Virginia was contingent upon the safety of Washington, thus causing the diversion of many thousand soldiers for that single duty. On the Southern side the correct military decision would have been to abandon Richmond as soon as Petersburg was invested, but the Government delayed, for political reasons, until it was too late, and the defending army surrendered as a consequence.

In the distribution of troops the Federal authorities were hampered by the rival claims of the border States, which thought they required protection. Hence, Ohio sent an army into West Virginia; Pennsylvania, into the Shenandoah valley; the national Government concentrated troops for the protection of its capital; the Western States gathered along the Ohio River and in Missouri. This great dispersion existed on both sides and continued more or less till the end of the war. The advantage it gave was in the protection of the friendly portion of the population and in the good recruiting ground thus secured. The great difficulty of holding troops in service, whose home country had been overrun, was appreciated by both sides and exercised a strong influence on the plans of the generals. These conditions dictated much of the strategy which is subject to criticism, and should not be forgotten.

The policy of furloughing great numbers of soldiers during the war, as an inducement to reenlist, was probably unavoidable, but it helped to cause inactivity during many months and in the case of Sherman's Atlanta campaign it caused the absence of two of his divisions. Absenteeism is one of the inevitable consequences of a long war, with troops untrained in time of peace by modern methods. Lincoln complained of it and the generals seemed powerless to limit or prevent it. Probably the latter are entitled to most of the blame. It was not uncommon for a general to call for reinforcements at a time when large numbers of his troops were absent.

The armies were indeed long in getting over the