is quoted in Kapp, Steuben, 361.

29. Steuben to Jefferson, December 16, 1780, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 213. Upon his return to Chesterfield Courthouse from Petersburg on December 13, he received the troops. He found that there were 316 rank-and-file present and fit for duty, and about 200 sick. Twenty-five of the fit were ordered to join Greene's detachment to offset deserters or were given to "Light-Horse Harry" Lee. The total remaining was 471 troops.

30. Virginia Gazette (Dixon and Nicolson), Richmond, December 23, 1780.

31. Steuben to Jefferson, December 28, 1780, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, 244-245. See Arthur J. Alexander, "Desertion and its Punishment in Revolutionary Virginia," VMQ, Third Series, III, July 1946, 383-397, and Arthur J. Alexander, "A Footnote on Deserters from the Virginia Forces During the American Revolution." Virginia Historical Magazine, LV, April 1947, 137-146.

32. Steuben to Jefferson, December 9, 1780, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 193-195.

33. Steuben to Jefferson, December 16, 1780, ibid., 213.

34. Steuben to Jefferson, December 21, 1780, and William Davies to Jefferson, February 1, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 219, 493. Two of many letters telling of supply difficulties and illustrating how goals were not met.

35. Lee A. Wallace, "The Battery at Hood's" VCM, XXIII, 1, 40.

36. Ibid., 41.

Chapter II

1. Jefferson to Steuben, December 31, 1780, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 254. Vessels and troops from New York had embarked on December 11, 1780 on an expedition to Virginia. The troops included the Queen's Rangers under Lieutenant-Colonel Simcoe, the York Volunteers under Captain Althouse, and the Buck's County Volunteers under Captain Thomas. On December 20, General Arnold issued an order against depredations while in Virginia, and on December 21, the expedition sailed from Sandy Nook. On December 30, 1780, after experiencing a storm in which several ships were separated, the fleet arrived off the Chesapeake Bay. The advance frigate under the command of Captain Evans had captured some small American vessels. By transferring to these, General Arnold was able to immediately move up the James River. See Lieutenant-Colonel J. G. Simcoe, A History of the Operation of a Partisan Corps called the Queen's Rangers (New York, 1844), 158-159. Hereafter referred to as Simcoe's Journal.

2. Steuben to Washington, January 11, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm. See also Frederick Kapp, The Life of Frederick William von Steuben (New York, 1859), 372.

3. Jefferson to Steuben, January 2, 1781, H. R. McIlwaine, ed., Official Letters of the Governors of the State of Virginia, II, 254-255.

4. Palmer, Steuben, 245-246. It was felt that Jefferson had the delegates carry the message to their counties in order to save the cost of couriers, but if so, it proved to be false economy. Since most of the statesmen took so long to get home, the British would be to Richmond and gone before the militia could respond.

5. Steuben to George Muter, January 1, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.

6. Steuben to Greene, January 8, 1781, quoted in Kapp, Steuben, 372. These actions were taken to carry out the agreement reached between Baron von Steuben and the governor and his council on January 1, 1781.

7. Jefferson to General Thomas Nelson, Richmond, January 2, 1781, McIlwaine, ed., Letters of the Governor, II, 260.

8. Jefferson to Taylor, January 2, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, 299.

9. Simcoe, Journal, 372-373. See also Wallace, "Battery at Hood's," VCM, 42. This action constituted the only firing done against the British forces until after Arnold left Richmond. Kapp says that the lead vessel was struck, but not sunk, and that a total of three shots were fired at the schooner. Other letters and books, however, say the shots were fired as I have stated.

10. Nelson to Steuben, January 4, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm. See also Benjamin Harrison to Jefferson, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 304, and Jefferson's diary entries for Thursday, January 4, 1781, 258-259. By landing on the north side of the James River, it was then between them and Petersburg. Since no satisfactory fording places existed between Westover and Richmond, strong indications were that the troops were heading for Richmond.

11. Simcoe, Journal, 160-161. See also Kapp, Steuben, 373. Mrs. Mary Willing Byrd was the first cousin to Margaret Shippen, wife of Benedict Arnold. Her estate, Westover, chosen as the landing point for General Arnold's invasion of Richmond, would even more than her kinship with Arnold lay her open to suspicion of being a loyalist. Although she was never found guilty of treason (but was found guilty of illegal communication with the enemy), she was made to suffer at the hands of both the Virginians and the British. Hers was a case of conflicting loyalties. Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 671-705, tells the lengthy story about the accusations and suspicions which surrounded colonials with strong roots in their English heritage.

12. Kapp, Steuben, 373.

13. Thomas Jefferson to John Banister, January 4, 1781, Thomas Jefferson to the County Lieutenants of Henrico

and Certain Other Counties, January 4, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 302-303.

14. Jefferson to Steuben, January 4, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.

15. Steuben to Greene, January 8, 1781, Green Papers, quoted in Doyle, Steuben, 203-204.

16. Ward and Greer, Richmond During the Revolution, 77-78.

17. Kapp, Steuben, 373-374. Although correspondence between the two would indicate Colonel Muter made every effort to support Steuben's needs if anything at all was available, Steuben developed a very low opinion of him and would on a number of occasions call him ineffectual and negligent.

18. Ibid.

19. Simcoe, Journal, 161-163. See also W. A. Christian, Richmond, Her Past and Present (Richmond, 1912), 20-21, and Palmer, Steuben, 246-247.

20. Simcoe, Journal, 163. See also Diary of Arnold's Invasion, Boyd ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV 258-270. The foundry and the arsenal at Westham were about one mile apart on the north bank of the James River at seven and eight miles upriver from Richmond. Today Westham has been redesignated as Williams Island. The area known as Westham had been purchased from John Balandine to erect a state foundry. By 1779 the foundry was in full operation. In December 1780, after the arrival of Baron von Steuben in Richmond, a state "laboratory" was enlarged, converted to use by the Continentals and moved to Westham to adjoin the foundry. This "laboratory" was primarily for the repair of arms and for the making of cartridges. See also Ward and Greer, Richmond During the Revolution, 99-101, for a comprehensive view and history of the foundry at Westham. The relationship of Westham in supplying munitions to the Southern Army can be seen in Donald E. Reynolds, "Ammunition Supply in Revolutionary Virginia," VMHB, LXXIII, 1965, 56-77.

21. Diary of Arnold's Invasion, (written and edited from December 31, 1780 to July 26, 1816), Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 359.

22. Ward and Greer, Richmond During the Revolution, 79-80.

23. Ibid.
24. Simcoe, Journal, 163.
25. Ward and Greer, Richmond During the Revolution, 80-81.
26. Steuben to Jefferson, January 6, 1780, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 312.
27. Diary of Arnold's Invasion, ibid., 263-264, includes a list of losses reported to Governor Jefferson.
28. Steuben to Jefferson, January 6, 1781, ibid., 312.
29. Jefferson to Muter, Steuben and letters from others, January 7-10, ibid., 313, 319. Colonel Davies to Thomas Jefferson, January 7, 1781, ibid., 313.
30. Nelson to Jefferson, January 8, 1781, ibid., 321.
31. See Simcoe, Journal, 165.
32. Kapp, Steuben, 376-377.
33. Simcoe, Journal, 168-170.
34. Steuben to the Board of War, January 27, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm. See also Kapp, Steuben, 378-379, and Doyle, Steuben, 209-211.
35. Steuben to Jefferson, January 21, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm. Steuben felt that the militia called up allowed for 2700 men who had sufficient arms to hold Arnold in check. These consisted of Nelson's and Armand's Horse Cavalry with 100 light infantry and 1600 infantry in eight battalions on the south side of the James River. Colonel Griffin's Horse Cavalry with 200 light infantry and 800 infantry in four battalions were located on the north side of the James River.
36. Note to letter from James Callaway to Jefferson, June 4, 1781, and Legislative Request for an Inquiry into the Conduct of General Steuben, Boyd., ed., Papers of Jefferson, VI, 77-79, 619-639.

Chapter III

1. Ward and Greer, Richmond During the Revolution, 94-100.
2. Steuben to the Board of War, December 8, 1780, Steuben Papers, microfilm. See also narrative in Kapp, Steuben, 360-362.
3. Greene to Steuben, December 8, 1780, Steuben Papers, microfilm.
4. Steuben to Washington, December 8, 1780, ibid.
5. Bettie W. Weaver, The Continental Training Depot and General Rendez-Vous at Chesterfield Courthouse, Virginia 1780-1781 (Midlothian, Virginia, 1976), 3-5. See extract of a letter, George Muter to William Davies, November 27, 1780, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 161. Davies must have solicited Muter's assistance in obtaining support for the troops being collected at Chesterfield Courthouse.
6. Ward and Greer, Richmond During the Revolution, 96-97.
7. Ibid.
8. Gaius Marcus Brumbaugh, ed., Revolutionary War Records, Volume I (Virginia) (Washington, D. C., 1936), 8-49.
9. John D. McBride, "The Virginia War Effort; 1775-1783: Manpower Policies and Practices," Dissertation for University of Virginia, 1977, 30.
10. Ward and Greer, Richmond During the Revolution, 99.
11. Ibid.
12. Steuben to Jefferson, January 9, 1781, and Jefferson to Hunter, January 10, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson. IV, 327, 329-330.
13. McBride, "The Virginia War Effort," 33.
14. Davies to Jefferson, January 7, and January 10, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 312-313, 328-329.
15. Steuben to Jefferson, April 21, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.

16. Donald E. Reynolds, "Ammunition Supply in Revolutionary Virginia," VMHB, 73, January 1965, 70-71.
17. Ibid., 56-57.
18. Ward and Greer, Richmond During the Revolution, 100-101.
19. McBride, "The Virginia War Effort," 32.
20. Davies to Jefferson, January 25, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 445-447.
21. Simcoe, Journal, 201-202.
22. Rice to Jefferson, enclosing a petition from the Inhabitants in the vicinity of Albemarle Barracks, April 4, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 346-347.
23. McBride, "The Virginia War Effort," 34-35.
24. Claiborne to Jefferson, April 4, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 340-341.
25. Claiborne to Jefferson, April 9, 1781, ibid., 389, 389n.
26. Davies to Jefferson, April 12, 1781, ibid., 416-418.
27. McBride, "The Virginia War Effort," 245-247.
28. Steuben to Jefferson, January 11, 1781, draft letter in Steuben Papers, microfilm. See also letter from Steuben to Jefferson, January 12, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.
29. Ibid., 40-90, for a very comprehensive evaluation of the Virginia militia system.
30. Claiborne to Jefferson, April 14, 1781, Calendar of State Papers, II, 42.
31. George Rice to Jefferson, March 23, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 223.
32. McBride, "The Virginia War Effort," 292-294.
33. Plan from John Senf to Jefferson, January 29, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 475-476.
34. Steuben to Jefferson, February 11, 1781, ibid.,

584-585. Boyd states in a note to this letter that these incidents are often used to identify the shortcomings of the Virginia government. It also explains that Steuben was most unhappy and the problems and pressures affecting his ability to command in Virginia were beginning to mount. See also Wallace, "Battery at Hood's," 44-45, for the problems encountered with money and labor.

35. Jefferson to Steuben, February 12, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 592-594.

36. Affair at Westover, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, Appendix 1, 671-705.

37. Davies to Steuben, February 20, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.

38. North to Greene, February 23, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm. Narrative and analysis of this situation is given in notes to letter from Jefferson to Steuben, February 19, 1781 while Steuben was at Chesterfield Courthouse. Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 661-662.

39. Greene to Steuben, February 15, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.

Chapter IV

1. Jefferson to Steuben, February 17, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.

2. Jefferson to the County Lieutenants of Lunenburg, Amelia, Powhatan, Cumberland, and Brunswick Counties, February 18, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 646.

3. George Waller to Jefferson, February 21, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 682-683. This letter told the governor that the Henry County militia had already joined General Greene because "the approach of the enemy appeared too alarming to await for your commands"

4. Jefferson to Steuben, February 20, 1781, ibid., 668-670.

5. Lawson to Jefferson, February 25, 1781, Jefferson to Steuben, February 25, 1781, ibid., V, 6-8.

6. Steuben to Jefferson, February 25, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.

7. Extract from Major North's notebook and diary quoted in William North, "Baron Steuben," Magazine of American History, VIII, 187-199.
8. Lafayette to Jefferson, February 21, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, IV, 676.
9. Washington to Steuben, February 20, 1781, Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, XXI, 256-258.
10. Washington to Lafayette, February 20, 1781, ibid., 253-256.
11. Baron van Steuben to General Nelson, March 10, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm. See also John Walker, a friend of Steuben living in Albemarle County, to Governor Jefferson, March 9, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 108.
12. Charlemagne Tower, The Marquis de Lafayette in the American Revolution (New York, 1970), II, 233.
13. Louis Gottschalk, Lafayette and the Close of the American Revolution (Chicago, 1942), 198-199.
14. Tower, Lafayette in the Revolution, II, 234-241.
15. Quoted in ibid., 243.
16. Notes by Jefferson, March 9, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 46-47, 66-70.
17. Steuben Papers, microfilm. Included in the papers is a full account of the charges Steuben incurred while staying at the King's Arms Tavern. This tavern, run by Jane Vobe, played host to many American troops during the Revolution and was a favorite stopping place for visitors to Williamsburg. Steuben's account amounted to \$288.60 for lodging, board, and drinks.
18. Lafayette to Washington, March 15, 1781, Louis Gottschalk, ed., Letters of Lafayette to Washington (Philadelphia, 1976), 159-160.
19. Lafayette to Jefferson, March 23, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 217.
20. Lafayette to Washington, March 26, 1781, Washington Papers, microfilm, Series IV, Library of Congress edition in the Virginia State Library. See also

H. L. Landers, The Virginia Campaign and the Blockade and Siege of Yorktown, 1781 (Washington, D. C., 1931), 88-90. The British fleet had been at anchor at Gardner's Bay while two ships damaged in a storm were repaired. Two days after the departure of the French fleet from Newport, the British fleet was ready and sailed. The English fleet under Admiral Arbuthnot bested Monsieur Destouches in a battle on March 16, 1781, even though each possessed eight line-of-battle ships and three or four frigates. Then they moved into Chesapeake Bay while the French fleet returned to Newport, arriving on March 26, 1781.

21. General Weedon to Jefferson, March 27, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm. Also printed in Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 267. The letter continues to give rationale on keeping the war as far from home ground as possible and this diversion to Greene is what was needed. The military board which Weedon refers to was composed of Generals Weedon, Lafayette, and Gouvion; as well as Steuben as an advisor. To be included was General Nelson, but his illness was so severe he could not participate.

22. Steuben to Greene, March 30, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.

23. Note to letter from Jefferson to the County Lieutenants of Montgomery and Certain Other Counties, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, 275n.

24. The response by the Council on March 29 is very lengthy and is included in the Steuben Papers, microfilm. It is also included as notes under a letter to the County Lieutenants of Montgomery and Certain Other Counties, March 29, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 275-277.

25. Steuben to Weedon, April 1, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.

26. Weedon to Steuben, April 1, 1781, ibid.

27. Greene to Steuben, April 6, 1781, note to letter from Jefferson to the County Lieutenants of Montgomery and Certain Other Counties, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 277.

28. Greene to Lawson, April 7, 1781, ibid.

29. Steuben to Weedon, April 1, 1781, ibid., 276.

Chapter V

1. Landers, Virginia Campaign, 90-91.
2. Muter to Jefferson and Walker to Muter, March 3-8, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 133-134 and note. Steuben brought charges against George Muter that the arms, ammunition, bombs, shells, and other military stores had suffered from shameful neglect. The representations made before the assembly were made by John Walker of Albemarle County.
3. Jefferson to Davies, March 22, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 204-205.
4. Jared Sparks, Correspondence of the American Revolution (Boston, 1853), III, 290-294.
5. Steuben to Greene, Steuben Papers, microfilm.
6. Steuben to Jefferson, April 17, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 479-481.
7. John Senf to Jefferson, April 19, 1781, ibid., 499-500. John Senf to Steuben, April 20, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.
8. William Davies to Jefferson, April 16, 1781, ibid., 465.
9. Kapp, Life of Steuben, 423-424.
10. Senf to Steuben, April 18, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.
11. Arnold to Clinton, May 12, 1781, Banastre Tarleton, A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America (New York, 1968), reprinted ed. (London, 1787), 334.
12. Simcoe, Journal, 189, 193-194. See also note to letter from Kelly to Innes, April 18, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 485n.
13. Jefferson to the County Lieutenants of Henrico and Certain Other Counties, April 19, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 496-497.
14. Steuben to Jefferson, April 21, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 526-527.

15. Steuben to Innes, April 23, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.
16. Steuben to Innes, April 23, 1781, ibid., the manual to which Steuben refers is the Regulation for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States, which he wrote in March 1779.
17. Jefferson to Steuben, April 24, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 550n.
18. Steuben to Greene, April 25, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm. Also, Jefferson to Washington, May 9, 1781, Sparks, Revolutionary Correspondence, III, 307-309, and Muhlenberg to his brother, quoted in Muhlenberg, Muhlenberg, 249-250.
19. Muhlenberg to Steuben, April 13, 1781, and April 20, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.
20. Steuben to Jefferson, April 21, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 526.
21. Jefferson to Steuben, April 24, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 550n. See also Kapp, Steuben, 425.
22. Lillie D. V. H. Harper, ed., Colonial Men and Times containing the "Journal of Colonel Daniel Trabue" (Philadelphia, 1916), 89.
23. Report of Petersburg Battle, covered in notes, ibid. See also Muhlenberg, Muhlenberg, 249-252.
24. Harper, ed., "Journal of Trabue," 91-93.
25. Jefferson to Washington, May 9, 1781, Sparks, Revolutionary Correspondence, III, 308.
26. Muhlenberg to his brother, quoted in Muhlenberg, Muhlenberg, 249-250.
27. Simcoe, Journal, 198.
28. Arnold to Clinton, May 12, 1781, Tarleton, A History, 334, and Jefferson to Washington, May 9, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 623-625. See also Muhlenberg, Muhlenberg, 249, Kapp, Steuben, 425, Coyle, Steuben, 232-234, Harper, ed., "Journal of Trabue," 91-94, Simcoe, Journal, 196-198.
29. Arnold to Clinton, May 12, 1781, Tarleton, A History, 335.

30. Ibid., 336.
31. Ibid.
32. Harper, ed., "Jornal of Trabue," 96.
33. Letters between Steuben and James Innes, April 21, 1781-April 26, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.
34. Simcoe, Journal, 201.
35. Arnold to Clinton, May 12, 1781, Tarleton, A History, 337.
36. Jefferson to Washington, May 9, 1781, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, V, 623-625, and J. Bennett Nolan, Lafayette in America Day by Day (Baltimore, 1934), 170.
37. Simcoe, Journal, 201.
38. Arnold to Clinton, May 12, 1781, Tarleton, A History, 337. The town of Warwick stood on the west bank of the James River on the land now occupied by the Dupont plant in Chesterfield County. It was across the river from an estate known as Wilton, which has since been moved into the city of Richmond on land across the canal from Williams Island, (known as Westham in those days) which was the location of the foundry burned by Arnold in January 1781. See also Simcoe, Journal, 201-202.
39. Nolan, Lafayette Day by Day, 171.
40. Kapp, Steuben, 427-428.
41. Tower, Lafayette in the Revolution, II, 308-309.
42. Lafayette to Washington, May 18, 1781, Gottschalk, Letters of Lafayette to Washington, 193-194. An attitude was present here which went deeper than mere spite on the part of Lafayette. The widespread destruction of property as Phillips and Arnold moved from Petersburg to Manchester in April had been accompanied with the statement by Phillips that: "I am authorized to inflict the severest punishment in return for this bad conduct, and that towns and villages lay at the mercy of the king's troops." Apparently, this feeling had some significant effect on the actions of the soldiers. See account in Gottschalk, Lafayette and the Close of the American

Revolution, 231.

43. Simcoe, Journal, 209-210.

Chapter VI

1. Steuben to Greene, May 15, 1781, Greene manuscript collection, quoted in Kapp, Steuben, 429.

2. Steuben's narrative of his Movements on Leaving Point of Fork, Boyd, Papers of Jefferson, VI, Appendix 1, 633.

3. Steuben to Greene, May 26, 1781, quoted in Kapp, Steuben, 437.

4. Gottschalk, Lafayette, 249.

5. Lafayette to Washington, May 24, 1781, Washington Papers, microfilm, Reel 4, Part 13.

6. Harry E. Wildes, Anthony Wayne--Trouble Shooter of the American Revolution (New York, 1941), 241-244.

7. Wildes, Anthony Wayne, 247-251.

8. Jefferson to Washington, May 28, 1781, Washington Papers, microfilm, Series IV, Reel V.

9. Cornwallis to Tarleton, June 9, 1781, Tarleton, A History, 344.

10. Henry P. Johnston, The Yorktown Campaign and the Surrender of Cornwallis, 1781 (New York, 1881), 44n. See also Richard C. M. Page, Genealogy of the Page Family in Virginia (New York, 1893), 216.

11. Wildes, Anthony Wayne, 250-251.

12. Steuben's narrative of his Movements on Leaving Point of Fork, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, VI, Appendix 1, 633-635.

13. Simcoe, Journal, 222-223.

14. Kapp, Steuben, 442-443. See also Steuben's narrative on his Movements on Leaving Point of Fork, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, VI, Appendix 1, 624, 634.

15. Simcoe, Journal, 221.
16. Ibid., 223.
17. Storekeeper's Report of Loss, June 4, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.
18. Steuben to Greene, June 9, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.
19. Steuben to Sumner, June 12, 1781, ibid.
20. Letter to the County Lieutenants of Prince Edward, Amelia, and Cumberland Courthouses, June 9, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.
21. Lafayette to Steuben, June 13, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.
22. Palmer, Steuben, 281. See also Kapp, Steuben, 451-452.
23. Tower, Lafayette in the Revolution, II, 335-336.
24. Clinton to Cornwallis, June 11, 1781, Tarleton, A History, 395-397. See also Gottschalk, Lafayette, 255.
25. William Feltman, Journal of Lieutenant William Feltman of the First Pennsylvania Regiment, 1781-1782 (Philadelphia, 1853), 4, and John Davis, "Journal of Captain John Davis, "Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, V, 58.
26. Feltman, Journal, 5.
27. Benjamin F. Stevens, ed., The Campaign in Virginia, 1781 (London, 1888), II, 33.
28. See Tower, Lafayette in the Revolution, 348-355.
29. Lafayette to Washington, June 18, 1781, Gottschalk, Letters of Lafayette, 201-203.
30. Lafayette to Washington, June 28, 1781, ibid., 203-204.
31. Davies to Steuben, June 23, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.

32. Steuben's account of the events at Point of Fork, ibid.

33. Legislative Request for an Inquiry into the Conduct of General Steuben, Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, VI, 621.

34. Harrison to Jones, June 8, 1781, ibid.

35. Cary to Jefferson, June 19, 1781, ibid.

Chapter VII

1. Steuben to Richard Peters, July 23, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.

2. Steuben to Greene, August 13, 1781, Greene Papers, quoted in Kapp, Steuben, 454.

3. Page, The Page Family, 200-218.

4. Steuben to Morgan, July 16, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.

5. Steuben to Peters, July 23, 1781, Peters Papers, quoted in Palmer, Steuben, 286-287.

6. Ibid.

7. Tower, Lafayette in the Revolution, II, 354. See also Gottschalk, Lafayette, 263.

8. Cornwallis to Clinton, May 26, 1781, Theodore Thayer, Yorktown: Campaign of Strategic Options (New York, 1975), 18.

9. Clinton to Cornwallis, June 28, 1781, ibid., 21.

10. Clinton to Cornwallis, July 8 and 11, 1781, ibid., 85-87, 89-90.

11. Cornwallis to Graves, July 26, 1781, ibid., 90.

12. Tower, Lafayette in the Revolution, II, 382. See also Rochambeau to DeGrasse, June 11, 1781, Thayer, Yorktown, 97-98.

13. Thayer, Yorktown, 42. See also Henry A. Johnston, The Yorktown Campaign and the Surrender of

Cornwallis, 1781, (New York, 1881), 83-84.

14. Freeman, Washington, V, 312.

15. Tower, Lafayette in the Revolution, II, 424-426.

16. Washington to Lafayette, August 21, 1781, Washington Papers, microfilm, Series IV, Part 4.

17. Lafayette to Washington, September 1, 1781, Gottschalk, ed., Letters of Lafayette to Washington, 225-227.

18. Lafayette to Steuben, September 3, 1781, Steuben Papers, microfilm.

19. Steuben to Greene, September 9, 1781, quoted in Kapp, Steuben, 455.

20. Harold A. Larabee, Decision at the Chesapeake (New York, 1964), 141-142. See also J. G. Shea, ed., The Operations of the French Fleet Under the Count De Grasse in 1781-1782 (New York, 1864, reprint ed., New York, 1971), 66n.

21. See account of Steuben, training troops at Williamsburg in Ebenezer Denny, "Military Journal" Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1860), vii, 243-244.

22. Washington to Greene, October 6, 1781, quoted in Palmer, Steuben, 290.

23. Johnston, Yorktown Campaign, 115.

24. Ibid., 136; Palmer, Steuben, 290. Siege warfare in the true European sense is a highly developed, formalized, and rigidly controlled ritual. See John W. Wright, "Notes on the Siege of Yorktown in 1781, with Special Reference to the Conduct of a Siege in the Eighteenth Century," WMQ, second series, XII (1932), 229-249. This article is an in-depth analysis of how the siege should and did progress. See Almon W. Lauber, ed., Orderly Book of the Second and Fourth New York Regiment (Albany, 1932), 602-607 for a complete list of these instructions.

25. Baron du Bourg, "Diary of a French Officer," Magazine of American History, IV, 449.

26. Lauber, ed., Orderly Book of the Fourth Regiment, 595. See also "General Richard Butler's Journal of

the Siege of Yorktown," The Historical Magazine, VIII, 107.

27. Baron de Fersen, "Letters," Magazine of American History, III, Pt 2, 439. See also Howard C. Rice and Anne S. K. Brown, The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army, 1781-1783 (Princeton, 1972), I, 57n. The fascine was a large bundle of sticks or brush of varying length from five to twelve feet. Its principal use was for a temporary fortification in front of cannon or other defenses. The gabion was made by driving sticks in the ground in a circle, then weaving small brush through them to form a basket. When filled with dirt from the trench being dug behind them, it formed a secure breastwork.

28. Lauber, ed., Orderly Book of the Fourth Regiment, 596.

29. Butler, "Journal," 107.

30. Lauber, ed., Orderly Book of the Fourth Regiment, 596.

31. Johnston, The Yorktown Campaign, 131-132.

32. "Journal of the Siege of Yorktown," Martin's "Gazetteer of Virginia," quoted in Johnston, ibid., 135.

33. Ibid., 136.

34. Steuben to his officers, October 8, 1781. Quoted in Johnston, The Yorktown Campaign, 136.

35. Butler, "Journal," 108.

36. Rice and Brown, Rochambeau's Campaign, 59.

37. Cornwallis to Clinton, October 11, 1781, Carleton, History of the Campaigns, 425.

38. Butler, "Journal," 109.

39. William Feltman, The Journal of Lieutenant William Feltman (Philadelphia, 1853), 18.

40. Johnston, The Yorktown Campaign, 141.

41. James Thaxter, Military Journal of the American Revolution (Hartford, 1862), 428. This story is also included in Freeman, Washington, V, 368.

42. Steuben's Orders in the Trenches, October 11, 1781 from the Febiger manuscripts quoted in Johnston, The Yorktown Campaign, 141.

43. Thacher, Military Journal, 284.
44. Tarleton, History of the Campaigns, 425.
45. Butler, "Journal," 109.
46. Ibid.
47. Freeman, Washington, V, 368.
48. Butler, "Journal," 109.
49. Johnston, The Yorktown Campaign, 146.
50. Butler, "Journal," 110.
51. Van Courtlandt's Journal, quoted in Freeman, Washington, 372.
52. Quoted in ibid., 374.
53. Johnston, The Yorktown Campaign, 146.
54. Butler, "Journal," 110.
55. William North, "Baron Steuben," Magazine of American History, VII, Pt 1, 195.
56. Feltman, Journal, 21.
57. Johnston, The Yorktown Campaign, 152-154.
58. Denny, "Journal," 248.
59. Burke Davis, The Campaign That Won America, the Story of Yorktown (New York, 1970), 263.
60. Steuben to Greene, November 5, 1781, quoted in Palmer, Steuben, 294-295. According to Palmer, Continental pay records show a total of 220,000 dollars in paper money paid to Steuben during 1781.

Chapter VIII

1. Kapp, Steuben, 363. See also Palmer, Steuben, 241-242.
2. Palmer, Steuben, 244.
3. Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, Appendix 1, VI, 619-639.

4. Palmer, Steuben, 283-287.
5. Kapp, Steuben, 444.
6. Tower, Lafayette, II, 332-333.
7. Gottschalk, Lafayette, 275.
8. Washington to Jones, July 10, 1781 quoted in note to Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, VI, Appendix 1, 623.
9. Lafayette to Alexander Hamilton, May 23, 1781. John C. Hamilton, ed., Works of Alexander Hamilton, 1, 262. See also Palmer, Steuben, 269 and Boyd, ed., Papers of Jefferson, VI, 624.
10. Hammes, "Road to Glory and Great Possessions," VCM, 12.

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