

**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Defense or any of its agencies. This document may not be released for open publication until it has been cleared by the appropriate military service or government agency.

**WATERLOO AND GETTYSBURG:
A CAMPAIGN COMPARISON**

BY

**LIEUTENANT COLONEL GEORGE E. TEAGUE
United States Army**

**DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A:
Approved for Public Release.
Distribution is Unlimited.**

USAWC CLASS OF 2000



U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PA 17013-5050

DTIC QUALITY INSPECTED 4

20000613 176

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

Waterloo and Gettysburg: A Campaign Comparison

by

Lieutenant Colonel George E. Teague
United States Army

Brian D. Moore
Project Advisor

The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies.

U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A:
Approved for public release.
Distribution is unlimited.

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Lieutenant Colonel George E. Teague
TITLE: Waterloo and Gettysburg; A Campaign Comparison
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project
DATE: 07 April 2000 PAGES: 33 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

In June of 1815 Napoleon led French forces on an offensive campaign into Belgium against the Allied Anglo-Dutch and Prussian armies under Wellington and Blucher. During this campaign Napoleon and several of his marshals made serious errors that led to missed opportunities for victory and ultimately to defeat at Waterloo. Less than 50 years later Robert E. Lee led Confederate forces on an offensive campaign into Maryland and Pennsylvania against the Union Army under Hooker initially, then Meade. A meeting engagement near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania led to three days of fighting during which Lee and several of his generals made critical errors that allowed opportunities for victory to pass and ultimately led to decisive defeat.

These campaigns were remarkably alike in a number of ways. This paper reviews the campaigns and discusses similarities in the strategic settings, campaign objectives, size and disposition of forces, battlefield terrain, tactics employed, and leadership of each army. In particular, the paper compares the performances of selected French and Confederate leaders and how they contributed to the defeat of their respective armies. These comparisons provide valuable lessons learned for the conduct of future military operations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	vii
WATERLOO AND GETTYSBURG: A CAMPAIGN COMPARISON.....	1
THE WATERLOO CAMPAIGN.....	1
STRATEGIC SETTING AND CAMPAIGN PLAN.....	1
THE BATTLE OF LIGNY	3
THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO.....	5
THE GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN.....	7
STRATEGIC SETTING AND CAMPAIGN PLAN.....	7
THE 1 ST DAY	9
THE 2 ND DAY.....	10
CAMPAIGN COMPARISON	12
THE STRATEGIC SETTING.....	12
THE ARMIES.....	12
THE BATTLEFIELDS	13
THE LEADERS.....	13
Napoleon and Lee	14
Ney and Longstreet.....	15
Grouchy and Ewell.....	16
Grouchy and Longstreet	16
D'Erlon and Stuart.....	17
Picton and Chamberlain.....	18
THE FIGHTING	18
CONCLUSION.....	20
ENDNOTES.....	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY	25

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURE 1. THE BATTLE AT LIGNY	4
FIGURE 2. THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO	5
FIGURE 3. THE BATTLE AT GETTYSBURG.....	11

WATERLOO AND GETTYSBURG: A CAMPAIGN COMPARISON

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

—George Santayana, 1906.¹

For centuries military professionals have studied the accounts of previous conflicts and the tactics and strategies employed by their predecessors in order to improve their own capabilities to lead soldiers in combat. Perhaps the greatest benefit of such studies is that of learning from the failures of others so that the mistakes that led to these failures and their attendant consequences can be avoided in future conflicts. Among the many great military campaigns and battles of the world studied for this purpose, the French Waterloo campaign of 1815 in Europe and the Confederate Gettysburg campaign of 1863 in the United States are two of the most significant and well-documented. In a span of less than 50 years, the relatively small and strategically insignificant towns of Waterloo, Belgium and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania became the focal points of two of the most decisive campaigns in military history. At Waterloo the Allied Anglo-Dutch and Prussian armies virtually destroyed Napoleon's French army, ending his short-lived return to power and forever shifting the balance of power in Europe. Similarly, at Gettysburg the American Union Army dealt a crushing defeat to Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, ending the Confederate offensive and significantly shifting the momentum of the war in favor of the North. The French and Confederate armies were led by men who are universally recognized as great military leaders – Napoleon Bonaparte and Robert E. Lee, yet both armies made some serious mistakes, missed multiple opportunities to achieve decisive victories, and ultimately suffered devastating defeats.

In addition to the common campaign outcomes (uncharacteristic, devastating defeat), further study reveals a remarkable degree of similarity in other areas that make these campaigns well suited for comparison. The purpose of this paper is to compare the Waterloo and Gettysburg campaigns from the French and Confederate army perspectives to identify key elements they had in common and to assess the extent to which this commonality contributed to the ultimate defeat of the two armies. The paper first presents a review of each campaign for context, then addresses specific areas of comparison and discusses how these relate to the campaign outcome. The paper concludes with a discussion of the relevance of this information to the armies of today and the future. Although well over a century has passed and dramatic changes in the tools and methods of war have occurred since these campaigns, lessons learned from this comparison should be as relevant today as they were then.

THE WATERLOO CAMPAIGN

STRATEGIC SETTING AND CAMPAIGN PLAN

Following his defeat and abdication in April of 1814, Napoleon was exiled to the island of Elba and the Bourbons regained the throne of France in the person of Louis XVIII. The European Allies that had united to defeat the Corsican were now quarreling over establishment of new territorial boundaries

throughout Europe. They had, however, agreed to allow France to retain her pre-revolution frontiers in an effort to strengthen King Louis and bolster his efforts to pacify a French population uneasy about loss of the freedoms they had gained in the revolution. After less than a year at Elba, Napoleon escaped and returned to France, landing near Cannes on 1 March with a thousand soldiers. King Louis sent Marshal Ney to arrest him, but instead Ney and his soldiers welcomed him and Napoleon returned triumphantly to Paris on 20 March.² King Louis fled to Ghent and Napoleon resumed his role as Emperor. Reinstated by the army and welcomed by most, Napoleon recognized that he did not, however, have the same absolute power he previously held. While he clearly commanded the military, he had only a slight hold on the civil population.³

Napoleon immediately extended overtures of peace to the Allied governments, indicating that he would honor all existing treaties, but the Allies declared that his return to power violated the fundamental principle of the Treaty of Paris and constituted a declaration of war against Europe.⁴ The Allies then formed the Seventh Coalition with Great Britain, the Netherlands (which included Holland and Belgium), Prussia, Austria, Piedmont, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Russia, Bavaria, Denmark and Sweden. The Duke of Wellington was placed in command of the Anglo-Dutch (also called Anglo-Belgian or Anglo-Allied) Army and in April began a buildup of forces in Belgium with Prince von Blucher's Prussians in preparation for an invasion of France. Napoleon found himself facing the threat of invasion from multiple directions and without the soldiers or equipment he needed to defend France.⁵ He immediately began rebuilding and reorganizing the military, but by 1 June his effective field forces still numbered less than 200,000 men.⁶ By contrast, the Allied armies encircling France already numbered in excess of 660,000 and were continuing to build up.⁷ This situation left Napoleon with two options: continue preparing for the impending attack or strike out at the Allied forces closest to him. To adequately defend France, Napoleon estimated he would need about 800,000 men and time to properly train and equip them.⁸ While he estimated that the Allies would need at least three months to be in sufficient strength to assault Paris, allowing him some time to prepare, he realized that this would still leave much of France occupied.⁹ Further, even with additional manpower the odds against him would be greater once the Allies had amassed their forces than if he were to strike quickly against the forces in Belgium who outnumbered him by less than two to one. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Napoleon recognized that the war-weary people of France, over whom he no longer had total power, objected to operations on their soil. Given these issues, Napoleon opted to seize the initiative and strike the Allied armies in Belgium. His reasons for attacking this particular force at this time and place were quite logical. First, the Belgium territory was formerly a part of the French Empire and had many French sympathizers, to include some in the ranks of the Anglo-Dutch army of the Duke. Second, the Allied force was comprised of armies of two different nationalities who were likely to have language and coordination difficulties. Third, the attack would prevent a counter-invasion by the most threatening Allied force. Finally, a defeat of the British, who were absorbing the bulk of the costs of the operations against France, would discourage further financing.¹⁰

Even as he prepared for this offensive, Napoleon had to provide some degree of home defense. After manning forts and strongholds to protect the frontier, he was left with about 124,000 men and 366 guns in his *Armee du Nord*. The combined forces of Wellington and Blucher totaled almost 210,000, causing Napoleon to choose a strategy he had previously employed successfully in Italy when facing superior numbers – divide the enemy near his center and defeat him in detail.¹¹ His plan was to drive a wedge between the two Allied armies and then hold them apart and defeat them in separate engagements. To accomplish this he divided his force into two wings and a reserve. He would send his wings forward to make contact with the Allied armies with the intent that one wing would contain the smaller of the two Allied armies while the other – with assistance as required – would defeat the larger force. As soon as the larger force was defeated the smaller one would be attacked and defeated.¹² In organizing this force, however, Napoleon made some questionable decisions concerning assignment of general officers, decisions that may have ultimately cost him victory in the campaign. First, he assigned his best fighting marshal to an administrative position: Marshal Davout was left in Paris to serve as Minister of War. Next, he chose Marshal Soult, who had no staff experience, to serve as his chief of staff, rather than the more experienced Marshal Suchet, whom he instead assigned to the inconsequential theater of Lyons. Marshall Murat, the great cavalry leader (and Napoleon's brother-in-law), was in disfavor for publicly denouncing Napoleon in 1813 and was therefore not included in the rebuilt French military.¹³ As a result, Napoleon then used less capable marshals to command his largest fighting elements – his right and left wings. Marshal Grouchy, a cavalryman with little experience commanding combined arms, led the right wing, while Marshal Kellermann replaced him in command of the cavalry. Finally, the brave but erratic Marshal Ney was belatedly assigned command of the left wing, resulting in a delay in his arrival at Beaumont, Belgium until late afternoon of the 15th.¹⁴ These leadership assignments will be discussed in more detail later in the paper.

THE BATTLE OF LIGNY

As early as 4 June Napoleon began secretly moving his forces and by 14 June they were assembled in the vicinity of Beaumont preparing to move northward to cross the Sambre River and attack the next day. Strict enforcement of secrecy, coupled with skilful movement and deception measures, prevented the Allies from discovering this operation. Further, the deception plan led Wellington to believe an attack from the west (vicinity Mons) was likely, resulting in a wide dispersion of his troops and increased vulnerability to attack. The element of surprise, coupled with a favorable disposition of the opposing forces, appeared to give Napoleon a golden opportunity to drive between the two armies and force a retreat in opposite directions.¹⁵ The French advance on the 15th was slower than planned, due primarily to a late start by three of the four Corps. Additionally, the commander of the lead division of IV Corps in Grouchy's right wing, General de Bourmont, and five of his staff defected to the enemy causing great consternation and contributing to the Corps' failure to complete the crossing of the Sambre. Nonetheless the French were well positioned to execute an attack against either army on the 16th.¹⁶

The following morning Napoleon ordered both wings to attack, directing Ney to secure the crossroads at Quatre Bras and Grouchy to drive the Prussians from Ligny to the northeast (see Figure 1). He expected Ney to take the lightly defended crossroads fairly quickly and then prepare to either drive on

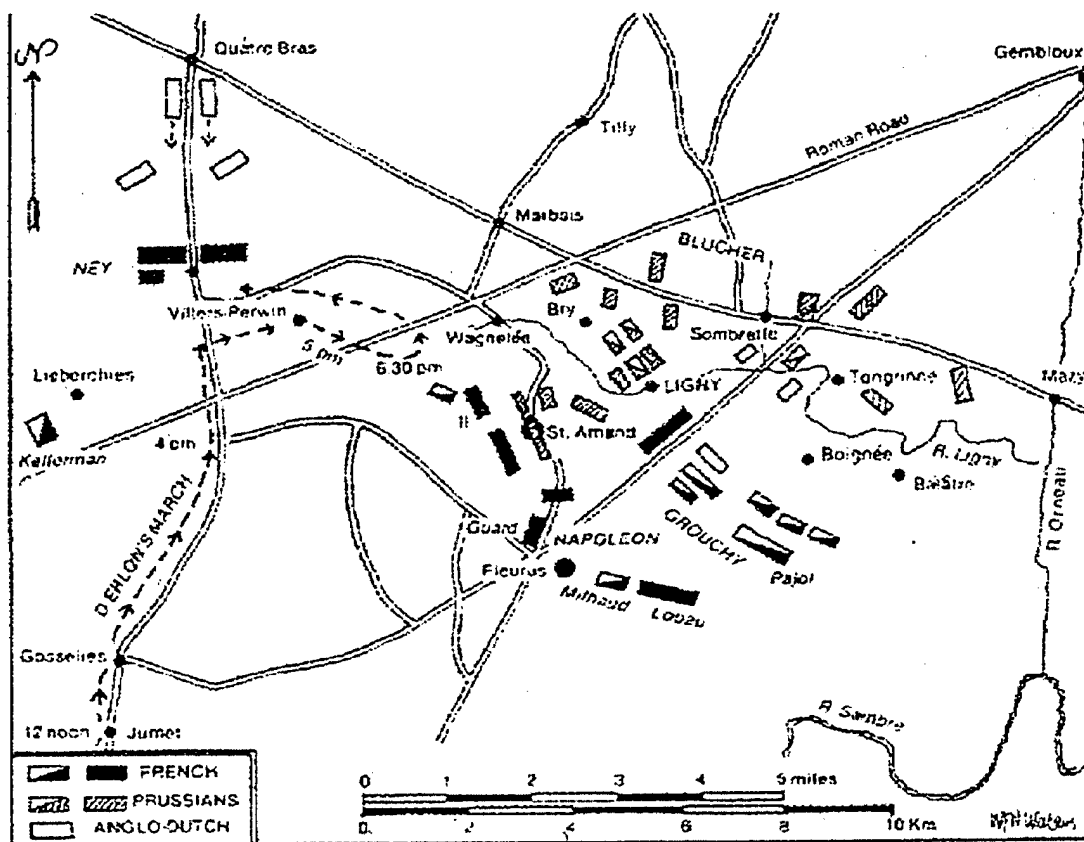


FIGURE 1. THE BATTLE AT LIGNY¹⁷

Reproduced by permission of Bedford/St. Martin's Press, Inc.

© Bedford/St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1989.

to Brussels or provide forces to aid in the defeat of the Prussians. Ney's forces did not attack, however, until late afternoon, allowing Wellington to reinforce the position. By the time he received Napoleon's order to wheel and attack the Prussians, Ney's forces were engaged in fierce fighting and unable to either take the position or to support the fight against the Prussians. The main battle of the day occurred at Ligny, where Napoleon personally took charge of the attack against the Prussians. Seeing an opportunity to rout the Prussian Army, he concentrated his efforts there and directed all available forces to press this attack. However, late and confusing orders kept two of his available corps from supporting the battle. IV Corps did not complete crossing the Sambre until late morning and was not directed to move forward until even later, preventing them from arriving in time to support the attack. Napoleon also sent for D'Erlon's I Corps that was marching on Quatre Bras. D'Erlon immediately set out for Ligny to attack the Prussian rear, but his message to inform Ney of his recall was not received and, unaware of Napoleon's orders, Ney issued a preemptory recall. D'Erlon once again turned towards Quatre Bras, but not before the unexpected appearance of his corps on the left flank of the French forces at Ligny, rather than the

Prussian rear, caused a critical delay of an attack to smash through the Prussian center. In the end this corps did not fight in either battle and its confused movements benefited only the Prussians.¹⁸ The failure of these two corps to reach Ligny, coupled with Ney's inability to provide reinforcements, allowed an opportunity to destroy the Prussian army to pass when Blucher successfully withdrew from the battlefield. Napoleon won the battle, inflicting over 20,000 casualties on the Prussians, but the fierce fighting cost him almost 10,000 of his own men and Blucher's army survived to fight two days later at Waterloo.¹⁹

THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO

With the Prussians withdrawn, Napoleon saw an opportunity to defeat Wellington at Quatre Bras on the morning of the 17th. He sent Grouchy with 33,000 men to follow Blucher and marched the remainder of his force to attack Wellington. The Duke, however, recognized the danger and began withdrawing toward Waterloo, and Ney let him escape before Napoleon's force arrived. The fault here lies not only with Ney, however, but with Napoleon as well, for he waited until the morning of the 17th to issue orders to Ney and until almost noon before dispatching Grouchy in pursuit of the Prussians.²⁰ Another opportunity had passed. Napoleon pursued Wellington almost to Waterloo, but heavy rains inhibited his efforts so he halted and made preparations to attack the morning of 18 June.²¹

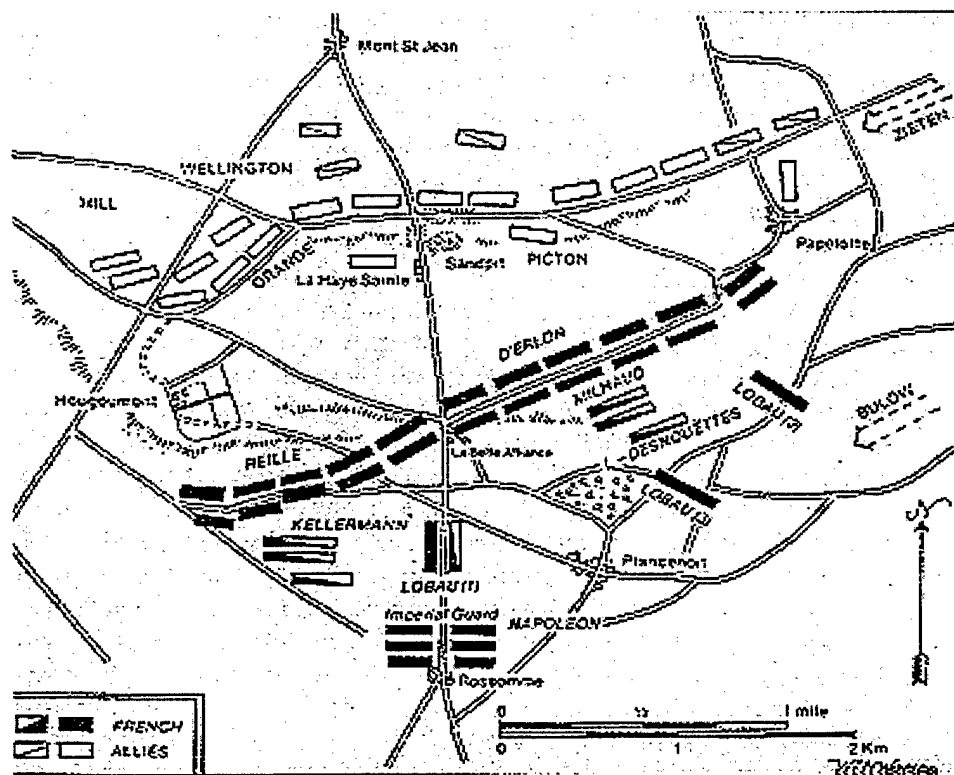


FIGURE 2. THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO²²

Reproduced by permission of Bedford/St. Martin's Press, Inc. © Bedford/St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1989.

Wellington deployed his forces along the heights of Mont Saint Jean about one mile south of the village of Waterloo and prepared strong defensive positions, concentrating forces in his center and on his right wing (see Figure 2). Although the Prussians were twelve miles northeast at Wavre, Wellington was counting on Blucher to send reinforcements to strengthen his weak left wing. Wellington drew most of his troops up on the reverse slopes of the ridge to reduce losses to the French artillery and occupied several advanced positions to break up the French attacks, to include the chateau of Hougoumont and the farmhouse at La Haye Sainte.²³

Despite awareness of these dispositions, Napoleon's plan was to launch a diversionary attack against Hougoumont on Wellington's right and then smash through his center. Marshall Soult suggested that the weak left flank indicated that Wellington was expecting the Prussians to come to his aid, and that Grouchy should be recalled before the battle. Napoleon, however, was counting on Grouchy to contain the Prussians and was steadfast in his belief that he could drive the British off the ridge with massed frontal assaults. As the French prepared to launch their attack the morning of the 18th, they found the ground soft and muddy from the all-night rains, making movement difficult for their cavalry and artillery and causing Napoleon postpone action until it had dried out. This delay would later prove fatal, as it allowed Blucher to arrive on the field with reinforcements before Wellington's forces could be broken. At about 1130 Napoleon began his attack by sending a division under command of Prince Jerome Bonaparte to attack the chateau of Hougoumont, hoping to cause Wellington to weaken his center by sending forces to reinforce that position. Jerome, however, was determined to capture the site at all costs and repeatedly called for reinforcements until most of the French II Corps was committed, resulting in weakening the French, rather than the British, center.²⁴

As this fighting continued, Napoleon initiated a massive artillery attack against the Allied center, but the wet ground absorbed much of the heavy shot and minimized its effectiveness. Wellington's use of reverse slope positioning further limited the effects of the artillery, resulting in very few casualties. Still, around 1:00 p.m. Napoleon was preparing to launch D'Erlon's corps against the Allied center when the advance element of Bulow's Prussian corps began appearing from the northeast. Determined to keep his word to Wellington, Blucher had left one corps to contain Grouchy at Wavre, dispatched Bulow's IV Corps with instructions to make all possible haste to Waterloo, and then personally led his other two corps on a hard march to join Bulow. Grouchy, on the other hand, continued to believe that the Prussians were massing at Wavre and refused to march to Waterloo even after hearing the initial gunfire and being encouraged to do so by some of his generals.²⁵ Recognizing what was happening, Napoleon dispatched an order for Grouchy to march to Waterloo, but this order would not reach him until almost 5:00 p.m. Determined that he must drive Wellington off the ridge before the remainder of the Prussians arrived, Napoleon sent a force of infantry and cavalry to hold Bulow's corps and ordered D'Erlon's corps to advance directly across the valley against the Allied center on the ridge. Advancing on a broad front and without adequate artillery or cavalry cover, D'Erlon's men were cut down by Allied artillery and musket fire. Those elements that did reach the top of the ridge were driven off by a bayonet charge from Sir

Thomas Picton's Redcoats and then hit by two cavalry brigades, resulting in 3000 French prisoners and thousands more killed or wounded.²⁶

Although he realized that the Prussians were continuing to arrive in great numbers, and that Grouchy would not arrive in time to provide any help, Napoleon refused to withdraw and ordered Marshal Ney to take the farmhouse at La Haye Sainte at all costs. While leading an assault Ney observed some Allied troops retreating and, believing that Wellington's army was breaking up at this point, ordered 5000 cavalry to assault the ridge without infantry or artillery support. The British met this attack by forming large squares against which the French cavalry was ineffective, and then decimated the attacking force with massed musket and artillery fire. Ney ordered a second, larger attack by 10,000 cavalry, but this met with similar results. Finally Ney organized an attack on the farmhouse with coordinated infantry and artillery support and drove the defenders from the buildings. He followed this up by bringing forward an artillery battery that began to smash the British squares, and the Allied troops on the ridge were dangerously close to breaking at this point. Ney sent an urgent request to Napoleon for additional troops to exploit this opportunity, but Napoleon was furious over Ney's misuse of the cavalry and refused the request. Meanwhile, Wellington took command of a reserve brigade and plugged the hole in his lines while more and more Prussians arrived to take some of the pressure off his troops.²⁷

Still, Napoleon refused to withdraw from the battlefield and to give up on the idea that he could push Wellington's men from the ridge. Ordering his officers to tell their men that the troops arriving on their right were Grouchy's and not Prussians, Napoleon then sent his Imperial Guard against Wellington's center.²⁸ As these men neared the top of the ridge they were met with massed grapeshot and musket fire followed by a bayonet charge that drove them back all along the line. Wellington then mounted a counterattack that swept the attackers completely from the ridge and led to a disorganized French withdrawal from the field. The Prussians continued to pursue the French forces throughout the night while Napoleon made no attempt to rally his beaten army. Losses were staggering on both sides. Estimated losses for the French range from 33,000 to 41,000 men killed, wounded or captured and 122-220 guns lost. Estimated losses for Wellington's army range from 14,798 to 15,100 men and Blucher's losses are consistently estimated at 7,000, not counting those lost at Wavre in the fighting with Grouchy's forces.²⁹

THE GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN

STRATEGIC SETTING AND CAMPAIGN PLAN

In May of 1863 the Confederacy was beginning to face serious military and financial crises in its efforts to win independence from the Union. The Union navy controlled the Atlantic coastline, effectively blockading Southern ports and cutting the flow of supplies and munitions from Europe. Southerners lived in constant fear of a Union amphibious landing somewhere on their coast that could cut the Confederacy in half. In the western theater, Union forces under General Grant were laying siege to the fortress at Vicksburg and threatening to take complete control of the Mississippi River, cutting off the western states

of the Confederacy and eliminating use of this valuable supply and trade route. Even in Virginia, where Confederate forces under Generals Lee and Jackson had recently won some brilliant victories over the Union Army of the Potomac, the shortage of food and other supplies were becoming a great concern. Southern resources were seriously depleted, and Confederate authorities were increasingly unable to fill the requisitions of their military forces. The strategy of an active defense of the South compounded this problem because it led to all battles occurring on Southern soil, therefore enabling Union forces to consume or destroy Southern resources and to pose a constant threat to the Confederate capital of Richmond. Despite continued efforts to alleviate these problems by gaining foreign financial and military support, Southern diplomats could not convince the European powers to support what appeared to be a nebulous cause.³⁰

From 1-4 May 1863, General Joe Hooker led the Army of the Potomac against Lee's army at Chancellorsville in a battle that set the stage for the Gettysburg campaign in several ways. First, despite being badly outnumbered, the Confederates achieved a stunning victory and forced Hooker to withdraw his defeated forces to the North to reorganize. This victory strengthened Lee's conviction that he and his army could defeat the numerically superior and better-equipped Union forces, leading him to develop the offensive strategy that resulted in the Gettysburg campaign. Second, although victorious at Chancellorsville, Lee failed to destroy Hooker's army and suffered the irreplaceable loss of General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. Third, Hooker's withdrawal and failure to counterattack or take steps to contain Lee's army opened the door for an initially uncontested drive into the North by the Confederate forces. This opportunity to acquire much needed food and other supplies from Maryland and Pennsylvania, coupled with the desire to increase pressure on Washington to negotiate for peace, led Davis and Lee to decide upon an invasion of the North. This decision came at the expense of providing additional forces to Vicksburg, the plan endorsed by I Corps commander General Longstreet.³¹ Finally, prior to the commencement of his northward movement, Lee reorganized his army into three corps under Longstreet (I Corps), Ewell (II Corps) and A. P. Hill (III Corps).³² These command assignments would prove significant in the upcoming Battle of Gettysburg.

In the North, the series of defeats suffered by the Army of the Potomac had shaken confidence in the military leadership. The promising events in the West were overshadowed by the constant threat Lee's Army of Northern Virginia posed to Washington, D.C., and Lincoln knew he needed a decisive victory over Lee to restore confidence in his army and reverse the trend in the East. On 28 June President Lincoln accepted General Joe Hooker's resignation, submitted in protest after his plan to abandon Harper's Ferry was disapproved, and appointed General George Meade to command this army. This move occurred well after Lee had launched his forces into the North and only 3 days before the initial fighting at Gettysburg. Further compounding matters, the numerical strength of the Army of the Potomac was decreasing daily, reaching a minimum strength of 89,000 by 20 June due to the mustering out of soldiers who had completed their tours of service.³³ This shortfall caused the army to draw

reinforcements from the Department of Washington, bringing the total strength to almost 100,000 by 2 July, although many of these troops were untested in battle.³⁴

By comparison, Lee opened the campaign with a force of almost 83,000 men and 272 guns, including General J. E. B. Stuart's 12,000 cavalry troops.³⁵ On 2 June, Lee left Hill's corps to watch Hooker's army at Fredericksburg and executed a very risky, almost audacious flank march that left his forces spread over many miles in enemy territory. Ewell's corps moved North towards the town of Culpeper, where it was joined by Longstreet's corps and General Stuart's cavalry. This force then moved on to the Blue Mountain gaps, to be joined later by Hill's corps. A cavalry battle took place on 9 June at Brandy Station, enabling the Federal Cavalry to confirm the northward movement of the Confederates and causing Hooker to initiate a parallel movement. Lee then divided Stuart's cavalry, retaining two brigades for close protection of his main body and sending Stuart and his remaining three brigades to ride around the right flank of the Federal army. This move would prove decisive, as Lee did not hear from Stuart again until after the Battle of Gettysburg had begun.³⁶ His Chief of Intelligence was stuck on the far side of the Union Army. Without information from Stuart, Lee lost track of Meade's army until a spy informed Longstreet of the Union Army's presence near Frederick on 28 June, the first indication that they had crossed the Potomac. Lee decided to concentrate his forces in the vicinity of Cashtown and Gettysburg to prevent westward movement by Union forces attempting to cut his lines of communication.³⁷ Contact with Union forces finally occurred on 30 June. After receiving news of a large consignment of Union Army shoes in a warehouse in Gettysburg, General Hill ordered Pettigrew's brigade from Heth's division into the town to procure these shoes for his own men. En route, however, they encountered Federal cavalry and Pettigrew withdrew to Cashtown to report.³⁸

THE 1ST DAY

The next day Hill ordered two divisions under Heth and Pender to advance on Gettysburg where they were engaged by two Federal cavalry brigades under command of John Buford. Buford sent a messenger to General Reynolds, I Corps commander, requesting immediate support. Buford's cavalymen held out long enough for Reynolds to arrive with two brigades, and in the fighting that ensued these men held the Confederates in check despite taking over 60 percent casualties, to include Reynolds who was killed. Meanwhile, Lee had arrived on the battlefield and ordered Ewell into the fight, where his corps was soon engaged with the General Howard's XI Corps. Lee ordered both corps to press the attack, and the continuous assaults by Ewell's corps forced Howard's corps to collapse and withdraw to Cemetery Hill, leaving the flank of Reynolds' I Corps unprotected (See Figure 3). Ewell, who had been suffering from dyspepsia, failed to exploit this opportunity to destroy the Union I Corps. Further, when Lee ordered Ewell to pursue Howard and take Cemetery Hill "if practicable," Ewell took this literally and decided it was not practicable. Additionally, Culp's Hill, adjacent to Cemetery Hill, was not occupied and could easily have been taken by Ewell's men, giving them a flanking advantage which might have driven the Federal forces from Cemetery Ridge. Instead, Ewell held his forces back and missed this opportunity.

By day's end the Federal forces had lost over 10,000 men killed, wounded or missing (including 5,000 prisoners), but they held Cemetery Ridge and were steadily bringing in additional forces and preparing defenses.³⁹

THE 2ND DAY

Bolstered by the successes of the first day, Lee was convinced that his army could destroy Meade's army on this battlefield, achieving the decisive victory he and Davis felt they needed to force the Union to recognize the independence of the South. Despite the absence of Stuart's cavalry and the attendant lack of proper enemy information, Lee was determined to attack Meade on 2 July before the Union Army could fully concentrate its forces. His plan was to launch his main attack with Longstreet's corps against the left of the Union line while Hill and Ewell launched supporting attacks against the Union center and right, respectively. Longstreet was very much opposed to this plan, preferring instead to turn the Union flank, but Lee was convinced that this plan would work. Longstreet did not attack until 4:00 p.m., several hours later than Lee had expected him to. An early morning attack would have caught the Union Army still repositioning forces and ill-prepared to defend against a massed Confederate attack. Longstreet's delay provided Meade the additional time he needed to bring up his reserves. Between sunrise and 10:30 a.m. the Union forces added two corps (Hancock's and Sykes') and all of its reserve artillery, and by 3:00 p.m. had another corps (the VI) on hand, thus greatly increasing their strength on the battlefield. Further, by the time Longstreet opened up with his artillery the Confederate plan to attack the left flank was clear to Meade, who had massed all his available strength there.⁴⁰

As his attack commenced, Longstreet received information that Sickles' III Corps was forward of and disconnected from the rest of the Union Army, leaving both Little Round Top and Big Round Top unoccupied. Although his division commanders urged him to ignore Lee's orders for a frontal attack and to instead turn the left flank by taking the two hills, Longstreet refused and ordered his men into the attack against Sickles' forces. The result was some of the bloodiest fighting of the war in an area known as the Peach Orchard and Devil's Den, and only limited gains made at the expense of many soldiers' lives. One Alabama brigade did finally attempt to occupy Little Round Top, but this attempt was thwarted by the quick action of Meade's chief engineer, General Warren, who discovered the hill was unoccupied and then gathered troops from V Corps, to include the 20th Maine Regiment, to defend it. Colonel Joshua Chamberlain and the 20th Maine, running short of ammunition, repulsed the Confederate assault with a heroic bayonet charge.⁴¹

Despite the delay in attacking and limited success on the left, the force of the Confederate assault was opening gaps along the center of the Union line, and Meade was forced to fill these with regiments pulled from his right flank. These moves once again opened up an opportunity for Ewell to take Culp's Hill and roll up the weakened Union right flank. However, Ewell's first attack was not coordinated with Longstreet's and went in much too late, and he called off his second attack. A second excellent opportunity to roll the right flank of the Union forces was lost due to Ewell's lack of awareness and

initiative, and during the night Meade returned his forces to the Culp's Hill area. At the end of the day both sides had suffered heavy casualties and the Confederate efforts had resulted in only slight gains on both the left and right. Union forces retained the key ground along Cemetery ridge. Although several brigade probing attacks against the then thinly manned center were beaten back with difficulty, Lee still determined that he could defeat the Federals with aggressive offensive action. His optimism was buoyed by the arrival of General Pickett's division as well as General Stuart's cavalry, and he laid out a plan to conduct a massive frontal assault upon the center of the Union line the next day.⁴²

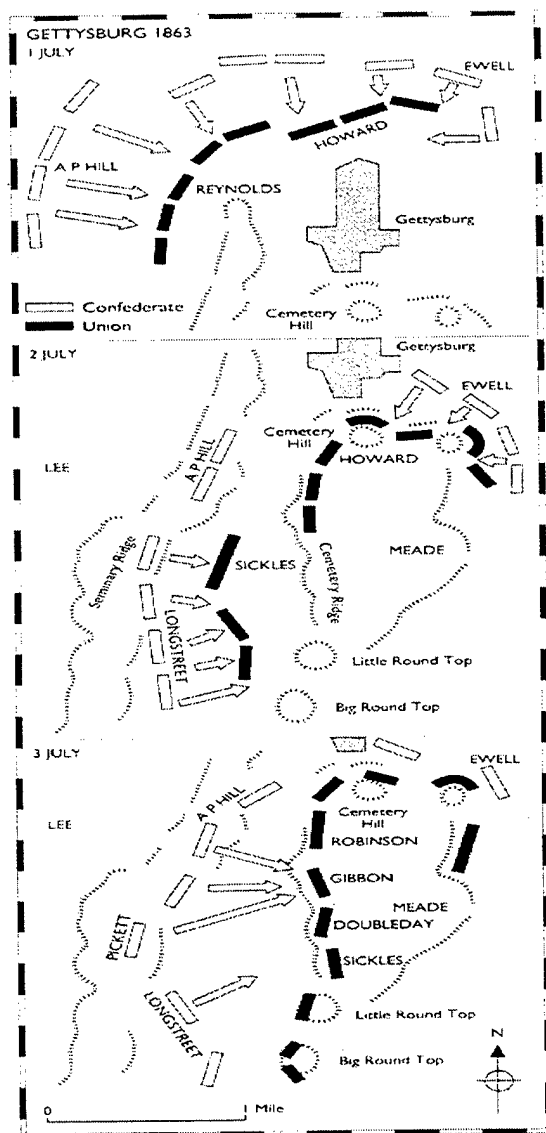


FIGURE 3. THE BATTLE AT GETTYSBURG⁴³

Reproduced by permission of Abbeville Press, Inc.
© Guinness Publishing Ltd., 1992.

THE 3rd DAY

Lee's plan of attack focused on the Union center, which was now thought to be weaker than either flank (Meade had drawn forces from his center to blunt Longstreet's thrust, but these forces had returned along with reinforcements). The attack would begin with a massive artillery bombardment, followed by a three-division frontal assault. Stuart's cavalry would operate against the Union left and rear, and Ewell's corps would conduct a supporting attack against the Union right. Longstreet was strongly opposed to this plan and argued at length for an attack against Meade's weakened left flank. Lee, however, was convinced he could force the Federal soldiers off of Cemetery Ridge with a massive frontal assault, and he refused to listen to Longstreet.

The battle began on July 3rd when Ewell's forward elements engaged the Union XII Corps on Culp's Hill from 4:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. Ewell's forces were defeated and prevented from supporting the main attack. The main effort began at 1:00 p.m. with a massive artillery bombardment by 138 Confederate cannon that lasted until 2:40 p.m. When the barrage ended Pickett led his division and elements of all three divisions of Hill's corps, 11,000 men total, directly across the valley towards Cemetery Ridge.

Pickett's men were overwhelmed by Union artillery and rifle fire, suffering 67 percent casualties, and were

forced to withdraw from the field. Simultaneously, about three miles to the east, Stuart's cavalry was engaged and driven from the field by Union cavalry, preventing him from aiding the infantry charge. Meade failed to counterattack and allowed Lee to conduct an orderly retreat from the battlefield. Although Meade missed an opportunity to complete the destruction of Lee's army, the defeat at Gettysburg was disastrous for both Lee and the Confederacy as a whole.

CAMPAIGN COMPARISON

THE STRATEGIC SETTING

Although France and the Confederacy had gone to war for different reasons, their armies launched these particular campaigns for several very similar reasons. After 22 years of near-constant fighting, the people of France were weary of war. Napoleon knew that they would not tolerate another war on their soil so soon after the successful invasion by the Allies in 1814. Further, since Belgium had until recently been a part of the French Empire and contained many sympathizers, he believed that once the English and Prussians were driven out the country would side with him, providing valuable military and financial support. Finally, he believed that a decisive victory over the British-led Anglo-Dutch army would weaken support for the war in England, reducing their financial aid and perhaps leading to a change of Ministry and withdrawal from the Alliance.

The motives of Confederate President Jefferson Davis and General Lee were remarkably similar to those of Napoleon. After two years of fighting, the people of the South, and particularly those in Virginia, were beginning to suffer from the devastating effects of the war and Davis knew he needed to do something to lift their spirits. Resources to support the army were diminishing, particularly food and clothing, and Lee felt his army could live off the fertile lands of Maryland and Pennsylvania. Further, by demonstrating an ability to strike at the heartland of the North, he and Davis hoped that Britain and France might be encouraged to recognize the South and possibly to offer financial and/or military support. Finally, they believed that Confederate victories in the North would threaten Washington and might force Lincoln to negotiate a peace settlement. Even if Lincoln refused to negotiate under these conditions, the Confederate leadership felt that their success in the North would weaken public support for the war and possibly lead to Lincoln's defeat by a pro-peace candidate in the 1864 election.

THE ARMIES

At the outset of the Waterloo campaign, Napoleon was only able to muster between 124,000 and 128,000 men (official accounts vary) on the Belgian frontier with which to launch his offensive against the 210,000 troops of the Allied and Prussian armies.⁴⁴ With his losses at Ligny and Grouchy's 30,000-man corps engaged at Wavre, Napoleon's forces for the decisive battle at Waterloo numbered almost 72,000 – 48,950 infantry, 15,765 cavalry, and 7,232 artillery – and were organized into three corps, the cavalry, and his Imperial Guard. To oppose him, Wellington fielded just over 67,600 Anglo-Dutch troops – 49,608 infantry, 12,408 cavalry, and 5645 gunners. The arrival of Blucher's Prussian reinforcements increased

this number by 30,000 at the height of the battle and eventually added over 50,000 men before the battle ended. These reinforcements raised the total Allied numbers to around 100,000 men as Napoleon launched his main attack, and ultimately to almost 120,000 men.⁴⁵ The force ratio at the beginning of the battle was fairly even, but the arrival of the Prussians produced a ratio of over 1.5:1 in favor of Wellington's forces, who already had the advantage of the defense.

Lee's Confederate army, which began the Gettysburg campaign with just under 83,000 men, entered the battle with a force very close in size and structure to that of Napoleon. Lee's forces totaled approximately 76,000, with about 60,000 infantry, 10,380 cavalry, and 5,400 artillery, and were also organized into three corps and the cavalry, although Lee did not have a force equivalent to Napoleon's Imperial Guard.⁴⁶ Likewise, the Union forces opposing Lee greatly resembled those of the Allied and Prussian forces, numbering almost 100,000 men with 80,700 infantry, 15,200 cavalry, and 3,900 artillery. Thus Lee, like Napoleon, was attacking a force that was nearly one and one-half times larger than his own.

THE BATTLEFIELDS

The decisive battles of the Waterloo and Gettysburg campaigns took place on battlefields that had some striking similarities, both in terms of terrain and troop disposition. In both battles, the opposing armies occupied parallel ridges separated by an open valley approximately three-quarters of a mile wide, with Allied and Union defensive lines stretching approximately three miles. Both battlefields included farms on which much of the land had been cleared, leaving little cover or concealment for forces crossing the valley and affording excellent fields of fire for defending forces. Farm buildings played a prominent role on both battlefields, especially those occupied forward of the main defensive lines, such as La Haye Sainte near the Allied center at Waterloo and the Codori and Bliss buildings near the Union center and right, respectively, at Gettysburg.⁴⁷ Wellington also established a forward strongpoint in the farm buildings of Hougoumont, forming a salient on the Allied right that was very similar to the salient created on the Union left when General Sickles repositioned his corps (without orders) to the Peach Orchard. A final significant similarity can be found in the general disposition of the Allied and Union forces in that both Wellington and Meade concentrated their forces on the right and center, assuming risk with a weak left flank.⁴⁸

THE LEADERS

It is beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to review the performance of all the leaders who played a key role in these campaigns. However, there are some very important similarities in the performance of a select few officers that warrant review here as their actions contributed directly to the outcome of each campaign. As has been the case throughout the paper, the focus here will remain on the French and the Confederates. However, one noteworthy example of strikingly similar actions taken by British and Union officers is included as well.

Napoleon and Lee

The performances of both Napoleon and Lee were clearly below the high standards they had set for themselves in their previous campaigns. One of the reasons for this appears to be illness. Throughout the Waterloo campaign Napoleon was suffering from piles, and his ill health appears to have affected his judgement and made him short-tempered and contemptuous of his enemy. There are numerous indicators that his poor health interfered with his ability to effectively lead his army during this campaign. The most obvious of these were his delays in making decisions and dispatching orders to subordinates before and after the battle at Quatre Bras and during the battle of Waterloo. These delays enabled Blucher to strengthen his defenses before the attack at Ligny and to break contact with Grouchy the morning after, allowed Wellington to withdraw from Quatre Bras unmolested, and prevented reinforcements from arriving at Ligny and then Waterloo in time to influence these battles. Other signs that his poor health affected his judgement and decision-making include his failures to exploit Wellington's weak left flank, to recognize it as an indication of pending Prussian reinforcements, and to withdraw from the battlefield when it became apparent that he could not win the fight. His contempt of his enemy, combined with his impaired judgement, apparently contributed to his dogged insistence on executing frontal attacks rather than flanking attacks. Finally, the effects of his poor health were most likely exacerbated by the frustration he experienced over missed opportunities and the poor performance of his subordinate general officers (especially Grouchy, Ney, and D'Erlon).

Lee, too, was suffering from illness throughout the Gettysburg campaign – in his case fatigue and prolonged diarrhea. He was also exhibiting symptoms of the heart disease he died from in 1870. The most obvious indicator that his health may have affected his leadership was his obsession with Cemetery Ridge and with achieving a decisive victory through massive frontal assaults. His refusal to listen to his most trusted advisor, General Longstreet, may also have been in part due to impatience and irritability associated with his poor health. Additionally, while it may not necessarily be due to his health, Lee also demonstrated some degree of contempt for his enemy through his persistent belief that he could destroy the larger army and through such actions as his bold flanking movement around Hooker at Fredericksburg and his constant frontal attacks. Finally, Lee's fatigue and illness were no doubt aggravated by his perception of missed opportunities and by the disappointing performance of his subordinate general officers (in particular, Stuart, Ewell, and Longstreet).

Whether due to illness or not, the most remarkable similarity between the two leaders during these campaigns was their adoption of the same basic strategy despite the sound advice and informed objections of their subordinates. Both men refused to back away from their plans to achieve decisive victory through the use of massed frontal assaults against a numerically superior enemy defending on good terrain. Both Napoleon and Lee were presented with viable alternatives by trusted senior advisors (Soult and Longstreet), and in both cases these alternatives involved attacking a weak left flank. This particular similarity is especially puzzling in General Lee's case. Lee was an avid student of Napoleonic warfare and had no doubt studied the Waterloo campaign in detail both as a student at the United States Military Academy and again later as Commandant of Cadets there. As such, it is surprising that in a

situation so similar to that faced by Napoleon at Waterloo, Lee would make so many of the same mistakes Napoleon made.

Despite the sub-par performances of Napoleon and Lee, their armies still had a number of opportunities to achieve victory during these campaigns – opportunities that were missed primarily because of poor decisions and inaction on the part of key subordinate leaders. As mentioned previously, both the French and Confederate armies had undergone some degree of reorganization just prior to the beginning of these campaigns, resulting in the placement of some general officers in leadership positions at levels with which they had no previous experience. In particular, these moves resulted in the assignment of Marshal Grouchy to command the French right wing and the assignment of General Ewell to command the Confederate II Corps. Although both of these men had distinguished themselves in battle on multiple occasions, neither had commanded at this level. Unfortunately for them and for their respective armies, both men failed to live up to the expectations of their commanders, and their reputations were forever tainted by their poor performances at key moments during these campaigns. Equally important to the outcome of these campaigns was the surprisingly poor performance of Marshal Ney, commander of the French right wing, General D'Erlon, commander of the French I Corps, General Longstreet, commander of the Confederate I Corps, and General Stuart, commander of the Confederate Cavalry. These four men had also acquitted themselves well in battle up to this point, and unlike Grouchy and Ewell, all of them had combat experience in command at their respective levels. Nonetheless, all four men made serious mistakes during these battles that caused their respective armies to miss opportunities for victory. A review of the performance of these six general officers reveals some striking parallels.

Ney and Longstreet

Ney's unexplainable delay in attacking the lightly defended crossroads at Quatre Bras is comparable to Longstreet's delay in attacking the Union left flank on the second day at Gettysburg. In both cases the commanding officers, Napoleon and Lee, expected the attacks to occur in the morning, but both attacks were delayed until late afternoon. Ney's delay enabled Wellington to identify the impending attack and reposition forces to strengthen the position, resulting in not only holding the position, but also engaging Ney's entire force and preventing him from sending reinforcements to Napoleon at Ligny. Although Napoleon won the battle at Ligny, Ney's actions prevented the possibility of destroying the Prussian army, allowing this force to escape and ultimately to swing the tide of battle at Waterloo. Similarly, Longstreet's delay enabled Meade time to observe the Confederate movements, identify the main attack, and bring up his reserve corps to strengthen the left flank. As a result, although the Union forces were forced back from the Peach Orchard and Devil's Den, they repulsed the Confederate attack at Little Round Top and held the left flank.

Grouchy and Ewell

Ney's attack at Quatre Bras was supposed to be conducted in coordination with Grouchy's attack on the Prussians at Ligny. Similarly, Longstreet's attack on the Union left flank was supposed to be coordinated with Ewell's attack on the right flank and Hill's attack on the center. However, both Grouchy and Ewell initiated their attacks far later than Napoleon and Lee expected, and both missed opportunities to exploit vulnerabilities in their opponents' defenses. Unaware of Napoleon's intended direction of attack on June 16th, Blucher's army was thinly spread over a seven-mile line around Ligny and was very vulnerable to an early attack. Grouchy failed to recognize and react to this disposition of the Prussians, however, and his forces assembled far too slowly to attack in the morning. When he arrived at the front around 11:00 a.m., Napoleon determined to make his main effort at Ligny and took personal command of the fight there, but was still unable to launch his attack until 2:30 p.m.⁴⁹ Grouchy's poor awareness of the situation and inability to organize his forces for attack in a timely manner allowed Blucher valuable time to concentrate his forces and improve his defenses. Although Napoleon was still able to drive the Prussians from the field, Grouchy's actions, coupled with Ney's failure to support the attack, caused the French to miss a great opportunity to destroy Blucher's army.

Ewell's performance at Gettysburg was remarkably similar to that of Grouchy. Ewell's corps was supposed to attack the Union right flank on 2 July as Longstreet initiated the main attack on the left. However, Ewell's attack was not coordinated with Longstreet's, was initiated far too late, and was unorganized to the point of being three independent division attacks. Ewell's failure to attack on time allowed Meade to pull several brigades from his right flank to fill holes created in the Union center by the aggressive attacks of Hill's corps. While these moves prevented the Union line in the center from collapsing, only one brigade was left to defend Culp's Hill and the Union right flank was dangerously weakened. Like Grouchy, however, Ewell was unaware of the enemy disposition and therefore failed to direct actions to exploit this vulnerability. Ewell's performance on this day, then, allowed two excellent opportunities for Confederate success to pass. First, he failed to fix the forces on the Union right as Hill and Longstreet attacked the center and left, allowing Meade to reposition these forces and stop the Confederate penetration of his center. Second, he failed to recognize and exploit his opportunity to seize Culp's Hill and force the Federals off of Cemetery Ridge by turning the weakened right flank. Remarkably, this same opportunity was presented on the first day of battle, but Ewell was again unaware of enemy dispositions and failed to realize that he could have easily taken Culp's Hill and perhaps swept the Union forces from Cemetery Ridge.⁵⁰

Grouchy and Longstreet

Another parallel can be drawn between the actions of Grouchy at Wavre and those of Longstreet on the second day at Gettysburg. When Grouchy's forces heard the initial sounds of battle coming from the direction of Waterloo, some of his generals encouraged him to send forces back to support the battle there. Having failed to maintain adequate observation of Blucher's forces, however, Grouchy remained convinced that the Prussians were massing at Wavre and therefore refused to dispatch reinforcements. Failure to take the initiative at this critical point in time prevented Grouchy from providing Napoleon with

the forces he needed to win the battle at Waterloo. Similarly, when Confederate patrols reported that the hills of Little Round Top and Big Round Top were unoccupied Longstreet's divisional commanders encouraged him to exploit this vulnerability and turn the Union left flank rather than executing the frontal attack directed by Lee. Apparently angry over Lee's rejection of this option when he presented it, Longstreet refused to deviate from Lee's plan and instead directed his forces to attack Sickles' forces at the Peach Orchard and Devil's Den head on, resulting in some of the bloodiest fighting of the battle. By the time Confederate forces did attempt to occupy Little Round Top Union forces had established defensive positions there and repulsed the attack. Longstreet's failure to take the initiative and exploit a critical Union vulnerability denied the Confederacy an opportunity to turn the Union flank, force them from Cemetery Ridge and potentially achieve a decisive victory.

D'Erlon and Stuart

A final parallel can be drawn between the actions of D'Erlon during the battles at Ligny and Quatre Bras and those of Stuart during the first two days of fighting at Gettysburg. The performance of these two men is comparable in that both failed to get their forces to the battle when and where they were needed. D'Erlon's I Corps initially moved with Ney's left wing to support the attack at Quatre Bras, but around 4:00 p.m. D'Erlon saw a note sent from Napoleon to Ney ordering his corps to immediately march to Ligny, envelop the Prussian right and then attack their rear. He then sent his chief of staff to notify Ney and turned his corps towards Ligny. However, D'Erlon chose a route of march that led his corps to the French left rear, confusing Napoleon and delaying the main attack. Further, as his corps moved within about two miles of the battle just after 6:30 p.m. D'Erlon received a directive from Ney to return to Quatre Bras. Despite his proximity to the battle at Ligny and the lateness of the hour, D'Erlon again turned his corps and marched towards Quatre Bras. He did, however, leave one division and some cavalry regiments, but he failed to notify Soult, Napoleon's chief of staff, and these forces had minimal impact on the battle.⁵¹ As a direct result of D'Erlon's poor understanding of the situation and bad judgement the bulk of his corps was not involved in either battle and yet another opportunity to destroy the Prussian army was lost.

Similarly, the bulk of the Confederate cavalry was not involved in the first two days of fighting at Gettysburg as a result of Stuart's actions. Early in the campaign Stuart had been somewhat embarrassed at Brandy Station by the effective performance of the Federal cavalry. When directed by Lee to cross the Potomac with three of his brigades to protect Ewell's flank and report on Union Army movement, Stuart attempted to repeat an earlier feat of riding around the entire army. Lee's orders did permit the possibility of this action, but this was conditional upon the Union Army remaining in Virginia and even then, only if he thought he could do it "without hindrance."⁵² Nonetheless Stuart almost immediately attempted to march around the Union Army. After discovering Union forces moving towards the Potomac, he executed a wide eastward movement to avoid contact and found himself on the far side of the Federals and unable to communicate with Lee. Although Stuart's cavalry engaged in several successful skirmishes, captured a large wagon train near Washington, and destroyed large sections of

railroad track, they were unable to pass around the Union Army until they had reached York, Pennsylvania. As a result, Stuart did not rejoin Lee until the afternoon of 2 July, leaving the Confederate army with no information about Union movements or disposition. Further, the two brigades he left in Virginia to watch enemy movements and cover the Confederate rear were also out of contact with Lee until 29 June, leading Lee to believe the Federals had not moved northward yet.⁵³ Stuart's absence forced Lee and his corps commanders to make decisions with very little information about the Union forces and was largely responsible for missed opportunities on each of the first two days of the battle. If Stuart had kept Lee informed on Union movements, it is unlikely that he would have concentrated his forces east of the mountains so close to Meade's army. Further, it is highly unlikely that Hill's men would have stumbled into the meeting engagement with Buford near Gettysburg on 1 July, or that Ewell would have been unaware of the opportunity to seize Culp's Hill with little resistance. On the second day, Stuart would likely have discovered the absence of troops on Big Round Top and Little Round Top, prompting Lee to adopt the course of action recommended by Longstreet. Lee could have used the cavalry to assist in turning the Union left flank and to cut off the movement of Union reinforcements. Stuart's poor understanding of the situation and failure to perform his assigned mission resulted in his absence from 24 June until 2 July, and in many ways led to the battle at Gettysburg and cost the Confederates multiple opportunities to win a decisive victory there.

Picton and Chamberlain

In addition to the parallels between French and Confederate officers addressed above, there were also a number of similar actions taken by Allied/Prussian officers and Union officers during these campaigns. Perhaps the most striking of these is seen in the actions of Sir Thomas Picton of the British Redcoats and Colonel Joshua Chamberlain of the 20th Maine Regiment. At the peak of D'Erlon's attack on the Allied center at Waterloo, Picton personally led a bayonet charge that broke the attack and drove the French back from the ridge, although he was killed during this action.⁵⁴ Under similar circumstances, with large numbers of Confederate forces nearing the top of Little Round Top on the Union left flank and with his ammunition exhausted, Chamberlain also ordered and personally led a bayonet charge that repulsed the attack and swept the Confederates from the field. These remarkably similar actions taken under desperate circumstances demonstrate the positive effects of good leadership, quick decision-making, and initiative on the battlefield.

THE FIGHTING

With the many similarities already identified, it is no surprise that the battles themselves are also quite similar in several respects. Although the Civil War era weapons had improved range, accuracy, and rates of fire relative to their Napoleonic era counterparts, the basic weaponry (artillery, rifles/muskets, sabers and bayonets) and tactics of war (daytime fighting, skirmishers, attack in formation and breastwork defenses) had not changed significantly. Further, the Union and Confederate leaders studied and employed Napoleonic warfare tactics and techniques, so one would naturally expect some degree of

similarity in the execution of battles in these two campaigns. However, the high degree of similarity between these particular campaigns exceeds normal expectations. The repeated frontal attacks, failure to exploit weak flanks, unnecessary delays, and multiple missed opportunities for success have already been addressed in some detail. Two other areas of remarkable similarity will be discussed here. The first involves D'Erlon's attack against the British center at Waterloo and Pickett's charge on the third day at Gettysburg. A massive artillery barrage involving hundreds of guns preceded both of these attacks, but were only minimally effective. At Waterloo the wet ground absorbed much of the shot, and Wellington's use of reverse slopes protected most of his troops. Similarly, at Gettysburg the Union artillery, which was the main target of the barrage, was taken out of action until the Confederate barrage ended. As each attack commenced the artillery fire was halted, leaving the attackers without adequate counter-battery or covering fire. Further, both forces attacked in large, closely packed formations moving slowly across the long, open valleys of each battlefield, providing large targets that were almost impossible to miss. As a result, in both cases the Allied and Union artillery fire decimated the attackers from the time they entered the valley, and those forces that did make it to the ridgeline were then met with massive rifle and musket fire. Both attacking forces suffered untenable losses and were easily repelled, although in D'Erlon's case a bayonet charge followed by a cavalry assault were required to drive the French back.

A second area of similarity involves the misuse of cavalry forces by both the French and the Confederates. Stuart's escapades and the repercussions have already been discussed. On the third and decisive day of battle, Lee sent Stuart behind the Union forces to cut off their expected retreat. His troops, however, were decisively engaged by Federal cavalymen and again were not a factor in the outcome of the battle. The French cavalry were also misused, although in a much different manner. Napoleon had given Ney control of most of his cavalry to support the main attack at Waterloo. After D'Erlon's attack had been repelled, Ney continued to fight desperately to capture La Haye Sainte and break the Allied line. Mistakenly believing some of the Allied troops were retreating, he ordered 5,000 cavalry to assault the ridge in an effort to exploit this perceived opportunity. Without artillery or infantry support, however, the cavalry took severe losses first to the Allied artillery and then to the massed musket fire, and they could not break the British square formations. In many respects the cavalry charge was much like D'Erlon's and Pickett's charges, and they, too, took horrendous losses. Nonetheless, Ney continued to believe he could drive the defenders from the ridge with another cavalry assault so he ordered a second attack by almost 10,000 cavalry, but they met with the same fate. As previously stated, Napoleon was furious with Ney for allowing this to happen and later refused to provide reinforcements at a point when Ney actually had another opportunity to break the Allied defenses.

Finally, the net results of the two campaigns were very similar for the French and Confederate forces. Both armies lost a tremendous number of soldiers and would never fully recover from these losses. Again, official accounts of the French losses vary, with estimates ranging from 33,000 to 41,000 men, which equates to between 48 and 57 percent of Napoleon's force – the highest loss rate of any of his many campaigns. The Confederate losses were somewhat less, although still extremely high and

devastating for the army. Estimates of these losses range up to 28,000 men, which equates to 37 percent of Lee's army. Napoleon's army was destroyed for all intents and purposes, and he was forced to surrender and once again exiled. Lee's army, on the other hand, managed to fight an essentially defensive battle for another two years, although it clearly suffered irreparable damage and lost all hope of decisively defeating the Union Army.

CONCLUSION

The Gettysburg campaign of the Confederate Army is remarkably similar in many ways to the Waterloo campaign of the French Army despite the fact that these campaigns involved completely different combatant forces and occurred in two different areas of the world and at two different times in history. The similarities in army size and structure, weaponry, basic tactics and terrain afford a unique opportunity to study the similarities in leader and unit behavior associated with success or failure in combat. Numerous examples taken from accounts of these two campaigns highlight the importance of situational awareness, intelligence, initiative, understanding commander's intent, rest and good health, use of terrain, timeliness, exploitation of opponents' weaknesses and operational security. Further, the similarities of these two campaigns, and particularly their devastating outcomes for the French and Confederate armies, lend credence to the old adage that those who fail to learn from the mistakes of others are doomed to repeat those mistakes. General Lee, while a student at West Point and later as Commandant of Cadets, was an avid student of Napoleon and Napoleonic warfare, and throughout his distinguished career he successfully applied the lessons he learned in numerous situations. In the most important battle of his career, however, he and his subordinate commanders failed to recognize the similarities between their situation and that of Napoleon some 50 years earlier, and they subsequently made many of the same mistakes with catastrophic results. The overall lesson learned from this paper, then, is that the study of military history is only useful if one retains and applies lessons learned.

WORD COUNT = 10,074

ENDNOTES

¹ George Santayana, The Life of Reason (1906), 284; quoted in John Bartlett, Familiar Quotations, 16th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992), 588.

² Joseph P. Mitchell and Sir Edward Creasy, Twenty Decisive Battles of the World (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 225.

³ J. H. Anderson, Campaign of Waterloo, 1815 (London: Hugh Rees, 1934), 1.

⁴ George Hooper, Waterloo: The Downfall of the First Napoleon (London: George Bell and Sons, 1890), 14.

⁵ Anderson, 2-3.

⁶ Charles C. Chesney, Waterloo Lectures: A Study of the Campaign of 1815 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), 34-5.

⁷ William Seymour, Decisive Factors in Twenty Great Battles of the World (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 138.

⁸ Chesney, 34.

⁹ Seymour, 139.

¹⁰ Anderson, 9.

¹¹ Ibid., 10.

¹² Seymour, 139-141.

¹³ Alan Schom, One Hundred Days: Napoleon's Road to Waterloo (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 184, 208.

¹⁴ Seymour, 140.

¹⁵ Mitchell and Creasy, 229.

¹⁶ Seymour, 144.

¹⁷ Ibid., 147.

¹⁸ J. W. E. Donaldson and A. F. Becke, Waterloo (London: Hugh Rees, 1907), 38.

¹⁹ Mitchell and Creasy, 228-9.

²⁰ Donaldson and Becke, 45.

²¹ Mitchell and Creasy, 230.

- ²² Geoffrey Regan, The Guinness Book of Decisive Battles (New York: Canopy Books, 1992), 154.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 155.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 156.
- ²⁷ Seymour, 167-8.
- ²⁸ Regan, 157.
- ²⁹ Hooper, 247-8.
- ³⁰ Regan, 159.
- ³¹ Gustav J. Fiebeger, The Campaign and Battle of Gettysburg (West Point, NY: United States Military Academy, 1915), 17.
- ³² Seymour, 226-7
- ³³ Fiebeger, 12.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 24.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 19-20.
- ³⁶ Seymour, 227.
- ³⁷ Fiebeger, 45.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 46. The report concerning the shoes has been accepted by a number of reputable historians, but remains in dispute. Without the benefit of Stuart's presence, it is conceivable that the Confederates were conducting a reconnaissance in force.
- ³⁹ Seymour, 229.
- ⁴⁰ Robert M. Stribling, Gettysburg Campaign and Campaigns of 1864 and 1865 in Virginia (Petersburg, VA: Franklin Press, 1905), 48.
- ⁴¹ Regan, 162.
- ⁴² Seymour, 231.
- ⁴³ Regan, 161.
- ⁴⁴ Chesney, 39.

⁴⁵ Regan, 153.

⁴⁶ Fiebeger, 21.

⁴⁷ William C. Storrick, The Battle of Gettysburg: The Country, The Contestants, The Results (Harrisburg, PA: McFarland, 1954), 38-40.

⁴⁸ Seymour, 162-3 and 238-9.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 148.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 229.

⁵¹ Ibid., 151.

⁵² Stribling, 29.

⁵³ Ibid., 30-1.

⁵⁴ Mitchell and Creasy, 234.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, J. H. Campaign of Waterloo, 1815. London, Hugh Rees, Ltd., 1934.
- Chesney, Charles C. Waterloo Lectures: A Study of the Campaign of 1815. London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1907.
- Donaldson, J. W. E., and Becke, A. F. Waterloo. London, Hugh Rees, Ltd., 1907.
- Fiebeger, Gustav J. The Campaign and Battle of Gettysburg. West Point, NY: United States Military Academy, 1915.
- Hooper, George. Waterloo: The Downfall of the First Napoleon. London, George Bell and Sons, 1890.
- Horsburgh, E. L. S. Waterloo: A Narrative and a Criticism. London, Methuen and Company, 1896.
- McIntosh, David G. Review of the Gettysburg Campaign. n.p., n.d.
- Mitchell, Joseph P. and Creasy, Edward S. Twenty Decisive Battles of the World. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964.
- Regan, Geoffrey. The Guinness Book of Decisive Battles. New York: Canopy Books, Abbeville Press, 1992.
- Santayana, George. The Life of Reason. 1906, 284. Quoted in John Bartlett, Familiar Quotations, 16th ed., 588. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992.
- Schom, Alan. One Hundred Days: Napoleon's Road to Waterloo. New York: Atheneum, 1992.
- Seymour, William. Decisive Factors in Twenty Great Battles of the World. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988.
- Storrick, William C. The Battle of Gettysburg: The Country, The Contestants, The Results. Harrisburg, PA: McFarland, 1954.
- Stribling, Robert M. Gettysburg Campaign and Campaigns of 1864 and 1865 in Virginia. Petersburg, VA: The Franklin Press, 1905.