

Executive Mansion,

Washington, January 26, 1863.

Major General Hooker:

General.

I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course I have done this upon what appear to me to be sufficient reasons. And yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which, I am not quite satisfied with you. I believe you to be a brave and a skilful soldier, which, of course, I like. I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right. You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable, if not an indispensable quality. You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does you rather than harm. But I think that during Gen. Burnside's command of the Army, you have taken counsel of your ambition, and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the Country, and to a most meritorious and honorable brother officer. I have heard, in such way as to believe it, of your recent

by saying that both the Army and the Government
needed a Dictator. Of course it was not for this, but
in spite of it, that I have given you the command.
Only those generals who gain successes, can set up dicta-
tor. What I now ask of you is military success, and
I will risk the dictatorship. The government will sup-
port you to the utmost of its ability, which is neither
more nor less than it has done and will do for all
commanders. I much fear that the spirit which you have
aroused to infuse into the Army, of criticising their Com-
manders, and withholding confidence from him, will
now turn upon you. I shall assist you as far as I can,
to put it down. Neither you, nor Napoleon, if he were
alive again, ^{could} ~~can~~ get any good out of an army, while
such a spirit prevails in it.

And now, beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but
with energy, and sleepless vigilance, go forward, and give
us victories.

Yours very truly
A. Lincoln



