

Following the defeat of Braddock, the fortunes of Great Britain in America in the Seven Years' War with France, reached a low ebb under a succession of incapable military leaders who were responsible for a series of military reverses. A few weeks after Loudoun took command, Fort Oswego fell to General Montcalm, and the French thus gained control of Lake Ontario. The ignominious failure of Loudoun in the summer of 1757 to capture Louisburg on Cape Breton Island, and the fall in August of Fort William Henry on Lake George to Montcalm, with the massacre by the French Indians of the English troops after its surrender, swelled the tide of ill-fortune. Towards the close of the year 1757 Loudoun, who strange to say notwithstanding these reverses was beginning to rise in the estimation of the officers under him, was recalled and General James Abercrombie was sent to succeed him as commander-in-chief. But Abercrombie was to prove no more of a success as a commander than Loudoun. At the head of a very large force of six thousand British regulars and nine thousand provincial troops Abercrombie on July 8, 1758, made an unsuccessful attack upon Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain, where he was repulsed with considerable loss by Montcalm in command of a garrison greatly inferior in numbers, and sought safety in ignominious flight back to his boats on Lake George. Fortunately for Britain, however, an important victory in another field, and one which was to turn the tide of war in her favor, had been gained a few days before the disgraceful failure of Abercrombie at Ticonderoga. This was the capture of Louisburg on June 27, 1758, by General Amherst and the British fleet, which retrieved the failure of Loudoun to capture this stronghold a year before. The British now gained control of the St. Lawrence, and the important theatre of war was transferred from the south to Canada.

Before news of the defeat at Ticonderoga and the successful attack upon Louisburg reached Maryland, the western expedition under Brigadier-General John Forbes with a force of about 7000 men including 500 Maryland militia, began its march to the Ohio, which was to result in the capture by the British of Fort Duquesne on November 24, 1758. The success of this expedition, carefully planned by Forbes, who unfortunately died of dysentery before victory was achieved, justified the wisdom of Governor Sharpe in his insistence upon the maintenance of an ample garrison at Fort Cumberland, a policy, as we shall see, that had been the cause of continual bickering between him and his Assembly, as is narrated in so much detail in these records. An unfortunate result of the capture of Fort Duquesne was, that when Maryland was thus relieved of the fear of a successful attack upon her western frontier, the Lower House of the Assembly stubbornly refused to take further measures to assist in the prosecution of the war.